

## **Overcoming The Problem Of Forgiveness (Part 2)** **Genesis 50:15-21; 2 Corinthians 2:6-11**

### **Introduction:**

- Forgiveness is a problem in the Christian life because it is so hard to do. It is one of the most difficult things to do, yet one of the most needed.

### **Why is forgiveness such an important issue for the believer?**

1. Because unforgiveness allows Satan to gain ground in our lives. 2 Corinthians 2:10-11
2. Because unforgiveness can destroy the person that we refuse to forgive.
3. Because unforgiveness hinders the entire body of Christ. 2 Corinthians 2:9

### **Why is it so difficult to forgive when we have been wronged?**

1. Because we want to see them suffer. 2 Corinthians 2:6; cf. Romans 12:19
2. Because, if we forgive, we feel as if we are letting them off the hook.
3. Because of stubbornness. cf. Proverbs 13:10
4. So how do we forgive? Let's look at five key principles from the life of Joseph that will help us to be victorious!

### **Five principles concerning forgiveness from the life of Joseph (Genesis 50:15-21)**

1. Bitterness is a natural work of the flesh, but forgiveness is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. vs. 15
  - It is important to remember that forgiveness is something that God expects us to do and has asked us to do. Therefore, we **can** do it. But it certainly will not come naturally.
  - Joseph's eleven brothers expected bitterness. They expected him to be bitter and to return evil for evil. It is natural to be bitter and to seek revenge for offenses suffered. It is very easy to live this way, and it takes no real effort.
  - Forgiveness, on the other hand, is supernatural and must come from the Holy Spirit. You can't work it up in the flesh. Ephesians 4:30-32
  - A believer must pray, yield to the Holy Spirit, and allow the Spirit's fruit of love to work in and through him. Bitterness is part of the old man (before Christ); forgiveness is part of the new man (Christ in you). Colossians 3:10, 12-13
2. Forgiveness acknowledges the offense, but refuses to use it against the offender in the future. vs. 20
  - Joseph didn't bury his head in the sand and act like it never happened. This is not forgiveness. Joseph acknowledged the fact that they intended evil against him.
  - Forgiveness does not mean that you were not legitimately wronged. Forgiveness doesn't mean that you are saying the offenders were right in what they did.

- Forgiveness is not an issue of someone else's spirituality, but rather how **you** will respond to their lack of spirituality.
  - You're saying, "I have chosen to forgive you and not bring this thing up again to you or to anybody else."
  - Forgiveness is not simply forgetting (as you hear so often). You will find that you cannot forget. You are human, and there is no delete button in your mind. Satan will be sure to bring it up and remind you of the offense. He wants you to wallow in bitterness and anger.
  - Forgiveness is not forgetting, but rather it is an act of the will – a definite choice. It is not a feeling. Don't wait until you **feel** like forgiving, because you most likely will never get there. Feelings will heal after the choice to forgive is made.
  - When Satan brings it up, you can take him back in time when you made the choice to forgive. You can say, "It is forgiven, and I refuse to allow you to ruin my life with bitterness, bring me into bondage, and chain me to the past."
3. When we forgive, we are allowing God to be the judge. vs. 19
- Joseph's brothers fully expected Joseph to retaliate and seek revenge upon them after their father, Jacob, died. The reality was that Joseph could have done this easily!
  - Joseph was second in command over the entire nation of Egypt. But the fact was that Joseph was in charge of everything, on a practical level. Genesis 41:40-44
  - Joseph could have imprisoned them for the same length of time that he had to rot in prison. Joseph could have had them tortured. He could have sold them into slavery as they had done to him. Joseph could have simply had them executed with one wave of his hand – one simple command.
  - Joseph could have easily been the judge and jury over his brothers, and certainly could have justified it in his mind. But notice what Joseph says in verse 19, "*Fear not; for am I in the place of God?*"
  - Forgiveness does not deny guilt, nor does it allow the guilty to be released from divine retribution. Forgiveness releases the offender to God to be dealt with fairly. It does not mean that you condone it or agree with it. You may not even be able to fellowship with that person.
  - Forgiveness is not tolerating the other person's sin. Tolerating sin makes a mockery of forgiveness.
  - Forgiveness is the idea, "God knows about this entire situation better than anybody. He knows the hearts. He knows the appropriate action to take. He is much better equipped to judge this matter than I. So I will allow God to judge this matter. I will forgive as He has instructed me to do, and I will allow Him to judge. Judgment and vengeance are in His job description, not mine."
  - This is very difficult to do. It is hard to swallow our pride and forgive, rather than take the opportunity to seek revenge. It is hard to admit that God may have even brought some good in our lives through the ordeal. vs. 20

4. Forgiveness is not merely words. It is action. vs. 21
  - Notice that Joseph comforted them and spoke kindly to them. This would demonstrate that he was truly sincere.
  - When we say that we forgive through gritted teeth, continue to let it occupy our minds, bring it up, gossip about it with others, dodge the other person, and avoid him, we haven't truly forgiven.
5. The basis of our forgiveness to others is God's forgiveness of us.
  - The Bible is clear that we should forgive on the basis of God's mercy and forgiveness that He has extended to us.
    - "...forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" **Ephesians 4:32**
    - "...having forgiven you all trespasses... Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another... even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." **Colossians 2:13, 3:13**
  - Have you ever needed God's forgiveness? God offers it to us freely. It is a free gift given on the basis of what Christ has done on the cross.
  - Because of the cross, God can forgive me. And, because of the cross, I can forgive others.
  - Where is the justice? The cross makes forgiveness legally and morally right.
  - Here is a practical suggestion: Make a list of those who have offended you. Take that list and lay it before the Lord. Imagine yourself facing the cross of Jesus Christ where He paid for the sins and offenses of mankind. As you are doing this, pray something similar to this, "God, since you have forgiven me freely, I can forgive them too. I make a choice of my free will to extend grace and forgiveness to \_\_\_\_\_ right now."
  - Joseph ended up living to 110 years old (vs. 22). He could live with the joy of knowing that his heart was free from the bondage of bitterness and revenge. He was truly free!! You can know this freedom too!