



STORY

Joseph's Brothers Come to Egypt - Genesis 42

8/18/04

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Father, I understand and believe that whom the Lord loves He chastens. Grant to me the faith and the strength to accept the discipline You give to me and to understand that it is given out of love for me and my spiritual welfare. Thankful for the forgiveness You have given to me, strengthen me that I might bring needed discipline to the lives of the young people You have placed under my care, and that I might do so with love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

VOCABULARY

calamity: an event that brings terrible loss, lasting distress, or severe affliction; a disaster:

famine: a time when there is not enough food.

interpreter: one who translates orally from one language into another.

provisions: food and other material goods necessary to sustain life.

bereaved: suffering the loss of a loved one

OUTER AIM

The Lord disciplined Joseph's brothers to change their hearts and correct their sinful behavior.

INNER AIM

As the Lord chastened or disciplined Joseph's brothers, so the Lord also chastens or disciplines us because of His love for us. This chastening or discipline we receive from our Lord is a part of the unconditional love, forgiveness, and longsuffering of our God toward us. The Lord disciplines us because He loves us.

BACKGROUND

This story represents the first step in God's chastening of the ten brothers who had treated Joseph so shamefully. Joseph's actions toward his brothers were not done out of hate but love. Joseph, a God-fearing man, was deeply concerned for the spiritual welfare of his brothers. Joseph's acceptance of what God had allowed to come into his life, together with his loving forgiveness toward his brothers, serves as a model for all who would follow.

Verses 1-14

Because there was a great famine in the land, Jacob determined to send his sons to Egypt to buy grain. He did not, however, send Benjamin. Jacob continued to imitate his own father's shameless favoritism. As he had once showed favoritism to Joseph, so also now did he favor Benjamin.

Joseph recognized his brothers, but his brothers did not recognize Joseph. There are several possible explanation for this. 1) Joseph did not look the same, he would have changed much in the twenty or more difficult years that had passed. 2) His brothers never expected to find Joseph occupying such a position of authority. 3) While the Israelites were bearded people, the Egyptians were clean-shaven, often used makeup, and had dramatically different hairstyles and head coverings. 4) Joseph spoke harshly to them in a foreign language. 5) The brothers probably believed that Joseph was dead. Joseph had no doubt wondered often during the past 20 years just when the dreams of his youth would be fulfilled (Cf. Genesis 37:1-11). He recognized their fulfillment immediately when his brothers bowed down to him; yet, in great love, for a time he resisted the temptation to reveal himself and point out the fulfillment of his dreams.

What might at first seem like harsh behavior is, in fact, God using Joseph to chasten or discipline his brothers to bring them to repentance. The first part of this chastening was Joseph's feigned anger with the brothers. The brothers were naturally puzzled and probably quite fearful when Joseph did not accept their explanation that they had come to buy food. Why did this Egyptian ruler single *them* out when there were surely many other strangers doing just what they were doing? The pleading of the brothers was to no avail. How fitting a chastisement! Joseph had pleaded with his brothers to spare his life many years ago, and was rejected, so now the pleading of his brothers is rejected.

Verses 14-24

The brothers were to be tested. They would not be allowed to leave Egypt until the younger brother Benjamin was brought to him. Note the wisdom of Joseph's actions. He wanted to see Benjamin, his only full brother, but he arranged to see him through means that appeared wise and normal to the ten brothers. Joseph was demanding that they prove their whole story by verifying one small part. If they could produce Benjamin, their entire story would be validated.

The brothers were unjustly thrown into prison for three days. Later they would certainly learn that they had likely been held in the same prison where Joseph suffered for several years. Joseph was giving them time to contemplate their sin.

Joseph left them in prison only three days because he did not want his father's large household to suffer from hunger. He would send the brothers back with the exception of Simeon, who would remain as a hostage or prisoner to ensure the brothers return. The others would carry the muchneeded food back to his father's household.

Why Simeon, the second oldest, was chosen is not known, although we have no record of Simeon ever objecting to the harsh treatment of Joseph - as did the oldest brother, Reuben.

