**1. Motivate**

How would you describe the taste of bitterness?

* makes your mouth pucker
* you want to spit it out

A video introduction to the Bible study is available. View it at <https://tinyurl.com/mr3bd6fu> If there is no wi-fi where you teach, it is best to download the video file to your computer from <https://tinyurl.com/44un8bje>

* like high percent chocolate
* sharp
* strong sharp taste but not sweet
* pungent
* harsh, disagreeably acrid taste
* a strong and sometimes unpleasant flavor that is the opposite of sweet.

**2. Transition**

Sometimes the harsh, disagreeable feeling comes in relationships

* Joseph could have felt that way but was willing to forgive his brothers.
* Forgiveness can lead to family healing and restoration.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Good Out of Crisis

Listen for Jacob’s reservations.

Genesis 42:3-5 (NIV) Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. 4 But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. 5 So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also.

Why did he send only ten of his sons to secure food in Egypt?

* didn’t send Benjamin, only son left of his favorite wife (who had died in childbirth)
* Benjamin may have been considerably younger
* afraid harm might come to him (like happened to Joseph)

How do past experiences shape decisions?

* learned lessons from what happened (good or bad)
* influenced by bad experiences, good experiences
* you might get “gun-shy” over facing a similar situation again
* you could learn a different way to deal with a similar situation

What kinds of concerns might the brothers have had as they set off traveling a long way to get famine relief?

* will we have enough money
* how are they treating foreigners
* how will we communicate
* how willing are they to sell to foreigners
* how do we find who is in charge of selling what we need

What do you suppose the brothers thought about why Benjamin was not told to go with them?

* well, Dad’s got his favorite, you know
* he’s still young, might not be up to the trip
* Dad needs him around the camp
* maybe Dad’s afraid something will happen to him (like Joseph “disappeared”)
* they were probably reminded of their treachery with Joseph
* some guilt feelings resurfaced in their hearts and minds
* might have still felt somewhat angry that Dad still had a favorite (and *they* were *not* the favorite)

Jacob’s decision to keep Benjamin home could have been due to a lack of trust in God’s protection, or simply a father’s fear. How do we balance practical caution with faith in times of uncertainty?

* don’t flaunt your faith … presuming upon God to keep you safe no matter what
* we take obvious caution when we drive … fasten seat belts, travel at safe speeds, keep up maintenance on the car
* similarly with our family … avoid dangerous neighborhoods, be aware of problems
* such as bullying in schools or ungodly teaching taking place in classes
* consider Hebrews 11, the “Faith Chapter” … many of those heroes of faith had to face God even though they didn’t know the outcome – we don’t always know the outcome of current events in our lives
* if you know the outcome, you don’t need to be trusting God (other than the fact that you believe God has the outcome under His control)

Reflect on a time when you or someone else had to step out of a comfort zone in response to a need. How did faith and relationships influence the journey?

* you might have been totally at the end of your own resources (financial, physical, emotional)
* forced to pursue a solution outside normal channels
* nothing else to do but trust that God will lead, supply, protect
* knew family was behind you, supporting you with prayer

3.2 I Was Wrong

Listen for “I told you so”

Genesis 42:21-24a (NIV) They 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." 22 Reuben 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." 23 They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. 24 He turned away from them and began to weep, but then turned back and spoke to them again.

Why do you think the brothers immediately remember their treatment of Joseph when they face trouble in Egypt?

* that whole story was still in the back of their minds
* now that they were away from the rest of the family, they felt they could talk about it openly
* they probably felt a healthy measure of guilt still hanging over their heads
* that forced them to think of cause and effect … we did a bad thing, that will eventually result in punishment of some kind

Consider how guilt and unresolved issues from the past can resurface. How might this experience affect their conscience or sense of justice?

* they thought this was long gone
* surprised to think it was now (a couple of decades) coming back to bite them
* the irony was that this was actually Joseph who was causing them to remember their sin
* they were realizing that the guilt was still there, unresolved

What obstacles often prevent us from admitting that we’re wrong?

* pride
* don’t want to get in trouble for being wrong
* want to “save face”
* still believe it was justified in the situation
* hate the person pointing out the truth

What are the benefits of repenting?

* get rid of guilt
* make things right
* restore relationships
* be back in right relationship with God

Reflect on the emotional complexity of Joseph’s position. What might this moment mean for him in terms of forgiveness, empathy, or unresolved hurt?

* no doubt had mixed emotions
* part of him probably wanted to get revenge
* in another sense, he may have wanted to test them to see if they still had that old hatred for him
* but here was *family* … a connection to all the rest of the family, including his younger brother who was not with them

3.3 Let Go of the Past

Listen for a big surprise.

Genesis 45:1-5 (NIV) 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.

Imagine that you are Joseph and your brothers show up. What reasons might you have for not telling them right away who you are?

* you would still be in control of the situation
* you might have wanted revenge
* you want to see if they still hated you
* you want to see how they had treated your brother Benjamin
* you might still be working through your own feelings of anger
* want to test them, were they still the evil rascals who had sold you as a slave

Why would the brothers have been *troubled* by Joseph’s identifying himself to them?

* they could see he was a person of influence and power
* now he had power over them, not the other way around
* he was in a perfect place to take vengeance on them for his mistreatment by them
* maybe they began to remember the dream Joseph had shared so many years ago
* it would have been totally a shock
* his dress and position were totally out of context
* they had no expectation of ever seeing him again, now he’s the guy in charge

Note what Joseph told his brothers …

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

* Don’t be distressed, don’t be angry
* It was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you
* God sent me ahead of you to save your lives, to deliver you
* God put me here as an adviser to Pharaoh and gave me great authority

Why is it *important* to forgive others?

* resentment can imprison you for life,
* it will destroy you and your other relationships.
* Lewis Smedes wrote: “To forgive is to set the prisoner free…and to discover that the prisoner was you.”
* Ask yourself “do I want things bitter or better?”

Application

Using an online Bible, do a quick search for scriptures on forgiveness.

* Write one on a sticky note and place it on your mirror.
* Let it be a reminder to always choose forgiveness over bitterness.

Journal about a personal story of forgiveness with a family member or friend.

* What was the outcome?

Who do you need to forgive today?

* Ask God to lead you as you seek reconciliation and forgiveness this week.
* Be the initiator of the process this week

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Fallen Phrases Puzzle





Well, we had to block off the highway because of all the excitement. That pesky alien is back again. We now know he (she, it?) is from the Zecugantu system. The rascal zapped the billboard and caused letters to fall straight down. We need your help to put them back in place. Go for the single letter columns first, then work on the two and three letter words to use letters that make reasonable words. Technical help is available at <https://tinyurl.com/44un8bje> along with other Fun Family Activities. When you solve the puzzle memorize it and pass it on to Spiros the spy.