

FIXABLE

Message Series Devotional

Produced by the Calvary Church Staff

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St. Peters, MO

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LESSON I

When My Family Is Dysfunctional

¹Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. ²This is the account of Jacob. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them. ³Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. ⁴When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. ⁵Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: ⁷We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." ⁸His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. ⁹Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" ¹¹His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind. (Genesis 37:1-11)

Today we begin our study of Joseph who, along with Daniel, is one of the few people in scripture about whom there are almost no negative character comments. More space is dedicated to Joseph in Genesis than to Adam,

Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. Whenever God lingers at length on one person's life, it is undoubtedly because he has significant lessons for us to learn. We see in Joseph how God chooses individuals, walks with them through difficulty and shapes their character so his great purposes can be accomplished.

Joseph was the son of Jacob, who was the son of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham.

Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter. Instead of being a father to all his children, Jacob poured himself into his son Joseph. Jacob loved Joseph more than the others. In these first few words we have the set up for a giant problem. We have a breeding ground for envy. Jacob also told people that he loved Joseph more than any of the other bothers. Jacob even went so far as to give his favored son a special coat. You would have thought Jacob knew the dangers of favoritism after his father Isaac had shown favoritism to his brother, Easu.

In addition, God was working in Joseph's life. God had given Joseph a vision. It was a vision that one day God would do great things through him. At a young age Joseph didn't know how to react to the dream. Jacob did not know how to spiritually nurture Joseph and his brothers to allow them to properly see the dreams. Instead of nurturing Joseph's spiritual life, he made Joseph his favorite. The giving of a coat did not sit well with the other brothers. Every time he wore it, there was a reminder that their father would never love them the way he loved Joseph. Every time Joseph wore it, each of his brothers would die a little.



The problem was not that Jacob gave Joseph a robe. The problem was that he didn't give the others a robe. It says here that the brothers knew their dad loved Joseph more, and they hated Joseph for it. Oddly, they didn't hate their dad. They hated Joseph. Jealousy distorts reality. The brother's real issue was that their dad didn't love them as much. Jealousy wouldn't let them face the real issue. It wasn't Joseph's fault his dad loved him more. But they couldn't see that. They could only see the object of their jealousy. Jealousy that is not faced and corrected ultimately becomes destructive.

Every one of us has some family wounds. It is part of living in a sinful world. Some of you never got to wear the robe. You never received the kind of affection and love from your parents that you longed for. Some of you grew up in families where your dreams and visions weren't nurtured. Some of you got the "coat" and still deal with broken relationships because you didn't know how to handle it. Still others have their own family challenges.

Joseph had broken family relationships and we will see how God restored them through the years. Is there something broken in your life that only God can restore? Lay it before him. Only he can make it new. Like Joseph, he has a dream for your life.

As you read the story of the childhood of Joseph, take time to reflect upon how your Heavenly Father is fully the father we long for and desire. Remember that you are the apple of his eye and the desire of his heart. Spend time with your Heavenly Father listening for his purposes and plans.

OPEN IT

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? How well did you get along with your brothers and sisters when you were growing up? Who was the baby in the family? How was that person treated?

EXPLORE IT

1. From these verses how would you describe Joseph to someone who had never met him? How do you feel about his behavior? If you had a brother like that, what would you do?

2. If you were Jacob, why play favorites? (Remember how parental favoritism ruined Jacob's family ties with his brother Esau)

3. What do these dreams tell us about how the story of Joseph will end? Why might God give these dreams to Joseph at this time?

4. Who can you identify with in this story? (Jacob, Reuben, Joseph, Judah)

5. What aspects of Joseph's experience can you relate to most deeply?

- the rejection
- being hurt by people I trusted
- being at the mercy of others
- having a frightening and uncertain future

6. What do you think Jacob should have done about the problem brewing between Joseph and his brothers?

7. What are the causes of conflict in your family?

APPLY IT

1. When God wants to give you a special message, how does he do it: Friends? Circumstances? Group interaction? Scripture?

2. What is one of your wildest dreams - one only God could bring about?

3. Where are you battling envy? How would you like to see that change?

MESSAGE NOTES

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Genesis 29:31-30:24
- Genesis 31:1-55
- Genesis 32:1-33:20
- Genesis 35:1-29

FOR THE FAMILY

There is so much pain and dysfunction in families today. It is important that we talk about these with our kids. Kids may feel that God has made a mistake or put them in the wrong family. Joseph may have thought that from time to time, but as his life played out it was apparent that God used his past and his family to make him the man he needed to be to do the work that God had planned for him. Take time this week to let your kids know how special they are to God and that he has a plan for them. God can heal and restore them through his love and his Word. You may want to remind your children about what the Lord said to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."



LESSON II

When People Are Jealous

¹³and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them." "Very well," he replied. ¹⁴So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem, ¹⁵a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?" ¹⁶He replied, "I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?" (Genesis 37:13-16)

I once read a story of two bakery owners who were bitter rivals. Their shops were directly across the street from each other, and they would spend each day keeping track of each other's business. If one got a customer, he would smile in triumph at his rival baker. One night an angel appeared to one of the bakers in a dream and said, "I will give you anything you ask, but whatever you receive, your rival will receive twice as much. You can be very rich, but he will be twice as wealthy. You can be well known for your bread making, but he will be notorious. You can live a long life, but his life will be longer and healthier. What is your desire?" The baker frowned, thought for a moment, and then said, "Here is my desire: Make me blind in one eye!"

