

Leadership Tip!

You don't have to be a leader long to run into people who must deal with their past. Understanding when to refer them to someone else for help is key in good leadership.

**UNEXPECTED
“Skeletons”****STARTER QUESTION:**

What is the difference between atonement, a pardon, and forgiveness?

MAIN IDEA:

Pastor Hank did a really great job on a very tough subject for many people. All of us have a “Past” and frankly some events in our past are easier to deal with than others especially when it comes down to reconciling our own actions in those events. Forgiveness is key on how God wants us to deal with these type problems from our past, but some would say that is easier said than done.

1 John 1:9 (NIV)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

A medical study by John Hopkins University on “forgiveness” found that forgiveness is never complete unless people and relationships are transformed in the process. The findings were never meant to be a study in Christianity, but there is a lot of Biblical truth to it.

Unless we are willing to be transformed, we will never be able to forgive others or ourselves completely. This is what Pastor Hank was talking about when he said that pride is a barrier to forgiveness. An unwillingness to be transformed by God's grace places our own priorities above those of God, and keeps us locked in the past. Sadly, most people do not even fully realize they are doing this unless someone points it out to them.

Read the scripture below and then comment on how you would get someone to start their transformation.

1 Peter 2:24 (NIV)

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”

Why is it important to start at the cross?

Even for people who have been Christian a long time; reviewing what Christ did on the cross brings into focus the full version of God’s love for us.

John 3:16 (NIV)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Remembering the feeling of being “so loved” can rekindle a faith long suppressed by regret.

It can also help those whose past is too frightening or traumatic for them to deal with by themselves. These people often believe that they are broken by their past and feel very alone. It is important that these people seek out professional help, but the church has a part to play in their healing.

We can remind them that even in their darkest moments they were never alone –

Psalms 23:4

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;”

And will not be alone now.

Galatians 6:2 (NIV)

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

This is a subject not often talked about in church. Why do you think that is so?

FINAL THOUGHTS:

It is interesting that both the Hebrew and Greek word for forgiveness has the same root meaning, that is: “to let go.” Christ can help us let go of those things in our past that are a barrier to drawing closer to Him and the people who love us. It is a process that we all need in some form.

FAMILY FOCUS:

Know: Joseph was faithful in times of trouble and trusted God to work in his life.

Feel: Secure in God's love and guidance in our lives.

Do: Treat others in the way we would want to be treated.

Bible Lesson: THAT'S NOT FAIR! The Story of Joseph

Materials: Poster board, large sheet of paper or even a chalk board

Procedure: Have you ever said –That's Not Fair! I'm sure we all have said or felt that at one time or another. What kinds of things do you think are unfair? What makes them unfair? What would make them fair?

Ask the kids to list times when something happened to them that they thought was unfair. Have them write it on the board, graffiti style, filling in as many different situations as they can think of.

As you can see, there are many things that can happen in our lives that we might think is unfair. But, Christians have faith that God can use those unfair situations to turn out something good. That is exactly what is going to happen in our lesson today.

Our Bible lesson today is from the book of Genesis, chapter 37. Help kids locate this in their Bibles. Joseph was from a very large family. He was the next to youngest of the 12 sons of Jacob. Jacob raised sheep, so his sons were shepherds and were strong and sometimes violent men. All except Joseph, that is. He was a thoughtful, dreamy boy and his rough older brothers didn't like him.

When Joseph was about seventeen, his father gave him a special gift, because he loved him very much. Have someone read 37:3. This verse says that the robe (or what we would call a coat today) that Jacob gave his son was –richly ornamented.|| We may not know what it looked like exactly, but we can be sure that it was very special and unusual and it would have made Joseph stand out when he wore it. Shepherds usually dress in rough, plain clothes without any decoration, so the robe made Joseph's brothers more jealous than ever.

Joseph also had dreams that made his brothers hate him all the more. God was letting Joseph know about his future and that He had great plans for him. But his brothers were also angry and jealous of that instead of being glad that God was working in his life. If time allows have students read the dreams in verses 37:5-11 and discuss them.

One day Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers who were watching the sheep in the fields. The sight of the long, rich, beautiful robe was more than the brothers could take. They could see him coming from a distance, and as he got nearer their jealousy and hatred took over and they plotted to kill Joseph and throw his body in a pit. Reuben, the oldest brother, could not bring himself to commit such a terrible crime, so he suggested they just throw Joseph in a pit. (Reuben planned to return and rescue him later.) When they had torn off Joseph's beautiful coat and had thrown him into a pit, they saw some merchants coming down the road. So, Joseph's envious brothers sold him to the merchants as a slave. This was not very unusual, because in those days poor families would often send their children to work for wealthy men because they could not always take care of all their children. (37:12-28)

The brothers went back to Jacob and lied to him about what happened to Joseph. They showed their father the coat that they had dipped in animal blood and let Jacob believe that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. Can you imagine the pain and hurt that Jacob suffered because of what his sons had done? Read 37:34- 35. The hatred and jealousy that Joseph's brothers had in their lives hurt many people.

Meanwhile, the merchants took Joseph with them into Egypt and sold him to an important officer of the king of Egypt, Potiphar. Joseph was a faithful and valuable servant. Even after being sold by his jealous and evil brothers, Joseph kept on doing what was right and good. He's an example for us today to keep trusting God even when we have troubles in our lives.

