

Homework - Week 5

Day 1

Read Genesis 42.

In this chapter, we see a reunion brewing that has been 20+ years in the making. But as fate would have it, Joseph is the only one that recognizes the impending reunion. Joseph's brothers are completely clueless about the identity of this powerful Egyptian ruler. If that seems strange to you, remember that Joseph was just a teenager when his brothers last saw him, and now he is in his late thirties. Not only that, the Egyptian culture and his powerful position had drastically changed his appearance. He was clothed in fine linens, clean shaven in the Egyptian manner of that time, and he would have looked completely different from the 17-year-old Hebrew boy they had thrown in a pit so many years ago. As if that wasn't enough, he was also using an interpreter to communicate with them (verse 23). They had no reason to think that this was their long-lost brother. The very possibility wasn't even remotely on their radar.

In Genesis 42:6, we see that Joseph's brothers arrive in his presence and immediately bow down with their faces to the ground. **Look at Genesis 42:10, and record how they reference him and themselves:**

Now go back and read Genesis 37:7-8. Record below Joseph's first dream and his brothers response to Joseph:

Talk about a spot-on fulfillment of that dream! Not only do they bow down to him just like the dream predicted, but their fears are realized when they reference him as "lord" and themselves as "servants." In addition, the dream also portrays them as sheaves of grain...the very thing they are now requesting of Joseph! While it may have taken 20 years for the dream to be fulfilled, with many detours along the way, God always keeps His Word. Not only that, but He is intimately involved with every aspect of our lives, down to the most intricate details.

Read the following verses about God's involvement and care for us. Circle the one that speaks to you today. Luke 12:6-7 // Matthew 6:25-26 // Psalm 56:8 // Psalm 139:13-14

As soon as Joseph sees his brothers, he recognizes them. I have to wonder if he had been looking for them, knowing there was a possibility they might show up one day looking for food. Once he sees them, he pretends to be a stranger and speaks harshly with them. (verse 7) He questions where they came from, what they want, and then accuses them of being spies. **Before you think that Joseph is acting out of revenge, go back to Genesis 41:51 and look at what Joseph named his firstborn son.** As we discussed last week, this name reveals the work that God had done in Joseph's heart allowing him to forgive and let go of the resentment that he held toward his family. Every time Joseph called his firstborn's name, he was reminded that God had "made" him forget. Joseph was not keeping a list of those who had wronged him so that he could find the perfect opportunity to punish them. Goodness knows he had plenty of people to put on that list (ahem...Potiphar's wife, the

cupbearer, and of course his brothers). In his position, he had the power and authority to carry out that revenge.

Are you holding on to “lists” of those that have wronged, hurt, embarrassed, falsely accused, or taken advantage of you? Do you find yourself dreaming about the day that you can give them what they deserve? Read Romans 12:19-21 and record what it says about this subject. What do you find challenging about this verse?

If revenge was all Joseph wanted, he would have likely revealed himself immediately and executed a fitting punishment right there on the spot. Instead, we will see as the story progresses, that Joseph was looking for signs of true repentance from his brothers. He wanted to uncover the state of their hearts. He also was looking for information on his father and younger brother, Benjamin. Once Joseph finds out that Benjamin is still alive, he devises a plan to see him. He tells his brothers they must bring Benjamin to Egypt in order to prove they are not spies. He then throws them all in prison for three days. Can you imagine what is going on in their minds during that time? At the end of three days, Joseph changes the terms and informs them he will hold one brother prisoner while letting the rest return with food for their families. However, they must bring back their younger brother if they want the imprisoned brother to be released.

At this point, the brothers’ guilty consciences has kicked into high gear. **Look at Genesis 42:21 and record why they think this is happening to them:**

Joseph’s brothers have been living with guilt for 20+ years. While they had moved on with their lives and we don’t know how often they thought about it or even talked about it, the events in Egypt bring those memories roaring into their minds with a vengeance. They immediately relate their current distress with the distress they inflicted upon Joseph. They see their troubles as God punishing them for their sins. Guilt has a way of digging its’ claws in deep and not letting go, regardless of how much time passes. It steals our joy and saps our strength. David most likely wrote Psalm 32 after his sin of adultery with Bathsheba, and the chapter paints a vivid picture of what unconfessed sin and a guilty conscience does to a person:

How joyful is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! ² How joyful is the man the Lord does not charge with sin and in whose spirit is no deceit! ³ When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night Your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer’s heat. Selah ⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and You took away the guilt of my sin. (Psalm 32:3-4)

The beautiful thing is that God offers us forgiveness, no matter what we have done. We simply have to acknowledge and confess our sin. Bring it out into the light! God is faithful to remove the guilt and restore our joy. **Do you have guilt that you have been dragging around with you for years? Have you brought it into the light, acknowledged it, and asked God to forgive you? Take some time today to do that.**

Day 2

Read Genesis 42:22 and 42:37-38.

