

The Power of Forgiveness

by Scott Volk

The sermon emphasizes the importance of forgiveness, highlighting the connection between forgiveness and God's forgiveness, and encouraging listeners to break free from cycles of pain and unforgiveness.

Duration: 49:34

Scripture: Genesis 45:1-3, Isaiah 43:25, Jeremiah 31:34, Matthew 5:27-28, Matthew 6:8, John 3:16, Romans 12:19

Topics: "Forgiveness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker tells a story about a criminal who steals from a priest and knocks him out. The next day, the criminal is caught by the police and accuses the priest of giving him the stolen items. However, instead of denying it, the priest admits to it. The speaker then poses the question of how we should respond when faced with those who have wronged us. He refers to the story of Joseph in the Bible, who forgave his brothers for selling him into slavery and even reassured them that it was part of God's plan. The main message is to let go of resentment and extend forgiveness to those who have hurt us.

Transcript

Father, we love you. Father, we call out to you. Great God in heaven.

Great God. Father, keep us from the mere formality of gathering together. Lord, we need an invasion of God.

Lord, in our everyday lives. Lord, we're not looking for meetings that give us tingles or feelings. We're just looking for you to come.

So, Lord, come. May your kingdom come in this place today. God on high.

Deliverer. Redeemer. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Lord. Father, our hope is in you. Our trust is in you.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

You may be seated. Open up, if you would, to Matthew chapter 6. Matthew chapter 6. Just really asking the Lord to lead me this morning. There's so many different directions that I can go with this scripture.

But I feel like there's a theme on God's heart for today. I actually felt like he gave me the theme over a week ago. When I sat down to write specific notes for it, I really didn't have the ability to do that.

So I'm just really going to be trusting the Lord. His heart's going to be delivered. Matthew chapter 6. Probably a scripture that all of you know by heart.

Depending on the tradition in which you were raised. Some of you may have recited this daily or multiple times daily. I think sometimes when scriptures become common to us, sometimes they can lose their punch.

There's a saying that familiarity breeds contempt. Sometimes it even happens with scripture that we can just gloss over a scripture. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

It almost, it's like, it's grievous how familiar we've come sometimes with scripture. But not really allowed it to pierce us because of the familiarity of it. Matthew chapter 6 verse 8. Therefore do not be like them.

Speaking of the Gentiles when they pray. For your father knows what you need before you ask. Pray in this way.

Our father. Who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth. As it is in heaven.

Give us this day. Our daily bread. And forgive us our debts.

As we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom. The power and the glory. Forever.

Amen. For. If you forgive men for their transgressions.

Your heavenly father will also forgive you. But. If you do not forgive.

Men. Then your father. Will not.

Forgive. You. Forgive us our debts.

As we forgive our debtors. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray. I want you to grab hold of this.

We're praying to God. And we're asking God to forgive us. This is how Jesus taught us to pray.

We're asking God to forgive us. To the same degree. That we forgive those who sin against us.

Forgive us. As we forgive. Our debtors.

You know how many times you've prayed that prayer. How many times that's come out of our mouths, our lips, or even in our hearts. Want you to grab hold of this today.

Because I feel like. There is a. A epidemic. Of unforgiveness in the church.

And that is not only keeping you from freedom. But keeping the people who have hurt you from seeing the kingdom of God come. Which is also part of this prayer.

Isn't it interesting that immediately after this prayer. The one thing that Jesus immediately repeats. Is the area of forgiveness.

I mean the kingdom is important. But Jesus says. Immediately after the prayer.

For. If you forgive men their transgressions. Your heavenly father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive men their transgressions. Your heavenly father will not forgive you. That's staggering.

It's staggering that we. Actually hold the key. For God's forgiveness in our lives.

We're the ones. We're the ones that hold the key to God's forgiveness. In our lives.

Because he does not make us forgive anybody. And he does not forgive anybody through us. He's forgiven.

And we're going to talk about that in a second. Give us our debts. As we forgive.

