

Joseph



1

WE STUDY

Reflect on Weekly Devotions as an individual or with our families

2

WE GATHER

Together in worship on Sunday to hear the word of God

3

WE INVEST

Time in small groups throughout the week to grow deeper as a community

Seeing Ghosts

Heavenly Father,

You are so good and I know that everything I go through is to be used for your glory and to develop my character into the person you desire me to be. Help me to absorb this message and apply it to my life according to Your will.

Backstory

Finally, after two years, Joseph was remembered by the cupbearer (Joseph had accurately interpreted his dream while in prison) when Pharaoh had two troubling dreams of his own. After being called up from prison, Joseph not only interpreted the dreams, but he gave a proposal of what should be done. Joseph found favor with Pharaoh, and the King of Egypt appointed him to be head over all the land, second only to Pharaoh.



Genesis 42 New International Version (NIV)

Joseph's Brothers go to Egypt

42 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you just keep looking at each other?” **2** He continued, “I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.”

3 Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. **4** But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. **5** So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for there was famine in the land of Canaan also.

6 Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. **7** As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. “Where do you come from?” he asked.

“From the land of Canaan,” they replied, “to buy food.”



8 Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. **9** Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, “You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

10 “No, my lord,” they answered. “Your servants have come to buy food. **11** We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies.”

12 “No!” he said to them. “You have come to see where our land is unprotected.”

13 But they replied, “Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more.”

14 Joseph said to them, “It is just as I told you: You are spies! **15** And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. **16** Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!” **17** And he put them all in custody for three days.

18 On the third day, Joseph said to them, “Do this and you will live, for I fear God: **19** If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. **20** But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die.” This they proceeded to do.

21 They said to one another, “Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that’s why this distress has come on us.”

22 Reuben replied, “Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn’t listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood.” **23** They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.

24 He turned away from them and began to weep, but then came back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.

25 Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man’s silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them, **26** they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.

27 At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack. **28** “My silver has been returned,” he said to his brothers. “Here it is in my sack.”

Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, “What is this that God has done to us?”

29 When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. They said, **30** “The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as though we were spying on the land. **31** But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies. **32** We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.’

33 “Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, ‘This is how I will know whether you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go. **34** But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the land.’”

35 As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man’s sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened. **36** Their father Jacob said to them, “You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!”

37 Then Reuben said to his father, “You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back.”

38 But Jacob said, “My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow.”

Discussion

Flashbacks...

Have you ever heard, seen, or smelled something that brings you back to a place of remembrance, whether it's good or bad? To this day I can't stand the smell of Thousand Island Dressing, because of an incident that shamed me as a child. On a more serious note, I have a friend who avoids driving by a certain hospital, where she lost a loved one. Joseph probably had similar feelings when he saw his brothers bowing down before him. He probably experienced an immediate flashback from the dream that he had that sent his brothers over the edge with hatred. Joseph must have been flooded with mixed feelings of joy, hurt, fear and anger when he was suddenly reunited with his family.

Genesis 42:7 As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them...

Why would Joseph have spoken harshly? At first we assume his response to be revenge of some kind. More likely, it was to keep the separation between them. Joseph recognized his brothers, but he would have been very much changed from the little brother they knew. An Egyptian official would have spoken strongly to foreigners coming on the scene, and Joseph was keeping up his disguise, perhaps to provide himself with some time to decide what he should do. Perhaps he needed a moment. Our instinctive reactions are not always how we really want to act, especially when our emotions have been triggered in a negative way. It helps to take time, and collect your thoughts.

We know from Joseph's words later in Genesis, that he kept his integrity and knew that God had worked out everything for his good. This impacted how he would confront his brothers. We find a similar message in Paul's letter to the Roman church. Here was a man who had suffered greatly for his faith, yet he said boldly:

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

We all have at least one thing that triggers a flashback to a negative memory. Whether it's not being able to eat Thousand Island dressing because as a child it exploded on you from off of the top shelf at a grocery store, OR something much much worse, we can decide how we will respond. We can take a moment, and let those initial emotions settle. Then we have a chance to act with integrity and remember that even within the tension of our memory, and our sadness and anger, God works out all things for his purpose because of his sovereignty over our lives.

