

# Devos - Questions - Small Group Guide



## Sermon Notes:

# EVIDENCE OF FORGIVENESS

**Genesis 45; Genesis 50:19–21**

**Big Idea:** *Unforgiveness and bitterness keep us from experiencing God's best. Joseph's response to his brothers reveals what complete, biblical forgiveness actually looks like.*

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past two weeks we've watched Joseph endure betrayal, injustice, false accusation, and years of delay. Today we arrive at the moment we've been waiting for. Joseph finally stands face-to-face with the very men who caused all of it.

This is the test. Anyone can talk about forgiveness when the offender is absent. But what happens when you're standing in the same room with the person who wounded you?

Joseph shows us what complete forgiveness looks like—not in theory, but in practice.

## 1. COMPLETE FORGIVENESS IS FULLY AWARE... YET FULLY FORGIVES

## **Luke 23:34**

Joseph didn't suffer from spiritual amnesia. He remembered the pit, the chains, the slavery, the prison, and the years that had been stolen from him. Forgiveness isn't pretending the hurt never happened. It is choosing not to hold it against the person any longer.

Jesus knew exactly what was happening at the cross when He prayed, *"Father, forgive them."*

**Truth:** Forgiveness doesn't require forgetting. It requires releasing.

**Question:** *Can I honestly acknowledge what happened and still choose to forgive?*

## **2. COMPLETE FORGIVENESS DOESN'T BROADCAST THE OFFENSE**

### **Genesis 45:1**

Before Joseph revealed himself, he cleared the room. Why? Because restoration wasn't meant to become public humiliation.

Joseph refused to expose his brothers when he had every opportunity to do so.

There is a difference between seeking godly counsel for healing and continually telling the story to gain sympathy or justify our bitterness.

**Truth:** Forgiveness doesn't use someone else's failure to elevate itself.

**Question:** *Am I helping the wound heal, or keeping it alive by continually talking about it?*

## **3. COMPLETE FORGIVENESS STOPS KEEPING SCORE**

### **1 Corinthians 13:5**

Joseph didn't begin the conversation with a list of everything his brothers had done. Love doesn't keep files. It doesn't continually revisit old offenses or save them for future arguments.

When we keep records, we eventually become prosecutors instead of peacemakers.

**Truth:** You can't bury an offense while constantly digging it back up.

**Question:** *Am I keeping a mental file that I can reopen whenever I'm hurt?*

## 4. COMPLETE FORGIVENESS REFUSES TO PUNISH

### Genesis 45:4

Joseph had all the power. His brothers had none.

This was his opportunity to settle the score.

Instead of pushing them away, he invited them closer.

Instead of revenge, he extended reconciliation.

Forgiveness surrenders justice to the only One who judges perfectly.

**Truth:** Forgiveness releases the desire to make someone pay.

**Question:** *Do I secretly want them to suffer for what they did to me?*

## 5. COMPLETE FORGIVENESS COVERS WITH MERCY & GRACE

### Genesis 45:8

Joseph never minimized their sin, but neither did he allow their sin to become the defining chapter of their lives. Instead, he pointed to God's greater purpose.

*"It was not you who sent me here, but God."*

Like Jesus with the woman caught in adultery, grace never ignores sin—but it also refuses to leave people imprisoned by it.

We extend mercy because we've received mercy.

**Truth:** Forgiven people become forgiving people.

**Question:** *Am I extending the same grace I've received from God?*

## 6. COMPLETE FORGIVENESS REFUSES TO SPREAD BITTERNESS

### Genesis 45:9

Joseph sent his brothers back to Jacob with a message of hope—not accusation.

Imagine everything he could have said.

Instead, he protected them.

Bitterness is contagious. Forgiveness breaks the cycle.

**Truth:** Forgiveness values restoration over vindication.

**Question:** *Do I want people restored... or simply exposed?*

## 7. COMPLETE FORGIVENESS IS A DAILY DECISION

### Genesis 50:19–21

Years later, after Jacob died, Joseph's brothers were afraid again. Joseph had another opportunity to retaliate. He chose forgiveness again.

That's because forgiveness isn't always a moment. It's often a lifestyle. Some mornings the memory returns. The hurt resurfaces. The enemy whispers old lies.

Every time it comes back... we surrender it again.

