

READ

Genesis 45

REFLECT

The jig was finally up; Joseph couldn't keep lying to his brothers any longer and outed himself as the same brother they'd sold off all those years ago. In some ways it mirrors the reunion between Jacob and Esau, where one had expected anger, he found grace. The deceit of Joseph's actions could be seen as malicious, but no real harm was done except creating a sense of anxiety for his brothers – which is a kind of abuse, though some might argue that the brothers deserved it for what they'd done to Joseph. No matter the intent, when Joseph came clean about who he really was he insisted that there were no hard feelings and was convinced that God's hands were in all that happened because he was now in a position to save his family. And save his family is exactly what he did – he told his brothers to go back home, get the whole family and all their belongings, and move to Egypt where they'd have plenty to eat and could wait out the famine in comfort without worry. Even Pharaoh got in on the action, he was pleased that Joseph's family was there and offered the use of whatever they might need. He gave them wagons, clothes, food, and more. And the extravagance toward Benjamin continued, whereas the other ten brothers each got one change of clothes, Benjamin received five plus three hundred pieces of silver! They had twenty donkeys loaded up with goods for the journey so that wouldn't have to worry about anything. When the brothers arrived in Canaan they told their father the good news, that Joseph was still alive and in a position of power in Egypt, and the news was so great and unbelievable it nearly killed him. When he got his emotions under control he became determined to see his son again before he died. This was a move that, unbeknownst to them, would forever change the trajectory of their family and their legacy. While the move itself was wise and it's easy to see where God's hands were throughout the action, as soon as God was ignored, things would begin to fall apart quickly.

REACT

- Joseph's brothers were stunned when he revealed himself to them, not sure what was going to happen. Has someone ever played a trick on you? When that trick was revealed, how did you feel? Does that feeling change whether or not the trick played was malicious/mean spirited?
- Joseph took the trauma he'd been through and was able to express a good outcome. Can you think back to some of the traumas in your life? Have any led to a positive in your life that wouldn't have been possible without the pain of the trauma? How were you able to make it through? Can you see how/when God was guiding you?
- Jacob was so overwhelmed by the news of Joseph not only being alive, but in power, that he nearly had a heart attack. Sometimes we get shocked by good news, too; we've built such low expectations for the world around us that when good things happen we're blown away. How can we shift our expectations from remembering only the bad to trusting in God's providence to bring out the good despite the bad?

RESPOND

Reframing Fear: Jacob was terrified that his whole life was crashing down around him. His family faced a famine. He'd already lost one child and now the rest were in danger because of schemes he didn't fully understand. When it was finally revealed that everything was okay, he was nearly broken by emotion. He'd built his life on scarcity when God had promised abundance. We, too, tend to expect scarcity and thus build a worldview to support that expectation. But God has promised abundance – abundance of love and grace, an abundant world created to be good, and more. Practice checking your expectations – will you allow yourself to trust in abundance or hold on to the myth of scarcity? When you make a decision, ask yourself, “am I choosing this because I trust in God's abundance or because I fear scarcity?” Try to do whatever it takes to accept the promise of abundance and see how different your week looks.