Our debtors. There's a scripture in the book of Ephesians chapter four. Says this.

Starts off by saying Ephesians chapter four by the way is an amazing community chapter. It's a one in the spirit chapter. The end of Ephesians four says this.

Let all bitterness. Wrath. Anger.

Clamor and evil speaking be put away from you. And be kind one to another. Tenderhearted.

Forgiving one another. Even as God has forgiven you. You know how we're called to forgive one another.

The same way God has forgiven us. That's staggering also. The fact that we are called to forgive like God.

It's the thing that I just want to encourage you with today. Because there are people who are sitting here. Who have been badly hurt by other people.

There are people sitting here who grew up. In homes that I wouldn't wish my enemies to grow up in. There are people here who have been cheated.

There are people here who have been cheated on. By a spouse. There are people here who have lost business deals.

Because of people cheating on them. There are people here whose closest people to them. Have turned on them.

And you're sitting here this morning. And you're asking God to release things for you. But there's a block.

Because of something that's in our hearts. With regard to the way that we've been treated. That's never been released.

Because God is waiting for you. To forgive. This isn't a typical Scott Volk word.

Forgive one another. Even as God has forgiven you. My question is how has God forgiven you? Because that will give us an indication how we're to forgive one another.

How has God forgiven you? Josh, where was that verse that you read? He will remember our sins no more. Is that Jeremiah? Hebrews 9, 10, 11, 12. All of that.

There's also a scripture in Jeremiah. That says he will remember your sins no more. Isaiah says.

I think it's Isaiah. It's in the Bible. As far as the east is from the west.

That's how far he's removed our transgressions from us. How do we forgive? How do we respond? I'll tell you the brunt of this message was formed. Inside of me.

After one of the most brutal times in my life. When the people that were closest to me. And closest to my family.

Absolutely turned their backs on us. Basically threw us to the curb. Ran over us.

And then put it in reverse and backed over us. I can't even tell you the pain and the anguish it caused. I'm not going to go into it.

Many of you know the story. And I'm not going to even go into the full story. But when I first visited Pensacola.

It was a few short months after this horrific season of ours. And I walked into that church not knowing anybody except Mike Brown. Had a saved seat for me.

Because there were people not only in the main sanctuary. But in the overflow room as well. And the spirit was so moving in that place.

That I sat down in the chair. And I put my head in my hands. And I said, God I need a touch from you.

And I had the first of only two open visions I've ever had in my life. And I'll tell you what happened. Had my hands in my head.

I said, God I need a touch from you. And I had a vision that I was standing behind the pulpit. Of the church that kicked my family out.

And out of my mouth I was asking them to forgive me. For harboring bitterness and unforgiveness in my heart towards them. I said, God, no.

You don't know what they. Like I'm telling God he doesn't know. You don't know what they did to us.

They should be coming to me. Asking me to forgive them for the hurt and anguish. I was crying out because I needed a touch from God.

This is what God said to me. He said, I can't fill you with what you need. Unless you empty yourself of what you have.

I can't fill you with what you need. Unless you empty yourself of what you have. And I knew I was full of bitterness and unforgiveness.

And in order for God's life to be flowing through me. To the capacity that it could. I had to empty myself of just this junk that was inside me.

I said, God, I can't do that on my own. I don't actually believe that any of us can. That's a grace.

That's what grace is. Grace is calling on God for the power and the ability to live holy. When we can't do that ourselves.

It's not the ability to do whatever we want and get forgiveness. It's the privilege of asking God for something we don't deserve. So that he can empower us to live holy.

And it was the last night of those meetings that God touched me. And in one fell swoop. John Kilpatrick, the pastor of that church whom I had never met before.

Walks over to me. At Mike Brown's urging. And prays for me.

Put myself on the floor. And when I was able to stand up. There was this weight on me.

It was like, I don't even know how to describe it. It was just like 10 of the biggest men you've ever met. Just sitting on my back.

Got up. Made my way into the front pew. Sat there and wet my eyes out.

