

Reconcile

SESSION 12

Genesis 45:1-15

Memory Verse: Genesis 45:5

Acknowledging God's sovereignty helps us seek reconciliation with others.

We live in a world of broken relationships. Perhaps nowhere is that fact more evident than in the family. Recent statistics from the American Psychological Association indicate that approximately 40 to 50 percent of first marriages end in divorce. The divorce rate for second marriages is even higher. And recent information from the United States Census Bureau indicates about 1,300 new stepfamilies are formed each day.

Conflict in any family is inevitable. That fact is especially true in blended families. As you prepare to teach this Bible study, reflect on your family and how God may want to use you as an agent of healing. Identify steps you can take to make that happen and commit to following through with those ideas. Also, think about people in your group who may be experiencing conflict in their families. Ask God to use you to help them seek reconciliation with others by acknowledging God's sovereignty.



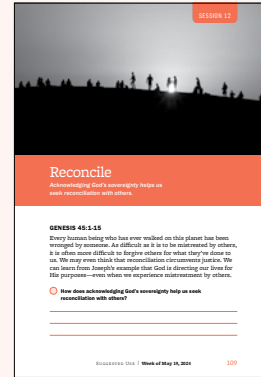
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Every human being who has ever walked on this planet has been wronged by someone. As difficult as it is to be mistreated by others, it is often more difficult to forgive others for what they’ve done to us. We may even think that reconciliation circumvents justice. We can learn from Joseph’s example that God is directing our lives for His purposes—even when we experience mistreatment by others. (PSG, p. 109)

How does acknowledging God’s sovereignty help us seek reconciliation with others.



Understand the Context (Genesis 42:1–46:34)

After remaining loyal to God through years of trying circumstances, Joseph was rewarded. Pharaoh positioned Joseph as second-in-command in Egypt. Thus, the stage was set for Joseph’s reunion and reconciliation with his family. The seven years of abundant harvests were followed by famine. The food shortage was severe, and people from far and wide came to Egypt looking for food (Gen. 41:57).

The famine’s severity even reached Canaan, so Jacob sent ten of his sons to Egypt to purchase grain. Joseph’s brothers bowed before him in accord with Joseph’s youthful dreams. Although Joseph recognized them, they failed to perceive his identity.

Joseph accused his brothers of being spies and determined to test them to see if their attitudes had changed. His test focused on Benjamin, the only other son of Rachel. Joseph imprisoned Simeon until the others should return with Benjamin. When the family had depleted the grain supply from Egypt, Jacob again sent his sons to buy food. When Judah promised to take personal responsibility for Benjamin, Jacob reluctantly allowed his youngest son to accompany the others.

When Joseph saw Benjamin, he was overcome with emotion and left the room until he could regain his composure. In accordance with Joseph’s instructions, his brothers ate the noon meal at his house. They were astonished to discover they had been seated in order by their ages.

Determined to discover if the brothers had really changed, Joseph arranged one final test. He instructed

his steward to place his silver cup in Benjamin’s bag of grain. Before the brothers had gone far from the city, Joseph instructed his steward to overtake them and find Joseph’s cup. Only the man in whose bag the cup was found would become Joseph’s slave. Of course, the steward uncovered the cup in Benjamin’s sack.

The brothers had changed. They refused to desert Benjamin. All returned to the city with the steward. Judah pleaded to remain as slave in place of Benjamin. After Judah concluded his plea, Joseph sent his attendants away before revealing his identity to his brothers. Terror gripped their hearts when they realized they stood in Joseph’s presence.

Joseph responded graciously by declaring that God had sent him ahead of them to preserve their lives. He then sent word for his father and all the family to join him in Egypt where he would settle them near him in Goshen.

When Jacob heard the news, he was stunned. But seeing the provisions that Joseph had sent, the elderly patriarch determined to journey to Egypt. Genesis 46:29 describes the touching reunion of Joseph with his father. With the arrival of Jacob and his sons, all those of Jacob’s household in Egypt were numbered at seventy (Gen. 46:27).

