

## Week 7: Reconciliation

Joseph's relationship with his brothers was broken. In Genesis 37, Joseph was filled with pride and his brothers were filled with jealousy. Their feelings toward Joseph led them to sell him into slavery with the hopes of never seeing him again. Joseph was entrapped in slavery, the brothers were enslaved in their guilt, and their father, Jacob was engulfed in hopeless grief. Yet, over twenty years later at the end of Genesis, all the brothers are gathered together in the presence of their father Jacob. How did this happen? Joseph and his brothers had walked through the process of reconciliation. Reconciliation is the process in which a broken relationship finds healing and repair.

In the story of Joseph and his brothers, we learn that reconciliation has at least two ingredients: repentance and forgiveness. Through the long Genesis narrative, Joseph's brothers provide an imperfect example of what is needed for repentance. They take responsibility for their mistake (42:21 – although not to Joseph!), feel remorse for what they have done (42:22 – although out of self-concern!), resolve to turn from their sin (44:30-34) and request Joseph's forgiveness (50:15-21). Amazingly, Joseph offers his brothers sacrificial forgiveness despite what seems to be at times a half-baked repentance. He sits with what happened, he sacrifices his right to get even, he speaks the truth and doesn't stuff, and shares forgiveness. When the brothers begin to show signs of repentance and Joseph forgives, new opportunities for the relationship are created.

Scripture Reading: Genesis 42:1-17, 45:1-9 and 50:15-21

### Questions

1. Reconciliation includes both repentance and forgiveness. Why are both of these required for reconciliation?
2. One of the most common misunderstandings of forgiveness is to equate it with “stuffing” - quietly pretending like everything is okay when it isn't. Instead, forgiveness necessitates that we acknowledge we have been hurt and communicate it to the other. When is a time that you have “stuffed” rather than gone through the process of communication and forgiveness? What was the result?
3. Christianity teaches that both ingredients for reconciliation – repentance and forgiveness – are impossible on our own. How then can Christians be empowered for repentance and forgiveness? Reflect on Ephesians 4:32 together as a group.
4. What are currently your greatest obstacles to either repentance or forgiveness?
5. To whom is God calling you to walk toward in reconciliation during this group? To whom do you need to repent, or to whom is God inviting you to offer forgiveness? What is your first step that you feel called to take?

### Prayer

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your great work of reconciliation. Thank You for revealing our sin to us that may have been blindly present. Thank You for giving us the gift of forgiveness through the life, death and resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Through the insight and empowerment of Your Spirit, may we see our sin and take responsibility for it. Out of the overflow of Your forgiveness, may we share it with others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