**Truth:** Forgiveness isn't proven once. It's practiced repeatedly.

**Question:** *Will I continue choosing forgiveness every time the wound resurfaces?*

## CLOSING

Joseph's story isn't simply about surviving betrayal. It's about refusing to let betrayal shape his heart. His brothers took years from his life. But they never took his character. They wounded him deeply. But they never made him bitter. That's the miracle.

Not that Joseph became second in command of Egypt. The greater miracle is that power never replaced compassion, pain never replaced mercy, and injustice never replaced love.

## FINAL CHALLENGE

**What evidence of complete forgiveness is missing from my life?**

- Am I still rehearsing the offense?
- Am I still keeping score?
- Am I still hoping they'll get what they deserve?
- Am I still spreading my hurt to others?
- Or have I truly released them to God?

**Remember:**

**Unforgiveness doesn't imprison the offender.**

**It imprisons the offended.**

When we release the offense... God releases us to walk in the freedom He intended all along.

**Genesis 50:20**

*"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."*

That's not just Joseph's testimony.

Through Christ... it can become ours.

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# 5-Day Devotional: Walking in Complete Forgiveness

## Day 1: Fully Aware, Fully Forgiven

**Reading:** Genesis 45:1-5

**Devotional:** Joseph stood before the very men who had destroyed his former life. He was not naive about what they had done. He remembered every detail. Yet his response was not accusation but revelation and grace. True forgiveness does not require you to pretend the wound never happened. It requires you to choose mercy in full awareness of the pain. Jesus forgave from the cross with complete knowledge of humanity's sin against Him, as recorded in Luke 23:34. Ask yourself today: where am I fully aware of a wrong done to me, yet still withholding full forgiveness? Awareness and forgiveness can coexist.

## Day 2: Keeping No Record of Wrongs

**Reading:** 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

**Devotional:** The love described in this passage is not a feeling but a discipline. One of its most demanding qualities is that it keeps no record of wrongs. We are naturally inclined to archive offenses, storing them away for future use in arguments, justifications, or moments of manipulation. Joseph had every reason to present a detailed account of his brothers' cruelty. Instead, he spoke of God's purpose. The record he kept was not of their sin but of God's sovereignty. Today, consider what records you are maintaining in your heart. What would it look like to surrender that ledger to God completely?

## Day 3: Refusing to Punish, Choosing to Restore

**Reading:** Romans 12:17-21

**Devotional:** Vengeance feels like justice, but Scripture is clear that it belongs to God alone. The passage in Romans 12 instructs believers not to repay evil with evil but to overcome evil with good. Joseph, standing as the most powerful man in Egypt outside of Pharaoh, had every earthly means to punish his brothers. Instead, he told them to come near. He invited the very people who had wronged him into his protection. This is the posture of Christ toward sinners. He does not stand at a distance in judgment. He calls us near. Who in your life are you keeping at a distance that God may be calling you to draw near?

## Day 4: Protecting Others With Mercy and Grace

**Reading:** John 8:3-11

**Devotional:** The woman caught in sin stood surrounded by those eager to condemn her. Jesus, the only one qualified to throw a stone, chose instead to extend mercy and send her forward in grace. This is the model for how believers are called to treat those who have wronged them. Joseph crafted his message home to his father in a way that shielded his brothers from shame and exposure. He protected them rather than exposed them. Mercy is not the absence of truth. It is the choice to prioritize restoration over condemnation. Today, pray that God would develop in you a heart that guards others with the same mercy He has extended to you.

## Day 5: Forgiveness as a Lifelong Commitment

**Reading:** Genesis 50:19-21

**Devotional:** Years after the initial reconciliation, Joseph's brothers feared that he would finally retaliate now that their father had died. Joseph's response revealed that his forgiveness had not been a single moment but a sustained daily commitment. He comforted them and provided for them. Complete forgiveness is not a one-time declaration. It is a decision renewed each time the memory surfaces, each time the wound is felt again, each time the enemy places the offense back in front of you. God's mercies are described in Lamentations 3:22-23 as new every morning. In the

same way, your forgiveness of others must be renewed daily. That renewal is not a sign of failure. It is the very nature of what complete forgiveness requires.

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## Consideration Questions

The sermon describes Joseph as being 'fully aware, yet fully willing to forgive' after 22 years of hardship caused by his brothers -- what does this tell us about the relationship between awareness of a wrong and the choice to forgive, and why might awareness actually make forgiveness harder rather than easier?