These are the only mentions of Rueben in this chapter, but there is an important lesson to be learned from his life. Rueben was the firstborn of Jacob, and as such, should have been a leader in the family. However, you notice here that his brothers did not listen to him (look back at Genesis 37:21-22). As we see in verses 37 and 38 of this chapter, Jacob doesn't heed his suggestions either. Rueben had lost his credibility and standing in the family, but why?

Look at Genesis 35:22 and record what Rueben did:

As the firstborn, Rueben would eventually inherit his father's concubine. Yet we see in this verse that he acts prematurely and arrogantly by trying to claim her before the time is right. As a result, he loses the respect and trust of his family and eventually loses his birthright (**read Genesis 49:3-4**).

People are watching to see how we live and the choices we make. Whether we like it or not, those choices affect our ability to lead and influence others. We can't publicly lead and encourage others to make godly choices, when we are making the wrong choices in private. Even if those private choices aren't seen by man, we know that God sees them. (**read Jeremiah 16:17, I Corinthians 4:5, and Hebrews 4:13**)

In Rueben's case, his brothers had witnessed his sinful choice, and when he had an opportunity later to lead his brothers in making the right choice, they wouldn't listen to him. We must have a bigger picture of our actions and the impact they have on the people around us. Unconfessed sin wreaks havoc not just in our own lives but in the lives of those around us.

In I Timothy 4:16, Paul tells us: *"Pay close attention to your life and your teaching; persevere in these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers."*

Character matters! Don't let the world or Satan tell you otherwise. We have seen this throughout the Joseph story, as his righteous and godly choices have positively impacted the people around him. With Rueben, we unfortunately see the opposite scenario with his bad choices resulting in the loss of influence.

Spend some time today examining your heart. Is there a secret sin that you need to confess? Is there a choice you are making in private that you need to repent and turn away from? There is such freedom when we bring things into the light! Read I John 1:9, and be encouraged that God is faithful to forgive if we take the first step and confess.

This story is also a good reminder to spend time praying for the spiritual leaders in your life. Pray that they would remain pure and Satan would not have any foothold in their lives. Pray that they would conduct themselves honorably in all things (Hebrews 13:18).

Make a list of some spiritual leaders that you can pray for this week:

Before we wrap up Genesis 42, I want to take a look at Jacob's response when the brothers return with the grain.

 **Read Genesis 42:36. Record Jacob's response below:**

Talk about a Debbie Downer! His sons have just returned with bags full of grain and money, saving their family from immediate starvation. Rather than seeing God's provision, he focuses on the negative. He could not get beyond his own grief and fears to see the bigger picture. This was the patriarch of the family! Jacob should have been pointing his family back to God. This was a great opportunity to remind his sons that God was faithful and He would provide. He could have encouraged them with stories of how God had been faithful in the past and demonstrated what it looked like to stand on faith that God will keep His promises. Instead, he allowed fear to cripple and sideline his faith. How often do we do the same thing?


Look up the following verses and record what they say about fear:

Deuteronomy 31:8

Psalms 34:4

Psalms 56:3-4

II Timothy 1:7

 **Is there an area of your life that you are holding too tightly out of fear? It could be your children, or it could be a dream, possessions, or your comfort zone. Write down a prayer below asking God to fill you with faith and remove your fears. Let's stand on God's promises and not let fear hold us back from what He has for us!**


Day 3

Read Genesis 43

The famine continues and Jacob's family has run out of the grain Joseph provided. Out of options, Jacob instructs his sons to go back to Egypt and buy some more food. However, they quickly remind Jacob that they can't go back without Benjamin.

Look at Genesis 43:8-9, and record what Judah offers to Jacob if he will send Benjamin with them.

In the prior chapter, Rueben offered his two sons if they didn't bring Benjamin home (Genesis 42:37). Now Judah is offering himself, an even more generous offer than Rueben made. Notice also that in verse 8, Judah reminds his father that it is necessary for the sake of the whole family. He helps Jacob to stop and see the larger picture and urges him to look beyond the grief and fear and consider all the others that were counting on him to live.

