

Series: after the beginning
“The Amazing Power of True Forgiveness”
Part Five: What True and Authentic Forgiveness Looks Like
Confirmation and Compassion
Genesis 44:1-34

MBC:AM; 09-25-11; 0181 (Skit Guys on Grace)

S1 Introduction & Review: **Read Scripture: Gen. 44:1-34** I trust everyone has their cell phones turned off or on vibrate only. You know you're getting old when you not only can't hear your phone but can't feel it either! This morning we need to answer our spiritual phones and answer the call from God to forgive and be forgiven. Unfortunately many of us have our phones on caller ID and when we see God calling we let the call go to voice mail. All of us need to pick up this morning. Will you do me a favor and just take a moment with me to tell God you have picked up the line to hear His voice this morning. (Pause for Prayer)

Someone said last time we were together on this topic that the hardest person to forgive is ourselves. So here's the question for all of us this morning, "Will you pick up the phone, will you take the call, will you make the call to forgive and to be forgiven?"

This issue of forgiving and being forgiven is something we all can relate to. All of us have been hurt and disappointed by others. It may seem very confusing when we try and understand exactly what true and authentic forgiveness really looks like? Where can we find a believable example we can pick apart and emulate? We want to return to one of the greatest stories in the whole Bible: the story of forgiveness from the life of Joseph and his eleven brothers and aging father Jacob, renamed Israel. In this amazing story we have all the ups and downs, ins and outs of being wronged, of doing wrong, of needing to forgive and of needing to be forgiven. It's all here, right before our very eyes. Let's pick up the phone and hear the call of what the Holy Spirit has to say to the church this morning.

S2, 3 1. CONFRONTATION: (Confront your sin.) False confidence destroyed. Genesis 44:1-13 Last time we looked at two factors of true and authentic forgiveness: confrontation and confession. It is imperative for all of us to admit when we are wrong and then have the moral courage to confess it as sin. We begin on this journey by looking first to the offenders: Joseph's ten brothers who sold him in to slavery, to the Midianite traders who sold him again to the Egyptians. Twenty-two years later we find Joseph as the Prime Minister of Egypt second only to Pharaoh himself. We pick up the story from last time. **A. Overjoyed. 44:1** These eleven brothers had just celebrated a party in their honor from the Prime Minister, unknown to them as their brother Joseph. Somehow this man had taken a liking to them in spite of all the tests he had put them through. They were overjoyed as they left Egypt to return to their father in Canaan. **B. Overtaken. 44:1b-6** As they travel, looking behind them, they see this dust cloud of men overtaking them. When they find out who it is and what the accusation is they are a bit cocky in their attitudes because they have proven to themselves, to their father and to this man their innocence, honesty and integrity. They were a bit to overconfident. **C. Overconfident. 44:7-12 D. Overwhelmed. 44:13** When they find the missing silver chalice in Benjamin's sack they are overwhelmed with grief. What are they to do? Busted! Someone had their number and called their bluff.

S4 2. CONFESSION: (Confess your sin.) True contrition manifest. Genesis 44:14-18 We find in the story that God Himself is orchestrating all the events to bring these ten brothers to a place of complete and utter abandonment to His sovereign will. The brothers admit there is nothing they can say. Even though they know they are innocent of this particular crime they have to admit they are guilty for many more offenses they have long thought forgotten. They say, "How shall we clear ourselves, God has found out the iniquity of your servants..." From a false confidence destroyed to a true contrition manifest within their hearts. God had broken them completely. It would be better for all of us to confess our sin before we have to be confronted over it. **A broken and a contrite spirit God will not despise.** Most of us wait until we are caught before we stop our sinning. Confession is good for the soul. This is one reason we have communion weekly, we trust it will be a deterrent for sin, as it was in the first century church. So we must confront our sin, confess our sin and then comes...

