

# LESSON 3: JOSEPH

*“But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives.” (Genesis 45:5, NLT)*

## **Genesis 42-45**

Forgiveness is one of the **hardest** things we are called to do as followers of Christ. It is human nature to want to hold others accountable and to see them pay for their wrongdoing, especially if it was directed towards us. It takes God’s **help** to reach a place where we can **forgive**.

Joseph had every human reason to harbor unforgiveness and seek revenge against his brothers. Their sins against him had caused great pain and **hardship** in Joseph’s life. When he found **himself** in a place of power, with his brothers’ very lives in his hands, he had the **perfect** opportunity for revenge. Yet he felt compassion and love. This can only happen when one’s heart is fully **surrendered** to God.

What we often fail to realize is that unforgiveness causes us **more** trouble than the person we are refusing to forgive. We find ourselves **trapped** in a cycle of bitterness and resentment, as we continually rehearse in our minds the wrongs the person **committed** against us. In the meantime, we are **missing out** on the freedom and love that God has for us if we will only let go of the pain. Lewis B. Smedes said, “to forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”

It’s important to note that forgiveness does not always equal **reconciliation**. Joseph forgave his brothers, but he **tested** them to see if their hearts were in the right place before he reunited with them fully. We can forgive those who wronged us in our hearts and minds, but still maintain **healthy** boundaries with them until we are sure that it is safe to **trust** them again.

Ultimately, it is the certainty that God is always **working** for our good that allows us to forgive. We are **promised** that He will ultimately **redeem** and use even the evil things done against us. What an amazing God! Being assured of this, we can **offer** others forgiveness just as we have been forgiven by Him.

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**Questions to think about:**

1. Are you holding on to any unforgiveness? Ask God to help you let go.
2. Look at times in the past when others have sinned against you or hurt you. Can you find examples where God redeemed those painful times and ultimately brought good from them?
3. How does it feel to harbor unforgiveness? What happens when you finally decide to forgive?