

The Long Game of Healing

Genesis 41-50

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: My wife's favorite Christmas gift this year was an **INSTAPOT** - now for you children of the 60's that's not what you think it is... it's actually a faster version of a crockpot. Crockpots are **SLOW** cookers... but the instapot gives you crockpot results in microwave time. We love the instapot.

This world system is obsessed with speed. The highest premiums are paid for the winners of the short game.

- **Credit Cards** - A guy wants a \$700 television? He's willing to pay 17% interest on a credit card that he will be paying on for months, maybe years... why? He can get it quick. In the end it's a \$2500 television - and guess what... there a new level of HD Quality that your television is not compatible with... it's antiquated by the time it's paid for.
- **Television/Entertainment** - This has radically impacted the television industry. No longer to you commit every Tuesday night of your life to your favorite comedy. Now you get the entire season up front so you can binge watch on a Saturday.
- **Even Romance** - Single? There's an app for that - you can be matched by a computer algorithm to a perfectly compatible individual of the opposite sex before this service is over. I like it the old school way where you had to stalk their facebook and find out what they are into so you can happen to be into the same stuff when you call them.

You see, there are some things where the **LONG GAME** is powerful. There are some things you can't get an **APP** for.

Imagine how different your life would be if **THAT** relationship was at least no longer draining life from your soul.

In our text today we discover that when it comes to dealing with deep hurts... there is **NO APP**. There is no shortcut. It's a life long process of healing, learning, growing and repeatedly applying the truth of the Gospel.

CONTEXT: Think about what Joseph went through.

- **His brothers hated him enough that they gave serious consideration to killing him.**
 - Now that in itself is enough for me to say, "this probably isn't going to work out". If I found out that my wife even consulted with a hit man.... I'm probably gonna skip the counselor and go straight to the lawyer".

- I mean, just think about the emotional trauma it would cause you knowing that all your brothers seriously considered taking you out of existence.
- **They did throw him into a pit and sell him in slavery.**
 - Now there are some things that happen in the scripture that we have to give cultural context to. You know, at first it seems bad, but then after you know the historical context it makes more sense. There is no context under which it's cool to sell your brother into slavery.
- **He suffers immensely as a result.**
 - So a chain of events begins which results in Joseph being in prison for a crime he did not commit for over 13 years. All because of his brothers hatred.

NOW - The rest of Genesis is given to a long, drawn out narrative that gives us a no holds barred look at the POWER OF THE LONG GAME.

How to determine if heart change is legitimate.

What are the evidences that you have genuinely healed from conflict

It begins with...

Genesis 41:50–52 (ESV)

⁵⁰ Before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, bore them to him. ⁵¹ Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh. "For," he said, "**God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house.**"

Really? You've forgotten all of it? Really?

There's something about the euphoria of a moment that can cause you to THINK something is dealt with, when in reality it's still there beneath the surface.

For Joseph it was his first child - Manasseh. As he held that new born baby in his arms it seemed that all the hurt of his childhood was erased.

When we experience a delightful, positive event - our bodies produce large amounts of dopamine, noradrenaline, and serotonin - all the feel good chemicals. And for a moment we can feel as though, it's all gone. The problem is the human body can't maintain that level production forever. Anywhere from 6 months to 3 years the well runs dry. Something triggers a memory of past trauma and suddenly your body produces Cortisol (the stress hormone) as if you were in the moment of the incident again. You feel the same way... That's what happens in verse 6.

Genesis 42:6–11 (ESV)

⁶ Now Joseph was governor over the land. He was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And **Joseph's brothers came** (there's the trigger) **and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground.**

Now, imagine that moment - Joseph's early dream, what God had told him as a teenage boy was coming to pass before his very eyes. It had to be surreal.

⁷ Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. "Where do you come from?" he said. They said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food." ⁸ And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.

The last time they saw Joseph he was 17. Just to give you an idea of how much people can change... this was me at 17. I know... it's very sad what life has done.

Remember that some **20 years had passed** since they had seen Joseph last. His voice had changed, his language had changed, he wore the make-up and garb of an Egyptian high official. He's speaking to them through an interpreter.



⁹ And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them. And he said to them, "You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land." ¹⁰ They said to him, "No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food." ¹¹ We are all sons of one man. **We are honest men.** Your servants have never been spies."

Really? Honest men? That is how you are going to describe yourself? Do you see what's happening? God is saying... Joseph I love you too much to allow you to sweep this under the rug. I am going to bring you face to face with these people who have hurt you and you are going to deal with it.

Has that ever happened to you? A holiday gathering? A Family reunion? A funeral? Where you had to come face to face with him/her? And suddenly you realize that you haven't dealt with the pain at all?

Now what follows is a long elaborate sequence of events where Joseph tests their hearts to prove whether or not they had legitimately changed.

ILLUSTRATION: We all know the story of the **good Samaritan**, he goes down the road finds a man who has been robbed and left for dead and takes care of him and provides for him right? Well suppose that happened day, after day, same guy, same road, same wounds... eventually you'd go to him and say.. hey bro... maybe it's the road! Maybe this road just isn't working out so well... try a new road?

There is wisdom from living and learning from our experiences...

My grandma used to say, “*You stand behind a mule and get kicked once... shame on the mule... you get kicked twice... shame on you!*”.

We are called to be **wise** and **discerning**. Words are remarkably cheap, heart change is serious business. Joseph tests his brothers to see if they’ve really changed.