That this chastening awoke the consciences of the brothers was made clear when they confessed to each other their guilt regarding Joseph. They remembered how Joseph had pleaded and how they had shown no mercy. Because of their sin long ago, now they were suffering. They came to realize that what they had done to Joseph was no different from murder in the eyes of God.

Once Joseph realized that his brothers were truly sorry for their sin, he wept. His long heartache was finally at an end. He was allowed to see the fruit of God's work in his life. We are hereby reminded that our sins can have far-reaching consequences. Sins don't simply go away. Time does not heal sins, Christ does. How important for us to understand that we daily sin much and are in constant need of forgiveness. We also see here the longsuffering of our merciful and gracious God. He still loved the ten brothers and wanted them brought to repentance. What comfort there is in this fact for each of us. Our Lord loves us and chastens us because He is not willing that any should perish.

Verses 25-38

See here again the loving wisdom of God at work through Joseph. He sent provisions for his brothers so they would have no need to look in their sacks until well on their journey. By returning their money to their sacks, Joseph was seeking to create in them the same sense of helplessness he must have once felt. Again, revenge was not his motive, but a loving concern for their souls. The brothers needed to learn that they did not control their destinies. God did. When life seems unfair, the only course of action is to trust our merciful God.

Reuben tries to put his father at ease and demonstrate his full devotion by offering his two sons as a pledge. It seems obvious to us that, should Jacob lose his son Benjamin, killing two of his own grandchildren could never

give him any comfort. Jacob refused to let Benjamin go, in effect, sentencing Simeon to death. Apparently selfish even in his old age, Jacob was in effect sentencing his whole family to death rather than face the possible loss of Benjamin and the resulting grief he would suffer.

We see here the temporal effects of sin in the lives of Joseph's brothers. What they had done twenty years or so earlier is now causing them great grief. We need to be reminded of this fact as well. The consequences of our sin can be devastating not only in the present but also in the distant future. Yet the Lord is merciful and gracious, we see His mercy in this chastening or disciplining of the brothers. Through these events, the Lord would bring them to repentance and forgiveness. We are once again reminded of what our Lord tells us; "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28) While we leave Jacob and his sons for now in a state of bitter anguish, the Lord in His grace will turn these events into a most joyful blessing.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, in this Bible truth you have shown me how much I am loved by my Father in heaven. You have shown me that when I am disciplined by my heavenly Father it is done out of love. Help me to accept this discipline and repent of all my sins knowing that in Jesus I have forgiveness. Help me to remember at all times that no matter what I have done wrong, God the Father has freely forgiven me of all my sins for Jesus' sake. Grant me an extra measure of Your Holy Spirit to turn me from my sinful ways to follow You. In Jesus' name I ask this. Amen.

PRESENTATION

The account is probably too long to read. You may prefer to tell this Bible truth in your own words using the written account as your guide. Emphasize that sin does not right itself with the passage of time. God in His wisdom used the famine as an opportunity to discipline Joseph's brothers to bring them to the knowledge and repentance of their sin.

Additional Teacher's Aids

Introduction (Guide listening of story)

(Teacher could come up with an example from his/her life when the Lord brought them blessing through and event the seemed unpleasant at the time.)

Explain to the students some things that are good for us – don't always feel that way at first. Discipline is a prime example of this.

(Ask the students to think (privately) of a time they were in trouble for doing something sinful.)

Yours was probably not a pleasant situation – but it's very important the correction takes place. Sin can separate us from God. Sin is dangerous to our souls. Our sin must be pointed out so we can repent and have it removed through forgiveness.

This process of correction doesn't usually *feel* good – but we should realize how good this is for our spiritual health.

It is an act of love when God protects our souls from sin. In today's Bible reading you will hear of God using Joseph to help his brothers see their sins and seek forgiveness!

Answer the Questions

1. List three events from Genesis 42 that helped Joseph's brothers recognize their sins.

(Possible Answers:

1. Treated unfairly as they had treated Joseph, selling him into slavery.
2. Their lives threaten as they had put Joseph's in danger.
3. Simeon bound as Joseph was into slavery.
4. Money being return filled them with fear, as it would look as though they didn't pay for the grain.
5. Brothers pleaded for mercy...like Joseph had.
6. The fact they were to bring the youngest, their father's favorite and endanger his life would certainly remind them of their sin of betraying and hating Joseph.)