One sign of jealousy is when we find it more desirable to cause hurt and pain than to extend blessing and joy. Jealousy is an ugly green-eyed monster according to Shakespeare, and what feeds it are feelings of

insecurity, anger, and fear. Monsters, especially green-eyed ones, are often ugly and create lots of pain. So what do you do when you find yourself looking at one? Well, like Joseph discovered, it's usually a difficult and painful experience. Maybe the jealousy of a friend has wounded you emotionally. Perhaps the jealous actions of a spouse or a sibling have left you feeling insecure and untrusting. Maybe you lost a job or a promotion because of the jealous behavior of a co-worker. But what others do out of jealousy to hurt us, God can use in His sovereignty to heal us.

OPEN IT

As a kid, who picked on you? Who stood up for you? What kind of pranks have you pulled? When did one go too far?

EXPLORE IT

1. What was behind the ten brothers' desire to kill Joseph? Resentment of his dreams? Clashing egos? Jealousy of their father's favoritism? Mob hysteria?

APPLY IT

1. What do others have that you are most tempted to be jealous of?

2. What dreams has God given you for your future? What can you do to allow His plans for your life to unfold?

3. Consider taking the thirteen-week class "Healing For Damaged Emotions" which will meet on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm beginning May 5. If you are interested, sign up at www.CalvaryOnline.cc/register.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Luke 20:17-19
- Mark 8:31
- Matthew 5:11
- 1 Peter 3:8-12

2. Why did the brothers end up selling Joseph instead of killing him? Second thoughts? A chance to make some money? Some conscience? God protecting Joseph? How have you seen God protect you?

3. How do you think Joseph was feeling? Have you ever experienced a bitter betrayal? How did it impact you?

4. What aspects of Joseph's experience can you relate to most deeply? The rejection? Being hurt by people you trusted? Being at the mercy of others? Having a frightening and uncertain future?

5. How do you respond when people close to you betray you? Desire to get even? Vow never to get close again? Assume it is part of God's plan? Get depressed?



FOR THE FAMILY

There are so many jealous actions in kids that it almost seems impossible to correct. Just like so many things with parenting, though, it is important to discipline every time you see it happen. Kids want what their siblings have, what their friends have, what they see on TV, and even what their parents have. This, however, is not what God wants them to feel. You may want to memorize Philippians 4:11 together as a family which says "...I have learned in whatever state I am in to be content."

MESSAGE NOTES

FIXABLE

LESSON III

When I Am Wrongfully Accused

¹Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. ²The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. ³When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, ⁴Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. ⁵From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. ⁶So he left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, ⁷and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" ⁸But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. ⁹No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" ¹⁰And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. ¹¹One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. ¹²She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. ¹³When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, ¹⁴she called her

household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. ¹⁵When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." ¹⁶She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. ¹⁷Then she told him this story: "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. ¹⁸But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." ¹⁹When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. ²⁰Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, ²¹the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. ²²So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. ²³The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did. (Genesis 39)

Have you ever been wrongfully accused? It's one thing to have your family wrongfully accuse you of eating the last piece of pie or being the one responsible for the way the room smells different all of a sudden. That's not that big of a deal. But it is another thing altogether when the stakes are higher. When a false accusation attacks your integrity at work, that's no laughing matter. When you are wrongfully accused of having motives that are self-serving, that hurts. Anytime our character is brought into question, our natural response is to defend ourselves. "No I didn't! That's not true! They are lying!"

Imagine what Jesus thought as they hurled insults and false accusations on him. He came to seek and save

the lost, only to have the religious leaders of his day accuse him of being a liar and a blasphemer. Jesus could have responded “horizontally.” He could have used his power to put those people in their place. However, he chose to respond in a different way. He chose to respond “vertically,” and entrust himself to the one who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23). It requires great faith to entrust ourselves to God in the midst of a character assassination. But when we do, we discover a level of grace and a freedom in God we never knew before. Whenever we suffer for righteousness without seeking to protect our reputation and rights, we are placing our faith in the one who can redeem us. This activates God’s grace in our lives and enables us to experience God’s presence like never before. When you are wrongfully accused, ask God to give you the grace to stay vertical with him and avoid the temptation of responding horizontally. Entrust yourself to the one who judges justly. It may be a divine appointment for your growth to another level in grace.

OPEN IT

1. What was your first real job?

2. When have you been accused of something you didn’t do?

EXPLORE IT

1. How do Joseph’s prospects look in verse 1? In verse 20? How real do you think his dreams (37:5-11) are to him at these times?

2. Given his turnabout in fortune, what might Joseph be thinking now? Why do you think God allowed this to happen? What does this say about evil in our world? What does this say about God’s plans for Joseph?

3. What tactics does Potiphar’s wife use to tempt Joseph (vv. 7, 10, 12)? In each case, how does Joseph resist? In verses 8-9, what reason does he give for not sinning? How can the example of Joseph help you resist temptation?



4. Which of the challenges Joseph faced would be the hardest for you? Being isolated from your family? Being sold into slavery? Being seduced? Being falsely accused? Being thrown in prison?

5. In what way is your life like Joseph right now? Feeling imprisoned? Not sure what’s going to happen? Experiencing God’s blessing in your life? In a difficult work environment? Constantly facing temptation?

APPLY IT

1. What motivates you to live a clean and holy life? Your love for God? God’s love for you? Your fear of God? Your desire not to disappoint others? Your own self-respect?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Romans 8:28-29
- 1 Peter 4:12-19
- 2 Corinthians 12:1-10
- 2 Corinthians 11:23-33
- Matthew 6:25-34

FOR THE FAMILY

Next time your kids feel wrongfully accused about something they did or did not do remind them of how Joseph responded to being wrongfully accused. Joseph’s response shows us that the key to success is not skill, luck, or wealth, but God’s presence. God’s presence will determine how your life is used to influence those around you. A good phrase to use with your kids is “Let go and let God.”

MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON IV

When I Am Waiting Longer Than I Want To

¹Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. ²Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. (Genesis 40:1-3)

Verse 1 begins, 'Some time later.' No doubt while Joseph was stuck in prison, he would have liked to have been released sooner rather than later. But not all fixes happen overnight. In fact, most don't. And though we don't like to wait, life requires us to wait.

There is waiting for the dentist as you listen to his drill.
There is waiting for thanksgiving dinner as you smell the turkey.
There is waiting in line at the DMV as you realize that it is the end of the month.
There is waiting at the hospital as you watch loved ones pace the floor.

In scripture, the Israelites after the exodus waited to enter the Promised Land. Elijah waited for the ravens. The prodigal son's dad waited for his son to return. Joseph found himself waiting in jail for 13 years, during the time that most would consider the prime of his life. And yet he actively and faithfully waited on God's timing.

How do you handle the waiting rooms of life? Do you



doubt or do you trust? Do you live in the now or do you live wondering where you would rather be? Do you feel helpless or are you hopeful?

As you find yourself in one of the waiting rooms of life, our prayer is that you would allow the Lord to use you in that moment as you put your trust in him. May your waiting not be in vain.

OPEN IT

1. What dreams do you have for the future?

2. In your life when have you had to wait on God? How did you feel during that time?

EXPLORE IT

1. How do you see God at work while Joseph was in prison? Have you gone through a difficult time and seen God at work in your life?

2. What were the dreams of the baker and cupbearer? What was the interpretation that Joseph gave of these dreams? As dream interpretation belongs to God, and as Joseph invites others to tell him their dreams, what does that tell you about Joseph's relationship with God?

3. Why do you think the cupbearer forgot Joseph? (v. 23) How do you think Joseph felt?

4. If you were Joseph - forgotten in prison, foiled in your hope of release – how would you now see your own God-given dreams? (37:5-11)

APPLY IT

1. Do you ever feel like God has forgotten you?
What can you learn from Joseph's example?

2. Where in your life are you feeling imprisoned?
What is your prayer of release? What do you
sense is God's answer to your prayers?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Psalms 37:1-11
James 1:1-8
1 Peter 1:3-9
2 Peter 1:3-9

FOR THE FAMILY

Time is such a hard concept for children and they do not like to wait for anything. Car trips are a good example of this. "Are we there yet?" You might want to use the next car trip as an example for your children and to teach them that God has us wait some times. During this waiting time we are to focus on him and grow in our understanding of his Word. On your next trip, work on memorizing some scripture together, take a good children's bible story on DVD, book, or tape. This will teach kids not to waste their times of waiting.

MESSAGE NOTES

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LESSON V
Mother's Day

¹⁴Then Laban said to him, "You are my own flesh and blood." After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, ¹⁵Laban said to him, "Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be." ¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful. ¹⁸Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel." ¹⁹Laban said, "It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me." ²⁰So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. ²¹Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to lie with her." ²²So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. ²³But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her. ²⁴And Laban gave his servant girl Zilpah to his daughter as her maidservant. ²⁵When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?" ²⁶Laban replied, "It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. ²⁷Finish this daughter's bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work." ²⁸And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. ²⁹Laban gave his servant girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant. ³⁰Jacob lay with Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years. ³¹When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, he opened

her womb, but Rachel was barren. ³²Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "It is because the LORD has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now." ³³She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the LORD heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon. ³⁴Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." So he was named Levi. ³⁵She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the LORD." So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children. ¹When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!" ²Jacob became angry with her and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?" ³Then she said, "Here is Bilhah, my maidservant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and that through her I too can build a family." ⁴So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife. Jacob slept with her, ⁵and she became pregnant and bore him a son. ⁶Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; he has listened to my plea and given me a son." Because of this she named him Dan. ⁷Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸Then Rachel said, "I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won." So she named him Naphtali. ⁹When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her maidservant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. ¹¹Then Leah said, "What good fortune!" So she named him Gad. ¹²Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. ¹³Then Leah said, "How happy I am! The women will call me happy." So she named him Asher. ¹⁴During wheat harvest, Reuben went out into the fields and found some mandrake plants, which he brought to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Please

give me some of your son's mandrakes." ¹⁵But she said to her, "Wasn't it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes too?" "Very well," Rachel said, "he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes." ¹⁶So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. "You must sleep with me," she said. "I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he slept with her that night. ¹⁷God listened to Leah, and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸Then Leah said, "God has rewarded me for giving my maidservant to my husband." So she named him Issachar. ¹⁹Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. ²⁰Then Leah said, "God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun. ²¹Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah. ²²Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and opened her womb. (Genesis 29:14 - Genesis 30:22)

Who taught you to wait? It may sound like an odd question, but who taught you the value, the importance and the demeanor to wait out things?

My mom was the consummate "waiter." If you were headed to the doctor, or had an appointment and wanted someone to come alongside and wait with you, then my mom was the one to call. She had an immense amount of patience. Whenever people talk about my mom it is the one thing they keep on saying. She could wait.

Joseph waited. He waited for God's dreams to be fulfilled in his life. He waited for justice to be accomplished. He waited for freedom. Where did he learn to wait? And not just to wait, but one thing that is clear in the life of

Joseph is that he waited well.

While Joseph's family certainly had their share of dysfunctions, they also left a positive legacy in his life. Where else would Joseph have learned how to be patient in waiting than through his family? Both his mom and dad were "waiters."