 **Have you ever encountered a time when you were consumed with fear, and couldn't see the larger picture of what was happening around you? Did something happen to shift your focus? Or did someone in your life help you get a new perspective?**

Once Jacob reluctantly agrees to send Benjamin, he instructs them to take gifts with them (Genesis 43:11-14). We have seen Jacob use this tactic before. **Read Genesis 32:13-21.** Jacob continues to feel the need to manipulate situations, rather than trusting God to provide and protect. This particular gift-giving could have backfired on him this time around!

Read Genesis 43:11 and record the specific things Jacob instructed them to take to Egypt:

Go back to Genesis 37:25 and record the spices that the caravan of Ishmaelites were carrying:

What are the odds that the brothers would show up with the exact same spices and smells that would immediately take Joseph back 20+ years to the painful memory of that long trip to Egypt? Can you just imagine what must have been going through Joseph's mind? Thankfully he was not a man easily swayed by his emotions.

Once they show up in Egypt, Joseph has them sent to his house with instructions to prepare a feast for them. **Look at Genesis 43:18 and record how the brothers responded:**

These poor brothers seem to be overcome with fear every time they turn around. Unfortunately, this is a common experience when we have unresolved guilt in our lives. It magnifies our anxiety and leaves us looking over our shoulders, just waiting for someone to “find out” or for the consequences to catch up with us. We tend to think that every action and word has hidden meaning, and we become suspicious of everything around us. Like Shakespeare said, “*Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind.*” What an exhausting way to live!



Have you ever experienced a time when you had unresolved guilt and it left you anxious, suspicious, and/or fearful?

Is there any unresolved guilt in your life right now that is causing anxiety? Take some time today to bring it out into the light. Let God’s perfect love drive out your fear! (1 John 4:18)

I love Joseph’s response when he sees Benjamin (**read Genesis 43:29-30**). The years of heartache and adversity had not changed his affection and longing for his family. So many times we can see people get hardened by the struggles of life. Yet, Joseph remained tender, despite all that he had gone through. On the flip side, he did not allow the power, wealth, and influence of his new position to alter his character either. It could have made him arrogant and self-sufficient, not needing his family, but that wasn’t the case. Joseph’s genuine concern and love for the people around him is evident throughout the story. Whether we go through hard times or good, we should never lose sight of the value found in relationships.

This chapter ends with Joseph sharing a feast with his brothers. In verse 33, we see that Joseph has them seated in birth order which astonished them. How could this Egyptian ruler possibly know their birth order? Despite these little clues, they still had no idea that it was their long-lost brother. The grace that Joseph shows his brothers is extraordinary. They didn’t deserve the treatment they were given, yet Joseph showered grace and blessings down on them.

Look back over the last two chapters (Genesis 42-43) and record all the examples of undeserved grace the brothers received:

What a beautiful picture of the grace our Heavenly Father pours out on us, even though we don’t deserve it. Aren’t you thankful that there is nothing we have to do to earn that grace? In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul reminds us that “*For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift— not from works, so that no one can boast.*” **Spend some time today thanking God for His grace in your life!**

Day 4

Read Genesis 44.

This chapter starts out with Joseph sending the brothers back home with bags full of grain, plus the money returned just like the first time. However, this time he has his men put his silver cup in Benjamin's bag. He doesn't let them get far before he sends his steward after them to get the cup.

Record the brother's response to the accusation in Genesis 44:9:

This was a rash promise to make considering they did not know with certainty that everyone in their party was innocent. It sounds similar to a promise made by their father, Jacob, after Laban accused him of stealing one of his gods. **(Read Genesis 31:30-32)** We must be careful when we hastily make promises, especially when they are contingent on the actions of others.

How do the brothers respond when the cup is found in Benjamin's bag? (Genesis 44:13)

I want you to notice that the brothers did not have to go back. They were not guilty of anything. The cup had been found in Benjamin's sack, and the steward had clearly said that only the guilty party must become a slave. The rest of the brothers were blameless and free to continue home. This was the moment of truth. Would they return home to their father with the news of Benjamin's fate? Would they desert their younger brother as they had with Joseph years earlier?

The dysfunction of their family had not changed over the years. Jacob was still playing favorites, now it was just Benjamin instead of Joseph. Yet, the brothers react with a genuine love and concern for their brother, and they act in unity. Not only do they all go back with Benjamin, but it says that they "tore their clothes," which was a sign of anguish and distress. I can only imagine how it must have pleased Joseph to see all of them walking back into his house.

What does Judah propose to Joseph? (Genesis 44:33-34)

Here is where we see true repentance on display. Judah was willing to take the punishment on himself, rather than hurt his father again by leaving Benjamin in Egypt. Earlier in the story, we saw that the brothers were sorry for what they had done to Joseph. **Look back at Genesis 42:21-22.** However, sorrow is not the same as repentance. Sorrow is regret for what you have done or sometimes just sorry that you got caught. Repentance on the other hand is a complete change of heart. It involves recognizing your sin and turning the opposite direction.

