**1. Motivate**

What item on the dinner table did you dread as a kid?

* broccoli
* cauliflower
* black eyed peas
* liver
* brussels sprouts
* sauerkraut
* mixed vegetables
* haggis
* oatmeal
* school cafeteria spaghetti

**2. Transition**

Some foods may have seemed bitter to the taste

* People also dislike relationships that go bitter
* Today we look at how Joseph could have been bitter
* We will conclude that bitter relationships can only move forward through forgiveness.

**3. Bible Study**

A video introduction is available. View it at <https://watch.liberty.edu/media/t/1_qwwqboii> . If you have no wi-fi where you teach, best to download to your computer at <https://tinyurl.com/6nn8mvwm>

3.1 Embrace Your Pain

Listen for a revelation.

Genesis 45:1-3 (NIV) Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. 2 And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. 3 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

Recall what had transpired in the years since Joseph had been appointed as second in command of all Egypt and the event described in these verses.

* he was overseer of collecting and storing 20% of all grain production for 7 years
* once the famine began, he was overseer for distribution of the stored grain
* now his brothers show up to buy grain due to the famine

Imagine that you are Joseph and your brothers show up. What reasons might you have for not telling them right away who you are?

* you would still be in control of the situation
* you might have wanted revenge
* you want to see if they still hated you
* you want to see how they had treated your brother Benjamin
* you might still be working through your own feelings of anger
* want to test them, were they still the evil rascals who had sold you as a slave

Why would the brothers have been *troubled* at Joseph identifying himself to them?

* they could see he was a person of influence and power
* now he had power over them, not the other way around
* he was in a perfect place to take vengeance on them for his mistreatment by them
* maybe they began to remember the dream Joseph had shared so many years ago
* it would have been totally a shock
* his dress and position were totally out of context
* they had no expectation of ever seeing him again, now he’s the guy in charge

What steps did Joseph initially take to try to ease their concern?

* had all his own servants and guards leave
* identify himself
* asks about his aged father

What are some unhealthy ways people deal with their emotional pain?

* revenge
* lash out verbally or even physically
* work to cause harm
* try to destroy those who have hurt them
* sometimes do harm to themselves
* try to escape the emotional hurt through substance abuse

What are the dangers of covering up hurt in our lives?

* like a bodily infection, it festers and becomes like an abscess
* it hurts us more than the original cause of the problem
* our hate and anger become feelings that eat at us and does more damage than the original problem
* better to confess our hurt and anger to the Lord

3.2 Forgive

Listen for how to treat people who wrong us.

Genesis 45:4-5 (NIV) Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! 5 And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.

Why do you think Joseph added the reminder that they had sold him into slavery in Egypt?

* to prove it is really him
* to force them to admit their sin
* to help them understand the overall picture of how God intervened
* to inform them that what they meant for evil, God used to accomplish good

So what kind of *mixed emotions* did Joseph and the brothers experience?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Joseph | The Brothers |
| * good to see family, but these were the guys who sold me to slavers * now I could get even but now I can also rescue the family * hope Dad is still alive, but no thanks to these brothers | * the family is saved now, but we’re in trouble * we hated Joseph then, but now we’re afraid of him * we made fun of his dream, and now it’s come true * deep down, we’re ashamed of what we did and now it’s come to haunt us |

Joseph acknowledged God’s guidance in and through his trials. Why would it be hard to view one’s trials in this way?

* all trials are hard
* would be easy (almost natural) to keep blaming his brothers the whole time
* they’re the ones who got him in Egypt
* except for them, he wouldn’t have been a slave in Potiphar’s house
* except for them, wouldn’t have been in a place to be tempted and accused

What are some ways the bad intentions or bad actions of others could bring about good in your life?

* fired for no reason – God brought along a better job
* yelled at by a boss – your (non angry) reaction was a testimony to others
* untrue things said about you to others – you “took it” and went on with your life, the truth eventually came out
* got in trouble due to actions of others, were grounded by your folks, and weren’t with the group that had something bad happen to them

Why is it hard to forgive someone who has wronged you?

* Human behavior suggests that people are “hard-wired” to retaliate
* Our pride or self-esteem is injured.
* Our expectations or dreams are disappointed.
* We lose something very valuable to us and we want pay back for the damages.
* we think “Forgiving is only for weak people”.
* “I would be a hypocrite if I forgave because I do not feel like forgiving”

Why is it *important* to forgive others?

* resentment can imprison you for life,
* it will destroy you and your other relationships.
* Lewis Smedes wrote: “To forgive is to set the prisoner free…and to discover that the prisoner was you.”
* Ask yourself “do I want things bitter or better?”

