

## Aim of lesson

To show that real forgiveness and real self-sacrifice are required for reconciliation.

## Bible background

Genesis 42; 43; 44; 45; 46 & 50.

## Outline of lesson

### Lost brothers

Read together Genesis 41:46-47. Ask the class how long it had been since Joseph had seen his family. They will need to read Genesis 37:2. The brothers have had a long time to think. Do the class think that any of them might have regretted what they had done to Joseph?

Read together Genesis 42:1-4 and turn to the workbook. This should help to clarify the movement from Canaan to Egypt and back again, but use it also to show the development of the brothers' fears and repentance.

### A test of loyalty

Work through the workbook in sequence. Look at the passages given and search together for the answers. Discuss the points that come out. In particular, you may like to draw out the reasons for Joseph's treatment of his brothers. He may well have feared that the brothers would have killed Benjamin too. He tests their loyalty to each other by imprisoning Simeon and then demanding Benjamin as a slave. It is when Judah is prepared to sacrifice himself and become a slave voluntarily to free Benjamin and save his father from sorrow, that Joseph knows that at least one of his brothers, has really repented. What a contrast to Judah's attitude at first in allowing Joseph to be sold. His example here has a strong parallel with the work of Christ.

### Joseph's character

Draw out from these incidents the character of Joseph. Show his spirit of forgiveness. He had great power and could have made his brothers suffer for what they had done to him; but he forgave them, seeing the hand of God in all the events of the past Genesis 45:5,7.

### ... and Reuben's

If you have time, it is worth noting how Reuben was not trusted by his father, Genesis 42:37,38. He was the eldest and as such had a very special responsibility for his brothers, yet he was not prepared to stand up against the others when Joseph was put in the pit. It is possible that the law provided for the firstborn to have a double portion because of the responsibility they had to redeem any of his brothers who became a slave through poverty. In the end, he lost his position as the firstborn, which passed to Joseph (Genesis 49:3-4; 1 Chronicles 5:1).

## Digging deeper

### God knew what would happen

This section refers back to Joseph's dreams and shows how they came true many years later. God knows the end from the beginning, and we can trust what he says.

## Relevance to our lives

God shows real forgiveness and real self-sacrifice in the death of his Son to reconcile us to himself. Are the class prepared to really forgive the wrongs which have been done to them, or do they bear a grudge or want 'their own back'? Are they prepared to be a servant to others as Judah was because of his love for his father? The class may like to try to serve the people they meet this week and discuss next week how they got on.

## Prayer

Dear Father, thank you for offering us forgiveness. Thank you for the sacrifice that the Lord Jesus made for us. Help us to forgive others from our hearts, and to serve them because of our love for you.

## Other suggestions for activities

- You can prepare a script for an interview with one or more of the servants of Joseph, describing the scene of the brothers' reconciliation. This could then be recorded on tape.
- Continue the study of the similarities between Joseph and Jesus Christ. Some of the following list may be a bit obscure for teenagers, so be selective.

### Joseph

Genesis 45:1: Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

Genesis 45:7: God sent Joseph to save his family.

Genesis 45:18: Joseph offered a blessing to those who came to him.

Genesis 47:23: Joseph 'bought' the people of Egypt.

### Jesus

Luke 24:31: Jesus made himself known to his disciples.

1 John 4:9: God sent Jesus to give us life.

Matthew 11:28: Jesus offered a blessing to those who came to him.

1 Corinthians 6:20: We are bought with a price.