

Genesis, pt3: Joseph's Character, part 4: Gospel Application for Reconciliation Genesis 44-47

MPS God reconciles people to Himself through Jesus that Christ-followers might live to labor for reconciliation to God and with one another.

OBJ Every person should recognize that True reconciliation requires Three Gospel Applications.

INTRO **Have you ever had to serve as an intermediary between two people?** As Christians, we are compelled to labor for reconciliation between people, because we have been reconciled to God.

At the end of Genesis 43, Joseph's ten brothers have returned a second time to buy grain and brought Benjamin. They are seated at a banquet feast in amazement at the blessing they are receiving, but still unaware that it is their brother seated with them at the table. Reconciliation among Joseph's family seems to be working out, but it is not complete yet. This is why Joseph's tests in these chapters are so important, that he might discern truth as a first step to pursue reconciliation.

Reconciliation that is true must be built on truth.

Last week we identified four dangers that threaten to undermine gospel reconciliation. The primary way reconciliation is subverted is when truth is averted, either by substitution with a half-truth, a lie, or simply neglecting to be discerned. Joseph discerns the intent of his brothers to learn the truth about his family. And now the only one who is still alive that he has not seen is his father. And because Jacob is still alive, Joseph remembers that one dream remains to be fulfilled; Jacob had not yet bowed down, as Joseph's second dream included. Therefore, he tests his brothers to bring his father to him.

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READ Genesis 44:1-2

*Then he commanded the steward of his house, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack, and put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain." And he did as Joseph told him. **Genesis 44:1-2***

Joseph tests his brothers to make them bring his father to him. He fills their sacks with grain, puts all their money back in their sacks, and puts his silver cup in Benjamin's sack. Again, Joseph's intent is demonstrated by his generosity. He is not intending harm to his brothers, but to force their honesty. Not long after they leave, Joseph sends his servant to inspect their sacks. They do not know what has happened. All their packs are removed and each one inspected. When the cup is found in Benjamin's sack, they become very distraught and return to Joseph's house.

44:16-34 They appear before Joseph and he questions them. Judah immediately speaks up. Remember, he is the last one named in the offense who devised the plan to sell Joseph into slavery.^{37:26} He is also the one who has taken personal responsibility for Benjamin's well-being to his father.^{43:3} His role here is significant in the reconciliation process. **Judah's confession serves to complete the knowledge Joseph needs, the truth, to accept their words.**

Judah bears full responsibility for Benjamin and his life is on the line. He offers that all the brothers take responsibility for the cup. But Joseph refuses, stating that only the one found with the cup should be held responsible. Joseph is testing them to see if they will sell out another brother or choose another path. Judah approaches Joseph's throne and requests to be heard by him. He shares his family's story, and how Joseph's question about their father becomes the turning point for their confession. Their father is an old man whose life is bound up³⁰ in his youngest son. He says that if they do not take Benjamin back, the grief will kill their father. Joseph's test forces them to a break point. **Judah's confession tells Joseph what his father believed about his life because of the brothers' lie, and what his brothers believed too.**

Judah's confession has a comprehensiveness to it. Joseph finds no joy in the tests on his brothers, in causing them such condemnation, but he must reach the point where the truth comes through confession. The confession by his brothers



to him is complete. Joseph learns all he needs to know. Once he knows what the brothers and his father believe, and the threat against his father, he is satisfied at their intent. He wants to see his father and does not want to place any further grief on him. He has learned the truth and can stand it no longer.

Do not miss the significance of this moment (44:16-34) nor what is taking place. Judah approaches the throne of the one man to whom the whole world has been saved to make a full confession and cast himself at the mercy of Joseph.

OBJ True reconciliation requires Three Gospel Applications.

1. Apply the light of God's truth to sin's dark deception by confession.

God cannot work His forgiving and cleansing power until the dark deception of sin has been exposed. This is why truth is essential for reconciliation, as we saw in chapters 42-43. Once exposed by the light through confession, sin's guilt and shame can be removed. Truth alleviates guilt by confession that brings us into honesty about our wrongdoing.

Reconciliation can only begin when truth's light illumines sin stain by confession.

John explains the importance for truth to inhabit and guide our whole lives when he writes,

*God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **1 John 1:5b-9***

God forgives and cleanses us when we confess our sins. But as long as we fail to confess our sins, we live deceived because false security and fracture from sin remains. Confession casts the light of truth on sin's dark stain to bring forgiveness and cleansing, which becomes the catalyst for reconciliation. So, let's take the next step to reconciliation.

READ Genesis 45:1-3

*Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him. He cried, "Make everyone go out from me." So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ²And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. ³And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. **Genesis 45:1-3***

Joseph sends everyone out from his presence except for his brothers. He makes himself known to his brothers: "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" He confirms what is most important for reconciliation, being reunited with his father. His brothers are speechless, and look like they've just seen a dead man, because as far as they knew, they had!

