

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

STUDY NUMBER SEVEN – GENESIS 44:1-34

INTRODUCTION:

In our last study together we saw Jacob come to a moment of surrender. And in that moment of surrender he was willing to let Benjamin go down to the land of Egypt. It was at a time of tremendous economic stress and crisis. The families were starving to death. Judah became the great intercessor to say I will take the responsibility for Benjamin.

And they have come down and upon arrival Joseph said to his steward “prepare lunch for the men they are all going to dine with me at noon.” And when they got together for lunch two things happened.

1. Number one they were all sitting in their place, sitting according to their ages -- Reuben first and Benjamin at the other end of the table. That kind of got them a little bit.
2. But the next thing that happened was when they started serving chow Benjamin got five times as much as everybody else.

And you will remember I told you last time that we needed to stop there so that Benjamin would have plenty of time to eat all that.

They are just finished at the table now and this is over and they are going to spend the rest of the afternoon and the evening in the royal condominiums. And then early in the morning they are going to take off with their provisions to go back to their starving families feeling that they have fulfilled all the requirements. That is what they think.

Now remember, this is a test.

The test now comes and we need to understand it to see how it is going to relate to what we are going see in that beautiful section in our next episode together.

v. 1 Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: “Fill the men’s sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man’s silver in the mouth of his sack.

Well this is basically what they did the first time. Joseph said give them grain, put their money back in the sack. So what is every sack going to have it in it? It is going to be filled with grain and two pouches of silver. The silver they gave for the first transaction and the silver they gave for this transaction. So they are getting all their money back. But then he gives a strange instruction in verse 2. This is the test.

v. 2 Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one’s sack, along with the silver for his grain.” And he did as Joseph said.

Now Benjamin's sack is pretty loaded. He has two pouches of silver and a big silver cup that is owned by Joseph.

v. 3 As morning dawned, [you see they spent the night] the men were sent on their way with their donkeys.

Well they had a great time at the White House Condominiums and they have gotten up early and they are ready to set out before it gets too hot.

I think they are so excited about this morning they just cannot stand it. They have gotten everything they came for and they are blowing and going and heading home. They are going to be like welcome home heroes when they get there! Everything has worked out just exactly the way they planned it and they are on a crest. And they are looking forward with anticipation you cannot believe in getting back to their starving families and making provision for them and knowing that they are going to be able to do this now because everything has worked out. And after all they are going to have a big story to tell when they get back about dinner at the White House and all that. So they are just really thrilled.

“And as morning dawned the men were sent on their way with their donkeys.”

v. 4 They had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, “Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them, say to them, ‘Why have repaid good with evil?’

v. 5 Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? This is a wicked thing you have done.”

Now when you look at that you may think that Joseph has gotten involved in Satanic activity in using his cup for divination purposes. Joseph and the steward use that word twice in the passage, I think, to really throw the rest of the guys off track. It is to give them no clue that Joseph has anything in his blood but the blood of an Egyptian. And like an Egyptian Pharaoh he has grown up in the line of the Pharaohs and Pharaohs use their cups for divination to accomplish their purposes. And I don't think Joseph participated and he certainly did not have any reason to do that. God has given him great wisdom in the dreams that have come and in everything else. He does not need this Satanic substitute here that is spoken. It is just a simple way of keeping the fellows to realize that they have really offended the Pharaoh of the land. And so it is serious because he is going to use it in just a minute on them too.

“This is a wicked thing you have done.”

Well the boys are just going along singing and praising the Lord and all of the sudden they look in their rearview mirrors and here is the flashing lights & sirens. Before they know it they are pulled over to the side of the road and it is kind of a search mission. And all these strange things happen and it is like everything fell apart. The wheels came off along the side of the road and now we are being accused of being criminals. It just hit them so fast.

v. 6 When he caught up with them, he repeated these words to them.

v. 7 But they said to him, “Why does my lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do anything like that!

Well their first question is, “why are you talking to us like that? We didn’t do anything. Far be it. That is the furthestest thing from our minds to do anything like that.

v. 8 We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the silver we found inside the mouths of our sacks. So *[let me ask you a question, sir]* why would we steal silver or gold from your master’s house?

I mean we have been honest with you. This has been an open, fair transaction. If we did that, then why would we steal from your master’s house?”

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Verse 9. Obviously Reuben has gotten involved in this. He is the one who always overstates it.

v. 9 If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die; *[That sounds like Reuben you know I will take Benjamin you can kill my two sons if I don't come back]* and the rest of us will become my lord's slaves."

Well I will tell you what sir. You find that silver cup in anybody's sack and it is ax on him and the rest of us will be your slaves. That is just how confident we are that we are honest. And you do not know what you are talking about.

