

Families Are Messy **How Do You Deal With Your Past?**

I. Introduction

A. Time does not heal all guilt!

B. Genesis 42:1-23 (NLT) ¹When Jacob heard that grain was available in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why are you standing around looking at one another? ²I have heard there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy enough grain to keep us alive. Otherwise we’ll die.” ³So Joseph’s ten older brothers went down to Egypt to buy grain. ⁴But Jacob wouldn’t let Joseph’s younger brother, Benjamin, go with them, for fear some harm might come to him. ⁵So Jacob’s sons arrived in Egypt along with others to buy food, for the famine was in Canaan as well. ⁶Since Joseph was governor of all Egypt and in charge of selling grain to all the people, it was to him that his brothers came. When they arrived, they bowed before him with their faces to the ground. ⁷Joseph recognized his brothers instantly, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. “Where are you from?” he demanded. “From the land of Canaan,” they replied. “We have come to buy food.” ⁸Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they didn’t recognize him. ⁹And he remembered the dreams he’d had about them many years before. He said to them, “You are spies! You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become.” ¹⁰“No, my lord!” they exclaimed. “Your servants have simply come to buy food.” ¹¹We are all brothers—members of the same family. We are honest men, sir! We are not spies!” ¹²“Yes, you are!” Joseph insisted. “You have come to see how vulnerable our land has become.” ¹³“Sir,” they said, “there are actually twelve of us. We, your servants, are all brothers, sons of a man living in the land of Canaan. Our youngest brother is back there with our father right now, and one of our brothers is no longer with us.” ¹⁴But Joseph insisted, “As I said, you are spies! ¹⁵This is how I will test your story. I swear by the life of Pharaoh that you will never leave Egypt unless your youngest brother comes here! ¹⁶One of you must go and get your brother. I’ll keep the rest of you here in prison. Then we’ll find out whether or not your story is true. By the life of Pharaoh, if it turns out that you don’t have a younger brother, then I’ll know you are spies.” ¹⁷So Joseph put them all in prison for three days. ¹⁸On the third day Joseph said to them, “I am a God-fearing man. If you do as I say, you will live. ¹⁹If you really are honest men, choose one of your brothers to remain in prison. The rest of you may go home with grain for your starving families. ²⁰But you must bring your youngest brother back to me. This will prove that you are telling the truth, and you will not die.” To this they agreed. ²¹Speaking among themselves, they said, “Clearly we are being punished because of what we did to Joseph long ago. We saw his anguish when he pleaded for his life, but we wouldn’t listen. That’s why we’re in this trouble.” ²²“Didn’t I tell you not to sin against the boy?” Reuben asked. “But you wouldn’t listen. And now we have to answer for his blood!” ²³Of course, they didn’t know that Joseph understood them, for he had been speaking to them through an interpreter.

II. What Not to Do About Your Past

A. Don’t cover it up

B. Don’t focus on forgiving yourself

1. I John 1:9 (NAS) *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

2. Ephesians 4:32 (NAS) *Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*
3. Because forgiveness is a transaction between two people!

III. How Do You Deal With Your Past Guilt?

A. You confess

1. Proverbs 28:13 (NAS) *He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.*
2. I John 1:9 (NAS) *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
3. "Confession" ("Homologeō") - - "To say the same thing as another person"
4. We are not "confessing" unless we name our behavior the same way God names it!
5. Psalm 51:1 (NAS) *Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.*

B. Sometimes you need to confess to another person!

1. James 5:16 (NAS) *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*
2. John 20:23 (NAS) *"If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained."*

C. Sometimes you need to make restitution

1. Genesis 42:24-28 (NLT) ²⁴*Now he turned away from them and began to weep. When he regained his composure, he spoke to them again. Then he chose Simeon from among them and had him tied up right before their eyes.* ²⁵*Joseph then ordered his servants to fill the men's sacks with grain, but he also gave secret instructions to return each brother's payment at the top of his sack. He also gave them supplies for their journey home.* ²⁶*So the brothers loaded their donkeys with the grain and headed for home.* ²⁷*But when they stopped for the night and one of them opened his sack to get grain for his donkey, he found his money in the top of his sack.* ²⁸*"Look!" he exclaimed to his brothers. "My money has been returned; it's here in my sack!" Then their hearts sank. Trembling, they said to each other, "What has God done to us?"*
2. Genesis 43:19-22 (NLT) ¹⁹*The brothers approached the manager of Joseph's household and spoke to him at the entrance to the palace.* ²⁰*"Sir," they said, "we came to Egypt once before to buy food.* ²¹*But as we were returning home, we stopped for the night and opened our sacks. Then we discovered that each man's money—the exact amount paid—was in the top of his sack! Here it is; we have brought it back with us.* ²²*We also have additional money to buy more food. We have no idea who put our money in our sacks."*
3. "Make a list of all the people we have harmed, and become willing to make amends to them all."

4. "Make direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

D. You repent

1. Genesis 44:10-16 (NLT) ¹⁰"Only the one who stole the cup will be my slave. The rest of you may go free." ¹¹They all quickly took their sacks from the backs of their donkeys and opened them. ¹²The palace manager searched the brothers' sacks, from the oldest to the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack! ¹³When the brothers saw this, they tore their clothing in despair. Then they loaded their donkeys again and returned to the city. ¹⁴Joseph was still in his palace when Judah and his brothers arrived, and they fell to the ground before him. ¹⁵"What have you done?" Joseph demanded. "Don't you know that a man like me can predict the future?" ¹⁶Judah answered, "Oh, my lord, what can we say to you? How can we explain this? How can we prove our innocence? God is punishing us for our sins. My lord, we have all returned to be your slaves—all of us, not just our brother who had your cup in his sack."

"Sometimes you discover when you're driving, that you're going the wrong direction. Instead of going north, you're going south. And you're 20 miles away from where you should be. Repentance is not just thinking in your mind, 'I'm going the wrong direction.' Repentance is not just saying, 'Well, other people are further away from where I need to be, so I'm not doing that badly.' Repentance is a decision you make to get off at the next exit, to cross over, and get back on the other road heading in the other direction." (Tony Evans)

IV. Conclusion