

REST, RELATIONSHIPS, AND HEALING

Lesson 7 for
August 14,
2021





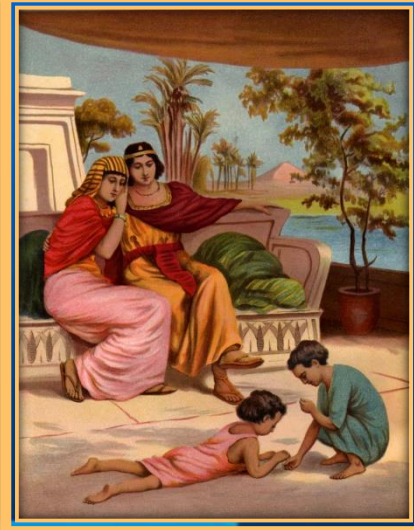
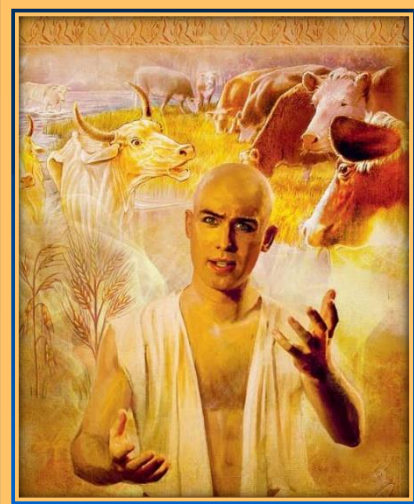
After the butler was released, Joseph spent two more years in prison.

The butler remembered about Joseph when the Pharaoh had a couple of strange dreams. He told Pharaoh how Joseph had interpreted his dream and the baker's.

Joseph did not claim he was the one interpreting dreams, but glorified God instead: "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace." (Genesis 41:16).

In addition to interpreting the dream (7 years of abundance followed by 7 years of famine), he suggested a plan to overcome the 7 years of famine.

Pharaoh promoted him to first minister and married him to Aseneth. They had two children: Manasseh and Ephraim.

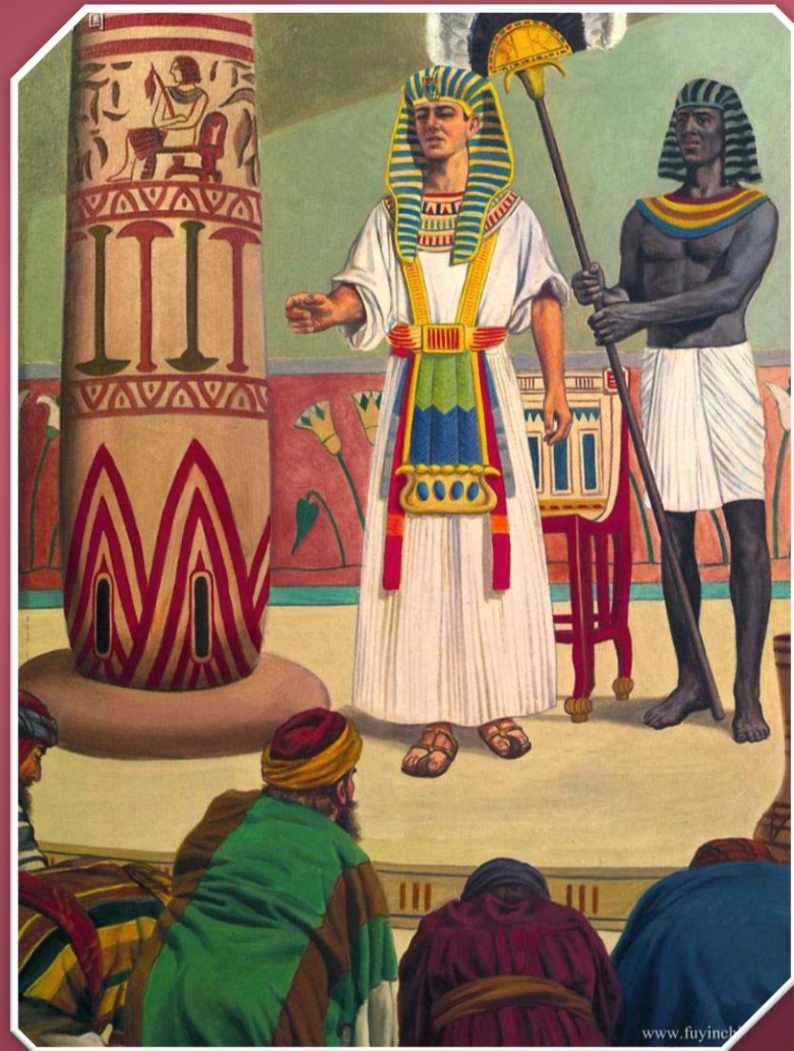
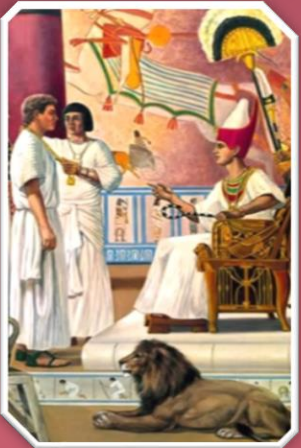


