

FPFWC Christian Development



Struggles with Love

September 2020

Fall Quarter

September 26, 2020

Lesson #4 – Revealed Love

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Genesis 45:1-8,10-15

Key Verse - Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.—Genesis 45:5

ICE BREAKERS

1. How can we overcome the desire for revenge?
2. How can you extend forgiveness to someone who has wronged you?

LESSON BACKGROUND

Lesson 3 covered the first trip that Joseph's brothers made to Egypt without Benjamin (Genesis 42:6-25). Though they returned with food, it inevitably ran out, and the brothers were faced with traveling to Egypt again. But they knew they could not return without Benjamin. Jacob, however, was still very reluctant to allow Benjamin to go. Finally, after Judah guaranteed Benjamin's safety and offered to bear the blame should Benjamin not return, Jacob relented (43:1-14).

When the brothers arrived in Egypt, they first spoke to Joseph's steward about the silver they had found in their sacks. He assured them all was well (Genesis 43:19-23a). Later, after Joseph released Simeon (43:23b) and fed the brothers a meal (43:31-34), he sent them back to Canaan with more supplies. But he also instructed his steward to place each man's silver in his sack and, in addition, to put Joseph's special silver cup in Benjamin's sack (44:1-2).

Following the brothers' departure, Joseph sent his steward to catch up with the men and accuse them of taking Joseph's cup. When the cup was discovered in Benjamin's sack of grain, the brothers tore their clothing in despair and returned to Egypt to face Joseph (Genesis 44:3-13).

After Joseph told his brothers that Benjamin would have to remain in Egypt, Judah stepped forward and voiced an impassioned plea not to keep Benjamin in Egypt. Such an action would break his father Jacob's heart to the point of hastening his death. Judah offered himself in place of Benjamin (Genesis 44:17-34). This act represented a drastic departure from the way Judah had treated Joseph those many years before (37:26-27).

LESSON COMMENTARY –

45:1-15. Seeing that his brothers were changed and overcome with emotion, Joseph revealed his true identity to his brothers, declaring I am Joseph! (vv. 1-

3). In response, the brothers were naturally dismayed (v. 3, lit., "dumbfounded") at this news and were afraid that Joseph might seek vengeance. Up to this point, Joseph's brothers had experienced a general sense of guilt, seeing their difficulties with this powerful Egyptian as just recompense for their sin in selling Joseph (42:22; 44:16). But out of concern for his brothers, Joseph sought to comfort them with kind words, which provide a theologically mature reflection on God's all-encompassing goodness and sovereignty. Despite his brothers' sinful intention in selling him as a slave to the Egypt-bound traders, Joseph realized a greater good: God sent me before you to preserve life (45:5; see also 50:20). Seeing the providence of God is the key to Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers, as is true for reconciliation between all estranged and hurt people. Although Joseph stated one time that they had sold him as a slave into Egypt (45:4), three times he clarified that in reality it was God who sent him to Egypt (vv. 5, 7, 8) as a an act of concern to preserve the family of Israel. In other words, all Joseph's sufferings during his 13 years as a slave and later as a prisoner was a result, ultimately, not only of the sinful will and actions of his brothers, but ultimately of the perfect will and behind-the-scenes work of God Himself. The verb sent (v. 5) is an active-voice verb and indicates God's providence over the sinful actions of Joseph's brothers. The verb sold, used for the sinful actions of the brothers, also is an active-voice verb (vv. 4-5). This is one of the key texts in the Bible indicating that God is sovereign over free human actions and that these two seemingly polar dynamics are nevertheless compatible in Scripture. Of course, this did not exonerate his brothers from the sinful part they played, though in response to their obvious repentance Joseph's declaration of this profound theological insight provided his brothers significant comfort and conciliation. For a brief discussion of the interplay between God's sovereignty (over sin and evil) and human responsibility, see comments on Rm 9:17-23. The genuineness of the full reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers is evident in Joseph's behavior toward them in providing a place for them to live (v. 10), food for them to endure the last five years of the famine (v. 11), and encouragement for them to bring [his] father down to Egypt (v. 13). True reconciliation shows genuine fruit and betrays no vengeance or bitterness.

LESSON NUGGET – Reconciliation – Joseph said, “Please come near to me” (v.4). He had forgiven them, but they were still afraid. In fact, they would still be afraid seventeen years later (50:15-21). In Jesus Christ, we have been reconciled to God, and we need not fear judgment (Rom. 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:20). God wants us to draw near to Him (Heb. 10:19-25; James 4:8).

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*