

Starlight Station: Forgiveness

Bible Passages: Genesis 45:1-15; Proverbs 17:9

Bottom Line: Servant leaders forgive others!

People can be mean! People can be cruel! People can do all kinds of things that hurt other people. That can be physical, mental and everywhere in-between. When those things happen to you, how do you react?

Sometimes things happen to you that aren't intentional, but are still someone's fault. What kind of reaction should you give? Forgiveness?

If we're honest, forgiveness isn't always the easy thing to do. There can be resentment, bitterness, anger, rage, sadness and disappointment toward those people who have wronged us. It can take some time for those feelings to calm down.

Imagine that someone beat you up and then threw you in a giant, deep pit. Then they took you from your family and gave you up to be a slave in a foreign land. Then they lied and told your family that you were dead and never coming home again.

What would happen if someone falsely accused you of doing something wrong and you went to jail because of that lie. Then someone promised to help you get out of prison and then totally forgot you for 2 years.

Joseph had an opportunity to do something about the people who probably hurt him the most, his brothers. Remember that Joseph had some dreams many years ago about his brothers bowing down to him? Well today it's coming true and Joseph has the upper hand. What will he do with it? Let's find out in Genesis 45:1-15.

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. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

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. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. 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. You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

“You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.”

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.

Joseph's brothers were right there in front of him. Now I can't know for sure, but I would imagine that Joseph hoped that a day like this would happen, a day where he could hold their lives in his hands. A time where he could choose how to repay them for everything they ever did to him.

Instead of revenge, Joseph chose forgiveness. Instead of bitterness, he chose love. Joseph wanted to right their wrongs, by doing the right thing, not creating more hard feelings. It was an amazing moment and it has me thinking about forgiveness and God.

We have all done things, (sin) that we aren't proud of. We can be down-right shameful of the sin that we've committed. We should be. Sin is a serious thing and can hurt other people, us and ultimately hurts God.

So imagine some of the worst things you've done. No, you don't have to tell me or even say it out loud. But just those thoughts can cause you to cringe just a little. Being forgiven for one thing might not be so bad, but to pile up all your sin including the worst of it can create a small mountain. It can be overwhelming.

All the sin we've ever done, even if it is to other people, or even just ourselves all goes against God. Every single one. That sin can only be forgiven by God Himself. He could choose to let that sin separate us from Him forever. But He didn't.

God made a way for us to be forgiven. God chose to show us love. No, God never loves our sin, but He loves you. He created you to be with Him. So Jesus came to forgive our sin, the small sin and the BIG sins we've committed. That is an overwhelming relief. It causes me to be thankful and grateful.

If God is able to forgive us, we HAVE to be willing to do the same for others. There are many times in the Bible where we are instructed to forgive each other. We are to follow God's example. It might not be easy, but it's the right thing to do.

QUESTIONS:

- **What was the most interesting part of Joseph's story today?**
- **What did you learn about Joseph?**
- **How can you incorporate what you learned about Joseph's life to yours?**
- **Who do you need to forgive?**
- **Who do you need to ask forgiveness from?**