The story of Joseph does not end with his success as the first minister of Egypt.

Joseph had to face his past during the first year of famine. His brothers came to him. The circumstances were entirely different to the last time they had met.

He could choose between punishment or forgiveness. What would he do and why?

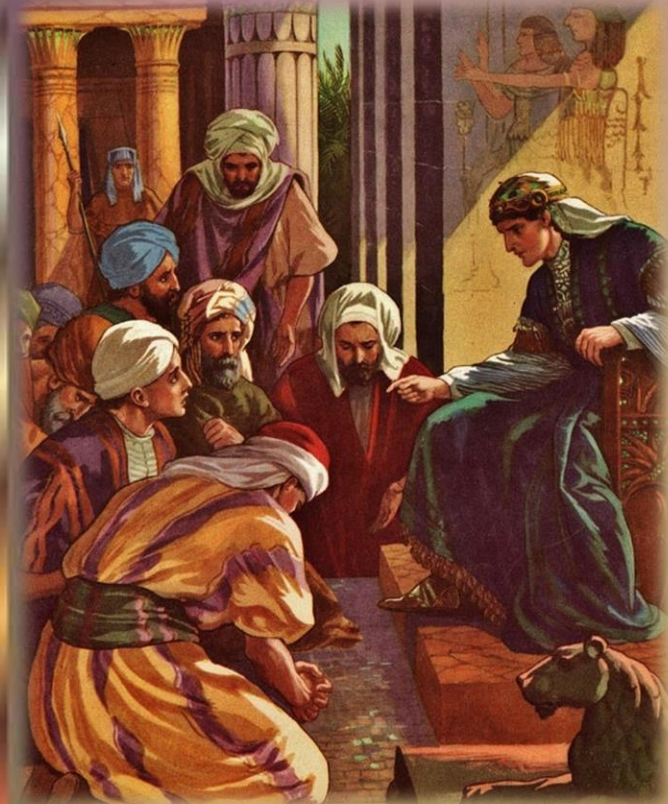
- **Has anything changed?**
- **Have they repented?**
- **Should I forgive them?**
- **Who should take the first step?**
- **What happens next?**



HAS ANYTHING CHANGED?

"We are all one man's sons; we are honest men; your servants are not spies." (Genesis 42:11)

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They were not spies. However, Joseph remembered they were jealous, envious, murderers, and fratricides.

Had they treated Benjamin the same way they treated him? Were they taking care of their old father?

Caring for the weak and the defenseless was one of the biblical principles Joseph had embraced (Ex. 22:21-23; Lv. 19:14, 32).

Abuse within the family is one of the most serious, because it is usually kept quiet. No physical, sexual, or emotional abuse can be tolerated.

Fortunately, his father and his brother were fine (Gn. 42:13). The situation had changed.

HAVE THEY REPENTED?

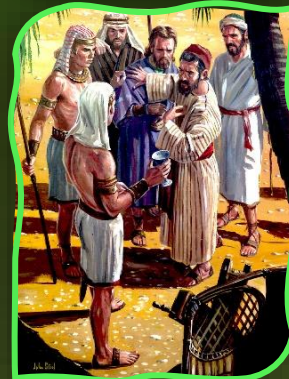
"Then they said to one another, 'We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.'" (Genesis 42:21)

Joseph had already forgiven his brothers. This story would have been hugely different if he had chosen hate and resentment instead.

