

What do you think of when you think of the word "reconciliation?"

I my mind the word is one of the most beautiful words in the English language... and one of the most useful.

It is essential in order for basic loving human relationships to exist. Reconciliation is the practice of healthy people.

People who cannot or will not work toward reconciliation are miserable.

Who am I speaking to? To whom is this text written? This amazing moment in the story of Joseph?

It is written to the person who has been unjustly fired... to the prisoner unjustly convicted.

It is written to victims of crime and to the ones who carry out those crimes.

It is written to the pastor who has hurt his congregation... and to the congregation who has hurt the pastor.

It is written to the man who has offended his neighbor... and to the neighbor who hates him for it.

It is written to the teacher at the end of her rope... and to the student who has ceased to think of her as a person.

It is written to the daughter who despises her mother. It is written to the son who doesn't listen to his father.

It is written to fathers and mothers hurt by their children.

It is written to people who are suing each other... and to people who will not talk to each other.

It is written to the husband and wife who are on the verge of divorce.

It is written to the brother who is betrayed by his siblings... one of whom, of course, is Joseph.

It is so important that if you do not heed this lesson, you will not enjoy God's blessing on your life.

I know that there are people in this church who will not be reconciled with another person in this church...

...a spouse, family members, old friends, people who have offended you, people who have hurt people you love...

You bear the grudge and will not let go. Maybe you refuse to even say a word to that person.

Oh, you have your excuses... "I can't do it. I can't even look at them. They must pay. I don't want them to be forgiven."

"What will my family think. The relationship is too much work. People just don't change."

Well, it is time for you to change. Today!

Genesis 45 opens in Egypt with Joseph and his brothers. You might remember what has happened.

22 years ago, Joseph's older brothers were jealous of him. He was 17. They sold him into slavery for 20 pieces of silver.

That's probably a worse offense than any you have ever experienced.

In the years since, Joseph worked as a slave, found success, was falsely accused, imprisoned... life was hard.

He was brought from prison to Pharaoh's court nine years ago... and elevated to serve as the Prime Minister of Egypt.

There were 7 years of prosperity as he had predicted and now, two of the seven years of famine.

Joseph was now 40 years old.

In the first year of famine, 10 of his brothers show up looking to buy food... they are the ten who sold him 22 years ago.

Could it be that there is a chance for Joseph to be reunited with his family? Could there be a reconciliation?

So, Joseph manipulates things so that one of them, Simeon, is left in Egypt as a prisoner.

They return the next year to buy more food, this time with Benjamin, the youngest, the favorite, and Joseph's full brother.

Benjamin's presence was the condition that they had been given if they were to come back.

Now, Joseph manipulates things again such that Benjamin is accused of theft. He will be a slave.

Judah, the brother who had the idea to sell Joseph, cannot bear the thought of it happening over again.

Judah, and the other brothers, have been tormented by their sin for 22 years. They know that God has not forgotten it.

Joseph has seen that their hearts have softened and they are sorry for their sin. They have changed.

Joseph has seen some evidence of the change and he can contain himself no longer.

I. Reconciliation is difficult.

vss. 1-8

It is difficult... maybe there is nothing more difficult. But it is worth it. Even the trying is worth it.

Let us learn from Joseph and his family.

A. God

It leaps off the page, really, how much Joseph talks about God in these verses. (vss. 5, 7, 8, 9)

He attributes everything that has happened to God... He sees God's hand in even the worst situations, guiding, providing.

Joseph and his brothers live life in the hand of God. Joseph has seen it.

vs. 5 "God sent me before you to preserve life."

vs. 7 What Joseph's brothers did to him was God's way of preserving their lives and delivering them.

vs. 8 God sent Joseph to Egypt and gave him all that the has there.

vs. 9 "God made me lord of all Egypt..."

In order to even begin to think about being reconciled to someone who has hurt you, or who you have hurt...

...you must learn to think like this.

You live in the hand of God. Even the hurt, He had done it, allowed it, for a reason. God is doing something with it.

One thing He is doing is always teaching you. He's been doing that with Joseph. Teaching Joseph that He's in control.

He's been teaching Joseph's brothers about their sin, and about how much they depend on Him...

He's been teaching all of them about His provision and that everything God says He will do... He does.

God has you in His hand.

That person who has hurt you. It is in His plan. It is not them against you! It is God working on you both.

That thing that you have done that you do not want to face. It is God revealing your sin and need for Him.

B. Conviction of sin and confession

Now, Genesis 45 does not really talk about this. We understand this from all that has gone before.

