

LESSON 12

TWENTY-TWO YEARS LATER

Genesis 50:15-21; Genesis 45:4-8; 1 Peter 3:8-9; Ephesians 6:1-4

GENESIS 50:15-21 · GENESIS 45:4-8

Reading before class: Genesis 45:1-8 and Genesis 50:15-21. If you have time, read Genesis 37 as well.

I want to say something before we begin. This is the only lesson in this quarter aimed at your house instead of this building, and some of you are carrying something old. Work it at your own pace and nobody is going to ask you to read your answers out loud. And what I said in the Forward stands: if what you are carrying is bigger than a workbook page, come find me.

1. Without naming anybody, write down how long the oldest unresolved thing in your family has been going on.
years.

2. In your own words, what is the difference between forgiving somebody and being close to them again? We will come back to this and it is the most important question in this lesson.

BUILD THE TIMELINE

Everything you need is in four verses. Look each one up and do the arithmetic.

3. Read Genesis 37:2. How old was Joseph when his brothers threw him in the pit and sold him?
years old.

4. Read Genesis 41:46. How old was he when he stood before Pharaoh?
years old.

5. After that came seven years of plenty. Then read Genesis 45:6. How far into the famine were they when his brothers showed up?
years.

6. Now add it up. How old was Joseph when he told his brothers who he was?
years old.

7. Subtract. How many years passed between the pit and the moment he said "I am your brother

Joseph"?

years.

8. Read Genesis 47:28. Jacob lived seventeen more years in Egypt, and Genesis 50 happens after he dies. So roughly how long after the pit is the scene in Genesis 50?
About years.

WHAT THE BROTHERS WERE STILL AFRAID OF

9. Read Genesis 50:15. What do the brothers say to each other when their father dies?

10. Stop and think about that. Joseph told them who he was in chapter 45 and wept on their necks. They have now lived beside him for seventeen more years, and look at what they still believe about him.

In your opinion, why did they not believe him?

11. Read Genesis 50:16-17. What do they send Joseph, and whose authority do they put behind it?

12. Read the end of verse 17. What does Joseph do when the message reaches him?

13. Why would that make a man weep? Put yourself in his chair for a second. He has fed these men for seventeen years.

WHAT JOSEPH ACTUALLY SAID

- 14.** Read Genesis 50:18. What do the brothers do and say when they come themselves?

- 15.** Read Genesis 50:19. Joseph answers with a question. Write it out.

- 16.** That is a strange thing to say. What is Joseph refusing to be, and why would that be the first thing out of his mouth?

- 17.** Read Genesis 50:20. Write the two halves of that sentence.

They meant: _____

God meant: _____

- 18.** Look hard at the first half. Does Joseph deny that what they did was evil?

- 19.** So Joseph is holding two things at once. Say them both in one sentence.

- 20.** Read Genesis 50:21. Joseph does three things. Write all three, and notice that only one of them is words.

THE EARLIER SCENE

- 21.** Read Genesis 45:4. How does Joseph identify himself, and what phrase does he attach?

- 22.** He names what they did to his face. Why does he say that part out loud instead of skipping past it?

23. Read Genesis 45:5. What does he tell them not to do to themselves?

24. In your opinion, what is the difference between "it was not that bad" and what Joseph actually says here?

TWO THINGS THAT ARE NOT THE SAME THING

This is the part I most want you to get right, and it is where a great deal of harm gets done by people who mean well.

25. Go back to the whole Joseph account. Who moved first, Joseph or the brothers? Look at Genesis 45:4 and Genesis 50:19-21 before you answer.

26. Now think about what Joseph could NOT do by himself. He could release them. Could he make them stop being afraid of him?

27. Genesis 50 proves it. Seventeen years after he forgave them, they were still afraid. So whose work was left undone, and could Joseph have done it for them?

28. In your own words, then: what is a person commanded to do, and what is the thing that takes two?

Commanded of me: _____

Takes both of us: _____

AT HOME

- 29.** Read 1 Peter 3:8-9. Peter lists five things and then forbids two. Write the two things forbidden and the one thing commanded in their place.

