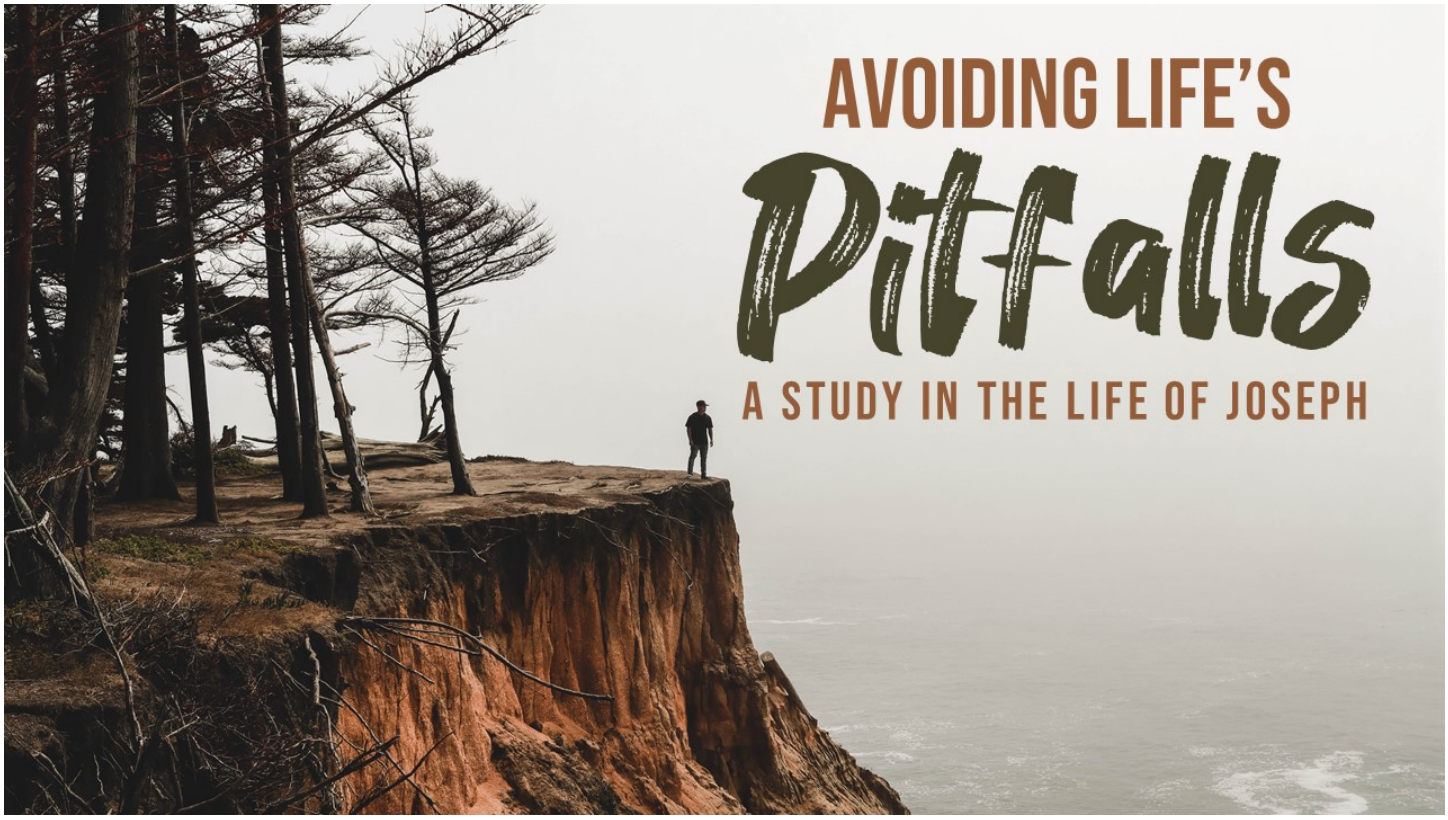


Title: Avoiding Life's Pitfalls- The Pitfall of Bitterness- Session 5
Scripture: Genesis 45:1-11, 15-21
Subject: Bitterness
Central Theme: Rejecting Bitterness
Objective Statement: We can prevent our hearts from growing bitter by making four choices.
Keyword: Choices

## Introduction:

### Connection:

- There have been times in my ministry when doing counseling that people tell me their story.
- In the way they tell there story there have been times that it seems in the way that they tell it that I happened very recently.
- When did that happen? 2021? 2020?
- "Nope. 1985."