Read Genesis 45:1-15. What truth did Joseph know that made it possible for him to reconcile with his brothers? (PSG, p. 110)



PRIOR TO THE SESSION: Display **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *The Patriarchs*) and **Pack Item 5** (Poster: *Key Moments in Jacob's Life*) for reference during the session. Secure a high school yearbook for the Engage activity.



INTRODUCE: As adults enter, present each person with an adhesive name tag. Encourage them to write their name on the tag and wear it as they greet others in the group.

DISCUSS: Show adults the yearbook and encourage volunteers to share their experiences with class reunions. Note that it's always interesting to meet up with people we haven't seen for a while.

ASK: **Which are more awkward, class reunions or family reunions? Why?**

READ: Direct a volunteer to read the introduction on page 109 of the PSG. Affirm that conflict is a reality in all families, and it can make situations difficult when families get together. Highlight the importance of reconciliation within families.



ASK: **How does acknowledging God's sovereignty help us seek reconciliation with others.** (PSG, p. 109)

TRANSITION: *In today's session, Joseph will be at the center of a family reunion. And while it could have been awkward, it wasn't because he understood how God's sovereign plan had brought him back together with his brothers.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Secure a copy of the lyrics of "Forgiven" by TobyMac and Lecrae. Play the song and lead a brief discussion on its main themes. Point out that accepting and offering forgiveness can be hard, but it gets easier when we remember how God has forgiven us. (NOTE: *The hymn "Grace Greater Than Our Sin," No. 105 in the Baptist Hymnal, 2008, can also be used for this activity.*)

I Am Joseph (Genesis 45:1-3)

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. **2** But he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and also Pharaoh’s household heard it. **3** Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But they could not answer him because they were terrified in his presence.

(v. 1) Keep his composure: Joseph had restrained his emotions in his brothers’ presence prior to this point, but the circumstances finally got the best of him. The same Hebrew verb used here previously appeared in Genesis 43:31 where Joseph exited the room to regain his **composure** after being overcome with emotion upon seeing Benjamin. With Judah’s penitent plea on behalf of Benjamin and his aging father (44:18-34), Joseph could no longer sustain his ruse or control his tears.

Key Phrase

Send everyone away

Joseph demanded privacy for this personal moment as he revealed his identity to his brothers. It’s possible that he sent his attendants away because he realized it was unwise for someone in his position to freely express his emotions before people under his rule.

Verse 16 indicates that evidently Joseph’s attendants were aware that Joseph’s brothers had arrived, and they must have reported the fact to Pharaoh. Also, Joseph may have simply wanted this occasion to be reserved for his family members.

(v. 1) Revealed his identity: This expression translates a form of a Hebrew verb that basically means “to know.” In the form used in this context, the term means “to make himself known.” The word can express acquaintance with an individual, as well as the most intimate of human relationships.

(v. 2) Wept so loudly: Weeping is a natural and spontaneous expression of strong emotion throughout the Old Testament. A person might weep out of joy, sorrow, complaint, repentance, or remorse. From the Hebrews’ perspective weeping was connected with the voice, whereas tears were associated with the eyes.

Thus the expression **wept so loudly** more literally means “gave his voice in weeping.” The Lord revealed through His prophet Isaiah that in His new creation

“the sound of weeping and crying will no longer be heard” (Isa. 65:19).

(v. 3) My father: After identifying himself, Joseph immediately turned his attention to Jacob. Assuming that Joseph was seventeen when his brothers sold him into slavery (Gen. 37:2), he would have been about thirty-nine when he saw his **father** again. This figure is based on the fact that Joseph was thirty when he entered Pharaoh’s service (41:46). The seven years of plenty had then passed. Five more years of the seven-year famine remained (45:6).

So, Joseph had not seen his father in approximately twenty-two years. In Joseph’s speech to his brothers (vv. 3-13), his father was his dominating concern (see vv. 3,9,13). Joseph had already expressed his anxiety regarding his father’s well-being in 43:7,27.

(v. 3) Terrified: The Hebrew verb expresses the emotion of an individual confronted with something unexpected, disastrous, or threatening. It indicates the panic that overwhelms a person when suddenly faced with obvious doom. Thus, Joseph’s brothers rightly felt terror or alarm when they realized they stood in the presence of Joseph, who had become second in authority in Egypt.