Because I realized in one fell swoop. God released every yucky, bitter, unforgiving bone that was inside of me. And filled me with love and compassion for these people who 10 minutes earlier.

I can tell you I hated. You know, it's amazing. The Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus is sitting on the Mount of Beatitudes. We say, you know, the Old Testament is law and the New Testament is grace. Well, I'm not disputing that.

But do you know what kind of grace Jesus gives in the New Testament? It's to live way above the standards of the law in the Old. You know, in the Old Testament. It said, if you commit.

Thou shalt not commit adultery. In grace. On the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus says, if you look at a woman with lust in your eyes. He, he like up at it. He just kind of brought it to the next level.

You know, the law says you shall not murder. Jesus ups that one. If you look at your brother with hate.

You've murdered him. Talk about legalistic in some people's minds. That's not legalism at all.

But Jesus takes the standard of the law and he just goes. Eons above it and says, this is how you can live. Area forgiveness and I for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, right? If you do not forgive.

Your heavenly father will not forgive you. I was sitting in that pew. And I realized that God had just done something in me.

One moment in the presence of God. Is far better than 10,000 years of counseling with the best psychiatrist. It's better than any kind of medicine that you can take.

Because you yield to God and he comes and he does for you. What you can never do for yourself. Except that you are willing to say, God.

I need you to touch me. God touched me. From that day on.

I have never been the same. Never been the same. I went back to those very people.

Who heard us. And was able to look them in the eye. And ask them to forgive me.

You know, I never once heard an apology. Not once from any of them. But can I tell you something? I am walking whole and clean.

Because God gave me by his grace the ability to forgive them. And from that moment on. It was at the moment that I was able to confront those people.

Not with their sin. But with mine. That my life totally took a different turn.

We moved to Pensacola. And it's been amazing ever since. I can tell you before God.

That I am not spiritual enough. Or good enough. To have done that for myself.

But God did it for me. When I just simply said, Lord. You touched me.

Forgive one another. As God has forgiven you. I wonder.

How much debt we have. Because we have not forgiven debt. I mean both natural debt.

And spiritual debt. I wonder how much anguish we have. Because we have not forgiven.

As far as the east is from the west. That's how far he has removed our transgressions from us. I was talking to my kingdom community class this week.

Fire School. And I was reminded. I don't typically talk about movies that I see publicly.

But I am going to tell you. About two movies. That I compared with my class.

And actually. Well, just compared them with the class. Just talked about them a little bit.

One movie is a movie called The Count of Monte Cristo. The other movie is a movie called Les Miserables. Both written by secular people.

But both with actually quite amazing. Amazingly compelling movies. Nothing in either of them that is questionable.

The Count of Monte Cristo. Is a movie about a man who was erroneously thrown into prison. And spent the rest of his life getting back at the people who threw him in prison.

And can I tell you something when I watch that movie. Every time one of these guys gets it. I am like yeah.

There is the other one over there. Get him. Yeah.

And it is like one by one. This dude. Not in like a vigilante kind of way.

But he just. He foils them. He gets back at them.

And makes them pay. For what they did to him. Les Miserables.

Written by Victor Hugo. Probably the most amazing message on repentance I have ever seen. And forgiveness I have ever seen in my life.

Is about this man. I am not even going to tell you the whole movie. I will just tell you how it starts.

This man. Who is a criminal during the days of the French Revolution. Is lying on a park bench.

With his criminal papers. Once a criminal. Always a criminal.

Destined to spend the rest of your life in prison. And this woman comes up to him and says you can't sleep here. And he says I am a criminal.

I have got nowhere to go. She goes you can go to that house. And he knocks on the door of that house.

Dirty criminal looking man. Knocks on the door. And a priest opens up the door.

And he says can I have some bread. And the man invites him in for dinner. I can't come in your house.

I am a criminal. He goes you are welcome here. Not only will I give you dinner.

But you can spend the night here. This man has never seen such love. And in the middle of the night.

This man wakes up. Goes into the kitchen. And takes every piece of silver that is in the kitchen.