Jacob waited seven years and worked hard for Laban for the privilege of marrying his daughter Rachel. That must have been hard for both of them to wait. Rachel waited, no doubt in tears and pain, to have a child while watching others around her give birth. After a while, Rachel and Jacob wanted to leave the family business and branch out on their own. It was going to take time to build up the resources to do that. Eventually they did. Out of their own life experiences of patiently waiting these two parents passed something of great spiritual value to Joseph... trusting God during the long haul.

Who taught you how to wait? Or perhaps who needs to teach you how to wait? As a mom, dad, grandparent, aunt, what are people learning about waiting and trusting God through you. What about God are other people learning from your life?

David starts Psalm 40 with the claim that he had waited patiently for the Lord and God finally heard him. The problem when life seems to be broken down is that "fixable" can seem an eternity away. There is no better lesson to learn than the lesson of waiting patiently on God.



OPEN IT

As a child, what "big deal" do you remember waiting for your parents to do for you? How did you feel when the event actually happened? Are you good at waiting?

EXPLORE IT

1. In Genesis 29, what trick does Laban play on Jacob? How could Laban's wedding night scheme work? How would you have responded if someone played a trick like that on you? How does Jacob respond? Have you ever had someone pull one on you that caused you to have to wait for something? How did you respond?

2. In 29:20 how was Jacob able to wait for Rachel for the first seven years? What lessons do you think God was teaching Jacob while he had to wait for Rachel? What lessons do you think he learned after he was tricked by Laban? What are you waiting for in life right now? What is God trying to do in your life as you wait?

3. Read Psalm 40. How did David describe his life in verses 2 and 3? What did the Lord do for him? (vv. 2-3) What happens to the man who puts his trust in the Lord? (v. 4) When God seems to take too long to help you, what "false gods" offer tempting alternative solutions? What great truth does verse 5 tell us? When life is difficult are you tempted to think that God has forgotten you and doesn't have a plan for your life?

4. How does David describe his situation in Psalm 40:12. What does he pray for in verse 11?

APPLY IT

1. What in your life feels like a "slimy pit"? Which helps you the most with present troubles: Remembering God's actions in the past? Or claiming God's promises for the future?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Psalm 25:1-22

Psalm 27:1-14

Joshua 1:6-9

Psalm 147:10-11

FOR THE FAMILY

As Joseph's mother waited for many years to have a child, she learned a lot about waiting on God. She may have passed down what she learned about waiting to Joseph. Joseph had to wait in his life as well and he could have leaned on what his mom taught him. This is such a great reminder for moms to share with their children what God has taught them because we do not know what our children will face in life. Take some time this week to sit with your children and tell them a story from your life and what God taught you in that time. Kids love stories and it will help them remember you and your faith.

MESSAGE NOTES**FIXABLE****LESSON VI****I Can Embrace Opportunities Again**

¹When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, ²when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. ³After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. ⁴And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. ⁵He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. ⁶After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted—thin and scorched by the east wind. ⁷The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream. ⁸In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him. ⁹Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. ¹⁰Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. ¹¹Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. ¹²Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. ¹³And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged.” ¹⁴So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. ¹⁵Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.” ¹⁶“I cannot do it,” Joseph replied to Pharaoh,

“but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.” ¹⁷Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, ¹⁸when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. ¹⁹After them, seven other cows came up—scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. ²¹But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up. ²²In my dreams I also saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. ²³After them, seven other heads sprouted—withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. ²⁴The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none could explain it to me.” ²⁵Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁶The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. ²⁷The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine. ²⁸It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁹Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, ³⁰but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. ³¹The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. ³²The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon. ³³And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. ³⁴Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. ³⁵They should collect

all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. ³⁶This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.” ³⁷The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. ³⁸So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?” ³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.” ⁴¹So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.” ⁴²Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, “Make way!” Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. (Genesis 41:1-43)

How do we let go of the past? We all have hurts, fears, and disappointments that lurk in the shadows of our past. A friend who has betrayed a trust. A coach who cut you from a team. A parent who walked out on you and the family. The lie told by a co-worker that cost you a promotion or even a job. A spouse who ran into the arms of someone else. Those experiences leave us feeling crushed, discouraged, and a lot more distrustful than we once were. Turning the corner on that kind of disappointment is difficult. We hurt because we feel we have been rejected, or worse yet, we are left feeling worthless. Sometimes we even blame ourselves thinking that somehow it’s our fault. How do we let go of the past and move forward?

The Bible tells us that with God’s help we can leave the past behind us and find strength for the future. Proverbs 3:5-6 says to trust God, acknowledge his presence in your life, and he will work out his plans in your life. God has designed a future and a hope for us. We will not be abandoned. He knows all about our hurts. He sees what lurks in the shadows of our past and He desires to help us and heal us. What he asks is that we put our trust in him and keep our eyes open to ways he is working all around us.

OPEN IT

1. As a kid, what would you do when you had a bad dream?

2. Which current head of state would you like to meet?

EXPLORE IT

1. What do you see as God’s role in all of this? Why do you think God chooses to work with Joseph in the way he did?



APPLY IT

1. Just as Joseph suffered, how have you suffered for things which weren’t your fault? How did you feel? How did God make things right? Or, if you are still waiting for things to be made right, what can you learn from Joseph’s story?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Luke 12:4-7
 1 Peter 5:10
 Isaiah 40:27-31
 Isaiah 41:10

FOR THE FAMILY

Failure and embarrassment can be devastating to children and cause them to not want to try again. It is good to communicate to our children that we learn from each situation and God will use that knowledge for his glory when the time is right, just like he did for Joseph. A game that teaches this is trying to get a paper ball in a bucket. Each time you miss you try and use what you’ve learned to make the next shot better. After the game, remind the kids that they need to be willing to wait on God until he has prepared them for his purposes.

