

Healing Broken Relationships- The Story of Joseph

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[0 : 00] Well, I began probably about four weeks ago a series of messages on choices, and I'm bringing that to a close today. There are others I could preach, but I'm going to stop right here today.

And I want to preach today on one of the greatest choices you'll ever make in your life, and that's the choice to forgive. You know, a lot of folk I meet really and truly are not convinced that that is a choice.

They think, you know, that if you have it in your heart to do it, you can, but if you don't, well, you just can't. I've seen television shows where you've seen that depicted somebody murder somebody's son or something, and they look at the judge when they're about to pass sentence.

They give the family the opportunity to speak, and someone says something like, you know, I just cannot forgive you. I'll never forgive you. I'll go to my grave not forgiving you. And we've seen that, and probably some of us can empathize with those folk because, well, we know what it would be like to have a family member maliciously murdered, and you can understand their thinking in that. But I want to tell you something. At the end of the day, forgiveness is not something you just feel. In fact, I think we have a misunderstanding of what forgiveness is. Forgiveness doesn't mean that I come to a place and I say what you did is okay.

[1 : 12] It doesn't matter to me anymore. It's always going to matter. It is wrong how some people are treated. Some acts are despicable, and they should never be excused.

But there's a difference in excusing something and forgiving something. Forgiving something means I come to a place that it's not your choice for me to forgive you. It's my choice.

And if I choose not to forgive me, I'll tell you something. Always, always, always it's going to happen. You're going to get stuck in your life at that point in time. You're never going to be able to completely move forward from that point in time.

And so I'm telling you, it's in your best interest to forgive someone. Come to a place where you say, you know, I know what you did was wrong, and I'm going to put this out of my life. I'm going to lay it aside. I'm not going to allow it to shipwreck me any longer where I just fail to move forward, where I just bear this bitterness and hatred in my heart, and it just spills over into every other action and every other piece of my life.

I'm just not going to do that. I'm going to forgive you. I'm going to put it behind me. I'm going to move on. The best biblical example I know of that in the Old Testament, there are a lot of them, but the very best, the most outstanding one to me is the man Joseph.

[2 : 24] And this morning, we're going to look at his life, all right? The story we're going to focus on today is found in chapter 45. So if you have your Bibles, go ahead and turn to Genesis chapter 45.

But in order to understand this story and appreciate this story, to get the full meaning of the story, you have to understand the whole life of Joseph. And so what I'm going to do without reading those chapters, because there are eight chapters, we're going to look at chapters 37 through 45 on the run, okay?

And I'm just going to describe to you what's happening and give you some background so that when we get to chapter 45, you can understand the significance of what it is he does.

So let's go back to chapter 37. And in chapter 37, I'm just going to tell you again what happened.

Here's what we find. There's this man named Jacob who has 12 sons.

He has these 12 sons through four different women. The wife of choice is the younger sister of his first wife, Leah.

[3 : 26] The wife of choice is named Rachel. He doesn't love Leah, doesn't intend to marry Leah, is deceived by his father-in-law into marrying Leah, and then works seven more years to win the heart

and hand of Rachel.

That's the wife he supremely loves. That's his sweetheart. Both of these women, Rachel and Leah, have handmaidens. And when Rachel, or just forget that for a moment, Rachel gives her handmaiden to Jacob, and Leah does the same.

And so through these four women, he has 12 sons. The two sons of Rachel are Joseph and Benjamin, and that's the two that he loves the most.

And sadly, second part of the story, he doesn't mind showing that favoritism. Chapter 47 tells us in one place that he bestows gifts on these that he doesn't the others.

He has a coat of many colors, and you've seen that portrayed in plays at church, and usually it's a pretty gaudy bathrobe, right? And you look and think, I don't think I'd like that coat of many colors. But I want to tell you, it was really a fine garment.

[4 : 42] It was something that all those brothers looked at and knew. Our father is singling him out, and he's putting him at the head of the pack. He's showing favoritism toward this son, Joseph.

Now, if you're somebody who's been shown favoritism, or somebody who hasn't been shown favoritism, you might look at that and say, boy, that'd be pretty cool to be somebody's favorite, right? The teacher's pet, so to speak.