\$5 3. CONFIRMATION: (Concede and own the need to be forgiven.) Authentic contrition proven. Gen. 44:19-

34 It is very interesting that Judah has now become the spokesman for the family. This is the man who was the instigator, the one who led his brothers to not only do harm to his brother Joseph but to profit over his enslavement. It is fitting that God reserves His greatest works for those who have the most to confess and make right. It is Judah that pleads for his youngest brother Benjamin's life. It is Judah who pleads on behalf of his father's life. It is Judah that shows the most remorse and repentance over his sin. It is Judah who represents the sins of even his brothers knowing it was he himself who encouraged them to do it. It is Judah who offers to give himself in a sacrificial replacement for his brother Benjamin. We see here true and authentic sorrow that leads to true fruits of repentance.

\$6 Confirmation definition:

\$7-9 WARNING Slides:

\$10 1. Is this person growing in their spiritual sensitivity and emotional connection to others? Gen. 44:1-13

Judah is seen here as the one illustrating these principles of true and authentic repentance and confession of sin. The truth is Judah could be any one of us. He is all of us. We are like Judah. We've wronged God and we've wronged one another. How priceless, how amazing, how like God that He chose His Son, the Redeemer, Savior of the world to come from the tribe of (guess who?) JUDAH!

\$11 2. Is this person growing in their willingness to place themselves at risk for the sake of others? Gen. 44:14,15 These ten brothers went from saying God is in this, God is doing this to us, to now saying here in verse 16: *God has found out the iniquity of your servants.* Judah was not referring here to the stolen cup but Joseph's stolen life. The heaviness of these brother's collective sins hung heavy on each of their shoulders. They knew what he was talking about here. Think of the abuse they put Joseph through: rejection, ridicule, slander, hatred, physical, mental, verbal abuse, day after day after day after day.

Can we establish a mutual abuse and victim's support group this morning? All of us are charter members of MBC's first Victim and Abuse Support Group. We meet every Sunday morning from 10:00 – 11:30. All of us have been hurt, abused, abandoned, betrayed, wronged, slandered, gossiped about, maligned, hated, taken advantage of, mocked; the list could go on forever. How is it that some who experience these things are forever crippled by the experiences and others go through the pain and come out the other side stronger and more resolute to not be that kind of person to others? Some grow bitter while others grow better?

Does it have something to do with our world view? I saw an excellent DVD talk by Louie Giglio on this subject of Hope just this past week: he essentially said that most of us have as our number one priority in life self-preservation. To go as long as we can, as far as we can without having anything bad or difficult happen to us or to those we love. We understand that this is not a bad objective it just can't be the Christian's number one objective. Our number one objective must be to give God all the glory and honor in the midst of whatever tragedy or difficulty comes our way. Trouble is coming for all of us. Offenses will come. What we do with them when they arrive speaks volumes about what is most important to us in our world view. Is it me? Is it others? Is it God? What is it you value the most in life? While it may be normal to say it is yourself: me, myself and I, this is not congruent with what a Christian should look like or act like.

\$12 3. Is this person growing in a godly sorrow that leads to repentance to others? Gen. 42:22-37; 44:16,17; II Cor. 7:10 (*Illustration of parental discipline and my cries: "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry!"*) Was I sorry for what I did or sorry that I got caught? The truth being told none of us know truly our own hearts much less the hearts of others. We can guess, we can assume, but often our guesses and assumptions are wrong. We are not to judge others in the sense that God judges with a sense of complete omniscience. We don't know all things. Jeremiah 17:9

\$13 4. Is this person growing in a sensitive, respectful conversation with others? Gen. 42:6; 44:18 Notice the tone of Judah as he addresses Joseph. Yes, we know he doesn't know at this point who Joseph is. But his tone conveys respect, deference and a genuine esteem for the one he was speaking to. We've all been guilty of doing this

or having it done to us when confessing sin: *"I'm really sorry for what I did, but I wouldn't have done it if you hadn't done what you did! And you know what you did!"* Watch your tone when owning your sin. A soft answer turns away wrath. Don't be demeaning, condescending, mocking or surly in your statements. Think before you speak. Think of how you would want to be spoken to and then speak from a wellspring of kindness. If you struggle in this area go to James chapter three. Practice spiritual breathing. Confess your sin immediately. Don't save up your sin in a dump truck and unload it all at once. If at all possible don't discuss confession matters over the phone or in an email or texting. Do it in person. So much of conversation is in your body language, your eyes tell the true story, your posture. When we feel we have the right to defend ourselves and our case be assured you can know that true confession is not taking place.