2. Quote evidence from Scripture that the brothers recognize their guilt and are being led toward repentance. Be sure to include a reference as well as key words from the passage/s.

(Genesis 42:21,22)

21 Then they said to one another, "**We are truly guilty concerning our brother**, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us."22 And Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us.")

Discuss

1. If Joseph had simply revealed himself to his brothers what may have remained? (Perhaps they would've feared Joseph and not had godly fear repentance from their guilt.)
2. Discuss different ways in which you have been corrected in an attempt to identify your sin and move you toward godly repentance. (Spanking, grounding, bible passages, lecture, jail, removing privileges...)
3. Discuss these sayings from God's Little Instruction Book Volumes I, II, & III.
"Too many parents are not on spanking terms with their children."
Basis – Proverbs 13:24
"Whenever a man is ready to uncover his sins, God is always ready to cover them."
Basis – Proverbs 28:13
4. Discuss how radiation treatment of cancer can actually kills cells and makes people sick...but gets rid of the life threatening cancer. Discuss how this is like our inner aim. (The treatment feels bad, damages cells...but saves lives.)
5. Discuss how in muscle building the muscle cells are actually damaged before they come back stronger than they were before lifting weights. Discuss how this might be like our inner aim. (Cells are damaged; it hurts; yet we are stronger because of it.)

Concordance Activity

Search for passages that emphasize the Lord chastises those He loves. Search for passages that emphasize chastisement as a good thing.

Proverbs 3:11,12

My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction;¹² For whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son *in whom* he delights.

Titus 1:13

This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith,

Hebrews 12:10,11

For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness.¹¹ Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Proverbs 13:24

He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

Proverbs 19:18

Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction.

Proverbs 22:15

Foolishness *is* bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

APPLICATIONS

1. As was the case with Joseph's brothers, our Lord does not give up on us. His love and patience toward us is abundantly evident.
2. It seems that people in our day have a very relaxed attitude toward sin. Emphasize to your students that sin is a terrible destroyer. This is evident in the Bible truth laid out before us. The sin of Joseph's brothers had farreaching effects. Their sin had not only destroyed the relationship between Joseph and his brothers, their sin had separated them from their Father in heaven. Our Lord in this Bible story leads us once again to understand the terrible consequences of sin. It doesn't just go away. If left unchecked it will destroy individuals, families, and most importantly our relationship with God and our salvation.
3. Our Lord demonstrates His love for all mankind in His chastening efforts to lead Joseph's brothers to repentance. The promised Messiah was to be born from this family, specifically from the tribe of Judah. In preserving this family, God was working to preserve all mankind.
4. God's grace is at the forefront of this Bible story. If God had not cared about Joseph's brothers He would not have chastened them. God disciplines us out of love. Our Lord may allow things to come upon us in this life to lead us to repentance, and to strengthen the faith He has created in us. God's disciplining of us is a blessing. God shows His love through his chastising. Parents are called upon to do the same. It has been said that one of the greatest forms of child abuse is lack of discipline. Parents are commanded by God to offer this same loving correction to the children God has entrusted to their care. You might also use this section to teach the students about true repentance, and the difference between confession and repentance. A man might confess a transgression without ever repenting of it. Godly sorrow over sin is more than sorrow over getting caught. True repentance involves a faithful turning *away* from sin and turning *to* God for forgiveness. Use Judas and Peter to contrast the difference between being sorry and confessing sin (Judas) and true repentance (Peter).

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Psalms 94:12 - *Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O LORD, And teach out of Your law,*

Hebrews 12:6 - *For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.*

Revelation 3:19 - *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.*

Middle any of the above and...

Proverbs 13:24 - *He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.*

Upper any of the above and...

Proverbs 19:18 - *Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction.*

HYMN CHOICES

“Jesus Sinners Doth Receive” (TLH #324:1-2)

“Chief Of Sinners Though I Be” (TLH #342:1 & 5)