

LESSON 2



CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

APRIL 08 2023

could you do it?

Scripture Story: Genesis 41:54-56; 42-50.

Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 21.

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

This is the story of Joseph reconnecting with his family. It is a long portion of Scripture, with the crux coming in chapter 45. Joseph plays with his brothers a bit when they come to Egypt, and by doing so he learns that they are truly repentant for having sold him into slavery. Joseph then has a decision to make: should he forgive or should he punish? Punishment would be easy for him, given the power that has been placed upon his shoulders by Pharaoh. However, Joseph decides that punishment or revenge will never be as sweet as the forgiveness that God has shown him so many times.

Because Joseph has remained faithful to a forgiving God, he knows the responsibility of God's children for forgiveness. He finds his brothers repentant and wants to be in a relationship with them as soon as possible. He misses his family and his father in particular. He is not willing to allow his pride or lust for revenge to stop the reunion with his family.

As you teach today's lesson, keep in mind that all of us have someone we should forgive, or someone who can forgive us for something we have done. Since we are all in this situation, the story of Joseph has universal appeal and application. What we gain from the lesson is an understanding that everyone can be as successful and strong of character as Joseph; it just takes hard work and an adherence to God's plan.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- Know that forgiveness, whether large or small, creates freedom for those involved. (*Know*)
- Feel the need to forgive and be forgiven. (*Feel*)
- Take the opportunity to examine where they can forgive or seek forgiveness in their own lives. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

Unity in the Body of Christ, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 14

"The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children" (Ps. 133:1; Matt. 28:19, 20; John 17:20-23; Acts 17:26, 27; Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Gal. 3:27-29; Eph. 2:13-16; 4:3-6, 11-16; Col. 3:10-15).

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

If any of your students do not have siblings, have them fill out the activity about a good friend or someone with whom they spend a good deal of time. Then ask the following questions:

1. Was it easy to come up with things you would like to change about your brother, sister, or best friend.
2. Was it as easy to come up with things you do like about the person?
3. Do you find yourself spending most of your time being positive about the person or negative about them in your day-to-day life?
4. How well do you really know this person? (Living with someone and really getting to know someone are often two different things.)

Additional Activities

Agree or Disagree

- _____ I have a brother or a sister.
- _____ I love them all the time.
- _____ I get along with them all the time.
- _____ I like to hang out and do things with them.
- _____ They never make me angry or upset.
- _____ They never get into my stuff.

Forgiveness

It's often hard to practice *forgiveness*, especially when it comes to family members. Think of one thing that your brother(s) or sister(s) have done that you have had a really hard time forgiving them for. Tell the story in a couple of sentences and then notice how long it took you to forgive them. In fact, you might have something that you need to forgive them for right now.

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

On Sunday, January 8, 1956, five young missionaries flew into the Amazon jungle. Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Peter Fleming, and Roger Youderian landed at a remote clearing to bring the gospel to the Auca Indians. The next day their bodies were found floating in the Curaray River, ambushed by the very people to whom they had come to share Christ's love. Back in Oak Park, Illinois, Dr. T. E. McCully was shaken by his son's death. But he was also rooted in Christ's love. A few days after their deaths, T. E. McCully prayed, "Lord, let me live long enough to see those fellows saved who killed our boy, that I may throw my arms around them and tell them I love them because they love my Christ." When he rose, tears ran down his cheeks. In less than three years, Nate Saint's sister, Rachel, and Jim Elliot's widow, Elisabeth, began their ministry with the Aucas, and many Aucas came to the Lord. Nine years after the murder of the five missionaries, two of those who had killed Nate Saint and his companions baptized two of Nate's children, Kathy and Stephen Saint. In June 1995, Stephen Saint was called by the Aucas to assist in developing their church leadership.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive hate, only love can do that."—Martin Luther King, Jr.

God's Word: "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27, NIV).

(Taken from www.sermonillustrator.org/illustrator/topics/forgiven.htm)

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

It's only through rootedness in Christ's love that anyone can forgive—especially someone who murdered their loved one. And it was rootedness in Christ's love that allowed Joseph to forgive his brothers for their treacherous act.

Are we rooted in Christ's love? Have we embraced His love to the extent that we can risk loving others to this degree when even other Christians may not understand it? Will we take the time to get to know the hearts of those around us and become better equipped to *love* and to *forgive* when the time is right for both?

We cannot love our enemies. But Christ's love living through us can.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

In groups, have students read some of the other highlights of Joseph's story from Genesis 42 to 50. Then ask:

- Have you heard this story before?
- Was there anything in these verses that you didn't know before?
- Could you have done what Joseph did?
- What did you think of Jacob's reaction to the sons having to take Benjamin back to Egypt?



Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

Don't Tell Them; Let Them Tell You!