Joseph explains all that had taken place with him. This is how we know that Joseph had already forgiven his brothers, before he ever saw them. Joseph tells his brothers, "And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt."⁷⁻⁸ All the wrong and harm done to him by his brothers is considered "paid" or "erased", and therefore forgiven, because this was God's plan. Here is the critical and essential question to understand this story, and its application for our lives. **How did Joseph forgive his brothers before he was ever confronted by them? Joseph forgave his brothers because his life was in God's hands and he trusted God's plan.**

Joseph forgives his brother's wrongs against him by the "payment" of God's plan for his life. Because of their confession and Joseph's forgiveness, they can be reconciled. Reconciliation depends completely on this forgiveness that comes from their wrongs atoned. **Joseph trusted God's plan as payment for his brother's wrongs to forgive them.**

2. Apply God's atonement in Jesus to forgive other's wrongs against you.



Reconciliation depends on forgiveness that only comes from atonement. Here's a lesson we all need to understand; debt never just disappears. Someone is always left to pay the bill, and so it is with our sin debt. Sin left unatoned is a debt unpaid to God. [Guilt or offense is only removed when sin is cleansed because atonement is applied.](#)

It is a frustrating mistake to think that forgiveness means forgetting. It's also a gospel aversion. Forgiveness means cleansing, not forgetting, because sufficient atonement has been applied to sin's debt. When you short-circuit forgiveness by claiming forgetfulness that is unatoned, you can be sure that your forgetfulness will not last but return even more bitter than at first. Forgetfulness is a cheap substitute for cleansing, but is all one can hope for when the offense is not atoned. When you choose to try and forget without applying any atonement, you cheapen the value of forgiveness and forsake the cleansing that it brings to wear the guilt and shame of the offense, or hold it draped on another. [Atonement that brings forgiveness means the offense, if and when it is remembered, is cleansed and no longer counted.](#)

Atonement for sin comes only by the cross of Jesus Christ. God did not just forget your sin, He paid your sin debt. Jesus is our propitiation for sin that God put forth for us.^{1John2:2} The only way to truly forgive and be cleansed is to trust God's plan in Jesus as payment for your wrongs, and for other's wrongs against you. This is the glory of the cross and the gospel. Whether it is a person before you or someone who has passed never again to be seen by you, atonement for any wrong can be applied for forgiveness and cleansing when we rest our life in God's hand and trust His plan. [If God is satisfied with Jesus' atoning sacrifice for all sin, how can we act as though it is not enough to satisfy us?](#)

ILLUS We live in an "offense-driven" world. Everybody is offended by something, and the cultural pressure demands we rage against the world. This is nothing more than a simple and continual denial of Jesus' payment for sin. But praise God, Christians worship and source life in an atonement-empowered, forgiving God. When you "take / hold offense" at someone else's wrong against you and remain in unforgiveness toward them, you deny God's forgiveness of you. Paul says to the Colossians, "*as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*"^{Col3:13} Forgiving other people does not mean they get off free and your offense un-paid. [Rather, by faith the Christ-follower applies Jesus' atoning sacrifice as payment for other's sin against you, just as God applied it for your sin against Him.](#)

TRANS When Pharaoh hears that Joseph's brothers have come, his love for Joseph spills over into blessing for Jacob's family. He promises land and spares no resource to bring them to Egypt, commanding Joseph to do this.¹⁹ When they arrive back in Canaan, they tell Jacob that Joseph is still alive. The news shocks him so that it says his heart became numb because he did not believe them.²⁷ Jacob's numbness quickly gave way to strength at the reality of seeing his son, so he decided to go. They are carried back to Canaan by the finest of Egyptian royal transportation and provision.

Genesis 46 - 47 As they travel, God speaks to Israel, Jacob's name of God's promise. He tells him not to fear, but that in Egypt he will make him into a great nation. Once in Goshen, the blessing of Pharaoh in provision and possession rested on Jacob's whole family because of his love and pleasure for Joseph.^{6,11-12,27} God's plan to multiply His people moves forward by the work of one man.

3. Apply God's blessing of reconciliation as your reward, over sin's brokenness, hurt and separation.

Reconciliation is the reward of blessing when we are brought back to God, and with one another. We see reconciliation begin for Joseph and his family, but the process continues as relationships are rebuilt. In reconciliation, God builds a new relationship on truth as all parties follow Him by faith.

Learning to enjoy God's blessing in reconciliation means we must acknowledge [two important realities of reconciliation](#) in our broken, incomplete world. [First, reconciliation does not always mean reunited to the relationship prior to the offense.](#) While forgiveness is required for reconciliation to be pursued, it doesn't mean reconciliation is always completed in this life. You can forgive without being reconciled. We must learn that there are things in and about this life that will not get worked out in this life. And we must acknowledge that while forgiveness should always be given, reconciliation between people is not always possible. Sometimes it is because one of the persons are no longer present, and at other times because one or more are not willing even when forgiveness has been applied.



Joseph shows us that reconciliation is his highest hope, but not the highest glory. If his brothers still meant him harm, God's work remained his highest glory. So, his aim was not "reconcile at all or any cost." The cost had been determined and paid. Joseph's work was to reconcile by the cost already paid for the highest glory. And that is our work too.

Reconciliation means the offense of wrong is forgiven and some, or the possibility for new, relationship is restored. But it doesn't mean there will be a fast resolution or any return to the way the relationship was before the offense. Working out the wrongs of a relationship take time as trust is re-built over new closeness / intimacy gained and memories made. And sometimes this is simply not possible to accomplish in this life. [Learning to trust and follow God in reconciliation may mean "let it go" more than "contort your life to try and make it happen"](#).

[Second, just because reconciliation is not complete does not mean God's blessing is any less](#). God's blessing rests on every relationship in your life only when you trust His plan as your highest glory, above your or anyone else's desires. Our responsibility is to trust and obey God in pursuing His righteousness in all our relationships, to honor and glorify Him. God blesses the one who follows Him by faith richly, forgiving and cleansing from all sin and laboring for reconciliation to God and with others.

[God reconciles people to Himself through Jesus that Christ-followers might live to labor for reconciliation to God and with one another.](#)

CLOSE Jesus invites you to come to Him today to apply His atoning sacrifice to all your wrongs, and every wrong committed against you. [Will you trust Him for that today?](#)