2. When was the last time you wondered if God had forgotten about you? How did he show you he hasn’t forgotten you? How might this story help you remember that God is always there?

3. As Joseph resisted the temptation to take pride in his own abilities (v. 16), when have you likewise given God the credit for something he has done in your life? For what would you like to give him credit today?

4. What quality in Joseph’s life stands out the most in this story? Patience? Intimacy with God? Humility? Wisdom? Faithfulness? Which of these qualities do you desire for yourself?

MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON VII I Can Enjoy Healing Moments

⁴³He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. ⁴⁴Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt." ⁴⁵Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt. ⁴⁶Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. ⁴⁷During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. ⁴⁸Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. ⁴⁹Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure. ⁵⁰Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. ⁵¹Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." ⁵²The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering." ⁵³The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. ⁵⁵When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph and do what he tells you." ⁵⁶When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine



was severe throughout Egypt. ⁵⁷And all the countries came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world. (Genesis 41:43-57)

When you think of life's tests, what comes to mind? Most people usually think of trials, hardship, and adversity. Testing is part of life. According to the Bible, God uses testing and trials to purify and strengthen our lives. They aren't designed to punish us but to purify us. We see that illustrated in Joseph's life. He has been through some severe testing and it refined his character, but one of the greatest tests of all is the test of success. We don't usually think of success as a test. We put it in the category of blessing, but the truth is, it's one of the hardest tests of all. Joseph is elevated to the second most important position in the world at that time. He is successful, wealthy, and powerful, and he faces a test that we all face. We grumble about not being able to make end's meet, and stretching the budget, but the truth is that the poorest among us are considered rich in the eyes of billions of people in our world. We are a very prosperous people, and we face the same type of test that Joseph faced. The test of success. How did he keep it from going straight to his head? How did Joseph hold up to the test of success?

Joseph never forgot God in his prosperity. He acknowledged God's hand at work in every aspect of his life. His fingerprints were seen in the trials and in the success. That's our challenge too: seeing God's hand at work in the trials of life. Whether that trial is hardship or success, do you see God's fingerprints on it?

OPEN IT

If you were King or Queen for a day, what would you do?

EXPLORE IT

1. Has Joseph gone too far in taking on ring, robes, chauffeured chariot, name change, native wife and all? How would becoming more like an Egyptian help Joseph fulfill his new role?

2. How is the Joseph of chapter 41 unlike the Joseph of chapter 37? How do you account for his maturity, zeal, and wisdom to run the government? Might the thirteen previous years of humiliation and prison have helped shape him?

3. In what ways have you changed from what you were like thirteen years ago? What did God do during that time to mold your character?

APPLY IT

1. Like Joseph, what past trouble would you like God to help you forget?

2. Where are you now experiencing a "famine": Physically? Socially? Culturally? Spiritually? What traits of Joseph will help you survive such famine-like trials?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Romans 12:1-2
Hebrews 5:11 – 6: 3
1 Peter 1:13-25
Philippians 3:12-14

FOR THE FAMILY

When playing a board game with your kids you can observe that kids think they are going to lose because someone else is far ahead. Their countenance drops and they get discouraged and angry sometimes. But before you know it the game takes a turn and the person that once thought was going to lose, wins. This is a great time to teach them about how God can redeem our lives and heal our past hurts just like he did for Joseph.



MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON IX
I Can Move Beyond The Guilt Of The Past

¹When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" ²He continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die." ³Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. ⁴But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. ⁵So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also. ⁶Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. ⁷As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food." ⁸Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. ⁹Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected." ¹⁰"No, my lord," they answered. "Your servants have come to buy food. ¹¹We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies." ¹²"No!" he said to them. "You have come to see where our land is unprotected." ¹³But they replied, "Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more." ¹⁴Joseph said to them, "It is just as I told you: You are spies! ¹⁵And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. ¹⁶Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may

be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!" ¹⁷And he put them all in custody for three days. ¹⁸On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: ¹⁹If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. ²⁰But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do. ²¹They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come upon us." ²²Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood." ²³They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. ²⁴He turned away from them and began to weep, but then turned back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes. ²⁵Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them, ²⁶they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left. ²⁷At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack. ²⁸"My silver has been returned," he said to his brothers. "Here it is in my sack." Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, "What is this that God has done to us?" ²⁹When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. They said, ³⁰"The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as though we were spying on the land. ³¹But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies. ³²We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.'

³³"Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, 'This is how I will know whether you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go. ³⁴But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the land.'" ³⁵As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man's sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened. ³⁶Their father Jacob said to them, "You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!" ³⁷Then Reuben said to his father, "You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back." ³⁸But Jacob said, "My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow." (Genesis 42)

When God begins to restore us, it sometimes means there are others who need to be restored. God was doing a great thing in Joseph's life, but for nearly 20 years, his brothers must have suffered through some guilt. You can't get rid of your brother and spend your life covering your tracks with lies to your dad and it not take a toll on you. So with Joseph's dream coming true, it is now the brother's turn.

The famine has extended beyond Egypt into Canaan and hearing that there is food, the brothers come to get some. In the greatest twist of irony, they are now standing before Joseph although they don't recognize him. What must Joseph have felt? How did he feel when he saw the brothers there? Did they have any remorse?



