

Foundations for Forgiving Others 2017-02-05

Gen 45:1-3

45 Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2 And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. 3 And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

Family, friendships, marriages can be devastated by "irreconcilable differences."

- God is in the business of reconciling broken relationships.
 - Gen 45 beautifully illustrates Biblical forgiveness from God & toward others.

Joseph's Brothers on trial! Benjamin accused of stealing silver cup. Judah plead for mercy.

- Anxiously await verdict that will affect the course of their lives. 44:33-45:3
 - "I'm Joseph!" in Hebrew followed by confusion/horror...worst news: hoped the judge was impartial/merciful, but this guy they unjustly condemned.
 - "dismayed" means to be terrified.....NO NEED because
 - Lord worked in Joseph to forgive his brothers long before they came to repentance. Lk 23:34, Is 1:3, Jn 1:10-11

Forgiveness: to release or set free. To cancel a debt to provide an opportunity for repentance & restoration of the broken relationship.

- NOT: acknowledging that what they did was OK.
 - Assume real offense not unrealistic level of perfection.
- NOT: minimize, pretend not hurt or didn't happen. Joseph didn't.
- It is the decision of offended to absorb pain & loss caused by other person & they go free when they don't deserve it.

1st step towards reconciliation usually comes from the injured, not the one who hurt them.

- Most of us struggle to forgive those who harm us.
 - Easier to forgive others if we consider the forgiveness God has freely given you & trust in His sovereignty. Lk 6:35, 7:47, Col 3:12-13, Eph 4:31-32

Our debt to Jesus Christ is far greater than others' debt to us, yet He forgives us completely!

- The liberating joy that God has forgiven us empowers us to forgive anyone of anything.
 - Ask the Lord to help you see the size of your debt, the depth of the Lord's love & wonder of His forgiveness toward you because of the cross.

2nd key to help you forgive others is modeled by Joseph's "theology in practice."

- Related every event in his life, good or seemingly bad, to God. 45:5-8, Job 1:21, Act 2:23
 - Attributes brothers' action to God's sovereignty but also to their own wills.

- God did not force them to sin but used their acts to fulfill His purpose.
- Practically apply your theology...live like you believe the Lord is sovereign.
 - Trust that the Lord is always good & in control, even when it seems otherwise.

One of the surest signs that we have received the gift of forgiveness is that we forgive others.

- Forgiving is Christ-like & can lead to reconciliation & freedom for all involved
 - Frees offender from guilt & punishment & frees forgiver of anger & bitterness.
 - Unforgiveness may be the reason for physical ailments or emotional issues
- Ask God for His help to forgive the person(s) you have in mind.
 - Next week: What real forgiveness looks like.

“As you look at his face (the one who hurt you), look also for His face – the face of the One who forgave you. Look into the eyes of the King who wept when you pled for mercy. Look into the face of the Father who gave you grace when no one else gave you a chance. Find the face of the God who forgives in the face of your enemy. And then, because God has forgiven you more than you’ll ever be called on to forgive in another, set your enemy – and yourself – free. And allow the hole in your heart to heal.”
Max Lucado