However, he did not want to restore his family relationship if there was a risk of being abused by his brothers again.

His brothers did not know that Joseph could understand their language, so they spoke openly and showed their remorse. 21 years of remorse!

Joseph was convinced after some other tests. He showed favoritism towards Benjamin, but his brothers did not show jealousy or envy, but protected Benjamin (Gn. 43:34; 44:33-34).



SHOULD I FORGIVE THEM?

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'" (Matthew 18:21)



What if Joseph's brothers had not repented or changed at all? Should he have forgiven them?

Genuine forgiveness involves forgiving others even if they do not deserve it. God's forgiving love is unconditional, even when we do not deserve it.



We forgive because God has forgiven us (Romans 4:7).

When we forgive others, our bitterness goes away. The past is left behind, and we can go on with love and acceptance.

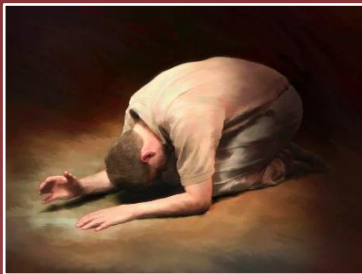


WHO SHOULD TAKE THE FIRST STEP?

"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you." (Luke 6:27-28)

When we are hurt by others, some wounds may be devastating. We may feel shattered, embittered, and angry.

Should I keep that hate and bitterness until the offender asks for forgiveness? I am the one who must decide whether to forgive or not.



We can share our anger with God. We can even ask Him to avenge the offense (Ps. 59:12-13; 69:23-24). Once we have taken our resentment to God, there is only one way ahead: forgiveness.

Jesus is the ultimate example. On the cross, he asked God to forgive his executioners: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34)



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

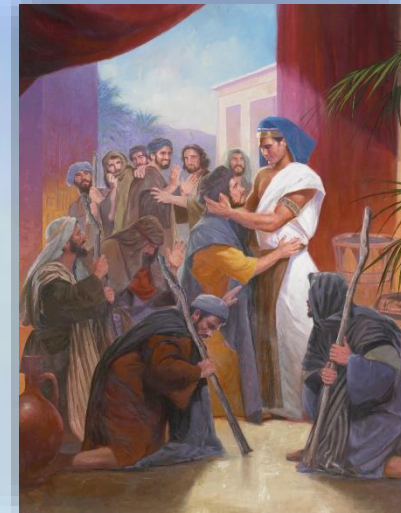
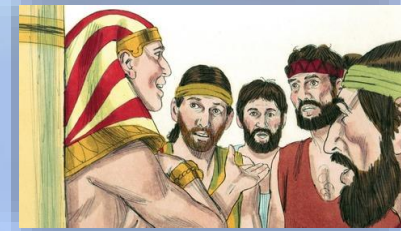
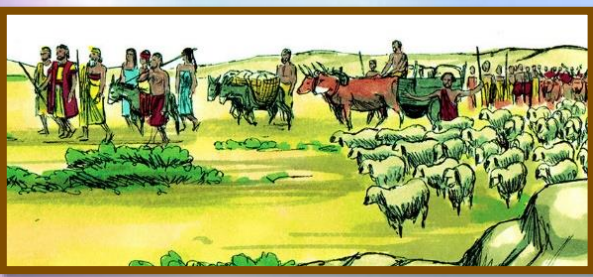
**"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."
(Genesis 50:20)**

Finally, Joseph's family was reconciled (Gn. 46:29). Although everything looked perfect, there were some wounds that had not heal completely.

After Jacob died, Joseph's brothers felt remorse and fear again. Had Joseph's forgiveness been genuine (Gn. 50:15)?

How many times should I forgive the same offense? All the times that are necessary until the wound is healed.

Joseph's forgiveness was not based on his feelings, but on his principles. He forgave them as God had forgiven him. He had understood God's plan for him (Gn. 50:50). There is no place for resentment in God's plan for us.



“The compassion that God manifests toward us, He bids us manifest toward others. Let the impulsive, the self-sufficient, the revengeful, behold the meek and lowly One, led as a lamb to the slaughter, unretaliating as a sheep dumb before her shearers. Let them look upon Him whom our sins have pierced and our sorrows burdened, and they will learn to endure, to forbear, and to forgive.”