Joseph begins a kind of reenactment of what the brothers had put him through by first responding harshly and accusing his brothers of being spies. Think of the irony here. Over 20 years before they had accused Joseph of spying on them and telling their father on them; now he was accusing them of being spies. The brothers tried to plead their case just like Joseph had. They defended themselves saying that they were part of a big family. Ten of the brothers were there while the youngest was back at home and another was "no more." No more? What did they mean by "no more?" Had he been kidnapped, killed or dead of natural causes? Imagine how Joseph must have felt hearing that they considered him to be gone from all memory. How sad he must have felt that after 20 years they could still not face the truth and admit what they had done. Their conscience still could not admit the truth. Joseph told the brothers he believed they had come as spies in which case their story about a younger brother was a mere fabrication. All they had to do to prove they were telling the truth was to produce their younger brother. He would have all of the brothers detained except one who would be sent home to bring Benjamin back. That would prove their honesty. When they accused Joseph they cast him into a pit. Now that he accused them he put them all together into a prison for 3 days. They pleaded for mercy and for understanding, but their pleas, like Joseph's years before went unheeded. They couldn't help but to see that the same things that were happening to them were the things they had done to Joseph. In verse 21 they finally admitted that this distress they were in was a result of the same kind of distress they made Joseph experience. It had been twenty years and time could

not erase the memory of what they put Joseph through. The years can't wipe away guilt. We know from our own lives that guilt can have devastating effects on us. When you have done wrong to someone and haven't gone through the process to make everything right, you then become the victim of the very distress that you put them through. God was not allowing them to experience this so that they could be punished, but this reawakened guilt was a moment of grace where through confession and repentance they could have it removed.

OPEN IT

Do you like to play practical jokes on friends? Share either a time you played a practical joke on someone or someone played a practical joke on you.

EXPLORE IT

1. As chapter 42 unfolds, what vantage point does the reader have that the brothers do not have when Joseph pretends not to know his brothers?

2. How do the brothers react to this treatment? How does Jacob respond? How does all this fulfill Joseph's dream (37:7,9)?

3. Is Joseph seeking revenge by forcing his brothers to endure all of this? Repentance? Or what?

4. What is Benjamin's role in the family? (vv. 36-38) Why would Joseph be so interested in how the brothers feel about Benjamin?

5. In verses 21-22, what do you think the brothers experienced? True penitence? Likewise in verse 27-28?

6. Why do you think Joseph reacts as he does in verse 24? Why doesn't he reveal himself now?

APPLY IT

1. Define "repentance."

2. When someone has deeply wronged you, are you most likely to seek revenge or reconciliation?

3. Like Jacob's sons (vv. 21-22) where are you still paying the price or reaping the effects of a mistake you made? Is God speaking to you in this?

MESSAGE NOTES

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Matthew 6:14-15
Matthew 18:21-35
1 Thessalonians 5:13
James 3:18

FOR THE FAMILY

Try not to use the past sins of your children to guilt them into obedience or to shame them. It is so important to teach your children not to do this to each other. Joseph could have done this to his brothers but instead he chose to forgive which brought healing to his family and brought them together again.

LESSON IX

I Can Realize Fixable Takes Time

¹Now the famine was still severe in the land. ²So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go back and buy us a little more food.” ³But Judah said to him, “The man warned us solemnly, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’ ⁴If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you. ⁵But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’” ⁶Israel asked, “Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?” ⁷They replied, “The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. ‘Is your father still living?’ he asked us. ‘Do you have another brother?’ We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, ‘Bring your brother down here?’” ⁸Then Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die. ⁹I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life. ¹⁰As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice.” ¹¹Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift—a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds. ¹²Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. ¹³Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. ¹⁴And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with

you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.” ¹⁵So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. ¹⁶When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare dinner; they are to eat with me at noon.” ¹⁷The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph’s house. ¹⁸Now the men were frightened when they were taken to his house. They thought, “We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys.” ¹⁹So they went up to Joseph’s steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. ²⁰“Please, sir,” they said, “we came down here the first time to buy food. ²¹But at the place where we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver—the exact weight—in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back with us. ²²We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don’t know who put our silver in our sacks.” ²³“It’s all right,” he said. “Don’t be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.” Then he brought Simeon out to them. ²⁴The steward took the men into Joseph’s house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys. ²⁵They prepared their gifts for Joseph’s arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there. ²⁶When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground. ²⁷He asked them how they were, and then he said, “How is your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?” ²⁸They replied, “Your servant our father is still alive and well.” And they bowed low to pay him honor. ²⁹As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother’s son, he asked, “Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?” And he said, “God be



gracious to you, my son.” ³⁰Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there. ³¹After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, “Serve the food.” ³²They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians. ³³The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment. ³⁴When portions were served to them from Joseph’s table, Benjamin’s portion was five times as much as anyone else’s. So they feasted and drank freely with him. (Genesis 43)

We live in an age of instant fixes and miracle cures, from miracle spot removers to body sculpting in 5 minutes a day for a month to weight loss in your sleep. We want our problems fixed and we don’t like to wait. We would love a magic wand to make our problems go away. If we aren’t too careful, we can begin to view God as our magic wand – and magic wands work quickly.

Truth is, Fixable takes time. It may have taken years for our current problems to develop, years that may have helped wound our hearts or confuse our minds. God usually wants more than an instant fix of our circumstances, more than a return to the way things used to be. He wants a deeper healing of our hearts and lives. And that may take time. Joseph waited in hope, and his trust challenges us to trust Him as He fixes our hearts.

