

Plot Twist: the story of Joseph

Genesis 45:1-15

“Nobody gets the story they want” -John Ortberg

Genesis 45:1-15 Joseph could stand it no longer. There were many people in the room, and he said to his attendants, “Out, all of you!” So he was alone with his brothers when he told them who he was. ² Then he broke down and wept. He wept so loudly the Egyptians could hear him, and word of it quickly carried to Pharaoh’s palace.

³ “I am Joseph!” he said to his brothers. “Is my father still alive?” But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them. ⁴ “Please, come closer,” he said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, “I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. ⁵ But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. ⁶ This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. ⁷ God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors.^[a] ⁸ So it was God who sent me here, not you! And he is the one who made me an adviser^[b] to Pharaoh—the manager of his entire palace and the governor of all Egypt.

⁹ “Now hurry back to my father and tell him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately! ¹⁰ You can live in the region of Goshen, where you can be near me with all your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and everything you own. ¹¹ I will take care of you there, for there are still five years of famine ahead of us. Otherwise you, your household, and all your animals will starve.’”

¹² Then Joseph added, “Look! You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that I really am Joseph! ¹³ Go tell my father of my honored position here in Egypt. Describe for him everything you have seen, and then bring my father here quickly.” ¹⁴ Weeping with joy, he embraced Benjamin, and Benjamin did the same. ¹⁵ Then Joseph kissed each of his brothers and wept over them, and after that they began talking freely with him.

“Forgiveness” is not a word found in vv1-15 but the idea and act of forgiveness is found throughout.

1. What forgiveness is.

- Proverbs 24:29 “Do not say: ‘I’ll do to them as they have done to me. I’ll pay them back for what they did.’”
 - “If someone wrongs you, you start by hoping for that person to be unhappy. But then you may graduate to saying and doing things to hurt them and those around them. What is happening? The evil done to you has overcome you and is shaping you.”
 - We can become twisted like that which twisted us.
- Marks of forgiveness.
 - Refusing to exact revenge, get even.
 - Unwilling to nurse resentment.
 - Declining to keep a record of wrongs.
 - Rejecting “schadenfreude”.

2. What forgiveness is not.

1. Forgiveness is not forgetting what happened.
2. Forgiveness is not automatically trusting.
3. Forgiveness is not diminishing a wrongdoing.
4. Forgiveness is not ceasing to feel the pain.
5. Forgiveness is not necessarily reconciliation.

3. What is the key to forgiving others?

- Sunflower is a “heliotrope”.
 - Helio: Sun Trope: turn
 - Joseph was a “heliotrope”.

- 5 It was **God** who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives.
- 7 **God** has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors.
- 8 So it was **God** who sent me here, not you! And **he** is the one who made me an adviser^l to Pharaoh...
- 9 **God** has made me master over all the land of Egypt. So come down to me immediately!

Colossians 3:13 “Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.”

“Forgiveness is releasing someone from their debt (at our own cost) just as God has released us from our debt. It is the ultimate expression of love.”

Corrie ten Boom and her family were arrested by the Nazis for hiding hunted Jews. She was sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp where she watched her father and sister die and she herself suffered at the hands of many. Some years later this happened:

“It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time.

He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. ‘How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein.’ He said. ‘To think that, as you say, God has washed my sins away!’

His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who preached so often the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.

Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.

I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me your forgiveness.

As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on his. When he tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself."

What do you want your forgiveness story to be??