The pastor warns against keeping a record of wrongs, noting that we often store them up as manipulation tools -- in what ways might holding onto past offenses actually reveal something about our own fears or insecurities rather than simply being about the person who wronged us?

Joseph sent a message back to his father that contained no incriminating words about his brothers, actively protecting them from exposure -- how does this challenge the common belief that accountability and forgiveness must go hand in hand?

The sermon suggests that completely forgiving someone moves us from the natural realm into the supernatural -- what does it look like practically in your daily life to rely on God's strength rather than your own willpower when forgiving someone who has deeply hurt you?

The pastor shares his fear of standing before Jesus and seeing a 'slideshow' of blessings missed due to unforgiveness -- how does viewing forgiveness through the lens of eternity and personal accountability change the urgency with which you approach unresolved bitterness in your life?

Joseph's message to his brothers shifted the narrative from 'you sold me into slavery' to 'God sent me here to preserve life' -- how difficult is it for you to reframe a painful experience as part of God's sovereign purpose, and what

makes that reframing spiritually transformative rather than just a coping mechanism?

The sermon draws a parallel between Joseph saying 'come near to me' to his frightened brothers and Jesus calling sinners into His presence -- in what ways does understanding God's posture toward you personally affect your ability to extend that same posture to those who have wronged you?

The pastor emphasizes that complete forgiveness is a lifelong daily commitment rather than a one-time decision, meaning we may need to forgive the same person or situation repeatedly -- how does this reframe what it means when painful memories resurface, and how does it protect us from concluding that our forgiveness was never genuine?

1 John 4:18 teaches that perfect love casts out fear and that fear has to do with punishment -- in what ways might our desire to see someone punished for what they did to us actually be rooted in fear rather than a genuine pursuit of justice?

The pastor connects the church's pursuit of revival with the congregation's willingness to walk in forgiveness, suggesting that corporate bitterness can hinder what God wants to do collectively -- do you believe that unresolved personal unforgiveness can have a measurable impact on a church community, and what responsibility does that place on each individual member?

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## **Small Group Guide: Evidence of Complete Forgiveness**

**Based on Genesis 45 and the Life of Joseph**

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## Overview

This session explores what complete, biblical forgiveness actually looks like in practice. Using the life of Joseph as a model, we examine seven evidences that indicate a person is walking in genuine forgiveness rather than harboring bitterness and unforgiveness. The goal is not simply to understand forgiveness intellectually but to identify where we are in the process and take honest steps forward.

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## Key Takeaways

- 1. Forgiveness is not the absence of awareness.** Joseph knew exactly what his brothers had done to him. Being fully aware of a wrong done to you does not disqualify you from forgiving. Choosing to forgive in spite of full awareness is the evidence.
  - 2. Complete forgiveness protects others, not just yourself.** Joseph refused to expose his brothers publicly, kept no record of their wrongs, refused to punish them, and even crafted a message to his father that shielded them from shame. Forgiveness, at its fullest, moves toward protecting the person who hurt you.
  - 3. Forgiveness is not a one-time decision.** Walking in complete forgiveness is a lifelong daily commitment. The enemy will bring old wounds back to the surface. Each time that happens, the call is to forgive again, just as fully as the first time.
  - 4. Complete forgiveness moves us from the natural into the supernatural.** It is not natural to forgive deeply and completely. When we do, we are operating in God's grace, not our own strength.
  - 5. Unforgiveness has eternal consequences.** Bitterness and unforgiveness do not just affect our relationships and emotional health. They can stand between us and the fullness of what God has planned for our lives.
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## The Seven Evidences of Complete Forgiveness

Use this list as a reference point throughout your discussion.

1. Fully aware, yet fully willing to forgive (Luke 23:34)
2. Not making it known publicly (Genesis 45:1)

3. Keeping no record of wrongs (Genesis 45:2-3; 1 Corinthians 13:5)
  4. Refusing to punish (Genesis 45:4-5)
  5. Protecting with mercy and grace (Genesis 45:7-8; John 8:7-11)
  6. Guarding against bitterness (Genesis 45:9-13)
  7. Committing to lifelong forgiveness (Genesis 50:19-21)
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## Discussion Questions

### Opening

1. Before this series, how would you have defined forgiveness? Has your understanding shifted at all? If so, in what direction?
2. The pastor mentioned that the same passage of Scripture speaks differently to people depending on where they are in life. Has that ever happened to you with a particular verse or passage? Describe that experience.