OPEN IT

1. What one fancy meal stands out in your memory?

2. If you had the choice, would you want to be the youngest child in the family? Oldest? Why?

EXPLORE IT

1. In what ways does Chapter 43 continue the action in Chapter 42?

2. What do you think of Joseph’s actions in this chapter? Too cautious? Too risky? Too weepy? Too generous?

3. How does Judah convince Israel to let Benjamin come back to Egypt? (vv. 3-10)

4. Compare Judah's words in 43:8-9 with 37:26-27. Do you think he has changed much? How so?

5. Why do you think Joseph chooses not to reveal himself to his brothers, even at the poignant moment of greeting Benjamin? What does Joseph want? What more does Benjamin get? (v. 34) Why does he get more?

APPLY IT

1. Who would you like to see? What one person who means a lot to you have you wanted to see again?

2. Are you facing a situation that is taking a long time fix? How have you dealt with the waiting? What can you learn from this story to help you?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Proverbs 3:1-8
Proverbs 4:1-27
Proverbs 8:1-36
Proverbs 9:1-18

FOR THE FAMILY

Kids and adults alike find themselves in difficult situations. Have you ever played the game called "Human Knot?" Groups of people hold hands and tie themselves in a knot. One person outside the group has to tell the others which way to move to get out of the situation. It takes much longer to untie the mess than it did to make it. Most of life's messes are not fixed instantly either. God will fix it at just the right time though.



MESSAGE NOTES

LESSON X
I Can Forgive

¹Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: "Fill the men's sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack. ²Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack, along with the silver for his grain." And he did as Joseph said. ³As morning dawned, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys. ⁴They had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, "Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid good with evil?' ⁵Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? This is a wicked thing you have done."⁶When he caught up with them, he repeated these words to them. ⁷But they said to him, "Why does my lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do anything like that! ⁸We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the silver we found inside the mouths of our sacks. So why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house? ⁹If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die; and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves."¹⁰"Very well, then," he said, "let it be as you say. Whoever is found to have it will become my slave; the rest of you will be free from blame."¹¹Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it. ¹²Then the steward proceeded to search, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. ¹³At this, they tore their clothes. Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city. ¹⁴Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him. ¹⁵Joseph said to them, "What is this you have done? Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?" ¹⁶"What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied.

“What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants’ guilt. We are now my lord’s slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup.”¹⁷ But Joseph said, “Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace.”¹⁸ Then Judah went up to him and said: “Please, my lord, let your servant speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself.¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, ‘Do you have a father or a brother?’²⁰ And we answered, ‘We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother’s sons left, and his father loves him.’²¹ “Then you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.’²² And we said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.’²³ But you told your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.’²⁴ When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said.²⁵ “Then our father said, ‘Go back and buy a little more food.’²⁶ But we said, ‘We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’²⁷ “Your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons.²⁸ One of them went away from me, and I said, ‘He has surely been torn to pieces.’ And I have not seen him since.²⁹ If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.’³⁰ “So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy’s life,³¹ sees that the boy isn’t there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow.³² Your servant guaranteed the boy’s safety to my father. I said, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you,

my father, all my life!’³³ “Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord’s slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers.³⁴ How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father.”¹ 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.² And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh’s household heard about it.³ 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.⁴ 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!⁵ 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.⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping.⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.⁸ “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.’¹² “You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you.¹³ Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.”¹⁴ Then



he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping.¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.¹⁶ When the news reached Pharaoh’s palace that Joseph’s brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased.¹⁷ Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers, ‘Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan,¹⁸ 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.’¹⁹ “You are also directed to tell them, ‘Do this: Take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives, and get your father and come.²⁰ Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.’”²¹ So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey.²² To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five sets of clothes.²³ And this is what he sent to his father: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey.²⁴ Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them, “Don’t quarrel on the way!”²⁵ So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan.²⁶ They told him, “Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.” Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them.²⁷ 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.²⁸ And Israel said, “I’m convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.” (Genesis 44-45)

What would the Liberty Bell be without its cracks and imperfections? Who would remember the Tower of Pisa if it didn’t lean a little bit?

Sometimes our battle scars, our wounds, and our hurts become so familiar, so closely identified with who we are, we can actually cling to them. Old hurts and wounds, all the things we have asked God to fix, can be hard to let go of when God is ready to fix them.

Joseph finally has his brothers before him; bowing down... the dream has come true. He has a choice, forgive and seek reconciliation, or hang on to his wounds. When it is God’s timing to fix our wounds and hurts, we will have to let go of them and trust him, and others, again. What if Joseph had not forgiven? He would have turned from victim to victimizer... it is easy to do.

As Joseph did, let’s trust God as he fixes us, not holding on to our wounds, even as we forgive and seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

OPEN IT

1. Who is someone you haven’t seen in a long time that you would like to see again?

2. Who in your family is the one who will forgive anyone anything? For whom does forgiveness come only with difficulty? Which one are you?

EXPLORE IT

1. Why did Joseph wait so long to reveal his true identity to his brothers? Revenge? He enjoyed the irony and surprise? They needed to feel the pain their sin had caused? Joseph's dream required them to bow down before him?

2. If you had been of one Joseph's brothers, how would you have felt when he revealed himself? Shock? Ashamed? Afraid? Relieved?

3. How could Joseph embrace his brothers after what they had done to him? Have you ever reconciled with someone after they have hurt you deeply?

4. What impresses you the most about Joseph? His perspective on God's hand on his life? His willingness to forgive? His perseverance through difficult times? His love for his family?

5. What do you usually do when someone close to you hurts you? What do you usually do when you've hurt someone close to you?

