

When You've Been Wronged.

Falsely Accused

I say again, the day Joseph left with that caravan, all hope must have died in his soul. And to add salt to his wound, he knew his brothers were happy about his terrible fate. Their hatred and betrayal had to have stung.

This particular pain would have been enough to last anyone a lifetime. Unfortunately, it was just the beginning. He arrives in Egypt and as a slave he rises in the favor of his master, Potiphar, who is the head of Pharaoh's Secret Service detail. And the Scripture says, "*The Lord was with him and...gave him success in everything he did*" (Genesis 39:3). As a result, he became a trusted advisor in the house of Potiphar. This was a remarkable turn of events. But he had also caught the eye of his boss's wife.

Everything was going so well, perhaps too well, actually. Joseph had found favor with God and with Potiphar, who trusted him to take care of all his household, which included servants and business affairs. Humanly the exaltation was more than Joseph could possibly have expected; clearly God was in all of this for this is not how Joseph had thought it would be. It was almost too good to be true. Enter Potiphar's wife.

Genesis 39:6-8 tells the story. God had given Joseph two gifts that would play a role in his destiny. He was unusually handsome and he possessed a remarkable character. Nevertheless, he ended up the victim of another cruel injustice, this time in the form of false accusation.

Verse 10 tells us that Potiphar's wife was attracted to Joseph but day by day he refused her advances. Verses 11-15 tell the story that ended with Potiphar throwing Joseph into the dungeon. Imagine the injustice now. Joseph had now been rejected by his brothers, separated from his beloved father, physically abused, sold as a slave, and finally imprisoned with shackles for a crime he didn't commit. Why? Because he was a gifted, good-looking, amazingly talented young man, who feared God and had a heart of integrity. It just doesn't seem to be right, does it?

Betrayed by a Friend

While in prison, Joseph met two servants of Pharaoh, one the cupbearer or butler, the other the chief baker of the king. They became friends, and Joseph willingly interpreted their dreams. The baker's dream revealed his execution. But the cupbearer's dream revealed his release from prison and reinstatement to his place as cupbearer to Pharaoh. After Joseph interpreted his dream he asked his friend to remember him before Pharaoh upon his release—to appeal to him for the injustice of his plight (Genesis 40: 8-18). Everything happened as Joseph had predicted. But this chapter closed as sadly as it had begun—for the chief cupbearer, his friend and the one to whom Joseph had entrusted his whole future, *“did not remember Joseph; he forgot him” (Genesis 40:23).*

In prison Joseph died several deaths:

- He died to his family.
- He died to his reputation.
- He died to his only friend.
- His dreams died.

He had every reason to believe he would be in prison for the rest of his life. He had nothing to look forward to except abuse, monotony, and deprivation. [Psalm 105](#) provides a very interesting commentary on Joseph's plight as a slave and a prisoner in Egypt. Read what he endured and why:

Read Psalm 105: 16-19. All of this happened *“till the word of the Lord proved him true”!* Joseph knew that what he was experiencing was by the divine will and purpose of God. He had every reason to be bitter—to allow his painful circumstances to make him angry and hopeless the rest of his days. Yet, he did not respond that way. Joseph, more than others, teaches us not only the lesson of forgiveness, but God's part in it all. Joseph could have decided to be a victim, but he decided his pain would not define who he was.

Joseph understood that God does not allow injustice in our lives unless he intends to do us some good and bear fruit. One lesson Joseph teaches us is *“When your dreams are being dashed to the ground, one of the best things you can do is to help somebody fulfill their dream.”*

Remember: Bitterness has roots. And bitterness spreads. What you do not forgive, you pass on.

Steps That Lead to Freedom

1) Joseph choose to live in the future, Not the past. (Genesis 41:45)

- God is bigger than our “If Only’s.”
- God is bigger than your past. *“You don’t have to be defined by your past.”*
- God can make you fruitful through your pain. *“Such as Pruning your garden”*

2) Joseph choose to set his brothers free. (Genesis 45: 1-7)

- Without one word of apology from his brothers, Joseph says, *“Do not be distressed for what you have done...”*

3) He saw God in the injustice. (Genesis 45: 7-8)

- You will never be free until you see God in your past.
- Joseph says to his brothers, it was not you that sent me here, but God. To save lives, including yours.
- Roman’s 8:28. *“All things work together for good...”*

4) Joseph responded to Injustice with a Blessing. (Genesis 45:9-13)

- He offered an invitation to bring the entire family to live with him and share his blessings.

5) He Refused to Retaliate. (Genesis 50: 15-20)

- Once their father had died, the brothers believed Joseph would surely seek his revenge.
- Joseph understood that for him to retaliate would be to put himself in the place of God.
- Vengeance is God’s business, not ours.
- You are not God! You cannot play god with the people who have wronged you. You must trust God to bring the truth out in the open in the day of judgement and to set all records straight.

- There are situations that you simply don't need to sort out. You might want to, but you don't need to. You don't need to retaliate because you are not in the place of God. The work of bringing justice—of making right the wrong—is God's work. Your work is to forgive and release. It's the only path to healing.
- Lay it down. You do that by spending time in the presence of God and asking Him to dig out every root, every thought, every fear, every lingering shred of resentment and pain. That's God's specialty. He will "cause you to forget," and the chains will fall off.
- They'll fall onto the floor and you will say like Joseph, "I'm Free—free to be blessed, free to be fruitful."
- Forgiveness is both an act and a process. We choose to forgive, and when the bitterness returns we forgive again. At all costs, we must forgive or we are the losers.
- "Bitterness is like swallowing poison and expecting your enemy to die." Forgiveness is an act of self-healing. When we forgive, we do ourselves a favor.

Next time: The High Cost of Reconciliation.