

Beulah Baptist Church
Rev. Jerry D. Black, Pastor

Sunday School Lesson for September 20th, 2020
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Lesson: Love Versus Guilt Text: Genesis 42:6-25

I. *Aim for Change / Learning Objectives...*
 By the end of the lesson, we will...

Learning Objectives:

- A. *EXPLAIN* why Joseph’s brothers interpreted their misfortune as punishment for their sins,
- B. *SENSE* the need for wholeness in their personal relationships, and
- C. *IDENTIFY* ways to accept God’s forgiveness and strive to offer grace to those who mistreat them.

Unifying Principle—Haunted by Shame. Some people allow the guilt of the past to poison their present. Is it ever possible to be free from condemnation for past actions? When Joseph saw his brothers who sold him into Egyptian slavery, he showed compassion (*mercy*) while motivating them to recall and take responsibility for their earlier actions.

Key Verse—“*And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required*” (Genesis 42:22, KJV).

People Places and Times

Israel’s Sons (The 12 Tribes) Israel took Leah as his first wife, but Israel married Rachel as well, giving him two wives. Soon after marrying, God blessed Leah with children; she bore Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. Rachel, who was barren, gave her handmaid Bilhah to Israel to have children by him in her stead. (This was similar to Sarah’s actions with Hagar, cf. Genesis 15). Bilhah bore Dan and Naphtali. Leah, believing she could not have more children and fearing she would fall behind in the race to bear sons, gave her handmaid Zilpah to Israel as yet another wife. Zilpah bore Gad and Asher. Then Leah was blessed to have two more sons, Issachar and Zebulun as well as a daughter Dinah.

Note: *Jacob took the two sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) as his own, figuratively. Thus there are two accounts / list of what accounts for the twelve tribes of Israel: one that includes Joseph as one of the twelve; and a second list that includes Ephraim and Manasseh who each account for a half-tribe.*

Notes: _____

Famine. A period of extreme food shortage brought on by drought and excessively dry land. This was the cause of the famine that befell Egypt during Joseph’s time. This was prophesied in Pharaoh’s dream of in Genesis 41:6, 23. With ancient agricultural methods providing only enough food for the anticipated population, dying of starvation during a famine was a real and present possibility. A famine could last several years.

II. Background

As displayed throughout Joseph’s life, God also gifted him as a strategic thinker and administrator. Joseph’s plan to store grain during the years of plenty prepared Egypt for the coming years of famine. At thirty years old, Joseph became the second most powerful man in the world. The famine hit Canaan where Israel, his sons, and their families lived. Israel heard there was grain in Egypt, and ordered all his sons—except for Benjamin—to travel there to purchase food for their families (Genesis 42:1-4). Benjamin was Israel’s remaining son from his beloved wife Rachel who died giving birth to him (Genesis 35:16-19). Israel was especially afraid to send Benjamin out, after the presumed death of his favorite Joseph. He deeply mourned Joseph (Genesis 37:35) and did not want anything to happen to Benjamin while traveling.

The Lesson At-A-Glance...

1. Confronting Shame (Genesis 42:6-8)
2. Confronting Opportunity (vv. 9-17)
3. Confronting Pain (vv. 18-22)
4. Confronting With Mercy (vv. 23-25)

III. In Depth with More Light on the Text

1. Confronting Shame (Genesis 42:6-8)

Over twenty years have passed since the sons of Israel last saw their then-teenage brother Joseph. He comes face-to-face with the men who turned his world upside down out of vicious envy.

2. Confronting Opportunity (vv. 9-17)

Joseph inwardly recognizes the fulfillment of the prophetic dreams he had as a young man where God revealed how his brothers would bow to him (Genesis 37:5, 9-10). Knowing the brothers’ explanation of their motives for traveling to Egypt, Joseph accuses them of being spies. The Lord has the supernatural ability to work in the lives of those inside and outside the faith community. When we are faithful to our Lord, God might elevate us to positions where we have favor even with those who do not know Jesus.

What would you do if you had the opportunity to pay back someone who hurt you?

Notes: _____

3. *Confronting Pain (v. 18-22)*

Joseph releases the brothers from prison after three days. He tells them he fears God, and in another test, they must prove they are honest men by leaving one brother behind in prison while the others travel back home with grain to feed their families. If they return with Benjamin, the one in prison will be released and they will all be allowed to live. The brothers talk amongst themselves. The sons of Israel recognize they are being punished for what they did to Joseph whom they believe is deceased. After all the years that passed, the brothers never absolved the guilt of their envious, hate-filled plot to kill their brother and the grief their father experienced. Reuben, Israel's firstborn exclaims how he had warned his brothers, "Do not sin against the child" (from v. 22; cf. Genesis 37:21-22, 29). They all live with considerable regret.

When have you accidentally or purposely inflicted pain on a family member? Were you able to gain forgiveness? Have you forgiven yourself?

4. *Confronting With Mercy (vv. 23-25)*

Overcome with emotion after hearing the exchange among his siblings, Joseph turns away and weeps. It is too much for him to listen to the brothers take responsibility for what they did to him, and to hear how Reuben defended him against his brothers' plot. Joseph shows mercy to the brothers by sending them back with the grain free of charge, having secretly returned their money to them. Joseph feared God, so seeing his brothers' pain and remorse propels him to give them what they did not give him—a chance to survive.

Recalling God's mercy in your own life, how have you been able to show mercy to others?

Notes: _____

Liberating Lesson & Application for Activation—see Sunday School book...

Vocabulary Words You Should Know...

Reciprocal: A reciprocal [action](#) or [arrangement involves](#) two [people](#) or [groups of people](#) who [behave](#) in the same way or [agree](#) to [help](#) each other and give each other [advantages](#). Cambridge Dictionary

Scripture Memory Verse...

- *Ps 103:8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. {plenteous...: Heb. great in mercy }*
- *Mt 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.(KJV)*