

## LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

### 6. Restoring Broken Relationships

*(Leader's Notes)*



Joseph had been promoted to the position of governor in the land of Egypt. The only person above him was Pharaoh himself! It seemed that Joseph had everything going for him – he had power, prestige and wealth. However there was still one area of his life that was broken, and that was his relationship with his brothers. A person may have everything that life can offer, but if he has broken relationships, he is not truly successful. As we come to the last study on the life of Joseph, we see that God was making a way so healing could take place.

#### **Scripture Reading: Genesis 42-45**

*(Since it may take too long to read through these chapters, perhaps you could tell the story in your own words.)*

- ✧ Why do you think Joseph didn't reveal his identity to his brothers when he first saw them?  
Genesis 42:6-9, 16, 20  
*(Joseph wanted to see if his brothers had changed!)*
  
- ✧ What steps did Joseph take to see if his brothers had changed? Genesis 42:18-24, 25-26, Genesis 43:32-34, Genesis 44:1-7
  - (1. Simeon was put in prison and the other brothers told to return with Benjamin, to see if they would treat his younger brother better than they had treated him. Genesis 42:18-24*
  - (2. The silver was put back into their sacks to see if they would respond honestly. Genesis 42:25-26*
  - (3. Five times more was given to Benjamin at a banquet to see if the others would be jealous. Genesis 43:32-34*
  - (4. The silver cup was put into Benjamin's sack, and then someone was sent after them to see if they would protect their brother. Genesis 44:1-7)*
  
- ✧ How did Joseph know that his brothers had changed and were sorry for what they had done to him?  
Genesis 42:21-23, Genesis 43:15, Genesis 44:33-34
  - (1. The brothers expressed their regret about their past actions, not realising Joseph could understand them. Genesis 42:21-23*
  - (2. They returned the silver and took Benjamin along. Genesis 43:15*
  - (3. When Benjamin was accused Judah begged to take the punishment in his place. Genesis 44:33-34)*

Joseph had forgiven his brothers for what had happened, but longed for their relationship to be fully restored. When he saw how sorry they were for what they had done to him, he knew that restoration could take place.

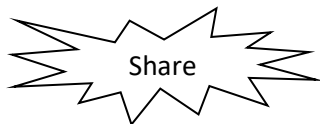
- ✧ What lessons can we learn from the way Joseph handled this situation that could help us in dealing with broken relationships in our own life? Genesis 45:1-15

- (1. Joseph spoke privately with his brothers. V1 - If we are wanting to resolve a relationship issue we need to speak with that person in private.
- (2. Joseph didn't pretend that nothing had happened, but spoke openly about it. V5 - Pretending nothing has happened will not resolve an issue, it must be addressed properly.
- (3. Joseph didn't accuse his brothers, but showed he had forgiven them. V5 - Likewise we should avoid 'accusing' the other person, or they will become defensive and this will not help in restoring the relationship.
- (4. He saw the events from God's perspective. V7-8 - We also need to see things from God's perspective, not our own.
- (5. Joseph was willing to do something to help his brothers and showed them affection. V11, 15 – What an example to us!)

It is easy to think that the person who has wronged us should come and apologize first, but Jesus told us to take the initiative and go to them first. Matthew 18:15. This is what Jesus did when Peter denied him. And this is what Joseph did too.



Jesus said, in Matthew 18:15, 'if your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault'. What is the difference between 'showing' and 'accusing' a person? Discuss.



Can you share a time when you have done what Joseph did? You have gone to another person to address a problem in your relationship, and you have seen true reconciliation take place.

*(Allow the Holy Spirit to move in the lives of group members. Perhaps there is someone who has a broken relationship with another person and they would like prayer.)*

## **Conclusion**

The first step in restoring relationships is being willing to forgive the one who has offended you. This doesn't depend on whether the other person responds or not. Jesus has commanded us to forgive. However we should desire for that relationship to be fully restored. There are times when that may not be possible, but as God's children we are to seek reconciliation. This is what Joseph did, and it resulted in an unfolding of God's blessing, not only for himself, but his whole family.