Joseph’s brothers had treated him wrongly, and he possessed the power to repay evil for evil. The tables had turned. They had held his life in their hands when he was a youth (37:18-20). Now, some two decades later, their lives depended on his mercy. The term rendered **terrified** appears elsewhere in the Old Testament to depict the alarm accompanying the day of the Lord. See Isaiah 13:8 where the same verb is rendered “horrified.”

EXPLORE Genesis 45:1-3



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can rejoice over reconciliation with others.

MINI LECTURE: Using **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: The Patriarchs*), **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Background of the Patriarchs*), and *Understand the Context* (PSG, p. 110), share the context for the session. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: Joseph as a Leader in Egypt*) to supplement the discussion. Highlight Joseph's first encounter with his brothers and his demand to see Benjamin. Explain that Joseph was trying to determine how his brothers had changed over the years.

READ: **Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 45:1-3**, as the group listens for the emotions displayed in the verses.

ROLE PLAY: Direct the group to stand, and ask half the group to respond as Joseph and half as his brothers while they listen to the verses being read. Guide the group to find a partner from the other half and discuss the following question: **Why do people long for reconciliation? What frightens them about it?** (PSG, p. 112) After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share.

REFLECT: Encourage adults to consider why Joseph chose reconciliation over revenge. Challenge them to think about people they may need to forgive or seek forgiveness from and to determine steps they can take to heal those wounds.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Books

Prior to the session, secure a few books that have significant plot twists. (*Examples: Murder on the Orient Express, Runaway Jury, or A Tale of Two Cities*) Encourage adults to suggest books or movies that have surprise twists. Share the books you have brought and the reversals in each book. Discuss how unexpected plot twists can make a difference in a story. Emphasize that Joseph threw an unbelievable twist at his brothers. Remind the group that while readers understand what's going on, Joseph's brothers would have been caught completely off guard by this turn of events.

God Sent Me (Genesis 45:4-8)

4 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 Egypt. **5** And now don’t be grieved or angry with yourselves for selling me here, because God sent me ahead of you to preserve life. **6** For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there will be five more years without plowing or harvesting. **7** God sent me ahead of you to establish you as a remnant within the land and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. **8** 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.”

(v. 4) *The one you sold:* In revealing his identity to his brothers, Joseph described himself as the person his brothers had **sold** into slavery. This description helped validate Joseph’s claim because it pointed to an event that only he and his brothers would have known. Joseph’s next words demonstrate that he only mentioned this for identification purposes because he immediately assured them that God was in charge of how his life had unfolded.

(v. 5) *Don’t be grieved or angry:* Joseph wisely recognized that although his brothers had plotted evil, God had been at work for good in his adverse circumstances. The Hebrew word rendered **grieved** relates to both physical pain and emotional sorrow. The same verb appears in Genesis 6:6 to depict the grief in the Lord’s heart because of human wickedness.

The term translated **angry** literally means “to be hot” or “to burn.” The verb is always used in reference to anger. It differs from other Hebrew words for anger in that it stresses the kindling of anger like the kindling of a fire or the heat of that anger once it is kindled.

(v. 5) *God sent me:* Joseph interpreted his experiences—both good and bad—from a divine perspective. The verb translated **sent** occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe someone sending another person on a mission. The same verb depicts Israel’s (Jacob’s) sending Joseph on a mission to check on his brothers (Gen. 37:13-14).

Of course, Joseph never returned to his father from that assignment. Instead, as he later recognized, God had directed events, even the ones his brothers meant for evil. As a result Joseph ended up as second-in-authority over all Egypt with the means to preserve many lives, including those of his own family. Joseph had lived out the truth of Romans 8:28. God does work things out to bless those He calls and who choose to pursue His purposes.

Key Doctrine

God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. (See Psalms 47:8; 103:19.)

