

Living with Conflict

Genesis 42:8-16

Sermon Outline

A. Confront It (vs. 8-9):

1. Joseph recognized his brothers – Joseph remembered his brothers and could identify them by name after twenty years.
2. Did not recognize him – Joseph was about sixteen years old when his brothers left him in the cistern. When they saw him again in Egypt, he spoke and dressed like an Egyptian, so they had no physical awareness of who he was.
 - a) Even if they had expected to meet Joseph, which they didn't, the ten men wouldn't have recognized their brother. He was seventeen when they sold him, and in the ensuing twenty years he would have changed in appearance far more than his older brothers. Furthermore, he was now clean-shaven like an Egyptian, he was dressed like an Egyptian, and he spoke to them in the Egyptian language through an interpreter.¹
3. Did not recognize him – His brothers believed he was dead, so they did not expect to see him anywhere much less as a Pharaoh.
 - a) These men standing before Joseph had sold him as a slave twenty years before, yet they were his brothers!²
4. Joseph remembered the dream – Upon seeing his brothers, Joseph mediated on all the Lord revealed to him in the dream he had years ago.
5. Said to them – Joseph, as if he did not plan on stopping, and in a commanding manner initiated a conversation with them. It appeared he could not hold back his need to interact with them through a translator.
6. You are spies – Joseph was on attack mode.
 - a) You are spies! (42:9). Semites/Asiatics were often distrusted by the Egyptians, so this is not an unusual charge. The Egyptians referred to them by various epithets such as “sand dwellers” and “throat slitters” and considered them wild and uncivilized.³
7. Come – Joseph accused his brothers of coming to Egypt for the sole purpose of trying to discover the weak points in Egypt's defenses.

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1997). *Be authentic* (pp. 108–109). Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub.

² Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (p. 74). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

³ Walton, J. H. (2009). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy* (Vol. 1, p. 132). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

8. Look – Joseph accused his brothers of seeking to develop a clear understanding of the undefended parts of Egypt.

B. Reaffirm Trust (vs 10-13):

1. Then they said – Joseph's brothers responded, with no intent of stopping, and constantly defending themselves and their purpose for coming to Egypt.
2. No, my lord – They respectfully and emphatically denied having intentions of spying, something Joseph already knew.
3. Your servants – They seem to recognize Joseph's authority or rank and were committed to humble themselves before him by being as polite as possible.
4. Come to buy food – Joseph's brothers stated that their sole purpose was to buy food; they had nothing else in mind.
5. We are honest men – Joseph's brothers described themselves as respectable, doing whatever is right and true.
6. Yet he said to them – Joseph was not going to give any credence to their claim to being men who do what is right. He continued to verbally accuse them of being spies.
7. You come to look at – Joseph was committed to accusing them of spying. He seems to be inferring that he did not trust them and was not going to trust them. I believe they understood that, and this is why they kept trying to prove they were honest men. Joseph obviously, even though physically in Egypt, was mentally at the incident that left him (his own brothers) in a cistern to die.
8. But they said – Joseph's brothers verbally refused to back down and kept denying his accusation.
9. Your servants – While refusing to back down, Joseph's brothers remained humble, polite, and contrite before him. They were not going to challenge his authority, but they were committed to defend their purpose for coming to Egypt.
10. We are twelve brothers – Joseph's brothers tried to identify themselves so that he could see they were not a part of an army or country trying to invade Egypt.
11. We are twelve brothers – Time has a way of making people better or worse.
12. One is no longer alive – They assumed that Joseph was dead. They did not forget the incident and felt that they were paying for their sin – verses 21-23.

C. Create a Plan for Peace (vs. 14-16, 18):

1. Joseph said to them – Joseph verbally informed them, by continuously saying the same thing over and over, that he was not going to stop accusing them of being spies. This must have been a very tense moment with soldiers standing by Joseph.
 - a) In Egyptian practice the oath in the name of the king was the “Oath of the Lord.” The nature of the oath is Joseph’s promise to prohibit the party from returning, except the youngest brother is escorted back to Egypt (v. 15). If the party fails to fulfill the obligation, the judgment “you are spies” stands (v. 16), implying that an unstated punishment (curse) will be imposed.⁴
2. By this he tested them – Joseph’s purpose for continually accusing them of being spies was to determine, by this examination, whether or not they were truly men of integrity.
3. Shall not go from this place – Joseph repeatedly stated that they were not going to leave their present location, indicating also that they would not receive any food until the task of finding out whether or not they were spies was resolved.
4. Youngest brother comes – Joseph did not trust them. If they could try to kill him who came from a different mother, they could do the same to Benjamin especially since their father did not love their mother or them as much as he did Rachel and her children.
5. Send – Joseph commands them to go right away and get Benjamin. This is similar to telling someone to shoot an arrow and hit a specific target.
6. He may get your brother – Going to get Benjamin was their main focus; nothing else mattered or was going to prove they were men of integrity.
7. Your words may be tested – Joseph said that what they relayed to him must be continuously investigated, so the integrity they claim to have could be verified. Because of what they did to Joseph, their honesty must be confirmed before the relationship could be reconciled.
 - a) Joseph was genuinely concerned about his family in Canaan and didn’t want them to starve. At the same time, he wanted to see God’s promises fulfilled so he could be reconciled with his brothers and his father. He had God’s assurance that all eleven brothers would eventually bow before him, but he wanted to motivate his brothers to act. That’s why he kept Simeon as hostage.⁵
8. Whether there is truth in you – Going to get Benjamin would establish if they were honorable men. If their father trusted them enough to bring their brother, that would be a testament of their integrity.
9. Whether there is truth in you – Time has a way of making people better or worse.
10. Whether there is truth in you – Trust is fundamental to every relationship, even our relationship with God.

⁴ Mathews, K. A. (2005). [Genesis 11:27–50:26](#) (Vol. 1B, pp. 778–779). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

⁵ Wiersbe, W. W. (1997). [Be authentic](#) (p. 110). Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub.

"On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: 19 If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. 20 But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do. (Ge 42:18-20: NIV)