

JOSEPH FORGIVES HIS BROTHERS

Lesson Aim: Be ready to forgive those who sin against you when they show true repentance.

Suggestion: Have the students read the Scriptures and answer the questions in the student lesson and insert the following questions where they fit the lesson for class discussion.

When Joseph saw his brothers, he wanted to forgive them, but he wisely waited until he had tested their attitude toward their father, Benjamin and himself. When they passed his tests, he felt they had truly repented of their sins; so he revealed himself to them and forgave them. "Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you" (Eph 4:32).

Why did Joseph charge his brothers with spying on Egypt? Gen 43:1-15; cf 42:6-24

As you remember from last week's lesson, the governor of Egypt told Jacob's sons that they were spies to see the devastation of the famine on Egypt. To prove that they were honest men, he demanded that they bring their youngest brother (Benjamin) to him or else he would not meet with them and would treat them as spies. They did not know that the governor was their brother, Joseph, because he looked like an Egyptian and spoke to them through an interpreter. Joseph wanted to see his only full brother, but he was not sure he could trust his half brothers to bring Benjamin to him, if he revealed who he was. They had badly mistreated him, threatened to kill him and finally sold him into slavery 22 years earlier. He was not bitter toward them, but he did not know if they still hated him and would refuse to bring his brother to him. So he demanded that they bring Benjamin to him to prove they were not spies. The brothers were troubled and admitted privately that they were guilty for selling Joseph as a slave. They did not know that Joseph heard everything that they had said. To their credit they persuaded their father to let Benjamin go with them to Egypt so they could bring him to the governor. In like manner, God is asking us to bring sinners to Him to prove our love for Him. This task may trouble us, but He knows what we say and what we think. He has provided the means of reconciliation for every sinner (2 Cor 5:18-21), but can He trust you to bring lost souls to Him?

Why did Joseph test his brothers regarding jealousy? Gen 43:16-34

Joseph was sold into slavery by his half brothers, because they were jealous of him. Joseph was the son of Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife. Since Benjamin was the second son of Rachel, Joseph wanted to know if his brothers also were jealous of him, or had they changed? When Joseph saw Benjamin, he commanded his steward to prepare a meal, so he could eat with them in his house. He used the meal to test his brothers to see if they resented Benjamin when he received special favor. First, he seated them according to their age and the oldest son would get the preferential treatment, but in this case, Benjamin, the youngest son, was given five times more food than any of the other sons were given. Did this cause the other sons to resent him or rejoice with him? To their credit, they showed no sign of jealousy, but rejoiced with him. This is the way all believers are to treat those that are favored. We should never be jealous of the blessings God gives to others. Instead we should rejoice with them and be content with God's provisions for us. "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim 6:6).

How did Joseph test his brothers regarding a sincere concern for Benjamin? Gen 44:1-34

After the meal, Joseph commanded his steward to fill their sacks with grain, put the money that they paid for the grain in the top of the sacks and put his silver cup in Benjamin's sack, which he did. In the morning the brothers left the city for home. When they had gone a short distance, Joseph told his steward to go after them to search their bags of grain for his silver cup beginning with the oldest brother. He found the money in the mouth of each sack, but not the silver cup until he opened the sack of Benjamin. They had to return to the governor who claimed Benjamin as his slave for taking his silver cup. All the brothers fell down before him and Judah said that they all would be his slaves. Joseph told them that only Benjamin would be his slave and the rest were free to return home in peace. Judah made a passionate plea before the governor to take Benjamin's place as his slave, so Benjamin could return to his father and spare his death. Now Joseph knew that his brothers loved their father and

would give their lives to protect Benjamin as his favorite son. Now he could reveal that he was Joseph. Likewise, we prove our love for God by being willing and ready to suffer for His Son (1 Pet 4:13-14).

How did Joseph help his family? Gen 45:7-11

He helped his family in several ways. First, he forgave his brothers for hating him and selling him as a slave. He considered it the blessed plan of God (45:7-8). Second, he sent his brothers back to his father with good news that he was alive and powerful and promised them a good place to live (45:9). This was a tremendous blessing to his father after thinking for 22 years that he was dead and now discovering that he was the ruler next to Pharaoh in Egypt. Third, he promised that they would live in Goshen, a good place to live with fertile land in the delta region of the Nile (45:10, 18). It was sparsely populated by Egyptians so they would be separated from the idolatrous worshippers in Egypt. Fourth, he would provide them with all the food that they needed during the next five years of the famine (45:11). What was true for Joseph can be true for every believer. If we seek to please the Lord in all that we do and have a generous hand to those who are in need, God will bless us so we can continue to help others (Lk 6:38; 2 Cor 9:6-8).