Stuffs it in his bag. And walks out of the house. Well excuse me.

Before he walks out of the house. The old man priest walks into the kitchen. And looks at him.

And the criminal takes his hand. Cold cocks this guy. And he is out.

They are both out. The next scene is the next day. The wife.

Who didn't want this man in the house in the first place. She is sitting on a bench crying. The old priest is maybe doing some raking in the yard.

And in walks a company of policemen with the criminal. The criminal is in shackles. And the policemen look at the priest and said.

This man said you gave him this stuff. Now the priest had an opportunity right there. To go what is he talking about.

He ripped it off. You know what the priest said. The priest goes he is right.

I just am upset because he forgot to take our favorite candlestick holder. And the criminal's mouth drops open. The policemen unshackle this criminal.

The policemen leaving the criminal standing there. In front of the priest. The criminal goes why did you do that for me.

The priest said I am giving you your life back. Go and make a difference. And that whole movie.

Then is about the guy who was the prisoners guard. Comes chasing after him to kill him and throw him back in prison. I am not going to tell you how it is.

But it is the most amazing movie of repentance I have ever. Repentance and forgiveness that I have ever seen. But you know what our human nature loves.

Vengeance. Get them back. Come on Count of Monte Cristo.

Go after the next one who threw you in that prison. So you spent violently 20 something years there. Get them back.

Forgive one another. Even as God has forgiven you. Flip over to Genesis 45.

I am sorry 40. 45. Genesis 45.

I spoke on this passage a couple of years ago. I just want to highlight. I just want to highlight some things in the life of Joseph.

Who is really a type of Jesus. In the area of forgiveness. Proper ways to respond.

Kind of like a litmus test. You know what a litmus test is? I am not exactly sure that I can explain it. But when you stick your little litmus paper in the water.

It comes out a certain color. I want this to kind of be a litmus test for us in the area of forgiveness. And I want to challenge you today.

Because I feel like God wants to set some of you free today. Litmus test. Here is how we can tell if we have truly forgiven those who hurt us.

Genesis 45 is the story of Joseph. All of you, most of you probably know the story of Joseph. Favorite son of Jacob.

Sold into slavery by his sons because of jealousy. Joseph had a dream that his sons were going to be bowing down to him. I am sorry.

What did I say? Sons. Brothers. Thank you.

Joseph had a dream that his grandparents were going to be bowing down to him. Joseph had a dream that his brothers were going to be bowing down to him. And he tells his brothers that wasn't the wisest thing to do.

His brothers get jealous. And they throw him in a pit. They take his coat of many colors.

They sprinkle blood all over it. They bring the coat back to the father and say something terrible has happened to Joseph. He has died.

Some wild animals have eaten him. Crazy story. Joseph's father is mourning as if he has lost his own son.

In the meantime, Joseph is sold into slavery and brought into Egypt. Spent years in prison. The dudes had a rough go of it.

Kind of the opposite of the Count of Monte Cristo at a certain point. But kind of an interesting thing. He did not deserve to be where he was.

So the question is, how do you handle it when you come face to face with the lowlifes that threw you into the pit? What do you do? How do you respond? Check this out. Some of the most amazing verses in scripture. Genesis 45, verse 1. Joseph's brothers are standing in front of him.

And Joseph's brothers have no idea who they're looking at. And Joseph knows who he's looking at. Verse 1. By the way, this is 22 years after Joseph's dream.

Can you imagine that? 22 years later. That's some hard years he's had. It's also some wonderful years where God brought him to a position of leadership.

Second in command now in Egypt. The greatest nation on the planet at this time. Then Joseph, verse 1, could not control himself before all those who stood by him.

And he cried, have everyone go out from me. So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it.

And the household of Pharaoh heard it. Verse 3. Then 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.

Can you imagine what Joseph's brothers felt? 22 years after they dumped this dude in a pit? Can you imagine the fear that was on them? Can you imagine the anguish that they were feeling? Joseph? Who could have lopped their heads off in a split second? You know what he does the first thing he does? He sends everybody out of the room. Except his brothers. I heard R.T. Kendall speak on this.

