

Genesis

Memorize the TRUTH!

Lesson 23 Joseph's Brothers Are Tested Genesis 43-44

Consider it pure joy, my brothers,
whenever you face trials of many kinds,
because you know that the testing of
your faith develops perseverance.
James 1:2-3

Back to Egypt – Genesis 43:1-14

Day 1

1. Why did Jacob/Israel delay sending his sons back to Egypt for more food?
2. Who did Jacob/Israel blame for the Egyptian ruler's demands? Was this really their fault?
3. a. Which son volunteered to be responsible for Benjamin's safety?

b. Who did Jacob/Israel ultimately have to trust with Benjamin's life?
4. Have you ever found yourself in a situation in which you could do nothing but trust God? How did you see God at work in that situation?

Learn the TRUTH!



Joseph's love for his brothers is real enough, but cannot be expressed until he determines what kind of men they are. He checks their loyalty with another test. Will they rise to the occasion? James 1:2 tells us that we should consider it a joy when we encounter trials. Do you rejoice when you are tested?

Meeting Joseph Again – Genesis 43:15-23

Day 2

5. a. What was the first step in Joseph's plan when his brothers, including Benjamin, arrived in Egypt?

b. How did his brothers interpret his intentions?
6. How did Joseph's steward reassure them and relieve their fears?

Dinner With Joseph
Genesis 43:24-34

Day 3

7. What questions did Joseph ask when they met him there?

8. Why was this such an emotional moment for Joseph? How did he react?

9. a. What test had Joseph prepared for his brothers when they joined him for dinner?

b. Do you think the brothers passed the test? Why or why not?

c. How do you react when someone receives special favor and you don't?

A Test of Loyalty
Genesis 44:1-17

Day 4

10. a. What order did Joseph give his steward? Why do you think he did this?

b. What happened when the steward caught up with Joseph's brothers?

11. a. How did Joseph's brothers respond to the steward's accusation?

b. How did the steward respond?

12. a. When the cup was found, what did Joseph's brothers do?

b. What did the test's outcome tell Joseph about his brothers?

Protecting Benjamin
Genesis 44:18-34

Day 5

13. a. What did Judah offer to do on behalf of Benjamin?

b. How does this compare to Reuben's offer in Genesis 43:37?

14. a. Why was Judah willing to make this sacrifice?

b. How does Judah's action here remind you of the actions and words of Jesus in John 15:13?

Live the TRUTH!

Think about the truth and accuracy of God's Word. Without knowing they were doing it, the brothers have now three times acted out the dreams of Joseph recorded in Genesis 37. God had spoken to the teenage Joseph in his dreams, predicting that his brothers would bow down to him. What does this mean for us? God keeps His word! When He chooses to reveal the future, what He says is going to happen really will happen.

Commentary Genesis Lesson 23

Over 20 years have passed since Joseph was sold by his brothers as a slave. In God's providence, he has risen to become viceroy of Egypt and is now in position to take vengeance and to correct the terrible wrong done to him. He does not do so, because he is seeking God's interests. At his insistence during their first trip, his brothers have left Simeon as a hostage in Egypt for the return of Benjamin. Joseph is seeking to determine whether the brothers have learned anything spiritually in the preceding two decades.

Jacob has entered a state of denial. The famine is severe, and the area is completely dependent on Egypt for grain. Jacob will have to send his sons there to obtain food eventually, but he is unwilling to face this fact. Gradually, Jacob's family consumes the food the brothers have brought back. Jacob seems to be content to allow Simeon to waste away in prison during this period. Now he wants to ignore the reported demands of "the man" in Egypt (43:3). Judah forcefully reminds him of the viceroy's stern warning that Simeon's release and the purchase of additional food depends on their taking Benjamin to Egypt.

Jacob accuses his sons of irresponsible behavior, who respectfully dispute his childish accusations. The leadership of the family is poised to be passed to the next generation — provided by Judah, who guarantees Benjamin's safe return. Starvation is approaching. Also, Judah knows that failure to meet Joseph's conditions might well result in the deaths of all the siblings. Years before, Joseph's brothers had sold him, the favored son, into slavery. Though the new favored son, Benjamin, is in their power, they are committed to his welfare. They have passed the test of jealousy. Israel at last bows to the inevitable and even proposes that they win the viceroy's favor by taking him gifts. In addition, the brothers are to exercise scrupulous honesty by taking enough money to pay for the previous consignment of grain and to purchase a fresh shipment. They must take Benjamin, too, and trust in God Almighty.

