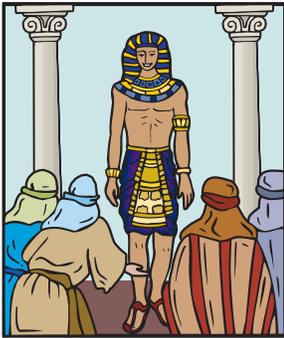




Joseph Makes Himself Known



After testing them, Joseph knew that his brothers had truly repented. Finally the time was right to tell them who he was. In Joseph's story, we see a picture of God's grace, forgiveness, and deliverance.

Day #1: Rejoicing

Joseph tested his brothers. He set up a situation where they could easily walk away from their youngest brother and leave him in slavery. But given the chance to repeat their sin, they did not do it. They had changed their hearts and minds.

When Joseph saw the true repentance of his brothers, he couldn't hold in his joy and excitement. He ordered every Egyptian to leave the room. Then, with sobs of joy he told his brothers who he was. Speaking in his brother's own language he exclaimed:

† "I am Joseph!" - Genesis 45:3b

Joseph's joy over the changed hearts of his brothers is a picture of God's joy over the repentant hearts of His children. Jesus explained it in a parable. He compared a sinful person to a lost coin:

*"Suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.' **In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents.**" - Luke 15:8-10 NLT*

Jesus said there is joy **in the presence of the angels** when someone turns from their sin. This means that it is God who is rejoicing! God rejoiced when Joseph's brothers repented, and He rejoices each time someone repents today.

* Pray for a "lost coin" - a person you know who is going his or her own way, away from God. Pray that he or she would turn from their sin very soon. Then you can rejoice with God and the angels! The next time you lose something, let it remind you that God is looking for repentant hearts!

Day #2: "Big Picture"

Imagine an ant walking through your lawn. How do you think this little insect would describe the grass around him? To him, each blade of grass would seem like a huge skyscraper. But how do you describe your lawn as you look out your front door? You and the ant have very different perspectives. The ant sees things differently because he is right down in the middle of the lawn. From where he stands, he cannot see that each blade of grass together makes up the lawn. You, on the other hand, can see the "big picture."

Sometimes we are like the ant. Sometimes we can only see the circumstances around us, while God can see the "big picture." When we focus on the things around us, we become frustrated or worried. But when we back up and see things as a part of God's plan, then we can have peace and gratitude.

Joseph saw the "big picture" of God's plan. Listen to what he told his brothers:

† *"Don't be upset. And don't be angry with yourselves because you sold me here. God sent me ahead of you to save many lives." - Genesis 45:5*

Joseph did not focus on his unfair treatment. He focused on God's plan for himself, for his brothers, and for the world. Joseph wasn't angry. He was thankful and filled with peace.

* Lie on your bedroom floor and look around. Now stand up and look at your room. See how your perspective changes. Start each day by talking to the Lord. Every day, ask God to help you see His "big picture" that day. The troubles or difficulties in your day will look a lot different from God's point of view.

Day #3: Full Forgiveness

Have you ever seen a compass rose? This is the symbol on a map with arrows pointing out in each direction: North, South, East, and West. All of the arrows point outward from the center. This is because east is the opposite direction from west, and north is the opposite from south. The directions can never cross paths. Let's see what these directions have to do with sin and forgiveness.

Joseph forgave the sins of his brothers. Joseph actually comforted his brothers (2 Corinthians 2:7).

Day #3 continued:

He told them not to be upset with themselves for what they had done to him. Not only did Joseph *not punish* them, but he also wanted them to know they were completely forgiven. This is a picture of how God has forgiven you. If you have repented from your sin and placed your trust in Jesus, you, too, are completely forgiven (Luke 3:3, Acts 2:38; 26:17-18).

† *He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.* - Psalm 103:12

Stand and hold your arms straight out to your sides. Now point your index fingers straight out. Imagine one direction is east and the other is west. When your faith is in Jesus, your sin is completely forgiven (Acts 13:38). It's just as if you were infinitely far in one direction and your sin was infinitely far in the opposite direction. This is how Joseph saw the sins of his brothers - completely removed from them.

* Since this is the way we were forgiven, then we must forgive others in the same way. The Bible says to, "Forgive as the Lord forgave you." (Colossians 3:13)

Do you forgive others completely? Or do you hold a grudge? Do you want the person to feel bad for what they've done, or do you want him or her to feel free from their guilt? God tells us not to hold a grudge (Leviticus 19:18). It is not always easy to forgive completely. Ask God for the grace you need to forgive and not hold a grudge.

Day #4: Promise Keeper

God had given a promise to Joseph's grandfather, and He had a plan to make it happen.

† **God's Promise** - God told Abraham: "I will certainly bless you. I will make your children after you as many as the stars in the sky. I will make them as many as the grains of sand on the seashore." - Genesis 22:17a

God's Plan - Joseph told his brothers: "God sent me ahead of you to keep some of you alive on earth. He sent me here to save your lives by an act of mighty power." - Genesis 45:7

God promised that Abraham would have many, many descendants. Joseph and his brothers were Abraham's descendants. Because of the famine, all of Abraham's grandchildren and great-grandchildren could have starved to death, but God would not allow it. He had to keep His promise! God used Joseph to provide food for his brothers, Abraham's

Day #4 continued:

descendants. God worked in an amazing and unexpected way to keep His promise.

And let's not miss **God's Grace** - None of them *deserved* the promise! (Deuteronomy 7:6-9) God's blessings were a free gift from their loving God.

* Learn God's promises. When you read your Bible, and you find one of God's MANY promises, underline it. Don't be surprised if God uses a difficult time in your life to accomplish His plan and keep His promises.

Day #5: Mirror Image

Look in a mirror. What you see in the mirror is a reflection of the real thing. We have seen many ways in which Joseph was a reflection of Jesus. Isn't God amazing to orchestrate Joseph's life to mirror the life of the Savior that God was going to send generations later? Let's continue to look at this comparison.

Now that the brothers had turned from their sin, Joseph poured out his grace on them.

- 1) Joseph freely forgave them. They would not receive the punishment they deserved.
- 2) Joseph would be their deliverer; he would save their lives by giving them food.
- 3) And amazingly, because of Joseph's connection to the King, they would have all the blessings that Joseph deserved.

When Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers had come to Egypt, he was very happy.

† *Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Here's what I want you to tell your brothers. Say to them, 'Load your animals. Return to the land of Canaan. Bring your father and your families back to me. I'll give you the best land in Egypt. You can enjoy all of the good things in the land.'" - Genesis 45:17-18*

In an even greater way, God pours out His grace on all who repent of their sin and turn to Jesus.

- 1) They are freely forgiven. They will not receive the punishment they deserve (Romans 6:23, Acts 2:38).
- 2) They will receive eternal life (John 3:16).
- 3) And amazingly, because Jesus is the perfect Son of God, they will receive all the blessings that Jesus deserves (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

As His children, we will receive all that He has for us. We will share what Christ receives. - Romans 8:17a

* Using a dry-erase marker, write, "I will share in Jesus' glory!" on your bathroom mirror, as a reminder of your inheritance if you have put your trust in Jesus.