Some of these points actually were birthed out of what I heard R.T. Kendall say. Genesis 45. Litmus test number 1. You will no longer tell anyone what was done to you.

Joseph had an amazing opportunity at this moment to reveal to all of Egypt that it was these guys right here that threw me into slavery. And you know what he did? He sent everybody out of the room so that when he revealed himself to his brothers, it was just he and his brothers that were there. Oh my goodness.

How easy is it to just repeat a matter over and over and over again? Well you don't know how I've been hurt. You don't know what they've done to me. The more we repeat a matter, the more it just embroils with inside of us.

It's like this root that just goes down and just kind of spreads all over the place. You know how you can tell if you're free and if you've truly forgiven? If you don't ever have to tell anybody anything about what you went through. Because that's how God's forgiven us.

What does the Bible say? I will remember your sins no more. Listen to this. There's a difference between forgetting and not remembering.

I forget a lot of things. It's a passive, it's just passive. Where's my wallet? Oh, I owed you \$5? No, I'm teasing.

It's easy to forget. It's a passive thing. But not remembering is an active thing.

Can I just tell you this? God doesn't forget anything. But there are things he chooses not to remember. And that's more powerful than forgetting.

I will remember your sin no more. Forgive one another even as God has forgiven us. How many of us want to hold sins over somebody's head? You know what you did to me? I can't love you.

I can't trust you. I can't work for you. I will remember your sin no more.

Man, that's so powerful. It's so amazing. That's who God is.

That's why we're sitting here. If you don't know the Lord today, can I tell you? You have an opportunity to come to a God who will never bring up one lousy bad thing that you've ever done once you just simply come and confess your sin to him. How wonderful is that? But we live with this Count of Monte Cristo thing going on inside of us.

I am going to see that everyone that ever did anything to me gets what they deserve. That's a little scary. Just read Matthew 18.

About the God that's been forgiven much. You know what we deserve? We don't deserve eternal life. If God gave us what we deserve, none of us would be sitting here today.

So how dare we inflict on somebody what we think they deserve with our own human understanding? You know what they deserve? Eternal life. So let's be the demonstration of the kingdom and forgive as God has forgiven us. This is so amazingly empowering.

Everybody out of the room. I am Joseph. Are you willing to never repeat what so-and-so did to you? Never let it be made known to anybody ever again? But Scott, people need to watch out for these guys.

But Scott, if I don't tell anybody, maybe they won't get what's supposed to be coming to them. What does the Bible say about vengeance? Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. Oh, they'll get what's coming to them.

They'll get what you sow, you reap. But you are not the one that causes them to get what they deserve. Everybody out.

Litmus test number one. Are you willing to no longer talk about what it is that you went through? Number two. He wept so loudly, verse two, that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it.

Verse three. Then Joseph said to his brothers, I'm Joseph. Is my father still alive? But his brothers could not answer him for they were dismayed.

And King James says troubled. NIV says terrified at his presence, obviously. Verse four.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, please come closer to me. They came closer and he said, I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Number two, litmus test number two.

Not only will you not speak about what they did, but you will not allow them to fear you or be intimidated by you. They were terrified. Joseph said, come closer.

How many of you want the people who hurt you the most closest to you? When we have bitterness or unforgiveness in our hearts, the last person we want to look at are those people who violated us. We want to hold them. We want them fearing who we are.

Joseph said, come closer. This is so amazing to me. I mean, I'm actually fighting emotionally when I think of what God did for all of us.

Come closer. Come to me. This is Jesus.

Forgive one another as God's forgiven us. I want to move quickly. Number one, you'll no longer talk to anybody about what they did.

Number two, you won't let them be fearful or intimidated by you. Number three, you won't even let them feel guilty for what they've done. Check this out.

Verse four, then Joseph said to his brothers, please come closer, brothers. I'm sorry. Then Joseph said to his brothers, please come closer to me.

