

What the Story of Joseph Has to Do With America Dropping \$4.3 Billion on Valentine's Day

Today is Valentine's Day. To celebrate the holiday, Americans will spend \$4.3 billion on jewelry, \$2 billion on flowers, \$1.9 billion on clothes, \$1.7 billion on candy, \$1.4 billion on gift cards and nearly \$1 billion on greeting cards. Today's news is filled with stories of love appropriate for the holiday.

Not everything in the news is good news, however.

This *Vogue* article grieves me: "What to Get a Friend Post-Abortion." The article pictures two teenage girls smiling and acting as though they are congratulating each other. What follows is an assortment of T-shirts, poetry and other gifts. Among them is an invitation from Planned Parenthood to become an escort for other women who choose abortion. The nation's leading abortion provider promises that "one day, this won't seem like such a big deal."

It's easy to see Valentine's Day as a momentary respite from a culture that is sliding ever further from biblical morality. But it's always too soon to give up on God.

Remember the story of Joseph? His brothers sold him into slavery out of anger at his dreams of superiority over them. Fast forward 13 years. Joseph is now second-in-command in Egypt, the greatest superpower in the world. His brothers have come to him for food in a time of famine. They do not recognize him, but he knows them.

To test them, he has his personal cup placed in the sack of

Benjamin, their youngest brother. They are arrested and brought before him. He offers to keep Benjamin as his servant and free the rest.

The brothers he knew 13 years ago would gladly have traded their younger brother for their freedom. The Joseph they knew would gladly have forced them into his service.

But slavery and prison have changed Joseph; years of grief and guilt have changed his brothers. They plead with him not to keep their brother; Judah even offers to stay in his place. When Joseph sees their repentant hearts, he reveals himself to them, forgives their sins against him and provides for them and their families. In this way, Joseph saves the Jewish people from famine (Gen. 37–50). Eventually one like Joseph will come to save the world (John 3:16).

Human nature doesn't change. We still face the same fears and cherish the same hopes as our ancestors back to Adam and Eve. However, human beings never remain the same. Every event and person, challenge and opportunity molds us in ways that make us either more or less the person God intends us to be.

Two conclusions follow:

1. We must never give up on people. Scripture is filled with adulterers, thieves and murderers used greatly by our Father. No sin is beyond his forgiveness. No sinner is beyond his grace—including you and me.

2. We must never assume godliness. Scripture is filled with people who started better than they ended. One reason King Saul and Judas are in the Bible is so their stories do not become our story. It's not where you begin the race that matters—it's where you finish.

So love others as God loves you. That's a gift worth more than money can buy, every day of the year. {eoa}