Read Acts 3:19 below and circle where we turn after repentance:

"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord"

This was the kind of repentance that Joseph was looking for in his brothers. Yes, they obviously regretted what they had done to Joseph years earlier. But, had that regret led to a deeper transformation of their heart? If presented again with the choice to abandon their younger brother, what would they choose?

All of Joseph's posturing and tests over the last few chapters, even the suffering and anguish that he put them through, had been strategically planned to bring his brothers to this point.

 **Read II Corinthians 7:8-11 and note below what Paul says about the relation between sorrow, grief, pain, and repentance.**

 **Have you ever encountered a time that God used sorrow, grief, or pain to bring you to true repentance?**

Joseph recognized that reconciliation was not possible without genuine repentance. If unity was going to be restored in their family, it was crucial that they change their way of thinking and turn from their old ways. Imagine the scene with me as the brothers come back ready to throw themselves at Joseph's feet and beg for mercy because they had no defense to give. As we will see in the next chapter, they found a brother who was eager to receive them with open arms. What a beautiful picture of our relationship with our Heavenly Father. No matter what we have done, He is always waiting for us with open arms!

There is a beautiful picture of true repentance in Psalm 51, which was written by King David after the prophet Nathan confronted him regarding his adultery with Bathsheba. **Read Psalm 51 and take note of David's heart condition as he comes before the Lord. In the space below, make a list of the things David experienced as a result of his repentance:**

When we approach our Heavenly Father with true repentance, we receive forgiveness, restoration of relationship, and joy that can only come from Him. **Is there an area of your life where you need to practice true repentance, not just sorrow or regret? Is the Holy Spirit pointing out a sin that you need to completely turn away from (repent)? It doesn't matter what you have done or how many times you have done it, God is faithful to forgive and forget.**

Day 5

Read Genesis 45

The long awaited reveal is finally here! After witnessing a heart of repentance from his brothers, Joseph can no longer hide his identity from them. What an extraordinary moment that must have been!

In Genesis 45:1-3, how does Joseph's response differ from his brothers?

Joseph had been holding onto this secret through two visits by his brothers. His emotions were running high, as evidenced by the fact that his weeping was heard by the servants. The brothers on the other hand were speechless.

What do you think was going through their mind?

Look at Genesis 45:4. What does Joseph tell them to do and how does he refer to himself?

All of the sudden, this powerful Egyptian ruler is not only speaking their language but claiming to be their long-lost brother. They must have thought they were seeing a ghost, and I'm sure their brains were scrambling as they tried to make sense of it all. Joseph had them come closer so they could get a better look at him, and then he refers to himself as their brother. Joseph recognized that he needed to steer them back to the relationship they shared. Despite what had transpired between them, they were still family, and nothing could change that.

Read Genesis 45:5-8 and record the three different reasons that Joseph gives for God sending him to Egypt:

I love how Joseph was able to look beyond what had been done to him, even though it was unfair and unjust, and see God's hand in the midst of it all. He doesn't deny that they did something evil (vs 5), yet he recognizes a very powerful truth that God is bigger than our circumstances.

 **Look up Romans 8:28 and write it below:**

 **Have you ever experienced a time when God brought good out of a bad situation?**

 **What hope does this verse give you for your current situation?**

Joseph then instructs his brothers to go back to Canaan, tell his father that he is alive, and bring everyone back to live in Egypt. The brothers had come hoping they could acquire enough grain to keep them alive for a little while longer, and suddenly Joseph was offering them so much more! He was offering to be their protector and provider and to bless them beyond their wildest dreams.

Read Genesis 45:9-11 below in the Message translation and circle all the things Joseph is promising his brothers, father, and their families:

“Hurry back to my father. Tell him, ‘Your son Joseph says: I’m master of all of Egypt. Come as fast as you can and join me here. I’ll give you a place to live in Goshen where you’ll be close to me—you, your children, your grandchildren, your flocks, your herds, and anything else you can think of. I’ll take care of you there completely. There are still five more years of famine ahead; I’ll make sure all your needs are taken care of, you and everyone connected with you—you won’t want for a thing.’”