In teaching, we often think that it is the wisdom that we have that needs to be transferred. We often give young people answers to questions that they are not asking. It is important for us to walk them through the thinking process in order for them to understand the themes we are trying to share with them. By asking a great deal of questions and by allowing them to process their responses, they may find their way to the themes and lessons without much prompting from us as teachers. Give them much credit. The young people you are working with are wonderfully bright individuals who just need guidance to get to some of the bigger questions. Never be afraid to be flexible and personable with the students if you feel the discussion is going in a different direction than you had planned. Perhaps it is God leading them somewhere!

- Did you identify with any of the characters in the story? Which ones and why?
- Identify a section from these chapters that tells the whole theme of the story in just a few words.

RABBI 101

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Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson. Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the Key Text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week's story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week's story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

- **Further Insight**

Ask them how the quote in Further Insight conveys the point of the story in this lesson.

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share it in your own words.

This section of the story of Joseph is the payoff. We see Joseph playing with his brothers in order to test their hearts. It may seem cruel, but it is necessary for him to understand who they are. It would have been simple for him never to reveal his identity. Pharaoh had given him an Egyptian name. And after decades people look different. However, Joseph was willing to reunite his family as he learned of his brothers' dedication to their father, their brother Benjamin, and their God.

The background of Egypt is always interesting in the account of Joseph's life. It sets the stage for Moses and the Exodus later on, but here, the Egyptians are not seen negatively. Rather, they are seen as intelligent people, willing to listen to someone of character (Joseph and his recounting of the dreams). As well, they seem benevolent in their dealings with the Hebrews, specifically Jacob and his family.

The theme of filial love, or brotherly love, is dealt with as well in this chapter. Joseph's love for his brothers and family was overwhelming, despite his history with his brothers. Joseph had let God remove from his character any need to hold old grudges or to seek revenge.

Prophecy, it should be pointed out, is a theme in this story as well. God's ability to see beyond the veil of time is showcased. In this week's passages, we see dreams being verified. Even the earliest hints of greatness that Joseph was given a glimpse of in his boyhood dreams come to pass in these chapters. What a powerful God we serve, one who answers the prayers of Jacob when his son Joseph was yet a young, impulsive boy, willing to be truthful with the message God was giving him. Joseph never strayed from being that person of character, and his steadfastness served him well throughout his life.

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Give your students a bit of quiet time (two to three minutes) to be alone and to review their lives to see where forgiveness could be given or sought. After this time, bring them together and pray for them as they seek forgiveness in their lives and work to be people of character. Point out that, in response to God's abundant mercy to us, we can allow Him to make us into the type of person Joseph became, with forgiveness and integrity of character being our guiding principles.

Summary

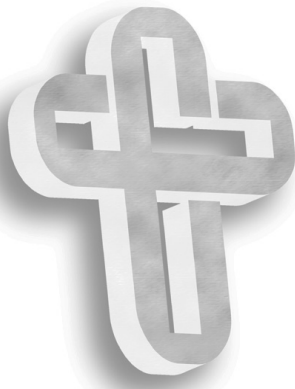
Share the following thoughts in your own words:

What part does forgiveness play in our lives? Especially when we deal with siblings and family members it seems hard to forgive, and to seek that forgiveness from those we love. Maybe it is because we become too familiar, or perhaps we are too selfish at times. We sometimes hold the largest grudges against those who are closest to us. Sometimes being a brother or sister is hard, and sometimes it is a joy. We have to get to the place where we focus on the good aspects in those around us, and release ourselves from being held back by not wanting to forgive or to seek forgiveness.

Joseph's story is powerful in that not only was Joseph willing to forgive, but he was eager for a reunion with those who had treated him so poorly in the past. His willingness to love is a wonderful lesson for us. He wasn't willing to look back and exact revenge, but rather looked forward, and in doing so was able to save his family from famine and even bring them to the foreign land he now called home.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 21.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Genesis 41:54-56; 42-50.

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could you do it?



Photo by Luis Guerra, Jr.

flashlight

“Joseph was satisfied. He had seen in his brothers the fruits of true repentance. Upon hearing Judah’s noble offer he gave orders that all but these men should withdraw; then, weeping aloud, he cried, ‘I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?’ His brothers stood motionless, dumb with fear and amazement. . . . All their ill treatment of him passed before them” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 230).

keytext

“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! 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 45:4, 5, NIV)

what do you think?

Brothers and sisters can be the best and the worst!

Take a moment to list five things you'd like to change about your brother, sister, or best friend. Then list six things you like about them!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Things you like:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

did you know?

The Bible says that Jacob (Israel) loved Joseph more than his other sons. No wonder they got upset with him!

The Jewish rabbis wrote more about Joseph than any other patriarch in the Midrash (Jewish book of wisdom).

Joseph was in slavery for 10 years. (And still he forgave his brothers! Could you?)

Slavery was a common practice in ancient times. It was possible to put yourself into slavery if you owed too many people too much money!

