

**I. Introduction.**

**II. Seek forgiveness (quickly) from those whom you have wronged. v. 15-18**

- A. Joseph's brothers (finally) seek his forgiveness for all the evil they did to him.
  - 1. Their motive is questionable because they fear Joseph will take revenge. v. 15
  - 2. Their method is questionable because they claim that their father Jacob instructed them to ask Joseph to forgive them. v. 16-17a
  - 3. Their timing is awful because they waited many years to actually seek forgiveness.
  - 4. Joseph's brothers do humble themselves before him. v. 18
  
- B. Jesus teaches that you have responsibility to quickly seek forgiveness from others when you have sinned against them.
  - 1. If your brother has something against you, drop everything and seek reconciliation immediately. Mt. 5:23-24
  - 2. If you delay, you will suffer. Pr. 28:1 Ps. 32:3-5
  - 3. Even if the other person is also at fault, seek forgiveness for your sin. Mt. 7:3-5
  
- C. The Bible also teaches you how to seek forgiveness.
  - 1. Many "mow the weeds" of conflict rather than pulling them out roots and all.
  - 2. The 7 A's of confession (from The Peacemaker).
    - a. Address everyone involved.
    - b. Avoid *if, but and maybe*.
    - c. Admit specifically.
    - d. Apologize. Acknowledge the hurt.
    - e. Accept the consequences.
    - f. Alter your behavior. II Co. 7:10-11
    - g. Ask for forgiveness.

**III. Graciously grant forgiveness to others when they wrong you. v. 17b-21**

- A. Joseph forgives his brothers in spite of their lame (and delayed) apology.
  
- B. What should you do if the other person hasn't yet sought forgiveness – or if their apology falls short of the biblical ideal? Ro. 12:18
  - 1. You can have a forgiving attitude towards the person who has wronged you, even if they haven't sought your forgiveness (yet). Luke 23:34
  - 2. You continue to hope and pray that the person will seek your forgiveness so that full restoration can take place.
  - 3. Joseph was kind to his brothers for many years before they explicitly sought his forgiveness. Gen. 45
  - 4. It is often appropriate to confront the person who has sinned against you so that he or she can have the opportunity to restore the relationship. Mt. 18:21ff Ga. 6:1
  
- C. What does it mean to forgive? The promises of forgiveness (from The Peacemaker).
  - 1. Is there a sense in which forgiving is forgetting? Jer. 31:34 Ps. 103:10-12 Ro. 5:19
  - 2. Forgiveness involves treating the offender as if the offense had never occurred.
  - 3. Forgiveness includes not bringing it up against them, nor talking about it with others, nor even thinking about it. 41:51 Jer. 31:34 I Co. 13:5
  - 4. There may be exceptional circumstances in which you forgive someone while not removing all of the consequences. Gal. 6:7 II Sam. 12:10-14 Num. 14:20ff

- D. Forgiveness includes showing love to the guilty party. v. 17b,21 45:3ff II Co. 2:7-8
  - 1. Take initiative in restoring the relationship.
  - 2. Comfort them in their guilt, fear and grief. v. 17b 45:3-5,14-15
  - 3. Rather than expecting them to try to make it up to you, minister to their needs. 45:10-13 50:21 Ro. 12:20-21
- E. What if you don't want to forgive? Phil. 4:13 Mt. 6:14-15 Heb. 12:15 I Co. 10:13

**IV. Joseph also teaches you how it is possible to forgive. v. 19-20**

- A. Remember that you are not God; therefore it is not your place to judge others. v. 19
  - 1. We become angry when we don't get what we desire. James 4:1-2
  - 2. Our angry desire for revenge is an attempt to play God by judging the other person. Mt. 7:1 5:21ff James 1:19 4:2
  - 3. Joseph does not take revenge on his brothers because he realizes he is not in God's place as judge.
  - 4. We must trust that God is judge who will bring just recompense to those who sin against us in His own time and way. Rom. 12:17-21
- B. Remember that God is in control. v. 20 45:8 Ro. 8:28 11:33 II Co. 12:7-9 Ps. 105:17
  - 1. We get angry and vengeful because we want to be in control of our lives. Js. 4:1-2
  - 2. Joseph recognizes that God had a good purpose in the evil deeds of his brothers. God is able to use human sin to bring about His good plan. Acts 2:23 Ro. 8:28 Prov. 16:1-4 19:21
  - 3. This does not excuse human sin. Sometimes God punishes those He uses. Is. 10:4f
  - 4. Good theology is practical! No person or circumstance can harm you, apart from God's sovereign will. Dt. 32:39 Ps. 103:19 Jer. 29:11 Ro. 8:28,32
  - 5. It takes faith to receive both blessing and trouble from God's hand. Job 2:10
- C. Remember the grace that God has shown you in Christ. Eph. 4:32 Mt. 6:12ff 18:21ff
  - 1. The gospel is the key to being able to forgive others.
  - 2. These principles have profound application to those who have been hurt or abused by others.

**V. Concluding applications: How does this passage point to Christ?**

- A. God predetermined that Jesus, like Joseph, must suffer that He might save His people. 45:7 John 18:11 Acts 2:23 4:28 13:27 Isa. 53:10
- B. Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers beautifully portrays Christ's forgiveness of us. Ps. 103:10-14 II Co. 8:9 II Pe. 1:2-3 Ro. 8:32 Phil. 4:19 II Co. 8:9

**Discussion questions**

1. Where does the Bible teach that we need to seek forgiveness when we wrong other people?
2. How should forgiveness be sought?
3. How does Joseph illustrate biblical principles of forgiveness?
4. What should you do to help those who seek your forgiveness?
5. What should you do if you don't feel like forgiving someone?
6. How was Joseph able to forgive his brothers?
7. How does Christ help us to forgive others?
8. Should you forgive someone who is not repentant?
9. How does Joseph's story help the victim of abuse?
10. How does Joseph's story point to Christ?