We serve a God who offers the same things...and so much more! Joseph’s interaction with his brothers in this scene paints a vivid picture of our Father’s heart for us. God has everything we need. Everything. We simply have to come. Notice how Joseph instructs them to come. In the HCSB translation, Genesis 45:9 says to *“Come down to me without delay.”*


As Joseph sent them off, notice his final instructions to them in Genesis 45:24...*“Don’t argue on the way.”* He knew if they started trying to figure out what had just happened and dwelling on the past, they were going to get hung up in blaming each other, questioning his motives, and trying to figure out his next move. All that would do is slow them down or stop them from coming all together. Isn’t this the same tactic our enemy uses with us today? He keeps bringing up the past and telling us we aren’t worthy of God’s promises. Or he appeals to our sense of control and convinces us to try to figure out God’s next move, or just circumvent Him altogether and try to do it on our own. He plants doubts and lies in our minds, and suddenly the quarreling that Joseph warns his brothers about is happening in our thought lives. Yet God tells us to come...don’t try to figure it out and understand it...just come and do it quickly.

What is keeping you from taking your needs to God today? Is it sin or guilt? Is it simply trying to handle it on your own? Has the devil convinced you that you are not worthy or deserving? I hope you hear the heart of the Father today. He invites you to come, not with hesitation or uncertainty, but to come quickly and without delay. He is waiting, and He has good things in store for you! Spend some time letting the Father reveal His heart to you today. He loves you so!


Group Discussion - Week 5

These are all the Group Discussion questions from this week's homework compiled onto two pages. This page is designed to help facilitate table discussion at the next session. You can record your answers again on this page, or simply look back at your homework...whatever you prefer!


Read Genesis 42. Notice Jacob's response in Genesis 42:36. Talk about a Debbie Downer! His sons have just returned with bags full of grain and money, saving their family from immediate starvation. Rather than seeing God's provision, he focused on the negative. He could not get beyond his own grief and fears to see the bigger picture. This was the patriarch of the family! Jacob should have been pointing his family back to God. This was a great opportunity to remind his sons that God was faithful and He would provide. He could have encouraged them with stories of how God had been faithful in the past and demonstrated what it looks like to stand on faith that God will keep His promises. Instead, he allowed fear to cripple and sideline his faith. How often do we do the same thing?

 **Is there an area of your life that you are holding too tightly out of fear? It could be your children, or it could be a dream, possessions, or your comfort zone. Write down a prayer below asking God to fill you with faith and remove your fears. Let's stand on God's promises and not let fear hold us back from what He has for us! (page 62)**

Read Genesis 43. Notice that in verse 8, Judah reminds his father that it is necessary for the sake of the whole family. He helps Jacob to stop, see the larger picture, and urges him to look beyond the grief and fear and consider all the others that were counting on him to live.

 **Have you ever encountered a time when you were consumed with fear, and couldn't see the larger picture of what was happening around you? Did something happen to shift your focus? Or did someone in your life help you get a new perspective? (page 63)**

Look at Genesis 43:18 and notice how the brothers responded. These poor brothers seem to be overcome with fear every time they turn around. Unfortunately, this is a common experience when we have unresolved guilt in our lives. It magnifies our anxiety and leaves us looking over our shoulders, just waiting for someone to "find out" or for the consequences to catch up with us. We tend to think that every action and word has hidden meaning, and we become suspicious of everything around us. Like Shakespeare said, "*Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind.*" What an exhausting way to live!

 **Have you ever experienced a time when you had unresolved guilt and it left you anxious, suspicious, and/or fearful? (page 64)**

 **Read Genesis 44. What does Judah propose to Joseph? (Genesis 44:33-34)**


Here is where we see true repentance on display. Judah was willing to take the punishment on himself, rather than hurt his father again by leaving Benjamin in Egypt. Earlier in the story, we saw that the brothers were sorry for what they had done to Joseph. **Look back at Genesis 42:21-22.** However, sorrow is not the same as repentance. Sorrow is regret for what you have done or sometimes just sorry that you got caught. Repentance on the other hand is a complete change of heart. It involves recognizing your sin and turning the opposite direction.

All of Joseph's posturing and tests over the last few chapters, even the suffering and anguish that he put them through, had been strategically planned to bring his brothers to this point.

 **Read II Corinthians 7:8-11 and note below what Paul says about the relation between sorrow, grief, pain, and repentance.**

 **Have you ever encountered a time that God used sorrow, grief, or pain to bring you to true repentance?**

Read Genesis 45. I love how Joseph was able to look beyond what had been done to him, even though it was unfair and unjust, and see God's hand in the midst of it all. He doesn't deny that they did something evil (vs 5), yet he recognizes a very powerful truth that God is bigger than our circumstances.

 **Look up Romans 8:28 and write it below:**

 **Have you ever experienced a time when God brought good out of a bad situation?**

 **What hope does this verse give you for your current situation?**