(v. 5) *To preserve life:* The Old Testament presents the possession of life as an intrinsic good (see Job 2:4; Prov. 3:16; Eccl. 9:4). It focuses on life as an experience, not an abstract principle of vitality. Rather than dividing individuals into body, soul, and spirit, ancient Jews viewed a person as a unified whole. Ultimately, a right relationship with God according to His standards determines success in life. Thus Moses challenged the Israelites to choose life by choosing to obey the Lord’s commands (Deut. 30:15-20).

Key Word

Remnant

Verse 7 contains the first reference to what later becomes a significant Old Testament teaching. The word identifies something left over, particularly the Lord’s righteous people after divine judgment.

(v. 8) *Father to Pharaoh:* Joseph served as a special advisor to the king. The term **father** may designate a person held in high regard, even by the king (see 2 Kings 6:21). This description highlights the esteem of Joseph’s position in Egypt. Joseph correctly attributed his reception of this honor to God rather than to Pharaoh.

EXPLORE Genesis 45:4-8



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can affirm God's plans for their lives.

READ: **Read aloud Genesis 45:4-8** while the group listens to discover how Joseph continued to reconnect with his brothers. Direct the group to turn to a neighbor and paraphrase Joseph's message in these verses. Allow volunteers to share their paraphrases.

EXAMINE: Encourage adults to read through the information for Genesis 45:5 on page 113 of the PSG. Facilitate a brief discussion about how Joseph was able to see past all the distractions and recognize God's true purpose in things. Highlight the phrase: "God had sent Joseph to Egypt ahead of his family to preserve their lives and the lives of many others." (PSG, p. 113)

MEMORIZE: Share that Genesis 45:5 is the memory verse for the session. Direct the group to read the verse aloud two or three times. Challenge them to continue memorizing it during the week and asking God to help them know how it can be applied to their lives each day.

SUMMARIZE: Use the information on page 114 of the PSG and page 136 of the Leader Guide to briefly explain the key points in verses 6-8. Note that Joseph emphasized God's hand at work three times in this passage. Talk with adults about how that might have calmed some of his brothers' fears.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Case Study

Encourage adults to suggest life situations where something good comes from difficult circumstances. Record responses on the board. Give each adult a piece of paper and a pencil. Select one scenario from the list and direct them to write a three-sentence case study based on that situation. After a few minutes, allow a few volunteers to share their work. As a group, discuss the question: ***How does recognizing God's work in and through us help us cope with life's challenges?*** (PSG, p. 114)

Settle in Goshen (Genesis 45:9-15)

9 “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 to me without delay. **10** You can settle in the land of Goshen and be near me — you, your children, and your grandchildren, your flocks, your herds, and all you have. **11** 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.”’ **12** Look! Your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin can see that I’m the one speaking to you. **13** Tell my father about all my glory in Egypt and about all you have seen. And bring my father here quickly.” **14** Then Joseph threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept on his shoulder. **15** Joseph kissed each of his brothers as he wept, and afterward his brothers talked with him.

(v. 9) Lord of all Egypt: The Hebrew term rendered **lord** (see also v. 8) differs from the title discussed in previous sessions. The title used here is written in English as *’Adon*. It typically, though not exclusively, refers to human beings. Sarah used the term to refer to Abraham (Gen. 18:12). The pharaoh of **Egypt** was also called by this designation (40:1, translated “master”). By stating that God had made him lord or master of Egypt, Joseph acknowledged that only God could have brought about this unbelievable turn of events.

Key Location

●Goshen

Pharaoh assigned the land of **Goshen** to Joseph’s family members when they came to Egypt. The area is generally located in the northeast part of the Nile Delta. The Hebrews, or Israelites, occupied this territory from the time of Joseph until their exodus from Egypt. The phrase is interchangeable with the expression “the land of Rameses” (Gen. 47:11). This Goshen differs from the Goshen mentioned in Joshua, which was located in the promised land (see Josh. 10:41; 11:16; 15:51).

(v. 11) I will sustain you: Jacob’s family made their living as herdsmen. During the extended famine, grazing land would have virtually been impossible to find. Therefore, Joseph stated that he would **sustain** his family during the remaining five years of the famine.

