



Viewfield Baptist Church

To enable people to become fully devoted
followers of Jesus Christ

Joseph Study Leaflet

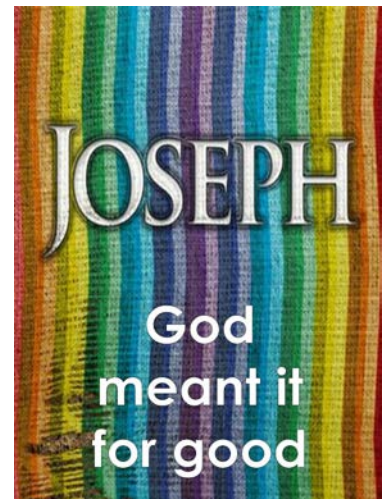
Sunday 2nd June

Sermon 12
“Total Forgiveness”
Genesis 42v17-38

This study guide will be used in our Small Groups, but can also be used by individuals.

You can download or listen to a recording of the sermon at this link:
<http://www.viewfield.org.uk/media/podcasts>

Leaflets about our small groups are available on the teabar. If you would like to join a small group, please speak to our Pastor, Rae, or to Pete Hutchison.



Viewfield Baptist Church

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Sermon 12 in Joseph series. Genesis 42v17-38. "Total Forgiveness."

We left the story of Joseph last time with Joseph having been reunited with his brothers, with the exception of Benjamin who was back home with his Father, Jacob. Although they were reunited they were not reconciled. Joseph had recognised his brothers but they had not recognised him. **V8**

At this point Joseph doesn't reveal his identity to the brothers. He tests them, not as part of a cold game but to see if their attitudes have changed. He is preparing the ground for reconciliation. Often this process takes time. The ultimate goal of forgiveness is reconciliation.

Here in this context Joseph is God's representative. He is challenging them to face up to their sin. We stopped last week at the point where the brothers spend a few days in prison to think upon the situation. As the reader of the story we are thinking will they or won't they repent? Will they or won't they be reconciled with Joseph? How will the story end?

Let's continue to reflect on this Chapter in the story and see what we can learn.

A discovery in Egypt

Joseph's initial plan had been to send just one brother back **v18** but as we read on we see that he changes his mind. He has now decided he will keep one brother in Egypt and send the other brothers back to Canaan with the grain. He also requests that they must bring their youngest his brother Benjamin back to Egypt. **v19-20**

Why does he change his mind? I think there are two reasons. Firstly, because it is what God wants him to do, which I want to unpack. Secondly, it may also partly have been to save his Father more heartache.

Obviously, while the brothers have been in prison Joseph has been considering the correct course of action and praying asking that the Lord would guide him. **v18**. Joseph testifies to the brothers that he has a fear of God. He is teaching his brothers about his own conscience. His conscience is governed by a fear of his God, and he is putting the claim before them, telling them indirectly that they also should fear God. So Joseph, by reversing his decision because he fears God, is modelling to them the kind of response God wants from them. They too can change their ways if they act in accordance with Godly fear.

We don't hear too many sermons nowadays on the Fear of the Lord. The Fear of the Lord is a topic mentioned regularly in Scripture. When we speak about the Fear of the Lord we are not talking about a terror but a Holy awe for the majesty and power of God. Some translations of the Bible sometimes replace the word "fear" with "reverence". This is because the Fear of the Lord incorporates more than simple fear. As **Robert B.**

Strimple says, *"There is the convergence of awe, reverence, adoration, honor, worship, confidence, thankfulness, love, and, yes, fear."*

God was using Joseph to speak and challenge his brothers. Now we begin to see signs that in response to the tests the brothers are facing they are beginning to show signs of repentance.

Joseph's plan to keep one brother as a test of their character provokes a discussion among the brothers. Although they didn't realise it, Joseph could understand every word they said. **V23**. Obviously, the brothers did not realise that he understands Hebrew.

Consequently, Joseph learns some interesting facts about the brothers.

Firstly, he learns that his brothers feel guilt for what they have done and they see what is happening as a punishment against them. **v21**. We have said before that God was using Joseph to speak to the brothers. God's word was challenging them, they were admitting their guilt.

In spite of everything, we could say about these men, they believed in God. They are aware they are reaping what they had sown. **READ GALATIANS 6v7-8**. Someone once said: *"Sow a thought, reap an act, sow an act, reap a habit, sow a habit, reap a character, sow a character, reap a destiny."*

We reap what we sow. That is why repentance is so important. So we can turn from sin's way of living and turn to God's way of living. There are signs of repentance. They are facing up to what they have done. Here is the beginning of their repentance. They're turning back.

Secondly, Joseph learns that his eldest brother Reuben had no part in the plot. **v22**. Indeed, perhaps the brothers never told Reuben what actually happened.

So far, through Joseph, that hand of God has been heavy upon the brothers. Joseph's stern words have pulled them up short and done their work of bringing them to their senses spiritually. However, as we read on there is a different feel to things. The Bible says that God disciplines those he loves: **READ Hebrews 12v5-6**.

We know that Joseph loves his brothers despite what they have done. That is why he weeps in **verse 24**. Joseph had been looking for a change in these men and he is beginning to see it.

As we read on we see Joseph show kindness to his brothers. In doing this Joseph becomes the channel of God's loving kindness towards these men. Let me mention a couple of examples: Firstly, because of Reuben's innocence, Joseph takes Simeon, the second eldest, as the one who will stay behind **v24**. Secondly, Joseph gave orders for

their bags to be filled with grain but also to secretly put each man's silver back in his sack and to give provisions for their journey. **V25**

Why did Joseph do this? He does it out of compassion and kindness towards his brothers. He may also be wanting to test their character to see if they have changed. They had sold him for silver, **37v28**, and he wants to see how much they value it. Will they keep the silver and leave Simeon to his fate, or return it honestly? The kindness that Joseph demonstrates impacts the brothers. They cannot understand what is happening. And for the first time in the whole story of Joseph the brothers mention God. **v28**.

The Bible says in **Romans 2v4**: *“Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that God’s kindness leads you to repentance.”*

We have already talked about how the fear of the Lord can bring people to repentance. However, here in the story and in this verse we also learn that God is kind towards us and this kindness leads us to repentance also.

God is so clearly at work in this situation. Joseph acts as God's servant. He has shown kindness and severity so that his family can be changed and then saved from death and become a great nation. The Bible makes it clear that we should have a fear of the Lord. And often the hand of God can be heavy upon us to bring us to repentance. However, the Bible also makes it clear that God is kind towards us. And his kindness leads us to repentance. God has made a way through the death of his son for us to be forgiven and transformed. May we today repent from our sin and seek to live God's way.

Bible study questions

Icebreaker: “What is your favourite part of the Joseph story and why?”

1. Discuss the wonder that through faith in Christ we are totally forgiven.
2. How should this effect the way we live?
3. In what ways does Joseph seek to test his brothers? Why does he do this?
4. What does it mean to have a fear of God? How should this impact our worship?
5. What does Joseph learn about his brothers in this passage?
6. In what way does Joseph express his kindness to his brothers in these verses?
7. In what ways does God express his kindness to us?
8. When Jesus was dying on the cross he cried out “It is finished.” What was finished?

Application: “Give God thanks for amazing news of total forgiveness.”