

The Work of Reconciliation

The gospel leads us to work toward reconciliation with those who are alienated from us.



GOD'S STORY
THE TRANSFORMATION FOR ADULT LIFEGROUPS

Genesis 44

March 15, 2020

(Gen. 44:1-34) ¹ Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: "Fill the men's sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man's silver in the mouth of his sack. ² Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one's sack, along with the silver for his grain." And he did as Joseph said. ³ As morning dawned, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys. ⁴ They had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, "Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid good with evil?' ⁵ Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? This is a wicked thing you have done.'" ⁶ When he caught up with them, he repeated these words to them. ⁷ But they said to him, "Why does my lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do anything like that! ⁸ We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the silver we found inside the mouths of our sacks. So why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house? ⁹ If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die; and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves." ¹⁰ "Very well, then," he said, "let it be as you say. Whoever is found to have it will become my slave; the rest of you will be free from blame." ¹¹ Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it. ¹² Then the steward proceeded to search, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. ¹³ At this, they tore their clothes. Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city.

¹⁴ Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him. ¹⁵ Joseph said to them, "What is this you have done? Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?" ¹⁶ "What can we say to my lord?" Judah replied. "What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants' guilt. We are now my lord's slaves—we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup." ¹⁷ But Joseph said, "Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace." ¹⁸ Then Judah went up to him and said: "Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. ¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, 'Do you have a father or a brother?' ²⁰ And we answered, 'We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him.' ²¹ "Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.' ²² And we said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.' ²³ But you told your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.' ²⁴ When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said. ²⁵ "Then our father said, 'Go back and buy a little more food.' ²⁶ But we said, 'We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' ²⁷ "Your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons. ²⁸ One of them went away from me, and I said, 'He has surely been torn to pieces.' And I have not seen him since. ²⁹ If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.' ³⁰ "So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, ³¹ sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. ³² Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to your father. I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!' ³³ "Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. ³⁴ How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father."

COMMUNITY – CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER

- Have you ever lost something valuable? What was it, and did you ever find or replace it?
- What is the most intense fight you have ever been in—physical or non-physical—with a friend or family member?
- How did you reconcile your relationship with that person?

CONTENT – EXPLORING GOD'S STORY

Have a volunteer read Genesis 44:1-13

- Describe Joseph's plan for reconciliation. What did he want to see happen, and how was he testing his brothers?
- Joseph continued to move toward his brothers in seeking reconciliation. How does his gift of the money they paid for the grain reveal the condition of his heart?

- How do the brothers respond when the planted cup is found in Benjamin's sack?
- The brothers obeyed Joseph's commands, even going beyond them to offer double for the grain. How can we discover the hearts of people with whom we are in conflict?
- How is seeking confirmation of others' intentions and emotional conditions a part of reconciliation? How does doing so bring us closer to those from whom we are estranged?

Have a volunteer read Genesis 44:14-34

- What evidence of change do you see from Judah in his response to this situation? How would you describe his character?
- Look specifically at verses 32-34. What did Judah's comments reveal about his being ready to reconcile the relationship with his brother?
- What other ways could Judah have responded? What would those responses have revealed about the potential for reconciliation?
- How do Judah's actions here compare with his vow in 43:8-9? How great a sacrifice is he willing to make?
- How does Judah's response compare with the way we should respond to God over our sins?
- Read Romans 5:6-11. Like Joseph, God had a plan to reconcile us back to Him. Why were we in need of reconciliation?
- What lengths did God go to in order to restore our relationship with Him? Is there anything we could do in seeking reconciliation that would cost us more than it cost Him?
- How are we called to respond to God given the reconciliation we have received? What does that look like in your daily life?

COMMISSION – ENGAGING IN GOD'S STORY

- What perspective does the gospel bring to any strained relationships you have?
- When is the last time you felt overwhelmed by the mercy God showed in forgiving you? How can you make that a more frequent part of your life?
- How might forgiving others turn into an opportunity to share the gospel?

PRAYER: Close in prayer, asking God to help you seek reconciliation with others. Thank God for the joy of reconciliation and for His taking the initiative to reconcile us to Himself through the death of Jesus.

CONTINUE TO JOURNEY THROUGH GOD'S STORY

Bible Reading Plan:

DAY 1 – Genesis 48-49
 DAY 2 – Genesis 50 – Exodus 1
 DAY 3 – Exodus 2-3
 DAY 4 – Exodus 4-5
 DAY 5 – Exodus 6-7

KEY VERSE: Genesis 50:20

H.E.A.R. Method:

Highlight a verse or two.
 Explain what the text means.
 Apply the verse to your life.
 Respond to God.

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