3.3 Restore Broken Relationships

Listen for how to restore broken relationships.

Genesis 45:9-11 (NIV) Now hurry back to my father and say to him, 'This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. 10 You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me--you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. 11 I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

What did Joseph want his brothers to do immediately?

* hurry back to the family
* tell Dad I’m still alive … AND … I have the power and authority to help and rescue the whole family in this famine
* established a place for the whole group to live

What assurance was Joseph trying to give his brothers through his plan for them?

* you will be in danger of more famine and starvation
* if you come here there will be plenty
* I will use my authority to provide for you
* this is all part of God’s plan to preserve the family

What actions on our part lead to reconciliation?

* offering forgiveness
* offering opportunity for both sides to make things right
* praying for the person who wronged you (praying for the reconciliation, not for God to “zap” them)
* reject the temptation to get even or seek revenge
* remember and thank God for His forgiveness of you

How does the gospel help us reconcile broken relationships?

* we have lived through a broken relationship with God
* we have sinned against Him
* still, He loves us and forgives us and works to bless us
* how can we hold anger and bitterness in our hearts when God has forgiven us?

What are some rewards that result from forgiveness?

* released from the anger
* all the bad feelings that go along with hate and anger are a “prison” for our attitudes and actions
* we are no longer held captive to that anger at someone else
* ultimately, we are the ones that suffer when we hold a grudge

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

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Be mindful.

* In the next few days, be mindful in moments when you feel wronged.
* Go immediately to God and seek grace to wipe away your hurt.

Talk it out.

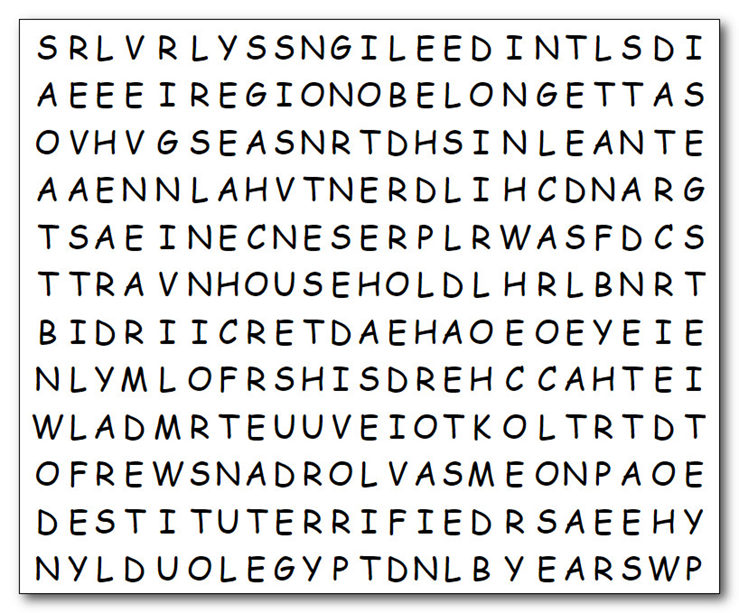
* Be aware when you resort to stonewalling or choosing the silent treatment.
* Though these forms of inner rage are subtle, they’re not less damaging.
* Talk with others about your feelings and avoid the temptation to hold it all in.

Help others.

* Spend some time listening for the relational pain of others.
* Plan a coffee time with someone who’s hurting and walk alongside them.
* You might offer to help mediate or simply share some helpful biblical principles from the life of Joseph.

AHEAD  
ANGRY  
ANSWER  
ATTENDANTS  
BECOME  
BELONG  
BROTHERS  
CHILDREN  
CLOSE  
COME  
CONTROL  
CRIED  
DELAY  
DESTITUTE  
DISTRESSED  
DOWN  
EGYPT  
FAMINE  
FATHER  
FIVE  
FLOCKS  
GOSHEN

GRANDCHILDREN  
HEARD  
HERDS  
HOUSEHOLD  
HURRY  
LEAVE  
LIVE  
LIVES  
LIVING  
LORD  
LOUDLY  
NEAR  
OTHERWISE  
PHARAOH  
PRESENCE  
PROVIDE  
REGION  
SAVE  
SELLING  
SENT  
STILL  
TERRIFIED  
WEPT  
YEARS



Humph! That Word Ninja fellow has just plunked down those words so they go left, right, up, down and diagonally. You’ve got to find them! Or would you rather have two book reports due? Humph! Don’t be bitter now, just find the words. If you get stuck, help is available at <https://tinyurl.com/6nn8mvwm> along with other educational activities.

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