



JOSEPH

SESSION 4

- **Main Passage:** Genesis 44:18-45:3
 - **Supporting Scripture:** Matthew 6:12
 - **Purpose:** To forgive others as God forgives us, relying on the Holy Spirit to help us reconcile ourselves to those who may have wronged us
 - **Session Snapshot:** Reconciliation can be difficult and painful. Countless relationships are ruined because of an absence of reconciliation. But reconciliation is essential to who we are as new creations in Christ. It is an ongoing theme in God's Word. What we see in this account of Joseph is an example of supernatural reconciliation. The good news is we have that same supernatural access as Joseph had, thanks to God's gracious gift of His Holy Spirit.
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GETTING STARTED

Kick-off your time together with a quick connection time or reviewing what you did in the last session.

FIRST, remind your group that this is week 4 of their video series on Joseph and that it's part of a larger study looking at the real men of the Bible.

THEN, if you want to start with asking men for prayer requests, checking in on how their weeks have gone, or any other housekeeping tasks, do so.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

THEN, when the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **Rick mentioned how difficult reconciliation can be. Ask for one or two volunteers from the group to share about a difficult reconciliation in their life. What specifically made it such a challenge?**
- **What are some of the barriers we can face in attempting to reconcile?**
- **On the flip side of that, what might be the consequences of failing to forgive someone that may have wronged you?**

- **Vengeance is woven into our secular society. Think about it: who doesn't love a good revenge movie? But, as Rick mentions, our version of handing out vengeance is always flawed when compared to God. What does this mean?**
- **Think back on what we have learned thus far about Joseph. Here we see him in a position of great power, strength, and prosperity. Do you think this is a factor in how he responds to his brothers who have wronged him?**
- **Can you think of examples of supernatural reconciliation, reconciliation so surprising that it could only be attributed to God? Why are stories like this so meaningful?**

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **We are forgiven based on God's grace. Nothing else. We do not deserve God's forgiveness. The brothers here, by the world's standards, did not deserve forgiveness. But Joseph was not operating based on the standards of the world. Let's go through this account together in God's Word.**

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at Genesis 44:18-45:3. As Rick stated in the video, we are called to forgive as Joseph did. Let's take a look at what led to this and how Joseph was obedient to God's call of forgiveness.

We must make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage they will be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Genesis, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).
- **Time frame:** It's difficult to establish with any certainty a date for the completion of the Pentateuch (a name for the first five books of the Bible—including Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—of which Genesis is a part). Most of the material originated from Moses himself, and depending on the date of the Exodus (which is also not known for sure), that would make the date for the writing of Genesis sometime in the 1400s or the 1200s BC.
- **Purpose:** Genesis details the earliest history of our world, including creation and Adam and Eves' fall. It also focuses on the emergence of Israel, not only as God's people but as the group God would work through to bring redemption to the world.

THEN, read or have a volunteer read Genesis 44:18-45:3. Lead the group in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **Think back on all we have seen with Joseph thus far (betrayed by his brothers, sold to slavery, wrongly accused and thrown in prison, forgotten in prison, and now in an unlikely position of prominence). How do you think these past experiences shape Joseph's response here in our text?**
 - Answers will vary. Men may even share how personal experiences have brought them to positions of spiritual strength they otherwise would not have attained.
- **We also see a difference in the brothers from before, as determined by Joseph when he tests them. What impact does their behavior have here?**

- *Answer:* This will hopefully lead to a robust discussion. On the one hand, there is change there, particularly on Judah's part, in regards to his concern for his father and brother, which manifests itself in selfless love. That could make them seem easier to forgive. On the other hand, they are completely helpless here. Joseph holds all the cards. Ultimately you want to remind the group that we are called to forgive, not based on the merit of the person seeking forgiveness.
- **Back to Judah for a minute. Before, we saw Judah's concern for Joseph, but he didn't fully follow through with it. He was conflicted but ultimately acted in cowardice. Here, we see a change in Judah's life. We see this in our own lives. People can bring us both happiness and disappointment. Why is this important to note?**
 - *Answer:* We are not to base our handing out forgiveness on a scorecard, weighing the good and the bad. While Joseph was moved by the change in his brother Judah's heart, the truth is we are never worthy of God's forgiveness. But thanks be to God, He continually bestows it on us. This is how we are to forgive as well.

NEXT, direct your group's attention to Matthew 6:12. Then, ask:

- **God's Word is clear that we are not to deny forgiveness to anyone, following the example God sets for us. Can you say you are comfortable asking God to forgive you in the manner you forgive others?**
 - This may not elicit an answer from the group, but it's sure to be thought-provoking to them. It's a question that gives each person pause.
- **If the previous question is daunting to you, remember that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do this. How does this impact your view of the challenge presented in the previous question?**
 - Answers should be along the line of Matthew 19:26: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Encourage men to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit as they seek to be men of reconciliation.
- **Ultimately, what causes us to withhold forgiveness from others? Conversely, what causes us to forgive those that the world may say should not be forgiven?**
 - *Answer:* Our sinful flesh, specifically pride, bitterness, selfishness, and an unhealthy view of God (thinking we have the right of vengeance). The reverse, of course, is our redeemed spirit. We want the things God wants and value the things God values. We want to forgive. We desire reconciliation in accordance with the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group's attention on the takeaways from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on the takeaways from this session. Consider starting this portion of your session by asking your group what they think are the main application points from your session. Allow discussion to go until there are no more suggestions.

Then, if necessary, supplement your discussion with the following application points. Say something like:

- **Is there someone you have been withholding forgiveness from?**
 - What barriers are there that prevent you from having already forgiven them?
- **In your mind, how have you justified this in light of the forgiveness God continually provides you?**
 - Does that justification stand up when compared with all that we have discussed during our time together today?

- **Our ability to forgive in difficult circumstances through the Holy Spirit's power can be the most countercultural thing we can do and the most noticeable to others.**
 - How is forgiveness and reconciliation part of your testimony?

If it feels appropriate, allow some discussion about the kind of processing they find themselves doing.

FINALLY, encourage men to continue to marinate on these points in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.