

BELONGING

Church "Business" - part 4

The Life of Joseph

January 26, 2014

DAY 1: Belonging Takes Building

1. "How do I forgive someone who has done me great wrong?" I've been asked this by women who were raped, men who were sexually abused by a pedophile, an ex who cheated on them, etc. What's perplexing to the asker is that they usually think in only two categories: Forgive or not forgive. To not forgive is really not an option. But the image of forgive usually connotes a, "Let's forget the past, erase it, and start all over as if that never happened." Forgiveness is more complicated than that! The goal is to rebuild a shattered relationship. Trust is not just granted; it is earned. In these cases, BELONGING doesn't just happen. BELONGING has to be BUILT.

2. We'll look at how Joseph BUILT BELONGING with his wicked brothers.

Genesis 42:6-17 Now Joseph was governor over the land. He was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground.

3. Do you remember Joseph's dream? (Gen. 37:5-11)

⁷ *Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. "Where do you come from?" he said. They said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food."* ⁸ *And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.*

4. Joseph meets his brothers years later, for the first time. He is speaking Egyptian. They don't recognize him. Why do you think "he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them?"

⁹ *And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them. And he said to them, "You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land."* ¹⁰ *They said to him, "No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food."* ¹¹ *We are all sons of one man. We are honest men. Your servants have never been spies."*

5. What "test" is Joseph giving his brothers, without knowing they are being tested?

¹² *He said to them, "No, it is the nakedness of the land that you have come to see."* ¹³ *And they said, "We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan, and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is no more."* ¹⁴ *But Joseph said to them, "It is as I said to you. You are spies."* ¹⁵ *By this you shall be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here.* ¹⁶ *Send one of you, and let him bring your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. Or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies."* ¹⁷ *And he put them all together in custody for three days.*

6. What is Joseph trying to build?

DAY 2: Belonging is Built on Trust

Genesis 42:18 On the third day Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: ¹⁹ if you are honest men, let one of your brothers remain confined where you are in custody, and let the rest go and carry grain for the famine of your households, ²⁰ and bring your youngest brother to me. So your words will be verified, and you shall not die."

1. The brothers claimed to be honest men. Words are cheap. Joseph wants to see this in action. Is this a good test?

2. What will their attitude be toward the littlest brother? Toward their dad?

And they did so. ²¹ Then they said to one another, "In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us." ²² And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood."

3. What things strike you about their internal dialogue?

²³ They did not know that Joseph understood them, for there was an interpreter between them.

4. Joseph could hear and understand everything they were saying! If that had been you, what would you have thought?

²⁴ Then he turned away from them and wept. And he returned to them and spoke to them.

5. Why did Joseph weep? What was touched down in his heart?

6. He's stirred by their *talk*. He wants to see if this will be true in *action*!

And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

7. Why did Joseph have Simeon incarcerated?

8. The rest of the brothers will return to their homeland with food, but without Simeon. Will they sell him out like they sold Joseph out?

9. Joseph is trying to build a relationship with them based on trust and honesty. He is BUILDING BELONGING.

DAY 3: Building: "Do you really care?"

1. Joseph continues his plan to test their character, and **build** loyalty and trust.

Genesis 42:25 And Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, and to replace every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. This was done for them. ²⁶ Then they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed.

2. How do you think the brothers will respond when they back to their home, not only with food, but with the very money they brought to Egypt?

²⁷ And as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money in the mouth of his sack. ²⁸ He said to his brothers, "My money has been put back; here it is in the mouth of my sack!" At this their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"

3. What reasons would they have to be afraid?

4. When they get back home, they tell their father, Jacob, the story of what happened in Egypt.

Genesis 42:36 And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has come against me." ³⁷ Then Reuben said to his father, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him back to you. Put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you." ³⁸ But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. If harm should happen to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol."

5. How does Reuben's offer strike you? (v. 37)

6. How did Joseph's death affect Jacob? (v. 38)

7. They have lived about seventeen years with their father after Joseph's death. They saw how Joseph's loss devastated their father, Jacob. What role do you think this played now with the brothers?

DAY 4: Grace AND Testing. Wisdom sometimes takes both.

1. The brothers plan their return to buy more food, take Benjamin with them and return to get Simeon. Jacob doesn't want to risk sending Benjamin. Judah steps up!

Genesis 43:8 And Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. ⁹ I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.

2. Compare his words, now, to his former words after they had thrown Joseph into the pit:

Genesis 37:26 Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? ²⁷ Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him.

3. What has happened to Judah?

4. The brothers are brought in to see Joseph. **Underline** where you see Joseph's gracious attitude, and **CIRCLE** words or phrases that indicate Joseph's testing of his brothers.

Genesis 43:18 And the men were afraid because they were brought to Joseph's house, and they said, "It is because of the money, which was replaced in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may assault us and fall upon us to make us servants and seize our donkeys." ¹⁹ So they went up to the steward of Joseph's house and spoke with him at the door of the house, ²⁰ and said, "Oh, my lord, we came down the first time to buy food. ²¹ And when we came to the lodging place we opened our sacks, and there was each man's money in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight. So we have brought it again with us, ²² and we have brought other money down with us to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks." ²³ He replied, "Peace to you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them. ²⁴ And when the man had brought the men into Joseph's house and given them water, and they had washed their feet, and when he had given their donkeys fodder, ²⁵ they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they should eat bread there. ²⁶ When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present that they had with them and bowed down to him to the ground. ²⁷ And he inquired about their welfare and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?" ²⁸ They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive." And they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves. ²⁹ And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!" ³⁰ Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep. And he entered his chamber and wept there. ³¹ Then he washed his face and came out. And controlling himself he said, "Serve the food." ³² They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. ³³ And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in amazement. ³⁴ Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry with him.

5. What struck you the most from this passage?

DAY 5: Relationship is Built by Grace and Wisdom

1. Joseph has one more test. He sends all the brothers back to their homeland with full bags of grain, each man's money in the grain and Joseph's own silver cup in Benjamin's food sack!!
2. They are discovered! The group returns to the city, ready to face their greatest fear: Benjamin is "sure" to be hung. Their father will be devastated.

Judah makes a pleas in behalf of Benjamin:

Genesis 44:33 "Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers. ³⁴For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father."

3. The test is a virtual repeat of what they did to Joseph! Will they throw Benjamin under the bus and lie to their father? Or will they be men of character? What strikes you about Judah's response?

Genesis 45:1 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. ⁴So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life."

4. How would you describe Joseph's attitude toward his brothers?

5. Our **ATTITUDE** flows from our **perspective about God**, **what we value**, and **how we think our needs are met**.

- a. What was Joseph's perspective about God? (v. 5) _____
- b. What did Joseph value? (vv. 4-5) _____
- c. Was Joseph depending on his brothers for his needs to be met? _____

Genesis 45:8 So 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. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. ¹⁰You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.' ¹²And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. ¹³You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." ¹⁴Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them.

6. What strikes you the most about this story? What do you need to do in a relationship of yours?