Joseph anticipated Jacob’s reluctance to depart the promised land to reside in Egypt. His promise of sustenance helped convince his father to move for the family’s welfare. Joseph kept his promise by providing food for all the family (see Gen. 47:12). The Hebrew verb rendered “provided” in 47:12 is the same verb used here.

(v. 12) Benjamin: This youngest son of Jacob was Joseph’s full brother. Rachel, Jacob’s favored wife, had died during Benjamin’s birth (Gen. 35:16-20) and named him Ben-oni, meaning “son of my sorrow.” However, Jacob called him **Benjamin**, meaning “son of the right hand.” Though small, the tribe of Benjamin later played a significant role in Israelite history. Saul, Israel’s first king, came from Benjamin (1 Sam. 9:21). And the apostle Paul also identified himself as a descendant of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:3-6).

(v. 13) My glory: This probably refers to Joseph’s esteemed position. Part of the Lord’s covenant with Abraham, the promise of a great name, was being fulfilled in Joseph’s rise to power (Gen. 12:2). The Hebrew term translated **glory** also means “dignity,” “splendor,” and “riches.” The basic meaning relates to weight, in the sense of being impressive or influential. Joseph’s upright behavior and dependence on God ultimately reaped God’s blessings (see Prov. 22:4).

(vv. 14-15) Wept: Public expressions of reunion among the Hebrews typically included kissing, hugging, and weeping (Gen. 33:4; 46:29; Ex. 4:27). The Scripture records that only Joseph and Benjamin **wept** on this occasion. The rest of the brothers talked with Joseph. This fact may reflect that the other brothers questioned Joseph’s kindness as genuine. Later when their father died, they revealed their fear that Joseph might retaliate (Gen. 50:15-18).

EXPLORE Genesis 45:9-15



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can demonstrate forgiveness to others.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Genesis 45:9-15** while the group focuses on the next steps for the brothers.

ASK: How did Joseph demonstrate that his forgiveness was genuine?

HIGHLIGHT: Use information for Genesis 45:9-15 (PSG, pp. 115-116) to highlight the key points in these verses. Emphasize the enthusiasm Joseph demonstrated in bringing his family to Egypt and being able to take care of them. Note that Goshen was a fertile area that would sustain the family long after the famine passed. Briefly recap Genesis 45:16–46:34. Direct attention to **Pack Item 5** (Poster: *Key Moments in Jacob's Life*) and highlight his move to Egypt to reunite with Joseph.

TRANSITION: *Joseph's dreams came to pass as his brothers bowed down to him in Egypt. Still, he understood that God was using him for something great. His example of forgiveness and reconciliation reflected God's character and protected the remnant God would use to carry on the promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Reflect

To supplement the activities for Genesis 45:9-15, guide the group to reflect on the following statements.

- I find it easy to forgive others.
- Seeking forgiveness for my own actions is difficult.
- Affirming that God is in control even when I can't see Him is easy.

For each statement, encourage adults to evaluate themselves on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “seldom” and 5 being “frequently.” Challenge them to return to these statements regularly and to ask God to help them grow in the areas that might be more difficult for them to apply personally.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 117 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Believers can rejoice over reconciliation with others.*
 - *Believers can affirm God's plans for their lives.*
 - *Believers can demonstrate forgiveness to others.*
- REVIEW:** Invite the group to suggest ways believers can practically apply these statements each day. Challenge them to pick out one they will focus on for the next few weeks.
- RESPOND:** Share this quote attributed to C.S. Lewis. Encourage adults to share if they agree: "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you." Lead a brief discussion on remembering God's forgiveness.
- ASK:** **What is something from this session that you could share with a person seeking healing and restoration in a relationship? How do you need to demonstrate your forgiveness of someone who has wronged you?** (PSG, p. 117)
- PRAY:** Praise God for His faithfulness to forgive our sins and for providing the Holy Spirit to guide us. Pray specifically for those who need to experience reconciliation with others.

After the Session

Reinforce the session by sending the group an email or text, sharing a personal story about a challenging time when you knew there was a need for reconciliation. Reflect on how knowing God had a plan changed the way you faced the situation. Remind adults that we should forgive as God forgives us. Challenge them to look for God's work in each situation of their lives, including those where reconciliation is needed.

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