Like Judah, we need to come to a place where we are out of excuses and justification. Notice the four things Judah did in **Genesis 44:18** – 1.) *Judah came near. When confessing sin come close, as close as you are allowed.* 2.) *Judah asked permission to speak. This gives the upper hand to the offended party to allow you audience.* 3.) *Try and anticipate the person's true feelings on the matter. Notice Judah's careful plea to Joseph.* 4.) *Give the word in, what I call "a love sandwich."* Flattery is not what I'm speaking of here or God for that matter, surely if you are coming to confess or to confront do so in a way that favors the person you are speaking to. Anyone can bring a criticism but do so with kindness and deference.

S14 **5. Is this person growing through an open honest declaration of integrity towards others? Gen. 42:10-13; 44:19-22** Is it becoming increasingly obvious that this person is making an honest attempt to make things right? It isn't up to us to make as hard as possible, for those who have wronged us, to make it right. We are to be ministers of reconciliation carrying the word of reconciliation. This is what we do as believers we reconcile one another back to God and back to one another in our relationships. Become a spiritual cheer-leader! Cheer enthusiastically, honest and open attempts by the offender to make right their offense. Lasting change happens slowly, usually over a long period of time. Extend grace while the offender hears God and gathers the courage to make whatever wrongs right. Reward faith and faithfulness. A person can be just as destroyed through a lack of words as too many words. Actions sometimes do speak louder than words. Notice here in this passage Judah answers the questions posed to him honestly, completely and candidly. When telling your story to the one you've offended or to anyone else be sure not to embellish the story to your favor. If anything let the truth hurt you, because most of the time the truth does hurt.

S15 **6. Is this person growing in their willingness to be tested and proven by others? Gen. 42:14-17; 44:23,24** When we are attempting reconciliation we should expect hard questions. This is not a little thing folks! No one enjoys taking tests especially when we have no idea what's on the exam. The only people who like tests are those who have studied and prepared for them. So prepare! Think of your offense, your wrongdoing, and try and anticipate what the offended party will want to know to validate your authenticity and integrity. If you are asking the questions do so graciously knowing how difficult it must be to be completely transparent and vulnerable. Judah answered Joseph's questions simply but completely with no reservations or guile.

S16 **7. Is this person quick to admit personal guilt and responsibility before others? Gen. 42:18-21** This too is not a small thing to accomplish. Admitting fault and responsibility is hard to do, we all know that. Peter asked Jesus in Matthew 18: how many times should we forgive? He understood in the rabbinical teachings that 70X was very magnanimous. What was Jesus' answer? "70X7." Be quick to forgive even if it is the 490th time. Notice Judah and his brothers in chapter 42: complete and open responsibility.

S17 **8. Is this person growing in their loyalty and fidelity to others even if at their own expense? Gen. 42:24; 44:1-32** Simeon and Judah bore the weight and responsibility for the sin of selling their brother into slavery. This is a huge factor in discerning authentic and genuine forgiveness. What's the motive for confession, brokenness, humility, repentance and tears of sorrow that lead someone to repentance? We've got to stop being so hard on others especially when we expect people to show more grace and grace to us. Judah especially showed true repentance in willingly sacrificing himself for his brother's best interests.