### Going Deeper

3. The first evidence is being fully aware of the wrong done to you and still choosing to forgive. Why do you think awareness makes forgiveness harder rather than easier? What does it take to choose forgiveness when you cannot pretend the hurt was not real?
4. Joseph cleared the room before revealing himself to his brothers. He refused to expose their wrongdoing in front of others. How does talking about what someone did to us with the wrong people or for the wrong reasons complicate the process of forgiving them? What is the difference between seeking counsel and recruiting people to your side?
5. The pastor described keeping records of wrongs as a manipulation tool we pull out when we want to gain the upper hand. Be honest with yourself: have you ever done this in a relationship? What does it cost both people when that happens?
6. One of the hardest ideas in this message is refusing to punish and even protecting the person who hurt you with mercy and grace. In John 8:7-11, Jesus extends that kind of protection to a woman caught in sin. What does it feel like when God extends that same mercy and grace to you? Does that change how you think about extending it to others?
7. Joseph waited 22 years before this moment of forgiveness arrived. The pastor suggested that earlier in his ordeal, Joseph would not have been ready to send

the message he sent. What does that tell us about the relationship between time, preparation, and our capacity to forgive?

8. The pastor said, "What do you value more, them being found out or them being forgiven?" That is a pointed question. How do you honestly answer it when you think about the person or situation you are dealing with?
9. The final evidence is that forgiveness is a lifelong commitment. The enemy will bring old wounds back to the surface, and when that happens it does not mean the original forgiveness was not real. How does reframing forgiveness as a daily recommitment rather than a single event change how you approach it?

## Personal Reflection

10. The pastor described not wanting to stand before Jesus and see a slideshow of things he missed because of unforgiveness and bitterness. When you think about your own life, is there a relationship or situation where unforgiveness may be limiting what God wants to do in you or through you?
11. Of the seven evidences listed, which one is the most difficult for you personally right now? What makes that particular one feel out of reach?
12. The pastor noted that completely forgiving is not natural. It requires moving into the supernatural. What does it look like practically for you to ask God for the capacity to forgive in a way you cannot manufacture on your own?

## Practical Applications

**This week, try one or more of the following:**

- **Identify the person or situation.** The pastor asked the congregation to go there in their minds. If you have been avoiding it, set aside a quiet moment this week to honestly name the hurt, the person, and the weight you have been carrying.
- **Take it to God before you take it to anyone else.** Psalm 143 calls us to lay our complaints at the feet of God. Before processing the situation with another person, bring it to God in prayer first. Be honest. Be specific.
- **Audit your conversations.** Think about who you have told about the situation and why. Are those conversations moving you toward healing and prayer, or are they building a case?
- **Make a daily declaration.** If forgiveness is a lifelong commitment, begin treating it as one. Each morning this week, name the person or situation and choose forgiveness out loud before God, even if the feelings have not caught up yet.

- **Pray for the person who hurt you.** This is one of the most direct ways to begin loosening the grip of bitterness. It does not require that you feel warmth toward them. It simply requires willingness.
- **Check the list honestly.** Go through the seven evidences privately and mark where you are walking in complete forgiveness and where you are not. Bring that honest assessment to God.

## Closing Prayer Focus

Close your time together by praying over these specific areas:

- That God would reveal any unforgiveness or bitterness being stored in the heart
- That God would grant the supernatural capacity to forgive what feels humanly impossible to forgive
- That God's mercy and grace would be the model for how group members extend forgiveness to others
- That nothing in the life of each person in the group would stand between them and the fullness of what God has planned

*Scripture references: Genesis 45:1-13, Genesis 50:19-21, Luke 23:34, 1 Corinthians 13:5, John 8:7-11, Psalm 143, 1 John 4:18*

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## Blog Post: Seven Signs You Have Truly Forgiven Someone

Forgiveness is one of the most talked-about concepts in the Christian faith, and yet it remains one of the most misunderstood. Many of us have said the words "I forgive you" — sometimes to another person, sometimes quietly in our own hearts — and then wondered later whether we actually meant it. The hurt resurfaces. The memory returns. The anger flares up again. And we find ourselves asking a question that cuts right to the core: How do I know if I have truly forgiven?