I want to tell you something. When it happens in a family, I can't imagine that anybody likes, if they have an ounce of cents, if they like being the favorite. You're looking at somebody who was the favorite, not of my parents.

They just tolerated me. But the favorite of my grandmother on my dad's side. And the reason was, he was her only son, had two daughters, her only son.

He was the baby in the family. And then I'm the oldest of his children, and I'm a boy, right? She favored boys over girls. I'll just be honest with you. And then we had seven of the grandchildren, eight of us in all.

[5 : 45] It's Christmas 1991. I'm a freshman in college. And here we sit at my grandmother's house, all eight of us, on one side of the room, against the wall.

And over here are my aunts and uncles, and my grandmother goes to pass night gifts. Remember those sock hats that women used to knit together back in the days? They're pretty ugly looking, most of them.

Well, she had a bunch of different colors of yarn, and she would just use that yarn until it ran out and go to the next one, you know? So here she starts down on one end, and she's got all my cousins there in line, and she goes, as she's passing out these gifts, sock hat, sock hat, sock hat, sock hat, \$100, sock hat, sock hat, sock hat.

Well, I was the guy who got the \$100. And the second she gives it to me, I just, oh, no, no, no, no. And I said, no, grandma, no, no, no. I don't want a sock hat.

I don't want those ugly sock hats, okay? Because I could just feel them burning a hole through me as they looked at me, right? And to make it worse, that's what she says. No, they don't need it.

[6 : 52] You're in the ministry. I hated that. You're in the ministry. And they're not doing anything with their lives. You're going to college right now, right? So I just want to die.

I mean, no, no, no. Give me one of them sock hats, right? If you've ever been somebody who was favored in a situation in your family, you know that's not a good feeling.

I want to tell you how bad it was for Joseph. Listen, in chapter 37, the scripture uses this word, a strong word. It says, not that they disliked him, but they held it against him.

You know what it says? Because they hated him. They hate. That's a strong word. His brothers hated. Now, me and my brother, we duke it out sometimes.

Me and my sister could even get some spats. But I want to tell you something. We never said to one another or felt as though they really and truly hate me. But that's how it was with Joseph and his brothers.

[7 : 53] I got to tell you something, too. Joseph didn't do anything to make it any better. One morning at breakfast, they're around the family table, and they're eating their Cheerios. And Joseph turns to the others and says, Hey, guys, funny thing last night, I had a dream.

Really? What did you dream, Joseph? Well, I dream we're out in the field, and we're gathering sheaves, and we bundle them all up, and you bundle all yours up. And a weird thing, my sheaf stands up, and all yours bow down to it.

Ha! Read what that means. And they look at him, and they say, Joseph, are you telling us that we're all going to one day be your servants, and we're going to bow down to you?

Ha! You think that's what it means? Right? And so he wasn't a favorite. Not with his brothers. And so you go down the road further as you're reading this story, and his father doesn't put him to work in the field.

He sends them to supervise him and to report on them. Right? That's what every brother and sister wants for his older brother and sister or younger brother and sister to go and give Pop the report on what they're doing or not doing.

[9 : 07] So he goes into the field, and he looks for them in one place. He can't find them there. Somebody directs him to another place. He goes there, and he sees them, and he's walking toward them, and they see that coat of many colors coming toward them.

And you know what they immediately do? This is how bad they're hating him. They look at each other, and they say, you know what? Let's kill him. Now, how many of you fought with your brothers and sisters?

Come on, be honest. Yeah, I did, right? Mom would always tell us, don't you get blood on my carpet. You go outside. Now, he didn't get that bad normally, but I just want to tell you something. I never had thought, I'm going to kill him.

I'm going to kill her, or they would have that thought about me. But his brothers are actually conspiring to kill him. I mean, graveyard dead. And Reuben thinks to himself, we can't do that. It'd kill Dad. And so he says to him, listen, I've got a better plan. There's a cistern over here. Let's throw him in the cistern. And what he's thinking is, I'll come back and rescue him later.

[10 : 09] And we'll just go off and tell Dad we don't know what happened to him. His blood won't be on our hands. Okay, we'll do that. Well, Reuben leaves.

