

Forgiveness: God's Healer

God moved in amazing ways throughout western Canada after two brothers reconciled in a small Baptist church. True forgiveness unleashes mighty spiritual power! Genesis 45 is a beautiful picture of this when Joseph forgives his brothers after they sold him into slavery. The heart of forgiveness is a complete and unqualified giving of oneself.

Three Steps in True Forgiveness:

1. Giving ____ (Up) – Your _____ (Rights)

- a. *“Then Joseph said to his brothers, ‘come close to me.’ When they had done so, he said, ‘I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt.” Genesis 45:4.* Justice would have demanded that his brothers were punished, but Joseph gave up this right.
- b. Joseph was the favorite of his father's twelve sons. As young adults, Joseph's brothers saw their chance to strike back and took it. They sold him into slavery for twenty pieces of silver. Joseph ends up in an Egyptian prison where he develops a reputation for interpreting dreams. After two years he is summoned to interpret Pharaoh's dream.
- c. Joseph is promoted to leadership to deal with a famine when one day his brothers arrive, desiring to buy food. With his identity concealed, Joseph ponders what to do. What would you do? How have you responded to those who've deeply hurt you? While God is grieved when the innocent suffer, vengeance belongs to him alone.
- d. *“Do not repay evil for evil...do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath.” Romans 12:17-19. “Forgive one another as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:32. “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Matthew 6:12.*

2. Give _____ (Notice) – Your _____ (Reconciliation)

- a. *“And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.” Genesis 45:5.* Joseph desires to reconcile with his brothers, but tests them to see if his trust in them can be restored (Genesis 42-44).
- b. God desires reconciliation, but this is only possible if you spell out what it would take to restore your trust. Although we are initially angry after being hurt, don't stay angry (Ephesians 4:26). Rather respectfully write out what it would take to reconcile and share it with your offender.
- c. Reconciliation is hard work because your trust has been violated. When Joseph found out his brothers really do have a conscience, *“he turned away from them and began to weep.” Genesis 42:24. “Make every effort to live at*

peace.” Hebrews 12:14. When Joseph witnesses how his brothers treat Benjamin with tenderness, he is ready to trust again (Genesis 45:1-3).

3. Give _____(Gifts) – Your _____(Reflection)

- a. *“Hurry back to my father and say to him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don’t delay. You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me – you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. I will provide for you there.’” Genesis 45:9-11.*
- b. *“If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.” Proverbs 25:21-22. When we bless those who hurt us, we follow the example of Jesus who said on the cross, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Luke 23:34.*
- c. *God is long-suffering and patient. “He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” Matthew 5:45.*

When Dr. Francis Collins was appointed Director of the National Institutes of Health in 2009, atheists mocked him for his Christian beliefs. Collins, over time, not only forgave his critics but won them over. When atheist Christopher Hitchens contracted cancer, Collins offered help on numerous occasions. In one of his last columns, Hitchens paid tribute to Collins, calling him “our most selfless Christian physician.”

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:21. Are you committed to living like that?