

CGYG & LIFE Bible Study – Genesis 42:1 – 45:28

Read Genesis 42:1-38

1. What was the dream Joseph had had regarding his brothers? (v.9; cf. 37:5-8)
 - dreamed that they were binding sheaves and that theirs all bowed down to his; i.e. that they would all bow down to him
2. Why didn't Joseph reveal who he was to his brothers right away? Why did he treat his brothers harshly, and why did he keep Simeon in jail? Was he trying to get revenge?
 - was testing them to see if they had repented
 - he knew God had placed him over them (from his dream) and was helping them see their sin, by putting them into what they thought was a very dangerous situation
 - we'll see in later chapters how God uses this situation to shape his brothers
 - was not trying to get revenge, but wanted to see Benjamin & Jacob again → kept Simeon to ensure they would come back with Benjamin
 - aside: may have chosen Simeon because he was the second-oldest after Reuben; may have spared Reuben because he tried to save Joseph's life earlier (v.22-23)
 - that he did not intend to seek revenge is shown in his provision for and generosity towards his family in giving them grain and returning their money; had he been vindictive, he could have sent them away empty handed, or kept 10 in jail and sent 1 for Benjamin
3. What do you think God was doing to Joseph's brothers through these events (v.28)?
 - exposing/confronting their sin in selling Joseph and leading them to repentance
 - they had concealed their sins for 20 years and it seems their conscience was eating them up; when the trouble arose, they immediately thought it was because of what they had done to Joseph
 - God was in reality showing them mercy and grace, though they did not recognize it at the time
4. How did Jacob react to his sons' report about the trip to Egypt? (v.36-38) How does this contrast with the way Joseph handled adversity?
 - responds in fear and dismay; cries out that everything is against him (v.36) and refuses to let them return to Egypt with Benjamin
 - shows that he still has ups and downs in his faith; does not exhibit here the same trust in God's sovereignty as Joseph did
 - would rather sacrifice Simeon than risk Benjamin – still playing favorites, though his other sons now seem more accommodating

Read Genesis 43:1-34

1. Why did Jacob wait until all the grain was gone before allowing his sons to go back to Egypt?
 - he was hoping not to have to part with Benjamin (42:38)
 - would rather have left Simeon in jail in Egypt than have parted with Benjamin (he actually seemed to have written Simeon off entirely in 42:36)
 - allowed him to go only because of the plight the entire family was in as a result of the famine
2. How does Jacob's interaction with his sons in v.1-14 reflect the pattern of his life to this point?
 - reflects on the struggle of faith that has been a recurring theme in his life
 - seems self-centered when asking why his sons brought this trouble on him (v.6)
 - continues to show favoritism to his favored son
 - makes appropriate preparations – maybe hoping to gain favor with 'the man' (Joseph) through his gift (v.11-12), but at the same time knows that God Almighty ('El Shaddai') is the one who is able to grant mercy (v.14)
 - seems to demonstrate faith, but then shows ambivalence as to whether God will really help him ('if I am bereaved, I am bereaved')
 - quite a realistic portrayal; in many ways reflects similar struggle that many believers go through with trusting God
3. If you put yourself in Jacob's sons' shoes, how would you have seen God answering Jacob's prayer (v.14) as you went back to Egypt and as the events of this chapter unfolded?
 - when they got there, they found favor with 'the man' (Joseph) and were invited to dine with him
 - the steward told them that God must have given their money back to them (v.23) and that he had received their payment
 - Simeon was released, and they were able to eat & drink & be merry together
 - point of application: from their perspective, they didn't know how things were going to turn out, though we do → having the complete Scriptural account, we are able to see their story from God's perspective, i.e. knowing how things will turn out, even though they weren't able to
 - good reminder for us, that though we go through life not knowing exactly how things may turn out, God knows; hence, we should trust him

Read Genesis 44:1-34

1. Why did Joseph falsely accuse his brothers? Why did he choose to put the cup in Benjamin's sack?
 - was testing his brothers to see the state of their hearts, whether they had repented of their sin against Joseph, or whether they would do the same thing to Benjamin (by abandoning him)

2. How did the brothers' response when Benjamin's "crime" was discovered (v.12-13) contrast with their prior treatment of Jacob's other favored son, Joseph? Does this surprise you? Why or why not?