APPLICATION

- What is your “Thousand Island Dressing?”
- What was your last response during a flashback moment?
- What is one step that you can take to improve your initial reactions when these triggers occur? How can you take a moment, and ask God to give you His perspective?

Day 2



Brothers in Egypt

Heavenly Father, Your ways are higher than my own and your perfection is unreachable. I praise you for the example that you are, and continue to strive to be transformed into your image moment by moment. Open my hands and prepare my heart for what I need to hear today.

Genesis 43 NIV

The Second Journey to Egypt

Now the famine was still severe in the land. **2** So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go back and buy us a little more food.”

3 But Judah said to him, “The man warned us solemnly, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’ **4** If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you. **5** But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’”



6 Israel asked, “Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?”

7 They replied, “The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. ‘Is your father still living?’ he asked us. ‘Do you have another brother?’ We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, ‘Bring your brother down here?’”

8 Then Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die. **9** I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life. **10** As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice.”

11 Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift—a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds. **12** Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. **13** Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. **14** And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.”

15 So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. **16** When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he

said to the steward of his house, “Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare a meal; they are to eat with me at noon.”

17 The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph’s house. **18** Now the men were frightened when they were taken to his house. They thought, “We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys.”

19 So they went up to Joseph’s steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. **20** “We beg your pardon, our lord,” they said, “we came down here the first time to buy food. **21** But at the place where we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver—the exact weight—in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back with us. **22** We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don’t know who put our silver in our sacks.”

23 “It’s all right,” he said. “Don’t be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.” Then he brought Simeon out to them.

24 The steward took the men into Joseph’s house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys. **25** They prepared their gifts for Joseph’s arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there.

26 When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground. **27** He asked them how they were, and then he said, “How is your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?”

28 They replied, “Your servant our father is still alive and well.” And they bowed down, prostrating themselves before him.

29 As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother’s son, he asked, “Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?” And he said, “God be gracious to you, my son.” **30** Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there.

31 After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, “Serve the food.”

32 They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians. **33** The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment. **34** When portions were served to them from Joseph’s table, Benjamin’s portion was five times as much as anyone else’s. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

Discussion

Mercy

BULLIES...they seem to be everywhere, and these days they come in types and forms. From childhood bullies to online bullies, there is just no end to them. If you have been bullied in ANY way before you are fully aware of the effect they can have on your life. When my husband was in middle school he had plenty of friends, but there was one kid who had moved from across the state and thought he had to make a name for himself. He decided that being loud, ruthless, and mean to the weaker would make him “the cool kid”. My husband got in an argument with this kid in math class and this “not so gentle giant” kicked him in the shin as hard as he could until there was blood and bruising. Needless to say, my husband found an opportunity to get revenge by pulling out the chair from behind the bully right before he sat down. The whole class turned and laughed, and even the teacher was caught smirking at the situation because he had seen the earlier incident.

In life we will face bullies, and we are given two choices. We could act like my husband and get revenge, or we could act like Joseph and show mercy. As a child, revenge is easier. Yet as we grow up in our faith we realize the incredible mercy God has shown us demands something more from us.

1 Timothy 1:16 (NIV) But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.

When we remember the love and forgiveness God extended to us, even while we are still sinners, we understand that our response to others needs to change. Joseph showed mercy to his brothers. He gave them back their silver and treated them to dinner even though they didn't deserve it after all that they had put him through.

One other point we need to recognize is that people can change, just like we have. We can't hold tight to their words or actions in the past that have hurt us. We will only become bitter. It has been said that refusing to forgive is like drinking poison and hoping the other person gets sick. It hurts you, not them. Thankfully, my husband was able to bury the past with his bully and they have had numerous encounters with one another where they have been able to see that they are not the same people as they once were as children.

APPLICATION

- Name a time when you have gotten revenge or have been tempted with revenge, big or small.
- Is there somebody in your life that you need to show mercy towards?
- Is there someone you need to reach out to to forgive or make peace with?
- Have you given this situation to God? Why? Why not?