

Revealed Love

John waited 15 years for something good to come out of all the bad stuff that had happened to him. A small group of his cohorts had advanced up the corporate ladder using his proposals. They had given mere mention to his contributions but hadn't given him full credit for his ideas. Behind his back, they grossly exaggerated whatever failures or negligence they perceived in his work. So, while they were promoted to higher positions, John lagged behind.

Then the Board of Directors appointed a new chief executive officer. The new CEO studied in-depth the company's prior proposals and how those had worked out. He also delved into who had created and executed them. Within six months, John was promoted to executive vice president over a corporate division, leap-frogging his former cohorts and becoming their superior. The CEO granted him full freedom to realign his division in whatever way he saw fit. Clearly, the recipe for revenge was being presented to him on a silver platter! So how did he react after waiting 15 years for this moment?

Most of us would expect John to call those former cohorts into his plush new office, humiliate them for what they'd done to him, and then fire them. But he didn't. He reflected on how God had used those difficult times to develop him into the man he is today. When he called in the former cohorts, they were nervous that they'd be fired or at least demoted. John did briefly address their past actions and reiterated that things weren't going to work that way in the future. But then he reasigned them to lead the different areas of the division.

- 1. *How difficult is it for you to trust God?***
- 2. *What does it take for you to trust someone? To trust God?***
- 3. *What blessings occur when you trust the Lord?***

Joseph's Disclosure

Genesis 45:1-7, KJV

1 Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

Genesis 45:1-7, NIV

¹Then 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. ²And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

³Joseph 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.

⁴Then 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! ⁵And 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. ⁶For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. ⁷But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance."

In Genesis 44:33-34, Judah concluded an impassioned request on behalf of Benjamin, his younger brother, to Joseph. Judah offered to become a substitute in slavery for Benjamin.

As Judah spoke, Joseph must have listened to see whether the once egotistical, vengeful brothers had changed.

Finally, Joseph commanded his attendants to leave the room (45:1). His emotional outburst was so intense that his weeping could even be heard by the servants who had departed.

Joseph's brothers were shocked to hear the second-most powerful person in Egypt declare, "I am Joseph!" (vs. 3) and ask about his father whom he had not seen since he was 17.

Joseph's brothers made no reply to his question, but wondered whether he would execute them on the spot. Instead, Joseph called them closer to look at his face. He was Joseph, the brother whom they had sold into slavery. Only Joseph could have known that detail. The person they had terribly wronged now had absolute power over them.

However, like his brothers, Joseph was a different person and not interested in revenge. He was able and willing to forgive them because he saw his trials from a godly perspective.

What follows signifies the theological high point of Joseph's story. Instead of concentrating on his brothers' evil intentions, he focused on God's supreme plan of blessing him with success and saving people from destruction. He urged his brothers not to be angry with themselves. Though their past actions were deplorable, God had used their decisions to place Joseph in a position to rescue Egypt and even his own family.

Joseph explained that the two years of famine that had already past would extend to seven, but God would use Joseph to preserve a "remnant" (vs. 7) of His chosen people. This implied they would be rescued only because God had something special in store for this family.

4. *What prompted Joseph's strong reaction?*

5. *What prevented Joseph's brothers from responding to him in a positive way?*

6. *What would have caused Joseph's brothers to feel distressed and angry with themselves?*

7. *What explanation did Joseph offer his brothers to calm their nerves?*

Joseph's Instructions

Genesis 45:8, 10-15, KJV

8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

...

10 And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:

11 And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.

12 And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.

13 And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.

14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

Genesis 45:8, 10-15, NIV

⁸"So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.

¹⁰"You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

¹²"You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. ¹³Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly."

¹⁴Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

The main point of Joseph's explanation was that ultimately God sent him to Egypt. Joseph said that the Lord had made

him a “father” (vs. 8) to Pharaoh, speaking figuratively about someone giving others trustworthy advice.

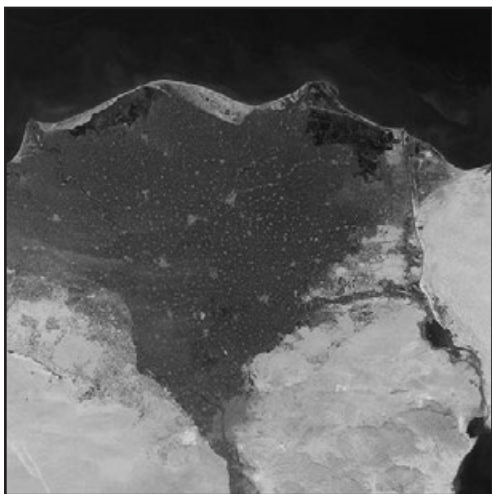
Joseph had worked out a plan for the family. He would quickly settle them in Egypt to survive the famine, which had several more years to go. The entire clan—family members, livestock, and all their possessions—would settle in the “land of Goshen” (vs. 10, KJV), in the Nile Delta region. Joseph promised to provide what they needed and would watch over them, especially in the five remaining years of famine.

