

One truth shared: We forgive as God has forgiven us.

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Genesis 50:15-21

When forgiving is the hardest

Giving the right gift isn't always easy. When you know someone really well you have a better idea of what they want and what they could use. But sometimes, you don't know the person whose name you pulled for the Christmas gift exchange. What gift are you going to give them? Good luck! The better we know someone, the easier it is to give them a gift. Better yet, it's easiest to give to someone we know has a specific need our gift can fill.

But what about that certain someone you feel is the *very last* person on the face of the earth who deserves your gift? You know what they've done to you and how they've hurt you, they don't deserve anything from you. That is the situation Joseph was in. He was loved by his father, but not by his brothers. They were all jealous of Joseph who was "the favorite." So they got rid of him by selling him off into slavery and lying to their father about it. But God had other plans. Joseph ascended to second in command in Egypt. His leadership helped provide the Egyptians the gift of food during a severe famine.

Then Joseph's brothers came looking for food too. They didn't know Joseph was *their brother* Joseph. When they found out he was still alive and one of the most powerful people on earth, they were terrified. They assumed Joseph would throw them into slavery as payback.

But Joseph didn't. He knew they had hurt him deeply, but that God had loved him completely through it all. Because Joseph knew God was so gracious to him, he then could be gracious and forgiving towards his brothers. He told them right away "Don't be afraid!" He wasn't here to take them away. God had put Joseph there at that very moment to give his brothers the best gift: forgiveness.

Who has hurt you? Who has apologized to you lately? Who do you need to apologize to? The story of Joseph and his brothers is a perfect example of Christian reconciliation. We too can restore our relationships with one another by apologizing, forgiving, and loving each other just as Christ has loved and forgiven us.

Prayer: Dear Lord, you sent Joseph and his brothers to Egypt so they could eventually be together again in love and forgiveness. Help me to forgive others as you have forgiven me. Move me to be the one who gives your gift of forgiveness to the people in my life. Amen.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

Year A – Proper 19

The Church God Wants

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When forgiving is the hardest

***Starting the Discussion:** This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

Assess the pros and cons of....

- Getting revenge on someone:
 - Pros -
 - Cons –
- Forgiving someone who has hurt you:
 - Pros –
 - Cons –

***Connecting:** This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

Quickly scan over Genesis 37. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers for being his father's favorite son. Many horrible things happen. Some incredible lifechanging events as well. Decades later, Joseph meets his brothers. He recognizes them, but they don't recognize him. He has the opportunity to get back at them. What would you do if you were in Joseph's shoes?

***Digging In:** Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- Looking back at Genesis 37, this was a breakdown-in-the-family issue. It was Joseph's own *brothers* who did this to him. Joseph had about 20 years to think about all of this afterward. What thoughts and opinions would you assume Joseph now had towards his brothers?
- Read verse 17 again. Why do you think Joseph wept after receiving his brothers' message?
- Read Matthew 18:21-35. The servant's debt was insanely high. Some say it was up to 150,000 years of wages. The point is the man could never have possibly paid this debt back. What point is Jesus making about our sin with the servant's debt?
- Why do you think the master was so angry with the unforgiving servant?
- Read Ephesians 4:29-5:2. Compare those things we should get rid of in verse 31 to those things we should practice in verse 32.

Conclusion: Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the “connecting question” above.

Write down the *one big thought* you want to go home with from this Bible study today. Partner up to discuss why you want to remember this one truth.