



# Joseph Tests His Brothers

FAMILIES IN TRUTH

Genesis 43 - 44



By God's grace, Joseph did not take revenge on his brothers. Because Joseph had been betrayed by his brothers, he tested them to see if they had repented from their sinful ways.

## Day #1: Faith in Whom?

Ten of Joseph's brothers went to Egypt to buy grain, but only nine returned home to Jacob. Joseph kept Simeon under lock and key, to be sure that his brothers would return. This was part of a test to see if his brothers had repented from their earlier sin. Joseph wanted to know if the nine would leave Simeon in prison, or if they would return as they promised.

When the nine brothers arrived home, they explained to Jacob that the powerful man in Egypt demanded that they bring their youngest brother to him. Jacob refused to let Benjamin leave his side.

† *Their father Jacob said to them, "You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!" - Genesis 43:36*

Jacob was living in fear, not faith. He didn't go to the Lord and ask what to do. He was simply too afraid to let Benjamin go.

Before long, the generous supply of food that Joseph gave to his brothers ran out. Jacob demanded that his nine sons return to Egypt. But they refused to go without Benjamin. Finally, Judah spoke up. He swore on his own sons' lives that he would not allow anything bad to happen to Benjamin. Reluctantly, Jacob agreed to let Benjamin go. At this point, Jacob put his faith in Judah to protect Benjamin.

Jacob's faith was in the wrong person. Judah was just a man. He could fail. Jacob's faith should have been in God, because God can NEVER fail.

\* Who is your faith in? Who do you look to for protection and guidance? Is it a person who can fail? Or do you trust in Jesus, the God who can NEVER fail?

## Day #2: Telling Others

So all ten brothers set out for Egypt. They brought gifts for Joseph, as well as money for more grain, and the money that had been returned to them during their first visit. When Joseph saw them coming in the distance, he told his servant to prepare a special meal for them.

The servant took the men to Joseph's house. The brothers thought they were in big trouble because the money they brought the first time had been returned to them. Nervously, they tried to explain to the servant that they did not know why their money had been placed in their sacks.

† *"It's all right," the (servant) said. "Don't be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you riches in your sacks. I received your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them. - Genesis 43:23*

The brothers must have been greatly relieved. They weren't in trouble at all. God had blessed them by His grace.

Notice the amazing words of Joseph's servant. He was an Egyptian. He was part of a people that worshipped many false gods. How did he now know about the one true God, the God of Jacob? He knew because Joseph told him! When Joseph rose to power, he did not forget the Lord who put him there. Joseph told all those around him about the one true God!

\* What "positions" has God put you in? Are you a big brother or big sister? Are you part of a sports team or band? Are you in a class at school? Wherever God has placed you, use your influence to tell others about Him.

## Day #3: Tears of Joy

Have you ever been so happy that you cried? Ask your mom or dad about such a time in their lives. Joseph had a very special moment like this.

When Joseph arrived at his home, his ten brothers bowed low to honor him, just as God had foretold so many years before in Joseph's dreams.

† *Joseph looked around. Then he saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother's son. He asked, "Is this your youngest brother? Is he the one you told me about?" He continued, "May God be gracious to you, my son."*

### Day #3 continued:

*It moved him deeply to see his brother. So Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to cry. He went into his own room and cried there. - Genesis 43:29-30*

When Joseph saw Benjamin, he was overcome with joy. He ran out of the room so no one would see him crying. Joseph was not ashamed of his emotions. He hid because he was still pretending to be an Egyptian. The time was not yet right to tell his brothers who he was.

Emotions of love, joy, longing for justice, and others are from the Lord. These are emotions that God has (John 3:16, Luke 10:21, Psalm 11:7). We were given emotions because we are created in His image (Genesis 1:27).



Read about the emotions that God feels for you:

*He will rejoice over you with joyful songs. - Zephaniah 3:17c NLT*

*Nothing at all can ever separate us from God's love because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done. - Romans 8:39b*

## Day #4: Joseph's Test

Because of the terrible famine, Joseph's brothers had had very little to eat. They had been getting by on the grain that Joseph had given them. Now, as they stood in Joseph's house, they could smell the delicious aroma of the special meal that was cooking.

When Joseph and his brothers sat to eat their meal, Joseph made sure that his servants gave Benjamin five times as much food as the others. This was part of a test for the brothers. When Joseph was just a teenager, his brothers were extremely jealous when he received special treatment from their father. Joseph gave special treatment to Benjamin to see if his brothers would repeat their sin.

When it was time for the family to return to Canaan, Joseph told his servant to fill the men's sacks with grain, and return all the money that they brought. In addition, Joseph told the servant to place his special silver cup in Benjamin's sack.

After the men left, Joseph sent his servant to stop them. The servant accused them of stealing Joseph's silver cup. Of course, the men swore they had done no such thing. After searching their bags, the servant found the cup in Benjamin's bag.

This silver cup was a part of Joseph's plan to test his brothers. Joseph wanted to know if the brothers

### Day #4 continued:

would try to help Benjamin even after seeing him receive special treatment. More than anything, Joseph wanted to see if his brothers had changed. He looked for repentant hearts in the men who once sinned against him.



Likewise, God looks for a repentant heart. He freely forgives those who change their mind about their sin, and place their trust in Him.



*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. - Acts 3:19 NIV*

## Day #5: U-Turn

What if you were riding your bicycle to your friend's house, and after going a short distance, you remembered your friend lived in the opposite direction? You would make a U-turn and go the right way. This is a symbol of the repentance that Joseph was looking for in his brothers. They had spent their lives going their own sinful way. After all these years, had they changed? Given the chance to repeat their sin, would they decide to go the opposite way?

When the men were brought back to Joseph, they fell to their knees in front of him again. They begged him for mercy. They said they would all become his slaves. But Joseph said that he would not allow that. He said that only Benjamin would become his slave, since the cup was in his bag.

Judah stepped forward. He explained how much his father loved Benjamin. Judah begged Joseph to let him become a slave **instead** of Benjamin. Judah said:



*"Now then, please let me stay here. Let me be your slave in place of the boy. Let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy isn't with me? Don't let me see the pain and suffering that would come to my father." - Genesis 44:33-34*

This was quite a change in direction for Judah. Over twenty years earlier, it was **Judah's idea** to sell Joseph into slavery! (Genesis 37:26-27) Now he was offering to give up his own freedom to keep his brother out of slavery. Judah's actions gave proof of the change in his heart and mind.



We have all been forced to apologize when we didn't mean it. We might flatly say, "Sorry," but in our hearts we are not sorry. This is not repentance at all! Repentance is a true change in heart. True repentance will be seen in your actions. Discuss what actions might come after true repentance. (Example: Standing up for someone you once made fun of.)