After Joseph, working on Pharaoh's behalf, had taken all the money from the Egyptians, he then acquired their livestock, and then their land. Talk about *power!*

INTO THE STORY

“Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, ‘Have everyone leave my presence!’ So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers.”

“Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am Joseph! Is my father still living?’ But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

“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! 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. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five

years there will be no plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. . . . Now 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. . . . I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.’”

“Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

“When the news reached Pharaoh’s palace that Joseph’s brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Tell your brothers, “Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.”’”

“So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. They told him, ‘Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.’ Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, ‘I’m convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.’”

(Genesis 45:1, 3-11, 14-18, 25-28, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

What are the main themes in this story (e.g., forgiveness)?

How much is too much to forgive? Can you imagine forgiving someone who had put you into prison for 10 years?

What did God do ahead of time in order for Jacob's sons to be able to buy food during the famine?

Joseph seemed to believe that God had put him in slavery in order to save his family later; do you agree or disagree? Why?

Why did Jacob love Benjamin and Joseph more than his other sons?

Would you want to exact revenge on the people who harmed you once you had power?

Why does Jacob not want to send Benjamin back with his brothers to Egypt?

punch lines

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (**Mark 11:25, NIV**).

“A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense” (**Proverbs 19:11, NIV**).

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone” (**Romans 12:17, NIV**).

“Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing” (**1 Peter 3:9, NIV**).

“We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly” (**1 Corinthians 4:12, 13, NIV**).

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (**Matthew 5:7, NIV**).

further insight

“When we come to ask mercy and blessing from God we should have a spirit of love and forgiveness in our own hearts. . . . If we expect our own prayers to be heard we must forgive others in the same manner and to the same extent as we hope to be forgiven.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 97.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read Romans 12:17, Matthew 5:7.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* section. What do you like about your siblings? (If you don't have siblings, substitute a close friend.) What behaviors are hard for you to be around? Could any of those behaviors be your fault?

Without a doubt, Joseph loved his brothers. They were not always happy with him, mainly because of the dreams he couldn't seem to keep to himself. But don't you imagine that there were times when they liked him as well?

What happens when we let negative feelings overshadow positive thoughts about another person?

Sunday

Read Genesis 45.

Notice how Joseph feels when he is able to tell his brothers who he really is. What did he consider the reason they had sold him? How did he feel about all that had happened to him in the preceding years? Do you think you could be so forgiving of people who had done horrible things to you? Do you have the ability to forgive those around you for little things they do to you? Where does the ability to forgive come from?

Monday

Read Genesis 45:4, 5.

The *Key Text* describes how powerful Joseph's forgiveness was to his brothers. What does it tell us about Joseph's belief in God's plan for his life? What does it tell us about his brothers' sense of guilt?

How do you think Joseph felt about his own act of forgiveness? Forgiveness is a funny thing; it frees not only those who are forgiven but also those who forgive.

Try forgiving someone who has done some-

thing very wrong to you. What do you need to do first? What can you learn from the experience that gives you a better understanding of God's forgiveness of us?

Tuesday

Read Philippians 4:12, 13.

In the *Flashlight* section we see Joseph evaluating his brothers to see if they were truly repentant. What were the fruits of their true repentance? What specifically do you think softened Joseph's heart? Can people look into your life, especially when you have made a huge mistake, and see that you are truly sorry for what you have done? When you are forgiven, do you change the way you live? Are you connected enough with God's plan for your life that you can see the bigger picture and not get too upset by someone's actions toward you? How does Paul relate to God's plan?

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson. Which of the verses relating to forgiveness speaks most strongly to you right now? Why do you think that is?

Which verse do you most wish you could share with someone whose actions annoy you? How do you think they would react?

Notice in Genesis 42:1 the humor in Jacob's comment to his hungry sons ("Why do you just keep looking at each other?"). Remember that even though these stories about people in the Bible are ancient, the people were still very much like you and me.

With which character in Genesis 42 to 50 do you most identify? What traits of character do you see in that person that you have and would like to keep? to change? to develop? How might developing a sense of humor help you in strengthening your ability to forgive?

Thursday

Read Mark 11:25.

Joseph had to wait decades before he could forgive his brothers for what they had done to him. Do you have in your life someone who needs to be forgiven? What are you waiting for? How long are you going to wait to forgive or seek forgiveness? Do you think the longer you wait the easier it will get? If you were Joseph, do you think you would have been able to forgive after so much time? Perhaps this is the time for you to make some things right with some people in your life.

Friday

Read Proverbs 19:11.

What does Joseph's willingness to forgive teach us about the following?

- His understanding of God
- His understanding of God's plan in his life
- His love for his family
- His love specifically for his father
- His pride

Put yourself in his shoes (or sandals!) and think about what you would have done if you had a chance like Joseph had, to command the attention of all his brothers at once. What would you have done after all the hardship you had gone through? Spend some time writing out your thoughts.

this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 21.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.