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AM I FORGIVEN?

“When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!’” (Gen. 50:15). There have been plenty of occasions in my adolescent life when the mere presence of a parental figure in the room was enough to keep me from going through with any form of retaliation I was being tempted to scheme up and pour down upon my sisters. One afternoon I was frantically looking for a missing G. I. Joe, only to find him sitting in a chair at a tea party in Barbie’s Dream House in my younger sister’s room. Filled immediately with what I felt were justifiable plans of payback, I ran through the house screaming her name only to be stopped short by the mediating presence of my mother who was shielding my

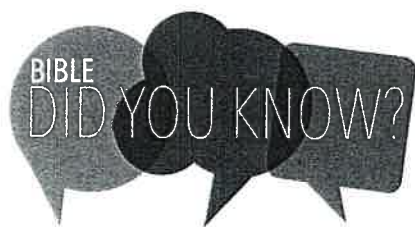
little sister from harm. For seventeen years Joseph and his brothers had been living in Egypt in somewhat awkward circumstances. Their very lives are in their betrayed brother’s hands who just so happens to be in a perfect position to completely crush them. Joseph never once mistreats or harms them in any way, but once their father dies, they feel that perhaps it was his mediating presence all along which kept Joseph’s hands from any form of vengeance. Without Dad present to prevent any sibling violence from breaking out within the family, Joseph’s brothers tremble at the thought of what Joseph may very well be capable of doing to them. While in one sense you can begin to appreciate and understand how Joseph’s brothers must have felt in a very vulnerable position with no

other respected prominent family members to protect them, it also seems strange considering the fact that Joseph made it very clear seventeen years ago that he looked upon them in love and forgiveness rather than in wrath and vengeful judgment. *"Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?' But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence...And he said, 'I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.'...He kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him," (Gen. 45:3,4-5,15).* You would think this should have settled any question in their mind as to how Joseph viewed the evil they did to him. Joseph plainly tells them not to even beat themselves up for it because it is certainly not what Joseph plans on doing. He kisses them in genuine tears of love and forgiveness and makes sure they and their families are all taken care of during the famine. Yet, seventeen years later, the lurking questions of doubt emerge and they wonder if they are really forgiven after all. Sound familiar? Have you

ever found yourself doubting whether or not God has really, truly, completely forgiven you? Has he really forgotten all about the sin I am so ashamed to admit I fell into? John, the apostle of our Savior Jesus, speaks of this common battle which takes place between the doubts we let our hearts entertain and the truth of what God tells us and wants us to be assured of. *"We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things," (1 Jn. 3:19-20).* Perhaps my favorite portrait of God's powerful mercy being extended towards me when I need to come boldly before the throne of grace to find help in my time of need (Heb. 4:16) is the picture painted by Micah: *"Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," (Micah 7:18-19).* The promise of God to remember our sins no more (Is. 43:25; Heb. 8:12; 10:17) is often directly

challenged by our own vivid recollection of every sinful act we have committed haunting our memories and flooding our hearts with the doubtful questions of uncertainty. John reassures us in those moments reminding us that even when our hearts condemn us, we can be reminded in the Word of Truth that God is greater than our hearts and His Truth can reassure us in whatever our hearts are condemning us of. Whenever we struggle with the leftover fragments of our sins still fresh in our memories and often sadly even reminded of by those around us, let this scene at the end of Genesis between Joseph and his brothers be a moment where God can remind us He is greater than our hearts in whatever our hearts may be condemning us of, as Joseph's words can be the words of God Himself we need to hear when we face moments of doubt. "So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, 'Your father charged before he died, saying, 'Thus you shall say to Joseph, 'Please forgive, I beg you...' " ...Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, 'Behold, we are your servants.' But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid...I will provide for you and your little ones.' So he comforted them and spoke

kindly to them," (Gen. 50:16-17,18,19,21). When, like Joseph's brothers, the doubts in your heart cause you to fall on your face in a state of unworthiness feeling you aren't even good enough to hold the status of a slave, let God's Truth reassure your heart reminding you He loves you as His precious child. "...I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet...for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate," (Lk. 15:21,22,24). – Daniel Ruegg



The Bible has been translated into more than 1,200 languages.

The Bible was written over a period of 1500 years and consisted of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

BIBLE TRIVIA

C H A L L E N G E

DIRECTIONS: After searching through your Bible, circle which answer is correct.

1. What land did Cain go to live in which was east of Eden?

- a) Sodom
- b) Shiloh
- c) Nod
- d) Hur

2. The woman who was bleeding for twelve years was healed when she touched what?

- a) Temple
- b) Priest
- c) Apostles
- d) Jesus' clothing

3. The wise men brought three kinds of gifts to baby Jesus: gold, myrrh and what else?

- a) Silver
- b) Frankincense
- c) Almonds
- d) Silk

4. Who stole the household idols from her father Laban's house?

- a) Rachel
- b) Hannah
- c) Miriam
- d) Esther

5. On what mountain did Moses die?

- a) Ararat
- b) Sinai
- c) Everest
- d) Nebo

6. What kind of food did Samson eat from the dead carcass of a lion?

- a) Locusts
- b) Honey
- c) Ants
- d) Bees

7. What insect was the writer of Proverbs talking about when he said: "Consider her ways and be wise?"

- a) Spider
- b) Fly
- c) Mosquito
- d) Ant

8. Which book records Paul's correction of Peter for his shunning of the uncircumcised?

- a) 2 Corinthians
- b) Ephesians
- c) Galatians
- d) Acts

9. How long was Lazarus dead in the tomb before Jesus revived him?

- a) 1 day
- b) 2 days
- c) 3 days
- d) 4 days

10. What was the name of Jonathan's five-year-old crippled son?

- a) Mephibosheth
- b) Samuel
- c) Jesse
- d) Obed

- 7) D, Reference: Prov. 6:6
 8) C, Reference: Gal. 2:11-21
 9) D, Reference: Jn. 11:39
 10) A, Reference: 2 Sam. 9:3
 1) C, Reference: Gen. 2:16
 2) D, Reference: Mt. 9:21
 3) B, Reference: Mt. 2:11
 4) A, Reference: Gen. 31:30-32
 5) D, Reference: Deut. 34:1-5
 6) B, Reference: Jdg. 14:8-9