Forbidden: _____

Instead: _____

- 30.** Read Ephesians 6:1-4. Paul gives a command to children and a command to fathers. Notice that he does not only correct the young ones. What is the father told not to do?

- 31.** In your opinion, why would God put a command to parents right beside a command to children?

WORD STUDY · MEANT (GENESIS 50:20)

It is the same Hebrew verb both times. "You meant evil against me" and "God meant it for good" run on one word, and both are in the same stem and the same tense. Your English gives you meant twice because the Hebrew gives you the same verb twice.

But now look closer, because the two halves are not identical. That verb covers a range: to consider, to reckon, to calculate, to plan, and to plot. And the two halves of this verse are read differently. The brothers' half is the plotting one: to plan secretly, and usually to plan something wicked. God's half is the plain planning one: to work out a plan, to devise.

Think about that, because it is careful, and it matters. Scripture uses one verb for both, so nobody can pretend the brothers' scheming and God's purpose were unrelated. But the wickedness is half of the verb and not in His. They plotted. He planned. The verse does not say God plotted anything, and it does not say the brothers did something neutral that God later made use of.

Why it matters here: this is exactly what Joseph is holding onto with both hands. What they did was evil and he says so out loud. God was working the whole time and he says that too. The Hebrew lets him hold both without softening either one, and any reading that makes God the author of what the brothers did has gone past what the sentence says.

Source: Logos, 4 Aug. 2026. Both forms are נָשָׂא, Qal perfect: the brothers' second-person plural, tagged sense to plot, "to plan secretly, usually something wicked"; God's third-person singular, tagged sense to plan (devise), "to make or work out a plan for." Lexicons consulted: Brown et al.; Gesenius and Tregelles; Strong. Full entries in Works Cited.

And note this: your English Bible already gives you the same word twice in one verse. That by itself is the point, and you can see it without a word of Hebrew.

BUT SOMEONE MAY ASK...

"Does forgiving somebody mean going back to them? What if the person who hurt me is dangerous?"

No. Forgiving is not returning, and I want to be as plain about this as I know how to be.

Nothing in this lesson, and nothing in this book, teaches that forgiving a person requires you to put yourself back within reach of harm. If anybody has ever told you that, they were not teaching you the Bible. Joseph's brothers were not dangerous to him by Genesis 50. He was the ruler of Egypt and they were terrified of him. That is not everybody's situation and the passage does not pretend it is.

Here is the distinction, and it is the one question 28 was driving at. Scripture commands you to forgive. That is between you and God and it does not wait on the other person. Reconciliation is a different thing. It takes two people, it requires trust, and trust is rebuilt over time by conduct. Joseph forgave in chapter 45 and his brothers were still afraid of him seventeen years later, which tells you the two are not the same and that one of them was not finished.

And on safety, plainly. Where there is danger, getting to a safe place is not a failure to forgive. It is not a spiritual compromise and it is not a lack of faith. Safety first, always, and the harder questions get worked out after somebody is safe.

If any of this is your situation rather than a hypothetical, please come talk to me, or to one of the elders, and do not work it out alone with a workbook.

FOR YOUR LIFE

32. Look back at your answer to question 2. Would you change it now? What changed?

33. Go back to question 1 and the number of years you wrote. Compare it to your answer in question 7.

34. Joseph's brothers spent decades afraid of a man who had already released them. Is there somebody who is afraid of you, or careful around you, who does not need to be?

35. In your opinion, which is harder in a family: to forgive, or to believe you have been forgiven?

THIS WEEK

36. Genesis 50:21 says Joseph comforted them and spoke kindly to them. That is not a feeling, it is something he said out loud. Name one person in your family who needs to hear something out loud from you.

37. Write what you will say, and when. If the honest answer this week is that you are not ready, write that instead and write what you will do about your own heart in the meantime.

Bring this workbook back next week. Next Sunday is the last one and it is the one the whole quarter has been pointing to.

NEXT WEEK. Lesson 13: As Far as the East Is From the West.

Read before class: Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13, Matthew 6:14-15 and Psalm 103.

One thing to watch for: Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13 both end the same way, with a short comparison. Find it in both, and notice that it is not telling you how much to forgive. It is telling you what to copy.