

Joseph Tests His Brothers

Genesis 43 - 44

PPT Title

Joseph Tests His Brothers

Main Point: God looks for a repentant heart.

Key Verse: *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

Props: A clear glass, a pitcher of water; **Optional:** a sign that says "God" and a sign that says "sin", tape for both signs.

BACKGROUND/REVIEW



Say: Last week, we saw God's grace at work! When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy food, Joseph did not take revenge on them. Joseph's ten brothers did not recognize Joseph. They bowed at his feet, just as God had foretold twenty years before. And when Joseph had power over their very lives, he was merciful. Joseph was only able to do these things because of God's grace.



Joseph longed to see his father and youngest brother, Benjamin, once again. Joseph kept his brother, Simeon, in an Egyptian prison, but let the others go home. He promised that when they brought their youngest brother back to meet him, he would let Simeon go. Before they left, Joseph loaded their donkeys with grain, and returned the silver they brought to buy the grain. Joseph hid their money in their packs with the grain. When they found the money in their sacks, the brothers were afraid that this was somehow going to get them into trouble. Their father, Jacob, refused to let Benjamin go to Egypt, even though Simeon was left in prison.

Jacob said, "My son will not go down there with you. His brother is dead. He's the only one left here with me. Suppose he's harmed on the journey you are taking. Then I would die as a sad old man. I would go down into the grave full of sorrow." - Genesis 42:38

Sadly, Jacob did not even pray about this situation. He did not realize that God was in complete control, and that God was keeping His promise to bless him.

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS SET OUT FOR EGYPT (Genesis 43:1-15)

Say: Joseph had given his brothers a very generous amount of food - ten donkeys could easily carry a thousand pounds of grain. But all of the brothers were married and had children. In all, Jacob had over seventy people in his family counting his kids and grandkids. The food Jacob had given them would not last forever. After some time, probably a couple months, the food ran out. **Ask:** Who can remember how long the famine was going to last? *Seven years.* **Say:** The famine was only in its second year, so there were five devastating years left. Jacob had to do something to feed his family. He told his sons to go back to Egypt to buy more food. Jacob's fourth oldest son, Judah, spoke up. He reminded Jacob that the man in charge of Egypt wanted to meet Benjamin.



Judah said to him, "The man gave us a strong warning. He said, 'You won't see my face again unless your brother comes with you.' So send our brother along with us. Then

we'll go down and buy food for you.

"If you won't send him, we won't go down. The man said to us, 'You won't see my face again unless your brother comes with you.' "

(Jacob) asked, "Why did you bring this trouble to me? Why did you tell the man you had another brother?"

They replied, "The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. 'Is your father still living?' he asked us. 'Do you have another brother?' We just answered his questions. How could we possibly know he would say, 'Bring your brother down here?'" - Genesis 43:3-7

Sadly, it seems that Jacob would rather have his sons lie than tell the whole truth. Remember, telling a half-truth is the same as lying. Jacob was living in fear; he was not trusting God.

Application: Hold up an empty glass. **Ask:** What is in this glass? *Some may say "Nothing."* **Say:** There *is* something in the glass. It is full of **air**. **Pour water into the glass until it is completely full.** **Say:** Now the glass is full of water. Is there any air left in the glass? *No.* The water pushed all the air out. Just as this water forced the air out of the glass, trusting God forces the fear out of your heart and mind.

God is **ABLE**.
God is **WILLING**.

There are two parts to fully trusting God. Part one is believing that God is **ABLE** to do anything. This means that you are **certain** that He knows everything, and He is so powerful that there's nothing He can't do. Part two is believing that God is **good**, so He is **WILLING** to do what is best for you - every single time. If you trust that God is **ABLE** and **WILLING** to allow only what is best for you, then what is there to fear?

The Bible says if you truly trust the Lord, you will stand firm with a strong heart, and you will not fear (Psalm 112:7, Hebrews 11:23, 27).

Note to Teacher: When Jesus rebuked His disciples for being afraid in the storm, He said, "Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!" (Matthew 8:26 NLT)

Say: To calm his father's fear, Judah promised to keep Benjamin safe no matter what. Finally, Jacob agreed to let Benjamin go with his brothers. Jacob told his sons to take gifts to the man in Egypt. (Little did Jacob know, he was sending gifts to his beloved Joseph!) The brothers took lotions, spices, and honey. They also took some almonds and pistachio nuts. These would have been extremely valuable during this time with no other food available! They took money to buy more food, and they also took the money that had been returned to them when they tried to buy grain the first time. All the brothers hurried to Egypt.



JOSEPH RECEIVES HIS BROTHERS (Genesis 43:16-34)

When Joseph saw his brothers coming with Benjamin, he told his main servant to take the men to his house and prepare a big meal.

Note to Teacher: Joseph seeing his brothers in the distance brings to mind the parable of the prodigal son. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him..." (Luke 15:20) We can picture Joseph, much like the prodigal's father, searching the horizon day after day, hoping his wayward brothers would return with repentant hearts.



The brothers were taken to Joseph's house, but they were very afraid. They thought they were in trouble because their money was put back in their sacks the first time they came to buy food. Nervously, they spoke to Joseph's servant. They tried to explain what happened with their silver the first time. They explained that they wanted to

return the money.



"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

Joseph's servant acknowledged Joseph's God, and confirmed that the free grain was an undeserved gift of grace. Simeon was released from prison, just as Joseph had promised.