Test #1 - Are You Honest Men?

Genesis 42:14–17 (ESV)

¹⁴ But Joseph said to them, “It is as I said to you. You are spies. ¹⁵ **By this you shall be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here.** ¹⁶ **Send one of you, and let him bring your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. Or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies.**” ¹⁷ And he put them all together in custody for three days.

Now this test accomplished a couple of things. One it verified that they were telling the truth and it allowed Joseph to be reunited with Benjamin. You see these 10 were really Joseph’s half brothers. Benjamin was the only other son of Rachael. And Benjamin was the only brother who hadn’t despised Joseph.

Genesis 42:18–24 (ESV)

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 remain confined where you are in custody, and let the rest go and carry grain for the famine of your households,** ²⁰ **and bring your youngest brother to me. So your words will be verified, and you shall not die.**” And they did so.

Ronald Reagan’s policy is helpful in the midst of reconciliation, “Trust but verify”.

Now notice the conversation they have that Joseph understands...

²¹ Then they said to one another, “In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us.” ²² And Reuben answered them, “Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood.” ²³ They did not know that Joseph understood them, for there was an interpreter between them. ²⁴ **Then he turned away from them and wept.**

Do you see that? That’s how deep hurts work. Just a few verses back Joseph was saying, “God has made me forget my affliction”. But it wasn’t forgotten, it wasn’t forgiven it was still there, real and raw. His emotions betray him and give evidence that they wound is still there.

Genesis 42:25 (ESV)

²⁵ **And Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, and to replace every man’s money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. This was done for them.**

They return to Canaan, and explain to Jacob that the Prime Minister of Egypt accused them of being spies, and as proof demanded that they bring back Benjamin to corroborate their stories.

ALSO, Joseph had bags of money added to everyone's baggage. What did this accomplish? It tested their integrity. Would they keep the money and the grain? Or would they return it assuming a mistake had happened.

- Jacob is crushed. This was his only son of Rachael (he believed). This is his baby boy. He refuses for it to happen.
 - Ultimately, the famine becomes so severe that they are facing impending doom.
 - Jacob sends them back. They bring Benjamin, they return with the bags of money they found in their sacks. They brought more money to buy grain with. AND they brought all the choice goods from Canaan.
- They passed the test - they were true to their words. Their hearts were changing.

When they return to Egypt, Joseph invites them into his dining hall and has a feast is prepared.

- Joseph sits them at the table in order from oldest to youngest.
- Joseph gives a 5 fold portion of food to Benjamin.

Test #2 - Positive - Is Love Present?

In **Chapter 44** Joseph tests the brothers yet again - When they pack up to return to Canaan, Joseph has a silver chalice hidden in the bag of Benjamin.

Then when they had traveled some distance away, he sends his guards after them accusing them of stealing.

Joseph pretends to be furious with the brothers. He demands that the one with who the silver cup is found shall be my slave.

Now does what does that bring to mind? Who was sold to slavery? They sold Joseph to slavery...

Well the cup was found with Benjamin... do you see what is happening? **Joseph is testing them to see if they would do the same thing again.** OR have they really changed.

But look what happens: **Judah** approaches Joseph and fervently begs for the life of Benjamin. Then Judah does the unthinkable -

Genesis 44:33 (ESV)

³³ Now therefore, ***please let your servant remain*** instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers.

Judah substitutes HIMSELF for Benjamin. Ironically, Judah is placing his life on the line is substitute for Benjamin.

This is an unconscious shadowing of Judah's descendant - the Lion of the Tribe of Judah who placed his life as a substitute for us all.

Genesis 45:1–15 (ESV)

¹ Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it.

Have you ever wept like that? All of the emotions of over 20 years of pain came out in the form of tears.

All of the pain CLASHES with all of the evidence of grace and Joseph could resist it no more.

³ And Joseph said to his brothers, "**I am Joseph!** Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

OK, THAT'S THE STORY... NOW LET'S EXAMINE THE HEART OF JOSEPH AND THE HEART OF THE BROTHERS AND SEE WHAT'S CHANGED AND WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE:

Joseph Displays -

a. A New Compassion for the Offender -

⁴ So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ And now ***do not be distressed or angry with yourselves*** because you sold me here,

Notice the compassion of Joseph's heart. You can tell that your heart has truly began to heal when you can look at the person who hurt you with compassion.

ILLUSTRATION: I remember when Julie and I first got married, I didn't understand the behavior of her mother. She went to ridiculous lengths to control our relationship. Frankly, it was quite hurtful. But one day it occurred to me that her mother had been abandoned as a ward of the state when she as a little girl. Her parent abandoned her. When it hit me how her entire worldview must have been effected by that - compassion began to grow in my heart for her and our relationship began to heal.

b. A New Perspective on God's Providence

5b. for God sent me before you to preserve life.

⁸ So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

You have heard it said that time heals everything. Well, I'm not sure that time has time has that much effect - but I can tell you this, **perspective changes things**.

c. A Celebration of God's Restoration -

⁹ Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. ¹⁰ You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.' ¹² And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. ¹³ You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.' ¹⁴ Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

The Brothers Display -

a. A Paranoia About Consequences

Genesis 50:15–21 (ESV)

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him."

b. A Continued Habit of Dishonesty

¹⁶ So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died: ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph, "Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you." ' And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him.

¹⁸ His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. ²¹ So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.