The brothers, probably with great foreboding, again make the 300-mile trek into Egypt. Joseph allows them to come before him with Benjamin. Their reception includes a surprise: Joseph invites the 11 brothers to a feast at his home. Because Egyptians were disdainful of foreigners, a meal at an official's residence would seem highly irregular. The brothers are fearful that they are going to be falsely accused. The most horrifying prospect they can imagine is to be sold as slaves—the very fate to which they committed Joseph two decades before. The brothers realize that Joseph has the power of life and death over them. At his arrival, they present their gifts and bow before him once again.

Joseph shows remarkable restraint as he asks about Jacob's welfare. When he sees Benjamin, he blesses him but is soon forced to retire to a private room to weep. There is still another important test they must face. Joseph washes his face, returns to the group, and orders the meal to be served. He sits apart from his family. As an Egyptian leader, he is expected to preserve ethnic decorum. To confuse them further, he seats them in order of age from the eldest (Reuben) to the youngest (Benjamin). The brothers are amazed. How could this Egyptian possess such knowledge? He shows a special fondness for Benjamin.

Check It Out:

Joseph gives his brothers the ultimate test. It will prove whether or not their hearts have been changed. They cannot bear to see their father hurt again. They obviously feel what is happening is divine retribution. These are the same callous men who enjoyed lunch while young Joseph pled for his life from the bottom of a cistern. Then they sent him off to Egypt, sold as a slave. Finally they dipped his coat of many colors in animal blood and unscrupulously took it to their father, apparently without the slightest concern about their father's feelings. Never doubt that people can truly change — including you.

What Joseph does next may seem vindictive—an unwarranted conclusion. These brothers sold him into slavery; now they will be placed in a position to repeat that harsh deed. He commands the stewards to place their money in the mouth of their grain sacks again, and he has a silver cup placed in Benjamin’s sack. The steward is directed to accost them outside the city and accuse them of stealing Joseph’s cup, waiting to the very end to look in Benjamin’s sack. Their commitment to Benjamin — displayed in the tearing of their clothes — comes through in the account. He can be sacrificed if they choose, just as they sacrificed Joseph so many years before. Joseph wants to know if they will abandon Benjamin. They all load their donkeys and return to plead their case. They throw themselves to the ground before Joseph, with Judah acting as Benjamin’s advocate. He admits that though the brothers are innocent in this case, they have guilt enough of their own. God’s justice has finally caught up with them. Benjamin’s life is now in Joseph’s hands.

Judah becomes the defender of the accused Benjamin. In his speech, he retells the entire Joseph story. He realizes the greatness of the man who will decide Benjamin’s fate. Judah reminds the viceroy that the brothers share a deep respect for their aged father. The patriarch of the clan has already lost a beloved son, and now it looks as though he is about to lose another one. These words are spoken with no trace of bitterness or jealousy. Jacob’s love of Rachel’s sons was once a point of great distress to these men, but now they simply accept their father for who he is. They have only returned with Benjamin out of absolute necessity. Joseph himself required it. When they were ordered to return, their father was heartbroken and insisted that if anything should happen to Benjamin, his own life would be over. The recent events will certainly end Jacob’s life, and he will simply not be able to survive the loss of the only remaining son of his favored wife, who is also deceased.

Judah then proposes to act as a substitute for Benjamin. He guaranteed Benjamin’s safe return, and he will now honor it his own cost. Judah’s love for Jacob emerges strongly in this proposal. He would rather die himself than see his father so miserable. Judah’s offer to suffer so that his brother can go free is precisely the climax of the drama that Joseph has been seeking. The brothers have passed the test of loyalty, and there is no longer any reason for Joseph to conceal his identity.



God had an agenda with Jacob’s sons. They needed to become unified as the nation of Israel. One of the beautiful results of Joseph’s tests of his brothers was their emerging loyalty to Benjamin and to their father. Did you notice 44:13? When the silver cup was found in Benjamin’s sack, “they tore their clothes. Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city.” Nobody ran in the other direction to save his own skin, nor did they abandon their youngest brother. In fact, Judah begged to take Benjamin’s place of punishment. They became their brother’s keepers. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus asks the Father for believers, His body — the church — to “be brought to complete unity” (John 17:23). Let us be part of the answer to our Savior’s prayer and reach out to fellow believers in loyalty and unity. We, too, are “keepers” of our brothers (and sisters) in Christ.



How do these verses help you trust God?

Nahum 1:7

John 14:1

Philippians 4:6-7, 19