6. Joseph saw God in control of every aspect of his life. How much is this your attitude in relation to the trials in your life?

APPLY IT

1. If you have a severed or strained relationship, what will it take for you to take the initiative and reach out in forgiveness like Joseph did?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Romans 12:9-21
Ephesians 4:25-32
1 Corinthians 13:1-13
John 15: 9-17

MESSAGE NOTES

FOR THE FAMILY

One important thing that kids need to understand is that they will often have to forgive before forgiveness has been asked. If Joseph had held unforgiveness in his heart for the years that he was apart from his brothers, the story would not have ended the way it did. Have a discussion this week with your kids about how the story might have ended if Joseph hadn't forgiven his brothers.



LESSON XI

I Can Bless Again (Father's Day)

¹Some time later Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim along with him. ²When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed. ³Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me ⁴and said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and will increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.' ⁵"Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. ⁶Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers. ⁷As I was returning from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan while we were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath. So I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath" (that is, Bethlehem). ⁸When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, "Who are these?" ⁹"They are the sons God has given me here," Joseph said to his father. Then Israel said, "Bring them to me so I may bless them." ¹⁰Now Israel's eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see. So Joseph brought his sons close to him, and his father kissed them and embraced them. ¹¹Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too." ¹²Then Joseph removed them from Israel's knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. ¹³And Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel's left hand and Manasseh on his left toward Israel's right hand, and brought them close to him. ¹⁴But Israel reached out his right hand

and put it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn. ¹⁵Then he blessed Joseph and said, "May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, ¹⁶the Angel who has delivered me from all harm—may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly upon the earth." ¹⁷When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim's head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸Joseph said to him, "No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." ¹⁹But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations." ²⁰He blessed them that day and said, "In your name will Israel pronounce this blessing: 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.'" So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. ²¹Then Israel said to Joseph, "I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers. ²²And to you, as one who is over your brothers, I give the ridge of land I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow." (Genesis 48)

Our story now comes full circle as we see Jacob taking great pains to pass on a blessing to each of his sons.

We began our study with a very different blessing. Joseph blessed his favorite son with a coat elevating Joseph in rank and power in effect saying to Joseph: You are my pride and joy. You have great skills and talents I want you to use. You are an incredibly valuable person.



It was a blessing of one son over all the others. We have seen the pain that causes.

While this special treatment may have brought blessing to one son, we see the impact upon the eleven other sons who didn't receive a blessing. A blessing is really a prayer of happiness and blessedness to another. It is the desire to see that person have a preferred and bountiful future. The brothers didn't get that and their unblessed life created such anger they couldn't wait to get rid of Joseph. No doubt with Joseph gone, they were hoping to get a blessing. That is how much we desire that others would bless us. Anger, resentment and insecurity are often emotions people carry when the blessing seems so close, yet so far away. Jacob should have known this. Years before he had stolen the blessing from his brother Esau. He went into his nearly blind father pretending that he was the older brother and took the blessing. From that point on he was haunted by the images of a brother who lived in despair because the blessing wasn't his.

Perhaps that is why so much of the last part of Genesis is devoted to Jacob now blessing his family. What is remarkable to me is that such a large section of the story of Joseph is devoted to this last act of Jacob, praying blessing upon his children and grandchildren. By the sheer volume of information presented here, it would seem that God wanted us to take special notice of this time of blessing, not only because these prophecies give us insight into the future of Israel, but also because God loves to bless. Maybe you need to remember that today. God has a desire to speak words of blessing into your life.

As we come to this passage, we see how important a parent's blessing is and how deeply most of us hunger for a blessing, not only from God, but from our parents and from each other in the body of Christ. You may want to consider how to pass on a blessing to your children or grandchildren. There are lots of resources available to learn how to do that. Who needs you to pass on words of blessing to them?

OPEN IT

1. What is a favorite memory you have about your grandparents?

2. What privilege or rank did you have as a child that your siblings did not seem to have?

EXPLORE IT

1. Who was Isaac's firstborn son (Genesis 25)? But which son received the birthright (ch. 27)? Who was Jacob's firstborn son (ch. 29)? But who received his blessing (27:3)? Who was Joseph's firstborn son (48: 14, 18)? But who received the favored blessing (vv. 9-20)? What do you make of this unconventional pattern?

2. Out of all the events in Jacob's 147 years, why do you think this one act of blessing Joseph's sons is singled out by the writer of Hebrews (Hebrews 11:21) as an example of outstanding faith? In 48:5, Jacob adopts Joseph's sons as his own, how did this determine the structure and leadership of the 12 tribes of Israel (1 Chronicles 5:1-26)?

3. In what respects do you identify with Ephraim? With Manasseh?

4. As Jacob invokes God's blessing on Joseph, he recalls how God has been his guiding shepherd and guardian angel? (vv. 15-16) Which of Jacob's pivotal encounters do you think he was likely reflecting upon? How has God been a guiding shepherd and guardian angel in your life?

APPLY IT

1. As you grew up did you receive a blessing from your parents? How can you be a blessing to your children? How about your grandchildren?

MESSAGE NOTES

2. Have you ever received a blessing from someone that inspires you to live a courageous, God-glorifying life?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Romans 8:28-39
Psalm 103:1-22
Ephesians 3:14-21
Psalm 145:20

FOR THE FAMILY

It's funny how kids will spend hours trying to advance a level on a video game and as soon as they figure it out, they share what they've learned with a friend so the friend can advance as well. Use this type of situation to encourage your kids to work hard and overcome their current struggles because they can then share what they've learned with their friends and family.