- they tore their clothes and all returned to Egypt, instead of trying to flee, even though the stakes were a lot higher for them personally (i.e. their freedom was at stake) than they had been with Joseph → suggests that they were changed men
- Not entirely surprising, because
 - their consciences had been tormenting them through the 20 years since selling Joseph – caused them to think immediately of their sin when they ran into trouble in Egypt (42:21)
 - had seen (and had to live with) the misery they had brought upon their father
 - God had been working through the years and through their encounter with Joseph to change their hearts and bring about repentance

3. What did Judah mean when he said, "God has uncovered your servants' guilt"? (v.16, cf. 42:21-22)

- acknowledged that it was God who had done this to them
- a double meaning
 - first, that they had been caught and could not refute that Benjamin had the cup – they were guilty and could not deny it
 - but more than that, that God had exposed their guilt in selling Joseph and was calling them to account for it through what was now happening to them

4. Why did Judah offer himself in place of Benjamin? How did Judah get to this point, from being the one who took the lead in selling Joseph into slavery 20 years earlier (cf. Gen. 37:26-27)?

- he had guaranteed Benjamin's safety to Jacob; would bear the guilt before Jacob all his life if Benjamin did not return (43:8-9)
- he had compassion on his father; had seen Jacob's misery over Joseph and didn't want to compound it (v.30-34)
- Judah seems to have changed significantly from Gen 37-38, from a man who seemed to live for the moment & for earthly things (e.g. money, sex), to a responsible man whom his father could trust with his most treasured son
 - God was bringing him to conviction, repentance, and change by various means – e.g. his encounter with Tamar (Gen 38); also, through his conscience over his previous sin against Joseph and his father (see above, Question 2)

Read Genesis 45:1-28

1. How does Joseph comfort his brothers after revealing himself? How can the example of his life be a comfort to us today?

- told them not to be distressed or angry with themselves – they sold him into slavery, but behind it, it was God who had sent him to Egypt to save lives
 - they meant it for evil, but God meant it for good (cf. Gen. 50:20)
- reminder to us of God's sovereign control of all things; that He works all things for the good of those who love Him & have been called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28)
 - can help us find comfort in the midst of trials, even unjust suffering, because we know God is using it for good

2. Why was Joseph able to forgive his brothers so readily? How can you apply his example to your own life?

- on one level, he saw that his brothers had repented, through their treatment of Benjamin
- but more importantly, he saw God's hand at work in all that he had been through; that ultimately, though his brothers did him evil, it was part of God's wise plan – both for his good, as well as for the good of many others, including his family
- he had also experienced the grace of God in his own life, as evidenced in his naming of Manasseh and Ephraim (41:50-52)

3. What are some ways the events of Joseph's life to this point demonstrate God's faithfulness?

- was faithful to preserve a remnant for Israel (45:7) – in faithfulness to His covenant with Abraham & Isaac
- was faithful to Joseph through his time of captivity – and freedom – in Egypt, to provide for him and cause him to prosper
- was faithful to chasten Jacob and his sons, in particular to bring his sons to repentance and reconciliation with Joseph
- was faithfully working all things for the good of His people

Aliens and Strangers

Even though neither he nor his brothers could see it at the time he was sold into Egypt, Joseph came to understand that God had greater purposes behind the trials he suffered - to preserve a remnant for Israel by a great deliverance (v.5-7). Not only that, but God used the fallout from that event to discipline and shape Joseph's brothers, bringing them to conviction and repentance that ultimately showed itself in their solidarity with Benjamin when they were tested. Though they had intended it for evil when they sold Joseph into slavery, surely, God meant it for good (Gen. 50:20). Because Joseph grasped this truth, he was able to forgive his brothers and show them love in spite of all the wrong they had done him.

We cannot always see the hand of God in the midst of circumstances which may discourage and perplex us; but as Joseph did, we should remember that we serve an all-wise God who works all things for good for those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. Spend some time thinking about how you can live each day in light of this precious truth. How do you handle adversity in your life? Do you thank God for the difficult circumstances He brings into your life? Do you thank Him for the 'difficult people' He brings into your life and seek to love them as God has loved you in Christ? Are you quick to forgive others when they wrong you, because you know that God is using even these things for your good?