

Genesis 50:15-21

(Gen 50:15) 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?" {16} So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: {17} '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. {18} His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. {19} But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? {20} You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. {21} So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Jesus' drastic words:

(Mat 18:34) In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. {35} "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Lack of forgiveness by us blocks out Jesus' forgiveness to us.

Today we want to discuss how important forgiveness is for getting along with other people.

No forgiveness unless forgiving  
HOW CAN I GET ALONG WITH OTHERS

I. Acknowledge Sin

A. Joseph

1. Favorite
2. Hated

B. Brothers - no acknowledgement

1. "Justice served"
2. Deceived Father

C. In Egypt

1. Joseph distributed grain
2. Family in Egypt; Jacob died

D. Attitude of brothers

1. Talked it over with Jacob
2. Went to Joseph

E. Us

1. Sinners will have conflicts
2. Pride doesn't admit guilt
3. Vindictiveness demands others first
4. Power position = no admission

5. Communication barrier resolved

## II. Forgive Sin

### A. Egypt

1. Joseph could get back
2. Brothers knew it

### B. Joseph's actions

1. Wept for joy
2. Wept for sadness
3. God is the judge
4. God is in charge

### C. Joseph's forgiveness

1. Ready because of God's
2. Actions of love

### D. Our forgiveness

1. Ready to forgive before penitence
2. God treats us that way
3. Back up with action

Easy two step method

IA1 Joseph had been Jacob's favorite son. He gave him special clothes. He told him to check up on his brothers. The favoritism had been open and blatant. Joseph didn't help matters. He told his brothers about a dream in which they bowed down to him.

2 The brothers hated this. They made life miserable for Joseph whenever they could. They openly expressed the desire to get rid of him. They took action. They grabbed him and intended to kill him. Instead they threw him into a dried up well. Then they sold him into slavery.

B1 The brothers did not acknowledge that what they had done was wrong. They thought justice had finally been served. They were the judges. They found Joseph guilty of the sin of being a recipient of favoritism. They punished him.

2 They could have acknowledged that what they had done was wrong when they reported the incident to their father Jacob. Instead they covered it up. They made up a story that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. They dipped his clothes in some animal blood to make the story realistic. The death of his son grieved Jacob tremendously. Still no truth. No admission by the brothers that what they had done was a sin against Joseph, Jacob and God. No acknowledgment of sin.

C1 Things had changed dramatically by the time of the incident before us today. A seven year long famine was gripping the entire region. Nobody had any grain except Egypt. Egypt had stored up extra grain for seven years. Joseph had been in charge of that program. He had been a slave for a time. Then a prisoner. But God had led him to be introduced to the Pharaoh. Pharaoh had made him second in command in charge of the grain.

2 Jacob and his sons had needed food. They came to Egypt to buy it. Joseph invited them to stay in Egypt during the famine. They did. Then Jacob died. The brothers were afraid that now Joseph would get back at them for selling him into slavery. They assumed he had just refrained from doing so out of respect for his father. (50:15) 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?"

D1 The attitude of Joseph's brothers had changed as dramatically as their circumstances. They were led by the circumstances to admit that what they had done to Joseph was wrong. They had discussed it with their Father before he died. {16} So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: {17} '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." No coverup. No rationalization. They admitted sins and wrongs.

2 They took the advice of their Father. They went to Joseph. They admitted their guilt. They asked his forgiveness. {18} His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. The burden was removed from their consciences. This should have happened years before.

E1 Anybody here like Joseph's brothers? All of us are sinners. So is everybody around us. That means we have had disrupted relationships. Are having them now. Will have them in the future. When sinners who are proud, selfish and vindictive are within a mile of each other, there will be conflicts in the relationship.

2 And it is very hard to admit that we might be the cause of the conflict, that we are not always right. We are too proud to admit that our actions are not always the correct ones. We could not possibly be the cause of the disruption in the relationship!! Unless we give up the attitude that the conflicts in our lives are always the other person's fault, it is going to be impossible to get along with other people.