### Tension:

- Having an offense against you can bring all kinds of turmoil.
- It can be like an acid that eats at and corrodes your joy.

- I've said it already, but it is so true. Bitterness and unforgiveness can be like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies.
- Forgiveness certainly must be done to honor God.
- Forgiveness certainly must be done towards the other person.
- Sometimes we forget that forgiveness helps us as well.
- Unforgiveness and Bitterness can be a pitfall that can be incredibly difficult.
- Joseph faced an opportunity to harbor bitterness and unforgiveness.
- He had been thrown in a pit and sold into slavery by his brothers.
- 10 on 1 odds against his older brothers did not work out well for him.
- They resented him. They chose to make profit off of him rather than killing him.
- Could you imagine the potential bitterness that Joseph could have had?
- Have you ever heard of anyone harboring bitterness for far less?
- In tonight's text we find Joseph in a situation where the balance of power has shifted into his favor.
- There was a famine in the land and Egypt was the only place with food.
- It had food because of God's using Joseph's leadership and influence to make it so.
- Only on the throne was one man greater than Joseph.
- He was not just a token, powerless vice-president.
- No. He had power. He had influence. He had resources.
- And with this power and influence, and with this personal history, he was tested with an opportunity for vengeance.

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*Genesis 42:1-24*

*(1) Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? (2) And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die. (3) And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.*

*(4) But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.*

*(5) And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan. (6) And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down*

*themselves before him with their faces to the earth.(7) And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. (8) And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him.*

*(9) And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. (10) And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. (11) We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies.*

*(12) And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come.*

*(13) And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.*
*(14) And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies:*

*(15) Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. (16) Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies.*

*(17) And he put them all together into ward three days.(18) And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God: (19) If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses:(20) But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.*

*(21) And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. (22) And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required. (23) And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.*

*(24) And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.*

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- Was Joseph tempted by vengeance? It appears to be so.
- Would you have been tempted that way?
- There is all kinds of drama up until this point.
- Back and forth they went. Joseph tested them by putting his stuff in their food sacks.

- Ultimately though, Joseph chose for his heart not to grow bitter.

## Truth:

## We can prevent our hearts from growing bitter by making four choices.

## 1. Choose to forgive. v.1-3

*Genesis 45:1-3*

*(1) Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.*

*(2) And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.*

- Imagine a large room. Joseph in a place of prominence and all of his servants standing around the room. His 10 brothers stand in front of him.
- He has put them through the ringer and they at least have admitted that the bad stuff happening to them may be because of what they had done in the past.
- All of the drama comes to a head, and Joseph cried out. "Everybody out!"
- The servants scurry out of the room.
- Yet just on the other side of the doors they hear Joseph weeping.
- They don't understand.
- Do you think the brothers get it?
- They may have been thinking, "This guy is all over the place. He speaks harshly with us. He has unrealistic expectations. He is demanding. He calls us spies and liars. Now he is weeping. What is going on?"
- And then he says three words that blow them away.

*(3) And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; "I am Joseph."*

- I'm sure at this point he said it in their tongue. They did not even know that He spoke their language at one point because he spoke through an interpreter.

*doth my father yet live?*

- What was their answer?

*And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.*

- Joseph had a choice.
- Does he pay them back, or does he forgive.
- Ultimately he had to forgive.
- Joseph had made a choice to live as if God was with him during all of these stages of his life.
    - At Potipher's house.
    - In the prison.
    - In the palace.
    - With Pharoah.
    - Even now with power. He said that he feared God.

*Application:*

- If we choose not to forgive, we are choosing the way of bitterness.
- If we choose not to forgive, we are choosing to act as if God is not with us.
- You see, when it came time to forgive, Joseph chose forgiveness. Why? His forgiveness was at least in part borne out of his theology. He chose to forgive because he had made another choice.

## We can prevent our hearts from growing bitter by making four choices.

### Choose to forgive. v.1-3

## 2. Choose to see God's Hand. v.4-5

*Genesis 45:4-5*

*(4) And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.*

- *"Come near to me, I pray you."* – Choosing forgiveness in this moment broke down relational barriers, which meant that even physical distance was impacted.
- Notice their response.

*"..and they came near."*

- Forgiveness can lead from not touching to touching. Not shaking hands to shaking hands. Not hugging to hugging. Going out of your way to avoid someone to walking up to someone.
- Here Joseph lays out his perspective that has been impacted by his theology.

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*(5) Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.*

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- God used your sin to get me to where I am today so that you can be saved, so that our family can be preserved.
- God used your sin for good.