And after a while, an Egyptian slave trader comes through. And as he's coming through, this brother Judah thinks to himself, you know what? Why have his blood on our hands at all? Let's sell him into slavery, and we won't be responsible for what happens to him. They pull him up out of the cistern and give him 30 pieces of silver, or 20 pieces of silver, rather, to take their brother and go down to Egypt.

Now, imagine you're Joseph. And this is hard to do. It's hard to interject yourself into this situation that happened so long ago. But imagine that your brothers hate you bad enough.

They want you dead. They put you in a cistern. You're probably injured. They pull you back up out of the cistern. You think they've come to their senses. They're rescuing you. But instead, they bind your hands and bind your feet.

[11 : 12] And you see them get 20 pieces of silver because they've sold you to a slave trader. Can you imagine what you're thinking? Can you imagine what you feel?

Well, you read on. The story doesn't end there. They get down to Egypt, and this slave trader sells him to a rich guy by the name of Potiphar.

Potiphar has a huge estate, apparently. He's got a lot of people working for him. And he recognizes in Joseph, and when you study the life of Joseph, you see why. He's a sharp character. He's sharper than the average bear.

They recognize, man, this guy's got talent. And so he immediately promotes him to be the straw boss over his entire state. And he says to Joseph, Joseph, you've got free run.

You do whatever you like. Manage my affairs, but don't mess with my wife. And so he agrees to that. Well, things are looking up for him, right?

[12 : 12] He's doing a good job. Potiphar's pleased. But the Bible tells us in chapter 37, the latter part of chapter 37, that Joseph was a handsome man and well-built, and Potiphar's wife apparently was a woman who just lacked morality.

And so right off the bat, you know what she does? She goes to him and says, Joseph, will you come sleep with me? Now, forget for a second we're in church.

Just flesh out in your mind how this plays out in normal, everyday life. Here's a guy who's not going after a woman, but a woman of means and power who's going after this young guy who has absolutely no ties to this lady or this household.

I'm going to tell you, for the average young man, that'd be a pretty big obstacle, temptation to overcome. But you know what Joseph does? Joseph looks at her right off the bat and he says, no, can't do that, not going to do that.

Because you see, Potiphar has entrusted me with his possessions, with everything he has except you. And I have sworn to him, I've given him my word, I'm going to be faithful to him and I'm going to be a good steward.

[13:25] And it would be wrong in the eyes of your husband, but more importantly, it would be wrong in the eyes of God. I won't do this. Well, time passes on and she gets more and more aggressive until one day she just decides she's going to seduce him.

And she grabs him by the clothes and when she does, the only thing he can do, words are not going to help him now, he flees. He leaves his coat actually behind in her hand and he takes off. She is so humiliated. Can you see this woman mentally? She's so angry and ticked and humiliated. How dare he treat me like this? Who does he think he is? That she screams rape.

The servants come and she shows them the robe and says, he tried to attack me and seduce me. Go get my husband. They go get the husband. They tell him. And Joseph is thrown into prison. Now his brothers have already done him wrong. But watch this. He rebounded from that. And he does right. And he's living right. And Potiphar's wife comes on to him.

[14:28] And as difficult as it must have been, so easy would it have been to say, you know what? I'll just please her and nobody will be the wiser. She's not going to tell her husband. But instead he stands up.

He's noble, a man of integrity and character, and he does the right thing. And he gets punished for it. I know somewhere in this room there's somebody who can identify with that.

Somebody who at some point in your life, you have been a man or woman of character, and you have absolutely done the right thing, but it costs you. Instead of being rewarded for your good action, you're punished.

And that's what happened to Joseph. Now I want you to ask yourself, what would it be like to be Joseph? His family's betrayed him. He endured slavery and hardship.

Now Potiphar's wife turns on him. I got a feeling he'd probably be asking himself, where was God in all this? Man, I've tried to be faithful to God. I've lived for God. God, why'd you allow this to happen?

[15:29] Right? So he's in prison. Well, pretty soon he meets two fellow inmates who have been close to the Pharaoh at one point in time.

