

The Plan from the Beginning
Daily Bible Reading Plan
Class Notes for Week 10: Genesis Chapters 42-45

A few lessons can be learned from our study:

1. Jacob still shows sign of preference in his love for his children. Can we not learn from our mistakes when we endure trials because of poor choices or practices?
2. Forgiveness may be harder to bestow when we find ourselves in a position to “pay back” those who have wronged us. We must be spiritually strong enough to resist vengeance. Jesus is clear on this issue (Matthew 6:14, 15)
3. We can be a great influence for God and for good when we are in positions of influence. To arrive at a position of authority or management through honest, hard work is not a shame for a Christian. As long as the goal is clear: to be in a position to share your blessings with others, not for the pursuit of fame, power or money.

I. Genesis 42: Jacob has not learned his lesson

- The famine predicted by Joseph is going on in Jacob’s land as well. Jacob dispatches ten of his sons, but keeps Benjamin back “lest some calamity befall him”. Jacob is still showing preference for the children of Rachel. Does he not worry that some calamity will befall the other ten?
- The brothers arrive in Egypt and approach Joseph to buy grain. Joseph has concealed his identity from them, but he knows who they are. More than 20 years have passed and the pain of missing his family still remains, as Joseph weeps later in the story. When the brothers approach him bowing to the ground, Joseph remembers the dreams he had.
- Joseph accuses the brothers of being spies. The brothers inform him that they are children of one father (but not one mother) and they yet have another brother back at home. Joseph has to know they are speaking of Benjamin and that his only full brother is still alive.
- Joseph creates a test for them, pretending the motive is to determine if they are spies. The real motivation appears to be to get them to bring Benjamin to him. At first he tells them to send one back to retrieve their youngest sibling, but after confining them for three days, he sends them all back, save Simeon. They are given grain and their money secretly returned to them.
- The brothers, speaking now to one another in Hebrew (assuming Joseph cannot understand them, but he can), realize that they are being punished for treating Joseph like they did. Reuben takes the “I told you so” route. It is sobering to see that Joseph “pleaded” with them not to sell him (v. 21).
- The brothers arrive home and tell their father all the bad news about Simeon and the returned money. Jacob is upset that he is between a rock and a hard place. He fears that the brothers cannot return to Egypt without taking Benjamin and facing accusations about the returned money. He laments that he has lost Joseph and Simeon and now may lose Benjamin.
- The chapter closes with Reuben offering Jacob two of his own children as a bounty for Benjamin. What kind of father risks his two son’s life for his half-brother? What kind of grandfather was Jacob that Reuben would even think Jacob would accept an offer that risked killing his own grandchildren?

II. Genesis 43: Hunger prevails

- Poor Simeon if left to rot in jail while the rest sit back in Canaan and eat until the grain they bought runs out. Jacob, the caring father that he is, tries to send the brothers back to buy more grain, with no plea to go free Simeon. They counter by reminding Jacob about the instructions from the “Egyptian”.
- Jacob chastises them for even telling that they had another brother (still no concern for Simeon). The brothers seemingly lie about the fact that they did not volunteer the information about their family, but were asked about it. This is not in line with the narrative in chapter 42.
- Judah offers himself as the responsible part for Benjamin and suffer before his father if harm comes to him. He comments that we could have been there and back twice by now if not for the delay, which indicates that this reluctance by Jacob to send Benjamin has been debated for some time.
- Bearing the money to buy grain, the money paid back to them before, gifts from their father and Benjamin, the brothers head back to Egypt.

- Joseph sees them and has his servants prepare a meal for them and invite the brothers to his house. Fearing that Joseph plans on making them into slaves as punishment for the returned money, they plead their case to Joseph's house steward. The steward reassures them and returns Simeon to them. When they come before Joseph, they are asked about the welfare of their father.
- Then Joseph sees Benjamin and it is more than he can bear. He retreats to his private chamber and weeps. Joseph cleans himself up and returns to the meal. He is seated separately from the Hebrews for social reasons. The brothers are amazed that they are organized in their seating from youngest to oldest. Benjamin receives a portion 5 times that of the others.

III. Genesis 44: Begging for mercy

- As the brothers prepare to return home, undoubtedly relieved that so far things have gone smoothly, Joseph orders that their sacks be filled with food, the money paid and also that his cup be placed in Benjamin's sack.
- After the brothers get out of town, Joseph sends the stewards after them. The brothers are dismayed when they are accused of stealing the cup and rightly so, since they are unaware of Joseph's workings. They foolishly offer the life of the one who is found to have the cup and themselves as slaves should it be found. The servant instead says that the one the cup is found with shall be kept as a slave.
- They panic when the cup is discovered in Benjamin's sack, tearing their clothes. They return to face the music.
- Upon being accused by Joseph, Judah, recounting the whole story we have discussed, pleads with Joseph to not keep Benjamin. He tells him of the pain it will cause his father to hurt so badly it will kill him. Judah offers himself in place of Benjamin.

IV. Genesis 45: Forgiveness

- Joseph can take it no more and reveals himself to them. They are too shocked to believe it. He tells them not to be distressed over their actions, crediting it to be part of God's plan. Joseph understands that God has placed him in Egypt to save his people from the famine.
- Joseph orders them to return to their land and return with their father. A place will be provided for them to settle, them and their herds. There are five remaining years of famine and Joseph wants to provide haven for his family.
- They all embrace, weep and spend time talking and catching up. Pharaoh hears of the situation and blesses Joseph's plan, augmenting it by sending wagons and beasts to aid in bringing their families and possessions back.
- They return to Jacob and tell him the news. Can you imagine the turn of emotions: A man who is still grieving over Joseph, has been stressing while Benjamin is gone, and is enduring a famine that seems to have no end, now hears the greatest news that he could ever ask for. Joseph is alive, he has been wildly successful, and there is a safe place for all of his family where they can be provided for. The Bible says the spirit of Jacob "revived".