*Application:*

- For those that are children of God we must believe that God is with us.
- Romans 8 makes it clear that God allows difficulties in our life for a purpose.
- We know that there may be more than one purpose that he allows difficulty. There is at least one purpose.

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*Romans 8:28-29*

*(28) And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*

*(29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

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- God allows difficulties into our lives for the purpose of making us more like Christ.
- In that sense we are like Joseph when we choose to forgive and have God's perspective on it.
- Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. If we are like Jesus we will help Him to preserve life by reaching out to others.
- If we are more like Christ as a result of exhibiting God's forgiveness to those who wrong us then we begin to understand at least part of the reason for which we go through difficulties and being sinned against.
- Choosing to forgive because of the choice to see God's hand meant yet another choice.

We can prevent our hearts from growing bitter by making four choices.

Choose to forgive. v.1-3

Choose to see God's Hand. v.4-5

## 3. Choose to be generous. v.9-11

*Genesis 45:9-11*

*(9) Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:*

*(10) And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:*

*(11) And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.*

- The choice to forgive, meant the choice to keep on forgiving.
- Forgiveness, especially for the very difficult things that we have done to us, involve two very important steps.
- The first step in forgiveness is the crisis.
- What do I mean?
- The crisis is the point at which we determine to forgive. When we make the decision to forgive for the first time.
- For Joseph this crisis point came when he yelled out, wept, sent everyone else in the room, and said, “I am Jospeh….Come near”.
- Do you see that point of decision?
- The second, much longer, part of forgiveness is the process. The choice to forgive is the choice to keep on forgiving.
- You pay the debt incurred by the other person, and then treat them as debt free.
- You continue to treat them as debt free.
- You are making the decision that what happened to them won’t be brought up to them, to others, or to yourself.
- Forgiveness means that nothing is done any longer as if that transaction occurred.
- And that meant for Joseph that he would treat them the way he would as if it had never happened.

- That meant that he would be generous to them.
- He would use his resources to help and sustain them.
- And if there is a time where bitterness and unforgiveness comes up again, we have to go back to the crisis. You have to choose, yet again, to forgive.
- God had put Joseph in a position where he could be generous.

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*Genesis 45:15-21*

*(15) Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.*

*(16) And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants.*

*(17) And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan;*

*(18) And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.*

*(19) Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.*

*(20) Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.*

*(21) And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way.*

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- It may seem weird to think about being generous to those who have wronged you.
- That may seem almost morbid to be generous like that to those who have wronged you.
- When the missionary kid calls the tribesman that kills his father “Grandfather”, the world has no category for that.
- Romans 5 puts it this way:

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*Romans 5:6-11*

*(6) For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

*(7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

*(8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

*(9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath*

*through him.*

*(10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*

*(11) And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

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- Joseph's dad comes to Goshen along with all their family.
- It was a tearful and joyful reunion.

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*Genesis 46:28-30*

*(28) And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.*

*(29) And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.*

*(30) And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.*

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- Jacob lives there for some years.
- Joseph introduces his sons to his father.
- Dad, here are my sons. Their names are "God made me forget" and "God double blessed me in the land of my affliction."
- Crisis. Process.
- Here is where the process gets difficult again. We have to make that choice one more time.

## We can prevent our hearts from growing bitter by making four choices.

Choose to forgive. v.1-3

Choose to see God's Hand. v.4-5

Choose to be generous. v.9-11

## 4. Choose to reject vengeance. v.15-21

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*Genesis 50:15-21*

*(15) And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.*

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- The godly kind of forgiveness that Joseph exhibited seemed to good to be true to the brothers.
- They thought maybe that Joseph had an alterior motive for forgiving them.
- So they send a message. They don't even go to Joseph. They send a messenger.

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*(16) And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,*

*(17) So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father.*

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- Look at Joseph's response.

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*And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.*

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- Talk about difficult.
- Now they didn't even believe that he had been sincere.
- After the crisis of forgiveness….
- After all of those years of process…being generous to them…
- Now, when their father died, they choose to disbelieve Joseph's love toward them.
- Look at what Joseph did:

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*(18) And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants.*

*(19) And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?*

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- Joseph understood something about God.
- Vengeance is not for us. Vengeance is for God.

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*Romans 12:19*

*(19) Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

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- Joseph continues…

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*(20) But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to*

*pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*

*(21) Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.*

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- The danger in bitterness is that it can keep being a temptation even after you have made the decision to reject it.
- We must choose