One is a cupbearer, and the other is a baker. They both follow the good graces of Pharaoh because Pharaoh was overly suspicious that they were going to either poison him or somehow do away with him.

So he has him cast into prison, and one night these two get a dream, have a dream, and they come to Joseph, and they say to Joseph, Joseph, you seem to be a man of God.

We've had this dream. What do you make of it? And Joseph listens to both of them, and after hearing both of them, this is what he says. He turns to the baker and he says, man, I don't know how to tell you this, but he's going to hang you.

It's not going to get better. It's going to get worse. In so many days, they're going to hang you, and they do. And he turns to the cupbearer, and he says to the cupbearer, but you are fortunate.

[16:32] What's going to happen is, in so many days, he's going to come, and he's going to release you. He's going to have restored confidence in you, and he's going to take you back into his court and allow you to serve him again.

And Joseph says to the cupbearer, listen, when you get in the good graces of Pharaoh, would you tell him how I've been mistreated? Would you help me out? Would you do me a favor? Would you mention me to Pharaoh?

Have you ever helped anybody out in hopes maybe down the road they'd help you out, but instead, they forget you? That's exactly what this cupbearer does to Joseph.

He gets back in the good graces of Pharaoh, but out of sight, out of mind, and he forgets him. And Joseph is stuck in prison. Now, you see all this happen before your eyes.

How do you think you're feeling now? Is anybody here willing to say, you know what, I think I'd begin to feel a little bit bitter. I think I'd begin to be eat up with hatred or animosity.

[17:32] I'd be thinking to myself, man, I hope my brothers and everybody who's had a hand in this pay someday for what they've done to me. The Bible doesn't tell us any of that. Joseph rocks on, and pretty soon, Pharaoh himself has a dream and is really troubling to him.

And he turns to the folk who work nearest him in his court, one being the cupbearer, and he says, do you all know anybody who can interpret dreams? Because here's the dream I've had. And that's

when the cupbearer remembers Joseph.

He says, listen, Pharaoh, I met this guy in prison. He's a Hebrew. And I'm telling you, he is really good at interpreting dreams. In fact, remember the baker that you hung?

Uh-huh. He told him a dream, and he predicted that would happen. And remember when you put me in prison? Yeah. Well, I told him about a dream, and he predicted that you would have me released.

And it came to pass. And Pharaoh says, go find that guy. And they go get Joseph, and they bring Joseph to Pharaoh. Pharaoh tells him his dream. And Joseph says, Pharaoh, I've got some scary news, but some good news for you.

[18:39] Here's the dream. He says, you're going to have seven years of bumper crops. I know you've been prosperous in the past, but never like you're going to be in the next seven years. Boy, Pharaoh's encouraged, right?

He says, but wait just a minute. Let me tell you something. It's going to be followed by seven years of the worst famine the world has ever seen. But don't get scared.

Let me tell you what. If you'll find somebody to manage your resources, to act wisely, you can come out on top in a huge way. Your people have enough for the seven years of plenty, but by saving and preparing for those seven years of want, you're going to have enough for everybody in Egypt.

But let me tell you something. In other places in the world, because they don't know this is going to happen, they'll be ill prepared. They'll use up the seven years of feast, and not be ready for the seven years of famine.

And they're going to come begging you to help them out. So it's a win-win for you, Pharaoh. You just got to find a good manager. And Pharaoh looks at Joseph and says, Joseph, you seem like a bright guy.

[19:47] How about you be the manager? Instantly, he becomes the number two man in all of Egypt. His life changes overnight. He goes from wearing rags to wearing fine clothes.

He's a free man. Second most powerful man in the world. Well, seven years of fruitful harvest comes, and he wisely stores it away.

Two years of famine come, and pretty soon the whole world is feeling that effect. And his brothers back down in the land of Canaan, they come to a place where, man, we've got to find some food, or we're going to starve.

And guess what they hear? There's food down in Egypt. We'll go down to Egypt and see Pharaoh, and we'll secure some food. Jacob sends his sons down there. When they get down there, we come to chapter 45, and I want us to look at our text from this point forward.

Here's what happens. They come before Joseph, and Joseph immediately recognizes who they are, but they don't have a clue who Joseph is.