They came closer and he said, I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. Verse five, do not be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here. For God sent me here before you to preserve life.

Joseph, man, you are blowing the best opportunity you've ever had to get back at these guys. You won't even let them feel guilty for what they've done. You didn't sell me here.

Don't be grieved. What does it say? Don't be here. Grieve because you sold me here.

For God sent me before you to preserve life. Joseph either is the biggest wuss in the world or the greatest hero of his time. Oh, Joseph, face those people who got you.

And man, you give it to them. You get an opportunity to look in their eyes. You give it back to them, buddy.

Stand up for your rights. I'm telling you, I've been around enough people who've been hurt, even in the church, who refused to forgive until the person that hurt them comes and begs and pleads forgiveness. I've been around leaders who are like that.

I was one of them. We want justice. We want, we want back what was stolen from us.

You know what God says? Forgive as I've forgiven you. You won't talk about it anymore. You won't let them fear you.

You won't let them feel guilty. Verse six, for the famine has been in the land these two years. And there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

Verse seven, look at this. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God.

Not only will you not allow them to feel guilty, but you'll be able to proclaim to them how God has worked in your life through them. It wasn't you that sold me here, but it was God that sent me here. Can I tell you something? In 1996, all I wanted to do was to get back at the people who wronged me.

Until one day in November of 1996, when God did something to me that I did not deserve, all of a sudden I wanted to thank those people for what they did. Not to shmeear something, that's kind of a Yiddish thing, shmeear. I don't know if I've ever said that, shmeear.

Where'd that come from? Not to just smear something mud in their face, but I realized however much I felt like what they did was wrong was God's way of getting me to the very next thing in my life that never could have happened. Can I tell you something? I would not be standing here today if that did not happen to me in 1996, and I wouldn't trade today for anything. So I can say, God, thank you.

They may have been the human instruments that did that to me, but it was you that allowed it to happen to get me to this place. And Joseph was mature enough and spiritual enough to look at his brothers who he could have shot right there, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. He could have sold them into slavery, and he said, It's okay.

Don't be dismayed. This was not your doing. It was God's doing.

How about when people come to you after they've hurt you? Oh, Beth, I just want to apologize to you. Sometimes what we do is we say, yeah, that really hurt me. I mean, do you know what you brought me through? Do you know all the years of anguish? I'll forgive you, but you just need to know something.

Is that it? How about looking those people in the eyes and just saying, Not only do I forgive you, but I thank God for you. Do you know what the Lord allowed me to do? He allowed me to look at the people who hurt me and my family the most. And it was God, because I saw them in a place I never expected to see them.

I was driving into a McDonald's one morning to get coffee, and the drive-thru line was just ridiculously long. It was early in the morning at a McDonald's I never stop at, and I decided to go in and grab a coffee. And as I walk in, right in the corner are those men, the very men that signed the letter basically booting my dad and I out of our own church.

And I saw them, and I quickly turned around. My heart starts beating. This is after my vision.

My heart starts beating, and I'm like, Oh, God, please. And I was like, Okay, this is the opportunity. I walked over to those men, and they had their Bibles open.

By the way, the people who hurt you most, some of them know that they've hurt you, but I would guarantee that the people who've hurt you most, if you gave them a lie detector test, would vow that they did what they felt like God wanted them to do. They might not ever even apologize to you. By the way, don't wait for an apology to forgive.

You're going to be waiting a long time. I walked over to them, and I kind of had a Joseph moment, but I didn't realize it at that moment. But I kind of had a Joseph moment with these guys.

This is the grace of God, and I looked at them, and I had written them a letter a month earlier, never heard any response to it, telling them what happened to me in Pensacola, asking if I can come and publicly apologize to the church and fulfill the vision. I never heard a word from them. I walk over to them, and I said, Gentlemen, I knew them all.

I knew their children. Some of their kids were in my youth group. I looked at them, and I said, I don't know if you got my letter.