The life of Joseph in the Old Testament offers one of the most vivid and honest portraits of forgiveness found anywhere in Scripture. His story is not a tidy one. Sold into slavery by his own brothers as a teenager, falsely accused, imprisoned for years, and forgotten — Joseph endured two decades of hardship that could be traced back to one brutal act of betrayal by the very people who should have protected him. Yet when the moment of reckoning finally arrived in Genesis 45, Joseph did not respond the way any of us might expect. What he did instead reveals seven powerful evidences of complete forgiveness — evidences that can serve as a practical litmus test for our own hearts.

### **1. Fully Aware, Yet Fully Willing to Forgive**

Joseph knew exactly what had been done to him. There was no confusion, no minimizing, no pretending it had not happened. And still, he chose to forgive. This is important because genuine forgiveness does not require us to pretend the wound was not real. Jesus himself, hanging on the cross, was fully aware of what was being done to him when he prayed in Luke 23:34 that the Father would forgive those responsible. Awareness and forgiveness are not opposites. True forgiveness holds both at the same time.

### **2. Not Making It Known**

When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, one of his first acts was to clear the room. He sent everyone out — the attendants, the interpreter, everyone — so that what passed between him and his brothers would remain between them. He did not use the moment as an opportunity to expose them publicly or build a case against them before an audience. This runs deeply against our instincts. When we are hurt, we want people to know. We want sympathy. We want someone on our side. But Psalm 143 points us toward laying our complaints at the feet of God rather than broadcasting them to anyone who will listen. Complete forgiveness means resisting the urge to recruit others to our cause.

### **3. Keeping No Record of Wrongs**

Joseph did not spend his first moments with his brothers cataloguing everything they had put him through. He did not walk them through two decades of suffering point by point. First Corinthians 13:5 tells us plainly that love keeps no record of wrongs — and this is one of the hardest lines in all of Scripture to actually live. We keep records because we want leverage. We file away offenses so we can retrieve them later, use them in arguments, or hold them over someone's head. But forgiveness requires us to close the file.

### **4. Refusing to Punish**

Joseph had every worldly advantage in that room. He was second only to Pharaoh in all of Egypt. His brothers were standing before him as desperate men in a famine, completely at his mercy. He could have destroyed them. He did not. Instead, he told them not to be distressed. He moved toward them rather than against them. First John 4:18 reminds us that perfect love casts out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. When we cling to the desire to see someone punished for what they did to us, we are holding on to something that belongs to God. Vengeance is his, not ours.

## **5. Protecting Them With Mercy and Grace**

Joseph did not just refrain from punishing his brothers — he actively protected them. He invited them into provision. He made a way for them to survive. This mirrors what God does for us every single day. In John 8, when a woman caught in sin was dragged before Jesus by people demanding punishment, he did not condemn her. He extended mercy and told her to go and sin no more. Without God's mercy and grace, none of us would be standing. It is that same mercy and grace that we are called to extend to those who have wronged us.

## **6. Guarding Them From Your Bitterness**

When Joseph sent his brothers back to their father with a message, he crafted that message carefully. There was not a single word of accusation in it, not a hint of the betrayal they had committed. He protected their reputation with their father even though they had destroyed his. This is the evidence that bitterness had truly been dealt with in his heart. Bitterness wants to be known. It wants to find its way into every conversation, every message, every interaction. Guarding others from your bitterness means making a deliberate choice, over and over again, to keep it from poisoning the story you tell about them.

## **7. Committing to Lifelong Forgiveness**

Years after the reunion in Genesis 45, after their father Jacob had died, the brothers feared that Joseph would finally take his revenge. His response in Genesis 50:19-21 is remarkable. He told them not to fear, acknowledged that they had intended evil against him, and then declared that God had meant it for good. He reaffirmed his forgiveness and his commitment to provide for them. This is the piece that most of us miss. Forgiveness is not a single moment. It is a daily decision. The memory will return. The pain may resurface. And each time it does, forgiveness must be chosen again — just as fully as the first time.

Complete forgiveness is not natural. It belongs to a realm beyond what our instincts and emotions can produce on their own. But it is exactly what God asks of us, because it is exactly what he has given to us.