

A Has anything changed?

- ❖ Had they treated Benjamin the same way they treated him? Were they taking care of their old father?
- ❖ Caring for the weak and the defenseless was one of the biblical principles Joseph had embraced (Exodus 22:21-23; Leviticus 19:14, 32).
- ❖ Abuse within the family is one of the most serious, because it is usually kept quiet. No physical, sexual, or emotional abuse can be tolerated.
- ❖ Fortunately, his father and his brother were fine (Genesis 42:13). The situation had changed.

B Have they repented?

- ❖ Joseph had already forgiven his brothers. This story would have been hugely different if he had chosen hate and resentment instead.
- ❖ However, he did not want to restore his family relationship if there was a risk of being abused by his brothers again.
- ❖ His brothers did not know that Joseph could understand their language, so they spoke openly and showed their remorse. 21 years of remorse!
- ❖ Joseph was convinced after some other tests. He showed favoritism towards Benjamin, but his brothers did not show jealousy or envy, but protected Benjamin (Genesis 43:34; 44:33-34).

C Should I forgive them?

- ❖ What if Joseph's brothers had not repented or changed at all? Should he have forgiven them?
- ❖ Genuine forgiveness involves forgiving others even if they do not deserve it. God's forgiving love is unconditional, even when we do not deserve it.
- ❖ We forgive because God has forgiven us (Romans 4:7). When we forgive others, our bitterness goes away. The past is left behind, and we can go on with love and acceptance.

D Who should take the first step?

- ❖ When we are hurt by others, some wounds may be devastating. We may feel shattered, embittered, and angry.
- ❖ Should I keep that hate and bitterness until the offender asks for forgiveness? I am the one who must decide whether to forgive or not.
- ❖ We can share our anger with God. We can even ask Him to avenge the offense (Psalm 59:12-13; 69:23-24). Once we have taken our resentment to God, there is only one way ahead: forgiveness.
- ❖ Jesus is the ultimate example. On the cross, he asked God to forgive his executioners: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34).

E What happens next?

- ❖ Finally, Joseph's family was reconciled (Genesis 46:29). Although everything looked perfect, there were some wounds that had not heal completely.
- ❖ After Jacob died, Joseph's brothers felt remorse and fear again. Had Joseph's forgiveness been genuine (Genesis 50:15)?
- ❖ Joseph's forgiveness was not based on his feelings, but on his principles. He forgave them as God had forgiven him. He had understood God's plan for him (Genesis 50:20). There is no place for resentment in God's plan for us.