

Christian Families Build an Attitude of Repentance and Forgiveness

Introduction

The family home is a place where forgiving love, care and concern should be modeled and experienced. But, sadly, because of sin, the home is also a place where we first experience personal conflict. In the latter chapters of Genesis we read about the family of a man named Jacob. Envy and jealousy led 10 of Jacob's sons to treat their brother Joseph with great cruelty, even to the point of selling him into slavery. As the story continues, we learn how years later these same brothers repented and asked Joseph to forgive them.

Word of God

Genesis 42:21

²¹ They [Joseph's brothers] said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us."

Genesis 50:15-21

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?" ¹⁶ So they sent word to Joseph, saying, "Your father left these instructions before he died: ¹⁷ 'This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.' Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father." When their message came to him, Joseph wept. ¹⁸ His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

Study

1. What evidence can you find to suggest that the brothers were sorry for what they had done to Joseph many years earlier?
2. Even after many years, the consciences of Joseph's brothers still stung with the guilt of selling their brother into slavery. How can parents help their child's conscience remain sharp enough to prick him or her when he or she is guilty of wrongdoing?
3. What conclusions about Joseph's attitude can we draw from these words: "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?" (See also Matthew 7:1,2.)