Joseph also wanted there to be no doubt among his siblings that he truly was their brother. Here we find Joseph dispensing with an interpreter and speaking directly to his brothers. He urged his siblings to tell their father how much Joseph was honored in Egypt and the collaborating details of what they saw. Joseph reasoned that their personal testimony would convince Jacob to relocate his entire family from Canaan to Egypt.

With the important explanations over, Joseph embraced and wept with his brothers, beginning with the youngest. Benjamin was Joseph’s full brother and the only innocent one.

This mutual display of emotion and the conversation that

followed completed the family reunion. Whatever bitterness Joseph may have felt toward his brothers was all gone. They had nothing to fear from him, for he had forgiven them.



This photo from space shows the triangular delta area of the Nile River. The fertile “region of Goshen” (vs. 10) where Jacob’s family settled is part of the right half of the delta.

8. What plan for Jacob’s clan did Joseph describe to his brothers?

9. How did Joseph try to convince his brothers of his true identity?

From Scraps Come Great Art

The Chinese sculptor Wang Zhiyuan (jehr-yoo-ehn) is famous for taking refuse and creating amazing works of art. Struck by the immense garbage on the streets of Beijing, he has dedicated his life to transforming trash into art. One of his sculptures is titled “Thrown to the Wind,” which appears as a whirling tornado and is made entirely of discarded water bottles.

Similarly, the Lord God does the same with us; we who were spiritually lost and discarded, He has transformed into His beloved and radiant children. And yet, as wonderful and inspiring as is the art of Wang Zhiyuan, what God has done in our lives is far more remarkable. Moreover, the Lord continues to mold us by redeeming even the worst things about us so that we can be better servants for His heavenly kingdom.

We can see how Christ dealt with the weaknesses of His closest followers and made them into His dynamic servants: Peter cowardly betrayed Jesus, but later he bravely faced execution for preaching the good news; John had a violent nature, but later he exuded kindness and gentleness in his letters; and Thomas doubted Jesus’ resurrection, but later, tradition says, he was martyred for his faith in the Lord.

Furthermore, the Lord is doing the same with us. He is stretching out His hand and reaching into the darkest regions of our past and our character and is transforming us with His light and His love. Although we have suffered terrible hurt, like with Peter and the other disciples, He comforts and strengthens us, and He teaches us to be more caring and more faithful than we ever were before.

Therefore, let us place greater trust in our Lord by obeying Scripture, which says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on our own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5-6).

10. *How do you know that God loves you?*

11. *Why is that important to you?*

12. *How has God made your path straight by redeeming your past hurts?*

Mending a Broken Heart

The human heart is fragile both physically and emotionally. The heart of Joseph's soul was deeply hurt on several occasions, but his brothers' hearts were also scarred by what they had done to Joseph in his youth. Nevertheless, the Lord's love abided with Joseph, and, therefore, reconciliation and healing occurred. Likewise, when we place our trust in the Lord's love, healing of our hearts will invariably occur.

► *Draw a simple picture of a heart broken in two. Above the heart, write a pledge to trust God that His love for you will continue to heal your heart. Throughout the coming week, in words and in this drawing, describe how God's love is mending your heart.*

KEY VERSE

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

—Genesis 45:5, KJV

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.

—Genesis 45:5, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Week of September 28 through October 4

(See *The Quiet Hour* for devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. 1 Thessalonians 3:1-6 —Timothy, My Brother and Co-worker.

Tues. 1 Samuel 17:41-51—David Slays Philistine with a Stone.

Wed. 1 Samuel 18:1-5—David and Jonathan Bond Together.

Thurs. 1 Samuel 18:12-18—Saul Jealous of and Fears David.

Fri. 1 Samuel 23:14-18—Jonathan Asserts David as Next King.

Sat. 2 Samuel 9:1-10—David Provides for Jonathan's Son Mephibosheth.

Sun. 1 Samuel 19:1-7—Saul Promises to Preserve David's Life.