God has used all of this situation to force the 10 brothers to see their sin. Is there anything more painful?

Do you know what sin is? It is you and me doing what we want rather than what God wants.

It is as if we say, "Hey! I'm a free person. I can do what I want." And then we hurt people. We hurt ourselves. We hurt God.

Do you know what most people in this world do with their sin? They hide it. They try to ignore it. They deny it.

But, this is the most unhealthy thing a person can do... and, if God is loving you, He will not let you forget it. **1 John 1:5-10**

D. Forgiveness

God has brought Joseph to the point of forgiveness even before he sees his brothers again. How do we know?

Well, there is his behavior and what he says about what God is doing... but, even apart from that we have **Gen. 41:51**.

It is not as if he does not remember what happened. Joseph has managed to put it behind him and not be resentful.

I cannot overstate how important the ability to forgive is for a person. It makes a person a whole person.

This is why Jesus picks out forgiveness as the topic for teaching right after the Lord's Prayer. **Matt. 6:14-15**

How does this work. Jesus tells a parable to help us understand. **Matt. 18:21-35**

Christian, for you forgiveness is not optional. You have to forgive... or you cannot follow Jesus.

C. Love and compassion

We see this in what Joseph has said and in what we are about to read next in Genesis 45.

Joseph cares about his brothers and their families. He loves them and wants to provide for them.

They may have done him wrong, but he intends to do good to them and bless them.

You might think, "It's easy for Joseph because he has all this stuff." But that is to misunderstand how people work.

It would be easy for Joseph to take his revenge... to make them pay for their crimes.

But, Joseph knows that this is not his place. Vengeance is the Lord's and Joseph says in Gen. 50 that He is not in God's place.

In order for reconciliation to be possible, you have to learn these four things... and then a next step.

II. Reconciliation means action

vss. 9-15

You cannot be reconciled with someone just by understanding God and what He teaches and what He commands.

You have to do something... and doing something in order to be reconciled always means you take a risk.

Now, before we continue, I want you to reflect on what Joseph has done thus far and realize that he has taken a calculated risk.

This is no blind, bumbling, throwing of himself at the mercy of his sinning brothers.

He has done all he reasonably can to see if they are mindful of their sin and repentant.

And, realize that he has no sin of his own to confess... which is not true of us. Rarely is damage in a relationship so one sided.

Nevertheless, after he had done all he could, he had to take action. What is his action?

A. Material

He provides for them. He makes sure that they will receive what they need... as much as he is able. He gives.

This is an indication of real love and care for another person. If we can help them, we help them, right where it is needed.

B. Emotional

Reconciliation is never some kind of detached, academic exercise... it involves all of who we are. We see this with Joseph.

A man who I said some hurtful things to... could have said, "Well, you're a bad pastor." One of the greatest victories.

Nancy and I have a wonderful marriage... like a mountain range is wonderful...

I have the gift of discouragement. She has the gift of losing it. If we didn't have forgiveness, we'd be done.

III. Reconciliation brings a response.

vss. 16-28

There is a response from Pharaoh. He is entirely supportive. Why?

I'm sure he knows Joseph's story by now. Is he surprised that Joseph is not punishing his brothers?

I'm sure that Joseph has already had an impact on his life... showing him what God is like... now he sees it.

Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers is showing Pharaoh what God is like and that God is in control.

There is a response from his brothers. They believe him. They trust him... and they go to get their father.

They are not worried about father's anger... about "I told you so-s"... about being embarrassed or exposed.

Real reconciliation has this effect. We recognize that we are sinners and are not so worried about people seeing our sin.

No one is putting on airs or trying to be someone they are not. We just want the relationships healed... whatever it takes.

I need to say that sometimes there is no response to efforts to reconcile.

You may go to that person and seek reconciliation, try to talk, confess sin, extend forgiveness...

... and... nothing... they don't want to let go of the hurt. That hurts. There may be nothing you can do.

I understand that. I know some of you are in that. It is like living with an open wound.

You have to love and forgive, 70x7... but you can have no reconciliation because reconciliation involves both sides.

For this reason all real reconciliation finds its source in God and His Son, Jesus Christ. On our own we will hold on to resentment.

When we confess sin and accept Christ's forgiveness... we are reconciled to God. But we have to accept His offer of reconciliation.

If we reject it... we cannot have it. It doesn't just happen to us. Reconciliation takes effort on both sides.

We have to come to Christ, confess our sin, accept His sacrifice and payment for our sin on the cross...

Then we will find we have nothing to lose by seeking reconciliation with others.