S18 **9. Is this person growing into a selfless, self-sacrificing individual for others? Gen. 42:38; 43:9; 44:34; I Cor. 13:** Once again what does the offender have to gain through being self-sacrificing and selfless? In the love chapter, I

Corinthians 13: we read that love keeps no record of wrongs. What does that mean? Many of us have files on every one that has ever offended us. The files turn into file cabinets, the file cabinets turn into rooms and the rooms into buildings full of the refuse and trash of other people's offenses. Can I make a suggestion? Torch the building, set on fire the file cabinets and files on people. FORGIVE as you've been forgiven! Don't hold the grudge, let it go. Let me put it this way: if everyone held you immediately to account for all of your wrongs you would be so overwhelmed under the rubbish you would suffocate under the load. Extend grace as you would want grace extended back to you. Love as you've been loved; forgive as you've been forgiven.

S19 10. Is this person growing in victory as one who was known as an abuser and offender towards others?

Gen. 43:26-34; I Cor. 13: What more could possibly be said than what we've already said? Joseph put his brothers through many tests. Whether it is our right biblically to do the same is still questionable, I guess it would rest on our motives in giving the tests. Are you ready? Here we go: do you want the person you are giving the tests to fail or pass with flying colors? Are you cheering the offender on to victory or are you expecting the worst? It is OK to be a fruit inspector but not a judge. Let God judge and you and I need to get out of the way.

S20 Confirmation Definition:

S21-29 The Forgiveness Journey Chart: (Tell the story of how this came to be)

S30-32 Rectitude Definition:

S33 The Forgiveness Journey Chart Review:

S34 4. COMPASSION: (Compassion on those needing forgiveness.) Gracious forgiveness demonstrated.

Genesis 45:1-15 (We will save this for next time). But suffice it to say here, that when confrontation takes place and then confession, a process of confirmation should be expected, but don't miss this beloved: NOT WITHOUT COMPASSION! Joseph modeled so beautifully this principle we will look at next time.

S35-38 Confrontation – Confession – Confirmation – Compassion.

S39 Moment of Decision: Have you ever had to get in touch with someone you knew was home and available and they wouldn't pick up? What were you doing, what were you saying while you were waiting? *"Would you please pick up the phone?"* Imagine how God feels week after week while God is on the other line. It may be in the form of one you've offended or someone you've offended in another state. Pick up the phone. Make the call. Take the call. Don't hang up on forgiveness. Don't hand up on the possibility to restore broken and wounded relationships. Jesus said of His disciples, *"They will know you by the love you show for one another!"* What right do any of us have in withholding true and authentic forgiveness from anyone who with sincerity asks to be forgiven, even if it is the 490th time?

I challenge you to come to the Lord's Table this morning with the objective of extending forgiveness to those who've wronged you. Be Jesus in the situation. Who from the cross said, *"Forgive them Father for they know not what they do!"*

We are going to take a short break from this series to share a series of messages from the Pastor's and Elders on the subject of stewardship of time, talents and resources. We are calling it, "I SAY, YES LORD!"

I hope, as you come to the table this morning that you will pick up the phone. Make the call. Take the call. You will not regret it. Your husband will thank you, your wife will praise you, your children will be grateful to you, the Body of Christ will be indebted to you, the community in which you live will be better for it because of you. Pick up the phone! ANSWER the call.

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Introduction / Review:

- From the perspective of the offenders: The brothers of Joseph.

1. CONFRONTATION: (Confront your sin.) False confidence destroyed. Genesis 44:1-13

2. CONFESSION: (Confess your sin.) True contrition manifest. Genesis 44:14-18

- From the perspective of the offenders and the offended: The brothers of Joseph and Joseph himself.

3. CONFIRMATION: (Concede and own the need to be forgiven.) Authentic contrition proven. Genesis 44:19-34

4. COMPASSION: (Compassion on those needing forgiveness.) Gracious forgiveness demonstrated. Genesis 45:1-15

Moment of Decision: (Outline revised from Warren Wiersbe's, Be Authentic, pp. 121-132)