[21:03] Any of you ever been in a situation like that? Man, I went to my 50th reunion a while back. Folk I hadn't seen in a while, and I'm going to tell you, I was glad they had name tags.

Because I didn't recognize hardly anybody, right? I mean, some of them knew me, but a lot of them, I didn't have a clue who they were.

And so that's what happens to Joseph. He knows them. They don't know him. Probably in part, that was brought on by the fact they never imagined in a million years their brothers going to be the number two men in all of Egypt.

They weren't anticipating. In their minds, they probably didn't even think about Joseph. They thought, he's dead by now, as long as he's been here in slavery. Well, in the end, he reaches out to them and forgives them, and it's an incredible story of how he demonstrates his forgiveness.

I want to show you five things he does that brought about a restoration of a relationship with his brothers that's just absolutely amazing because I want to tell you, as I put together this message, I have to believe that probably right here in this audience, there are some of you who are suffering from some broken relationships.

[22:19] Can I tell you, pretty often, more often than I'd like, I meet folk who say to me something like this, I haven't seen my son in five years. I haven't seen my son in ten years.

We don't talk anymore. I haven't seen my brother or my sister or my mother. We're estranged. I heard just two days ago of a man who was estranged from his family for 15 years, finally got back with his son.

He and his wife never got back together. The wife and the sons never got back together. Isn't it sad? It could be that right here in this audience, there's some folk today either with family or with friends.

Maybe it was somebody who used to go to this church and they got mad over something and you and them had a spiff and they've gone their separate ways. How do you restore relationships that are broken?

How do you forgive? And how do you get on with your life? That's what we're going to talk about. I want to share with you five things. If you have a sheet of paper and pencil, you might want to write these down. Here's the first. He immediately lay aside any thoughts of being vindictive.

[23 : 24] He immediately lay aside any thoughts of being vindictive. I want you to look at chapter 45 and verse 1. Joseph could no longer keep his composure in front of all his attendants.

So he called out, send everyone away from me. No one was with him when he revealed his identity to his brothers. But he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it and also Pharaoh's household heard it.

They don't have a clue who he is. He's been messing with them, checking out to see if they've developed character. You know the story how he sends them away and then they come back and he's put stuff in their packs.

Well, now he reveals himself to them and when he does, he just openly weeps in front of them and it's so loud, folk outside the room can hear Joseph wait.

You know what it says to me and when I read the rest of this text? He doesn't have a bit of animosity. Not one ounce of animosity is hard to believe toward his brothers.

[24 : 27] He wants to be restored to them and so it clearly tells me right off the bat, boy, he has never considered being vindictive. Now, I've got to be honest with you.

If it's old Ralph and these brothers have done to me what they've done to him, first time I saw him, I'd be thinking to myself, huh, who's got the upper hand now? Right?

I mean, here you come begging me for food. I don't even have to hurt you. All I've got to do is send you away hungry. All I've got to do is just say, nope, can't help you. Let you go back home and starve to death.

You created this situation, not me. I'm not even going to hurt you. Just go your way. But you know what? That would have been vindictive. Without doing anything, he's still trying to get to them. He could have had them thrown in jail. I'm going to let you ride in jail. I've been here 10 years, 15 years. I'm going to let you sit in jail 10, 15 years. See what that's like. He could have assigned them to hard labor.

[25 : 25] He could have had them executed on the spot. But he didn't consider any of that. You know why? Because Joseph was a non-vindictive person. I want to tell you something about Joseph.

It makes me admire him as much as anybody in the Old Testament. 2,000 years before Jesus would come and teach us to be non-vindictive and to love our enemies, Joseph is already practicing it.

Isn't that amazing? 2,000 years before Jesus would ever come, Joseph is already practicing being non-vindictive. I'll tell you a true story.

We're at a theme park when my kids are teenagers. And we're just going around having a big time. And I see this kid coming toward me. And on the front, his shirt says this, I don't get mad.

You know how those shirts always were? There was something on the back. And so when he passes me, I turn and look. And it says, I just get even. And I saw a lot of those shirts at that point in time.

[26 : 23] I want to take some. I hope all those shirts have rotted. I hope if you have one, you'll go home and burn it. Because I'm going to tell you something you can take to the bank today. Great people, there's no exception to this.

