

- iii. Forgiveness takes what can be a dangerous memory and transforms it. It allows us to change the trajectory of where that memory leads.

- C. Reconciliation is always the goal, but sometimes has to wait until the age to come.
  - i. Acts 3:19-21
  - ii. Forgiveness aims toward reconciliation. It is always the goal.

### LIVE THE STORY

*The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community.  
The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.*

- Why is it necessary that we, the community of God in Christ, imagine “unimaginable” forgiveness?
- Why is forgiveness so counterintuitive to human wisdom?
- How might the Joseph story speak to the person who battles believing God's forgiveness of them in Christ? ...who are suspicious that is isn't genuine?
- Why does forgiveness require more of us than any other gift? What does Jesus' parable in Matthew 18:23-35 say about this?
- Have you ever realized that your memory of events changed over time ... that a later version which you believed might not be the actual version of what happened?
- How can the story of the cross help us to re-form our memories so that it changes the trajectory of where that memory leads?
- Why is it essential to make sure that reconciliation is always the goal of forgiveness, even though it may not be possible until the age to come?

### Genesis: Truth for Understanding Our World (32)

#### *Imagining the Unimaginable*

Jerry Cisar — April 15, 2018

Text: Genesis 45:3-8

#### Introduction: Unimaginable forgiveness?

#### I. Forgiveness is Counterintuitive

##### A. Forgiveness Feels Unnatural to Us

- i. Herman Bavinck: “*Nature knows no forgiveness.*”
- a) “Forgiveness, in the true sense of the word, is not easy and often conflicts with our sense of justice.”<sup>1</sup>
- b) Our human sense of justice knows no forgiveness.
- ii. What feels natural to us is vengeance, retribution, retaliation. We take delight in it.

##### B. Forgiveness is the Law of Christ

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “*The law of Christ, which it is our duty to fulfill, is the bearing of the cross. My brother's burden which I must bear is not only his outward lot, his natural characteristics and gifts, but quite literally his sin. And the only way to bear that sin is by forgiving it in the power of the cross of Christ in which I now share*” (Cost of Discipleship, pg. 100).

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<sup>1</sup> Bavinck, Herman. Reformed Dogmatics: Abridged in One Volume (pp. 553-554). Baker Publishing Group.

- C. How did Jesus forgive us?
    - i. Ephesians 4:32
    - ii. Romans 12:19
  - D. Joseph absorbed the evil his brothers had done to him without returning it back on them.
  - E. Forgiveness requires dying and rising—the pattern of a disciple.
- B. Forgiveness transforms the forgiven; it comes with obligations.
- i. Forgiveness is the greatest of all gifts.
  - ii. Forgiveness requires more of us than any other gift.
    - a) Matthew 18:32-35
    - b) The gift of forgiveness requires us to forgive.
      - Matthew 6:12, 14-15
      - Colossians 3:13
      - Ephesians 4:32
      - [James 2:12-13]

## II. Forgiveness is Transformational

- A. Joseph's theology transformed his experience into forgiveness.

- i. Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers is rooted in his belief that God was at work using even their evil deeds.
  - a) Genesis 50:19-21
  - b) Many of us have a hard time believing him too. We are suspicious just like they were.
- ii. Forgiveness is rooted in truth about God.

iii. Only because Joseph had already forgiven his brothers could they have right relationships with each other.

- C. When we forgive, it leads to true living. “Cruciform living.”

## III. Forgiveness Aims for Reconciliation

- A. Forgiveness is essential for reconciliation, and reconciliation is always the goal, but reconciliation is not always possible in this life, and is a foretaste of the age to come.
- B. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting.
  - i. There is some truth in the adage, “Forgive and forget.”
  - ii. “Forgive and forget” doesn't do justice to what forgiveness is really all about. It is often not safe to truly forget the offense.

Desmond Tutu: “Unless we look the beast in the eye we find it has an uncanny habit of returning to hold us hostage.”