Joseph's brothers let anger, hatred, and jealousy control their lives instead of the love and friendship God wants us to feel for each other. How could this story have been different if they trusted God to work in their lives? Joseph and his father suffered because of what his brothers felt for him, and yet God was able to work through the terrible things they did. We'll find out more later about how Joseph continued to let God work in his life to save a whole nation of people.

Object lesson:

Materials: Several different colors of material – be sure to include a piece of green, red, yellow, blue, black and white material

In our lesson, we learned that the coat that Joseph received from his father caused him a lot of trouble. We found out that Joseph was the favorite son and his brothers were so jealous of him that they sold him as a slave and pretended that he was dead. Joseph had a lot of heartaches and trials in his life that seemed to start with that coat of many colors. Have you ever thought that in a way, each of us is making a coat of many colors for ourselves everyday? But, instead of a coat made of material, the coat that we are making for ourselves is made out of the things that we think, do and say.

Procedure:

To demonstrate to the students that the attitudes and actions we put on everyday become the coat that we wear the rest of our lives. The colors that are in that coat depend on the things we do and say.

Some of us may be making coats that have green in it. Hold up the green material. This green is going to represent jealousy in our lives. Feeling jealous of someone often happens when we want something that another person has. I wonder how many of us today are jealous of someone that we know. Have students give examples of what it means to be jealous of someone else. Jealousy is full of hatred and anger – is that a color you want in your life?

Sometimes we make coats for ourselves that have large patches of red. Hold up red material, which symbolizes anger and a quick temper. When someone has a quick temper they often say things in anger before thinking about what they should say. Have students think of things they can do when they get angry at someone or something to avoid doing something they will regret. Anger and a quick temper can hurt us as well as the ones around us. We need to try to keep this attitude out of our lives.

Some of us might be making coats that have yellow streaks in them. Hold up a piece of the yellow material. Yellow has always been a symbol of a fearful attitude. The Bible tells us that we can trust in God and we don't have to be afraid. As we have talked about the life of Joseph, we will see that there were no yellow streaks in the coat that he made for himself. He was one of the bravest men in the entire Bible – and he trusted God in fearful situations to make everything all right.

Let's follow Joseph's example and keep yellow out of our lives by putting our trust in God.

Blue (hold up blue material) often represents sadness in our lives. Sometimes you might hear someone say they're feeling blue. Psalm 68:3 says –may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful. God wants us to be happy and not worry about problems in our lives. Again, He wants us to put our trust in Him!

Often the coats of our life get spotted with black. Hold up the black material. This color is going to represent the lies and sins in our life. Do you remember what a sin is? Let students respond. We all have sin in our lives because we are human, but we can try our best to live the kind of life that God wants us to by following Jesus' example in loving and caring for others and putting God first in our lives. In our lessons about Joseph, we'll see that he was a man who dedicated his life to God, and he was rewarded for it.

The last color I want to talk about today is white. Hold up the white material. White has always been the color in the Bible for forgiveness – of cleanliness – of what happens to our hearts when Christ takes away the sin. We all have those spots of green, red, yellow, blue and black in our lives, but God has made a way for us to be made clean again – by accepting the gift of

His Son Jesus. By accepting Jesus into our hearts, we can have forgiveness for all the wrong things we do and feel.

We're going to talk more about Joseph and the coat that his father gave him. It was full of many of the colors we talked about here – but his life was not! Yes, different colors represent different things, and as we look at our own lives let's try to fill it with the actions and attitudes that God wishes us to have. Let's make our coat the right kind of coat the first time so we won't have to worry about changing it later!

UNEXPECTED

“Skeletons”

May 15, 2016

Some of us live with a past that haunts our present, and makes it hard to live out the kind of life God wants us to live in the future.

When you don't deal with your past...

1. You live life in “Avoidance Mode”

“When Jacob heard that grain was available in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why are you standing around looking at one another? I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy enough grain to keep us alive. Otherwise we'll die.” So Joseph's ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain... Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brothers came.”

Genesis 42:1-6 (NLT)

How do we avoid dealing with the past?

Minimize.

Rationalize.

Compromise.

2. Every bad thing that happens seems like punishment

“Joseph put them all in prison for three days... Speaking among themselves, they said, “Clearly we are being punished because of what we did to Joseph long ago. We saw his anguish when he pleaded for his life, but we wouldn't listen. That's why we're in this trouble.” “Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy?” Reuben asked. “But you wouldn't listen. And now we have to answer for his blood!” Genesis 42:17-22 (NLT)

3. Every good thing that happens seems undeserved.

“The brothers loaded their donkeys with the grain and headed for home. But when they stopped for the night and one of them opened his sack to get grain for his donkey, he found his money in the top of his sack. “Look!” he exclaimed to his brothers. “My money has been returned; it's here in my sack!” Then their hearts sank. Trembling, they said to each other, “What has God done to us?””

Genesis

How does God want us to deal with our past?

Admit the truth.

"When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable, and I groaned all day long... My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone."

Psalm 32:3-5 (NLT)

"We, the servants of the God of your father, beg you to forgive our sin." When Joseph received the message, he broke down and wept."

Genesis 50:17 (NLT)

Accept God's forgiveness.

"He personally carried the load of our sins in his own body when he died on the cross so that we can be finished with sin and live a good life from now on. For his wounds have healed ours!"

1 Peter 2:24 (TLB)

"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 1:9 (NKJV)

"There is no condemnation for those who live in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1 (NIV)