Great people are never vindictive. Great people are just, they never think in those shirts, I got to get back at you. You did this to me, I'm going to do that to you.

Great people just don't think that way. Jesus didn't think that way. Joseph didn't think that way. He didn't consider being vindictive to his brothers. So I'm going to tell you something. If you've got it in mind that somebody has done this to me and I'm going to make them pay, here's how I'm going to mete out their penalty for what they've done to me, dismiss that as fast as you can.

Because I'm going to tell you something. You're going down a road that won't lead you where you hope it will lead you. You think it's going to make you feel better? It's not going to make you feel better to be vindictive. What it's going to do is this.

It's going to put you on the same level as those that you now despise. You understand that? When you see that you're capable of treating them the way they treated you in order to get back, all it's going to do is bring you down in your own eye.

[27 : 34] You're going to look yourself in the mirror and say, you know what? I'm the same person that guy I just hurt was. I'm in the same spiritual condition he's in. Great people are never vindictive.

Secondly, he didn't try to embarrass them or demand apologies and expect great displays of remorse. Now, again, look back at those verses we just read.

This time look at verse 3. Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph. Is my father still living? But his brothers were too terrified to answer him. He weeps so loud, his entourage, the Egyptians, can hear him.

Outside in Pharaoh's court, they can hear him. He looks at his brothers and says, come here, come here, come here to me. And he grabs them and he hugs them and he kisses them and he says, you don't know me. I'm Joseph that you sold into slavery.

But I'm going to tell you something. He never tries to belittle them. He never tries to make them feel guilty. He never wants them to come pleading to him that they have done him wrong.

[28 : 36] Have you ever seen folk who they have this kind of attitude? If you want me to forgive you, you better come on bended knee. If you expect me to forgive you, you better come and you better plead and you better convince me that you really are sincere because you're going to have to prove to me that you really are sorry for what you did.

I'm going to tell you something. That's not how you restore broken relationships. It's just not how you do it. And that's not how Joseph did it. Joseph tried to help them to save face or he kept them from being embarrassed and didn't demand an apology or expect great displays of remorse.

Here's the third thing. He tried to help them to save face. He made it as easy as possible for them to return. Now, let's take a time out for a minute and let me just tell you what's in his head because we haven't got that far in the story yet.

But let me tell you what he's thinking. He doesn't want to punish them. He doesn't want to be vindictive as I said. He doesn't want to hurt them. He doesn't want them to feel guilty or shameful. What he wants is this. He wants them back in his life.

You understand? Maybe hard for some of you to imagine, but that's why he wants them back in his life. He wants his daddy back in his life, but his daddy's a long ways away down in the land of Canaan, right?

[29 : 56] He wants to meet his nieces and his nephews and his brother's wives. He's never seen them. He wants to know all those folk. He wants to have a relationship with them again.

He wants them, you don't know this yet, unless you've already read the text, he wants them to pick up and move from Canaan to Egypt. How awkward is that for those brothers? Can you just put yourself in their place for a minute?

Are they going to want to do that? Uh-uh. What do you want to do if you're one of Joseph's brothers? I want to get out of Dodge, right? I mean, I want the first train out of here. As soon as he quits talking and I think he'll let me leave, boy, I'm picking up my stuff and I'm gone, right?

I don't even want your food anymore. I just want to go home. I want to get out of here. I want to escape Egypt. He's smart enough. He knows that. But he knows he wants them to go home, get their families and come here.

You know why? Because he's going to take care of them. This is an incredible guy. He's going to take care of them. He's going to feed them. He wants them to move to Egypt. As you're going to see in a few minutes, he's already got a track of land picked out for them.

[30 : 59] They don't have a clue about any of this. So he's anticipating how they feel. And the way they're going to feel is this. If you'll not kill me, if you'll not put me in prison, I'm going to go home and, whoo, I'm getting out of here, right?

Why do they not want to go home and see their dad and say, hey, guess what? Joseph wants us to come to Egypt. Anybody know? Yeah, you know if you think about it for a second. Because to do that, your daddy who's been grieving Joseph for 10 years is going to say, Joseph, what are you talking about, Joseph?