They said yes. But I just want you to know something. The Lord touched my heart in Pensacola, and I need to ask you to forgive me for harboring bitterness and unforgiveness in my heart towards you.

He said, We forgive you. And without asking them if I could pray, I just started praying for them. This is how the prayer came out of my mouth, and I knew it was God because as it was coming out of my mouth, I thought, I'm not capable of praying this.

God, you're doing the work even as I'm praying. God bless them. Thank you for the privilege of allowing me to work with these men all these years.

I pray a blessing on their church. I pray a blessing on their children. I pray a blessing on their businesses and on their jobs.

Thank you for them. Lord, increase, increase them. May your spirit fall it.

Church, I was blown away at the prayer that was coming out of my mouth because God did something in my heart. And I am telling you, when God does something, you can't take credit for it. Oh, I'm such a good guy.

I've forgiven. No, no, no, no, no, no. Let me tell you something.

When you try to forgive in the natural, and you wake up the next morning and you hear about what the person who you forgave said about you, all of a sudden, he's just rising up all the more. Last point, and then I'm going to close. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God.

And he had made me a father to Pharaoh and the Lord of all of his household and ruler over all of Egypt. Now, it's really interesting. Read the rest of chapter 45 when you get home.

Joseph actually tells his brothers what to tell Jacob when they get to him. They said, you know, tell your father Joseph's alive. Do you know that Joseph never told his brothers to tell his father the truth of what happened? Never.

Go back and tell Dad, you sold me into slavery, but I'm okay. No. Go back and tell Dad you lied about me, but I'm okay.

No. Isn't that incredible? He tells them what to say so that they can be truthful. We saw Joseph.

He's alive. I don't know if Jacob knew. I mean, I haven't read through this again.

I can't remember whether Jacob ever knew that his sons even did this. That's remarkable, but turn quickly as we close to chapter 50. You guys with me okay? Jacob is now dead.

They bury Jacob, and Joseph's brothers start freaking out that now that Jacob's dead, Joseph's going to change his mind and give them what they deserve. Verse 15, when Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, what if Joseph should bear a grudge against us and pay us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him? So they sent a message to Joseph saying, and this is all untrue, but they feared, so this is the message they sent to Joseph. Your father charged before he died saying, thus you shall say to Joseph, please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.

And now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father. And when Joseph heard this, he wept when they spoke to him. And his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, behold, we are your servants.

But Joseph said to them, do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? As for me, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result to preserve many alive. Now verse 21 underlined this. So therefore, do not be afraid.

I will provide for you and your little ones. So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Joseph, in a moment when he had an opportunity to exile these guys, said, not only am I not going to do that, but forgiveness isn't just a temporary thing that's okay while daddy's alive.

But he's dead and I'm going to provide for you and the generations to come out of a heart of forgiveness because of what God has done for me. And I'm telling you that my friends is the Lord's work in a heart. Stand with me, will you? There are some of you in this place who are dealing with bitterness and unforgiveness.

And I know that God wants to touch your lives. And here's simply what I'm going to ask. I'm just going to ask us to pray.

I want you to lift your hands with me. I want you to pray with me. We pray for you.

Father, I just pray that you look down on this congregation. We yield ourselves to you. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you.

Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. Father, right now, we choose to forgive. Would you just repeat this after me? Father, right now, we choose to forgive.

We lean on you, Lord Jesus. We're not capable in and of ourselves. Father, those people who've hurt us, we choose to forgive.

We lean on your grace. Make us like Joseph. Make us like Jesus.

We need you, Lord. And we yield to you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Father, I just pray, Lord, that the power of your spirit would move across this congregation. Lord, and I pray for you that you would do for my brothers and sisters what you've done for me. Lord, we're not capable.

And as we yield to you, I pray, Lord, do the surgical work of the Messiah, Lord. Dig in, Lord, and remove anything, Lord, as we yield to you that's been lingering or keeping us from flowing and moving in the way that you would have us move. We yield to you, and we look to you, and we love you.

In Jesus' name.

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