3 It takes two to fight. The vindictive part of us insists that we won't admit our sin which caused the conflict until the other person admits his sinful part of the conflict. Nothing gets fixed.

4 When we were children and we were caught sinning, we admitted it and said we were sorry. Probably because our parents were bigger than we were. Do we act like Joseph's brothers and refuse to acknowledge our sins when we are dealing with peers? How about to people beneath you? Do you say to your children, your employees, or anybody else below you in the power structure, "I was wrong. I didn't carry out my responsibility. I need your forgiveness?"

5 What disrupts openness and communication between people? Isn't it often failure to acknowledge sin. May the Lord use whatever it takes in our lives to bring us to the situation of Joseph's brothers here in Genesis 50. May he lead us to say, "I was wrong. It is my fault. I sinned. I need your forgiveness." If we can't do that, it is going to be impossible for us to have a relationship with God. It will also be impossible for us to get along with anybody else.

IIA1 In Egypt the roles were reversed. Joseph had been hurt, betrayed and treated unfairly. Now he was the governor. He could treat his brothers in the same way.

2 His brothers knew it. They knew they were at his mercy. {18} His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said.

B1 When their message came to him, Joseph wept. These were tears of joy. Joy over the knowledge that these brothers who had been so cruel and callous years ago had been led by the Lord to acknowledge their sinfulness. Joy that they had been led to talk this whole thing over with their Father before he died.

2 But they were also tears of sorrow. Sorrow that they could have thought that he had just been playacting with the deeds of kindness over the past few years. Sorrow that they could think that he might actually take vengeance against them.

3 Joseph says that he knows it is God's job to punish people for sin. {19} But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?" The LORD says about Himself in another place: "Vengeance is mine. I will repay says the Lord." It is not our job to punish sinners. It is God's job.

4 Joseph also had figured out by this time why all this had happened. {20} You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. God had used the evil of the brothers one to Joseph to accomplish the good of keeping Jacob and his family alive.

C1 Did you notice Joseph's attitude? He had forgiven his brothers long before they had repented. Why? He knew that the Lord forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. How could he not do the same thing for his brothers which God does for him?

2 His forgiveness was not just words. {21} So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them. As governor he could take care of his brothers and their families. He promised to do that. He did it.

D1 Sometimes in our lives the conflict is the other person's fault. We get wronged. Instead of belaboring that point, we ought to be realistic. It is surprising. That other person is a sinner just as we are sinners. We need to forgive the perpetrator **before** he repents to us.

2 Why? Because that is the way God treats us. God has forgiven our sins because of Jesus' death on the cross even before we were conceived and born. Obviously that is way before we have repented. That free gift is offered to us all the time. It is still being offered to us even if we were to say, "I don't need it or want it." The forgiveness doesn't do us any good if we reject it. But it is still valid and being offered.

3 We should **tell** the repentant sinner that he has been forgiven. Now remember forgiving someone doesn't mean condoning his sin, helping him sin, or saying that sin is Ok. Forgiving someone doesn't mean allowing the sinner to continue to harm you, your dependents or anything else God has given you. It does mean calling to repentance and disciplining. It does letting God punish if that is necessary. We also need to work on being able to do what God does so that those sins don't affect our relationship with the repentant sinner. Throw the sins into the depths of the sea. Not remember them any more. Remove them as far as the east is from the west. Our forgiveness of others will only solve problems and fix relationships if we put our forgiving attitude into actions as Joseph did. Destructive words and actions won't solve problems or fix relationships even if we say we have forgiven them. God's forgiveness of our sins because of Jesus' death makes it possible for God to get along with us. Our forgiveness of each other is what is going to make us able to get along with each other.

Conc. How can I get along with others? God's formula is simple. Acknowledge sin. Forgive sin. Lord Jesus, please lead me to acknowledge my sin and forgive the sins of others.