He's dead. You told me he was dead. You told me you found his clothes. Well, all animals had torn him apart. How did you meet up with Joseph?

Well, Dad, I don't know how to tell you this, but we threw him in a cistern. We left him for dead.

Then we sold him to slaves or to slave owners.

Anybody want to go tell your daddy that? So he knows, boy, if I don't do everything I can, they're going to flee here as fast as they can. So what does he do?

[32 : 10] He tries to keep them from feeling embarrassed. He doesn't demand apologies. And he tries to help them save face. He made it as easy as possible for them to come back. Look at verse 4 and verse 5.

Verse 4 said, Then Joseph said to his brothers, Please come near me. And they came near. I am Joseph, your brother, he said, the one you sold into slavery. And now don't be worried or angry with yourselves for selling me here.

Can you believe you said that? Because God sent me ahead of you to preserve life. You know why he's saying that? He knows they're guilty.

They know they're guilty. They don't need anybody to remind them of that. But he's trying to give them a way to save face. To deal with this horrible thing that they've done.

This inexcusable. There's no justification for what they did. They can't say, Well, Dad gave you that coat of many colors and that's why we felt justified. They can't say, Well, you know, you bragged at the breakfast table one morning that we would one day serve you and that just ticked us off and so that justifies what we did.

[33 : 12] There's no justification for that. But he's trying to give them a way to save face. Listen, don't feel bad. Boy, I know what you did was wrong, but I want to tell you something. God has used this in a great, great, great way.

It's okay. It's worked out all right. God's had his hand. He had a purpose. You know what the purpose was? You were going to starve to death. I would have been down there with you in the land of Canaan starving to death right now except God brought me here ahead of you so that I could preserve life for you.

He gave me a way to save face. I want to tell you something, whether you're a boss, a daddy, a son, a daughter, a wife, whoever you are and you're on the house with somebody, if you really and truly want to see that relationship be healed and come together and it's not your pride, you don't need to be vindictive, you don't want to hurt anybody, all you want is to see things brought together again, I'm going to tell you something real, really important.

You need to hear this this morning. You need to find a way to do that such that the person you're talking to who has offended you can save to some degree face.

I'll tell you, I see a lot of people try to resolve bad situations and that's the place where it gets hung up and they're not very good because they want somehow that person to know how guilty they are.

[34 : 36] It's important that they impress on that person, okay, I'm going to forgive you, but you are the guilty one. And I'm telling you, if you really care about restoration, you'll find a way for them somehow to save face and that's what Joseph is trying to do.

Fourth thing, don't you see, he didn't dismiss their wrongdoing, but chose instead to focus on how God had used it in his life. Look at verse 8. Verse 8 says, Therefore it was not you who sent me here, but God.

He has made me a father to Pharaoh, Lord of his entire household, and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Now did God want his brothers to sell him into slavery?

No, that's not what he's saying. But what he's saying is, God had a plan for my life and God has used these circumstances to put me where I am today.

Can I tell you something? I can look back in my life and I can see moments in time where somebody hurt me, hurt me deeply, inexcusably. And yet at the same time see how some of those hurts that I suffered have made me into the person that I am today.

[35 : 46] And he was using that hurt to prepare me to help somebody else who down the road would be hurt in a similar fashion. Can you see that in your life? Everything bad that happens doesn't work out for bad in your life.

Have you seen that? Can you think of times, moments in time that something appeared on the surface? It's going to be bad, but you know what? God ended up using it for good. And that's how Joseph chose to think.

Here's the last thing and I close. He did everything in his power to restore a broken relationship with his families. Those who had inexcusably made his life miserable.

I want you to see this. Look at verse 9 through 15. Return quickly to my father and say to him, This is what your son Joseph says. God has made me Lord of all Egypt. Come down with me without delay.

You can settle in the land of Goshen and be near me. You, your children and grandchildren, your sheep, cattle, and all you have. There I will sustain you for there will be five more years of famine. Otherwise you, your household, and everything you have will become destitute.