When Joseph came home, they gave him the gifts they had brought into the house. They bowed down to the ground in front of him. He asked them how they were. Then he said, "How is your old father you told me about? Is he still living?"

They replied, "Your servant our father is still alive and well." And they bowed low to show him honor. - Genesis 43:26-28

Say: Remember, Joseph dreamed two times that his brothers would bow down to him!

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." 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



Say: Joseph was overwhelmed to see his little brother! Joseph was 17 when he last saw Benjamin. Benjamin was just a child then, and now he was a grown up. Joseph couldn't hold back his tears, so he ran out of the room. When Joseph calmed down, he returned and ordered that lunch be served. The brothers were seated in order, from oldest to youngest. This amazed the brothers. Of course, if they were just children it might be easy to tell who was oldest and who was youngest. But these were grown men. It is very difficult to guess the ages of grown men!



When all the food was served, Benjamin was given **five times** as much food as his brothers. Once again, the youngest brother was being favored. We'll see that this was part of test that Joseph was giving to his brothers.

SIVER CUP IN A SACK (Genesis 44:1-34)

Say: The next morning, the brothers were packing up to head home to Canaan. Wouldn't Jacob be amazed to hear how the man in Egypt had treated them so well? On this trip home, they had Simeon with them. All eleven brothers would return safe and sound. Judah must have been relieved that no harm had come to Benjamin. After all, he had sworn to keep him safe.

Jacob gave secret instructions to his main servant. He told him to fill the men's sacks with as much food as they could carry. He ordered that all of their money be placed inside their sacks as well. Then Joseph gave an unusual order. He told his servant to put his special silver cup inside Benjamin's sack.



They hadn't gone very far from the city when Joseph spoke to his (servant). "Go after those men at once," he said. "Catch up with them. Say to them, 'My master was good to you. Why have you paid him back by doing evil? Isn't this the cup my master drinks from? Doesn't he also use it to figure things out? You have done an evil thing.' "

When the (servant) caught up with them, he told them what Joseph had said.

But they said to him, "Why do you say these things? We would never do anything like that! We even brought back to you from Canaan the money we found in our sacks.

So why would we steal silver or gold from your master's house? If you find out that any of us has the cup, he will die. And the rest of us will become your slaves."

"All right, then," he said. "As you wish. The one who is found to have the cup will become my slave. But the rest of you will be free from blame." - Genesis 44:4-10



Say: The men pulled their sacks down off their donkeys. Starting with Reuben, the servant checked each man's bag, from oldest to youngest. **Ask:** What do you think happened when he got to Benjamin's bag? *He found the cup.* **Say:** The brothers were shocked and very, very sad that the cup was in Benjamin's sack. They **all** loaded their donkeys and headed back to Joseph's house.

When they arrived, they threw themselves on the ground in front of Joseph. They begged Joseph for mercy. They admitted they were guilty. Now, they were not guilty for *this* crime, but they were certainly guilty of other sins. They said they would **all** become Joseph's slaves. But Joseph said that would not be fair. Only Benjamin would become his slave. He said, "The rest of you can return to your father in peace." (Genesis 44:17)



But Judah stepped forward. He respectfully pleaded with Joseph. Judah told Joseph that his father favored his two youngest sons. One was Benjamin, and the other was no more. He explained that Jacob could not bear to lose his other beloved son. He said:

"I promised my father I would keep the boy safe. I said, 'Father, I'll bring him back to you. If I don't, you can put the blame on me for the rest of my life.'

"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 44:32-33

Judah offered to be Benjamin's substitute. Twenty years before, Judah had sold his brother into slavery. Now Judah was begging to become a slave in place of his brother. **Ask:** Is this a real change in Judah's heart? **Yes!** **Say:** Last week, we said that repentance is NOT just being sorry that you will be punished (2 Corinthians 7:10). Repentance is changing your mind, causing you to turn away from sin.

Joseph had been testing his brothers to see if they had truly repented. If they had not repented, they would have been furious that Benjamin received five times as much food as them at Joseph's table. If they had not repented, they could have easily let Benjamin go back to Joseph's house alone after the servant found the cup in his sack. If they had not repented, Judah would never have begged to take Benjamin's place and live the rest of his life as a slave. These men had a true change of heart. **Given the chance to repeat their sin, they went the opposite way.** Just imagine the joy that flooded over Joseph as he saw this amazing change! Be sure to come back next week to see the brothers' reaction when they found out who Joseph really was!

Application: Let's talk about our own sin for a minute. Our sin is very serious to God. Sin ruins everything. Our sin separates us from God, just as the brothers' sin separated them from Joseph.

Optional Illustration: Repentance is like this. **Tape sign that says "God's way" high on one wall, and sign that says "My way (sin)" on opposite wall. Stand under "God's way" sign. Say:** God has given us His instructions in the Bible. I know that God's instructions are perfect and they will give me many blessings. But when I chose to ignore His instructions, I am sinning. **Turn your back to "God's way" sign and walk away.** My sin separates me from God. But when I repent, I change my heart and mind; I turn away from the direction I was headed. **Turn back to face "God's way" sign, and walk back toward it.**

God rejoices when we repent, when we change our mind and turn away from our sin (Luke 15:10). God longs for every person to repent (2 Peter 2:9). God forgives everyone who repents of his sin and puts his trust in Jesus (Acts 2:38, 20:21). Our repentance restores our relationship with God!

PPT Verse

Key Verse: *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

PPT Main Point

Main Point: God looks for a repentant heart.