[36 : 52] Look, your brothers and my brother Benjamin's eyes can see that it is I, Joseph, who am speaking to you. Tell my father all about my glory in Egypt and about all you have seen and bring my father here quickly.

Then Joseph threw his arms around Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept on his shoulder. Joseph kissed each of his brothers as he wept. And afterward, his brothers talked with him.

I don't have time to read it. Let me tell you. If you read the verses that follow this, you know what happens? The Egyptians used carts that the Hebrews didn't use.

And after he's told him all this, think how they felt when they came forward and he hugged them. This guy they sold into slavery and he kisses them and they look in his eyes and tears are pouring down his face.

And they know, they can tell by his emotions, he really does mean it. He really has forgiven us. I can't understand. I don't know how he does it, but boy, he has really and truly forgiven.

[37 : 54] To top it all off, you know what he does? He says, now here's the thing. I'm going to give you a bunch of food to take back in the meantime until you can get here. But I'm going to send some of these Egyptian carts with you so that you can load up all the stuff and nieces, nephews, and everybody and bring them here to me.

You know what he did? He sent beacons. You know Beacons Moving Company? That's what he was doing. I'm sending beacons down there for you and they're going to move you here.

You don't have to pack yourself. They're going to help. They're going to bring you here right to my doorstep. And you're going to Goshen and I didn't tell you about that. Goshen is the best land in all of Egypt. And you know why he's putting them there?

Because his people, you know what they do for a living? They're shepherds. And you read the scripture and Egyptians hated shepherds. So he's going to put them in an isolated place where he can care for them and it's the best of the land and he's going to keep them from being harmed by their neighbors.

You know what that is? That's going the hundredth mile to make it easy because they've got a tough task. They've got to go back and look at Dad and say, Dad, we're going to kill you, son. We brought a lot of heartache on you.

[39 : 04] Please forgive us. But here's the good news. He's alive. He's alive. And I don't understand Dad, but he wants us all to come down there. He so wanted it.

He went to the nth degree to do everything. When it was all sitting down, I'm going to tell you something. If they don't come back, it ain't on Joseph. If they don't come back, oh, Joseph, he did every last thing he could do to get that family back to him.

And here's my question to you as I close. That person with whom you're on the outs, that person with whom you have a broken relationship, have you gone that far yet? I meet a lot of people who tell me something like this.

Pray for me. I'm on the outs with, and they name somebody, a family member, a relationship, and they say, I've tried to make amends.

I've tried to get back together. And I don't doubt they have. But I often want to say to them, have you done everything you could possibly do? Have you done everything?

[40 : 10] I mean, like Joseph, did you go that extra mile or did you just say, hey, you know, I'm sorry we had a riff. I forgive you. You want to come back and be with me? If you don't, you're just going your way.

Well, I tried. You did everything you could do. I'm going to ask you one question to consider. Have you ever considered taking part of the blame? Now, Joseph, you didn't have to do that.

But maybe you do. Maybe for you to be reconciled to that person if they mean enough to you and you want them back in your life, maybe you ought to just say, well, you know what?

I look back on that now, and I'm sure I was to blame in part. And I just want you to know, I need you back in my life. When I was pastor of a church at one time, there was a person on our staff who was a little bit insecure, and every time something went wrong, they always had to find somebody to blame.

So it wasn't uncommon that this person would gather people together and they would say, well, something and such happened, and I just want you to know it wasn't me. And they would go person by person and say, was it you?

[41 : 18] Was it you? Did you do it? And so one day I came in the office and that was going on. There were about five of them standing there, and this person was growing them, and they were saying, was it you?

I didn't do it. Was it you? Was it you? And I just overheard, I didn't even know what it was we were talking about. And so I just said, it was me. I did. I didn't even know what we were talking about. But I just knew this, it didn't matter. What mattered was that we're together, we're a team, and there's unity, and we're restored to one another, right?

It doesn't matter who's wrong. Does it really matter? There's some people in your life you need in your life. You just need them in your life. And so maybe the thing you have to do is take part of the blame, even though you know I'm not to blame at all.

Could you do that? We're going to sing a hymn of invitation of the Spirit of God spoken to you. You come as we stand and Ryan leads us. in the day of the Live here and Ryan adalah of our village said