Now look what the steward does. He realizes that this is a test and so what he says in verse 10 is different than what was said in verse 9. That helps you understand it.

v. 10 "Very well, then," he said, "let it be as you say. Whoever is found to have it will become my slave; the rest of you will be free from blame."

Okay, why does the steward have to say that? The one who has it will be our slave, the rest of you can take your grain free of blame and go back to your families. Okay why is that test being set up? It is being set up so these boys have an opportunity to forsake Benjamin and say, "you got it babe, you stay here and be a slave the rest of your life, we are going home to our families. Goodbye."

And that is exactly what they did to Joseph 22 years ago when they sold him into Egypt. Dipped the coat into blood and took it home to dad. If they do that to Benjamin then there has been no change in their lives over the last 22 years.

You see, sometimes God puts you in stressful circumstances to reveal to you how much you have grown or how little you have grown. And oftentimes your response to the stresses of life is a great revelation to the kind of person you really are. It is an amazing thing how when you go along in experiences of stress and you face something really unexpected how it reveals the true color of the character and also priorities that sometimes are terribly out of whack.

These boys do not even know it but they are being tested. In this situation Joseph has to know what the relationship with these boys is and that is the reason the cup is in his bag.

Now the steward says the person who has it can become our slave and the rest of you will be free from blame.

v. 11 Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it.

You know they are quick because they are honest and they feel like everything is going to be fine.

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v. 12 Then the steward proceeded to search, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

Is that drama or is that drama? Was that planned or was that planned? All he did was take the nametags off of the White House table and paste them on each sack you know and just walk down the line of all of them to build this thing up to a big dramatic deal.

Looks in Reuben's sack, finds the two pouches of silver and says, "you are fine Reuben." Turns to Simeon, looks in his, "you're fine." Levi, "you're fine." Judah, "you're fine." Whoo!

And you can just feel the intensity start to rise as the boys are watching the steward move from sack to sack. And then he comes to Dan's sack and Naphtali's sack and Gad and Asher, all those sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, the ones that did not like Joseph in the first place and nothing but a couple of pouches of silver in there. And the boys are just saying, "whew!"

Only three sacks left. Certainly Benjamin won't have it so we just have to get through Issachar and Zebulun and we will be all right." And so he started looking in Issachar's sack, Zebulun. You can see the other fellows are starting to tie up their sacks and getting ready to hoist them up on their animals and get on the road because they are free now and because after all Benjamin ate five steaks and five baked potatoes.

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He was so stuffed. He would not have even had time to think about a cup. And they come to Benjamin. “And the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack.”

What do you think happened? I think shock. As that cup was lifted out of that sack and revealed to the rest of the brothers I think they turned white as a sheet. I think Benjamin thought of instant execution. There was just a horrendous sense of fear. I think Issachar and Zebulun and the rest of them moved and Benjamin and said, “Why did you do it? Why did you think you could get away with it? Why? Why? Why? When the ruler has been so good to you.”

I can just hear Benjamin’s painful response. “But I didn’t, I didn’t, I didn’t. I didn’t know it was there. I didn’t put it in there. I promise you I’m innocent. I didn’t know it was in my sack.” Do you think he did that?

You know if Benjamin were a lot like Jesus Christ he did not even open his mouth because he is innocent.

In Isaiah 53:7 it says

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth.

You see you never have to open your mouth and defend yourself in the front of people if you are innocent.

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All you have to do is let the quality of your life demonstrate the fact of the total inconsistency of what people are thinking and saying.

Matt. 27:12-14

he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked Him, “Don’t you hear how many things they are accusing you of?” But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge, to the great amazement of the governor.

Oh you know Benjamin is upset, it has torn his heart out. He has been thrown into misunderstanding and miss accusation and false charges and he is upset and torn to pieces.

Benjamin can say, “This is my first time away from home and now I am a criminal probably going to be executed in the next few hours because of what has happened.”

v. 13 At this, they tore their clothes. [That is an act of repentance.] Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city.

“At this, they tore their clothes.” That is an act of repentance. That was a long trip back I want to tell you. And a very painful step every single one of them as they returned to the city. What are they dreading? Being taken into the presence of this man they have offended. That is what. Oh it is horrible to think of this.

They are returning to the city but to a destiny that they do not know anything about.

v. 14 Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him.

Joseph had just barely gotten up and had his shower and shaved and ran his few miles and he has just eaten breakfast and getting ready to go to work.

Now these guys had left before dawn and now here they are coming back in and he knows it. The steward naturally was told to bring them back to the house.

“They throw themselves on the ground before him.” Isn’t that interesting? There is another fulfillment of the dreams of 22 years ago.

Their faces are as white as sheet, they are frozen in fear because of Joseph’s prior stern treatment that they were called “spies” and they have had this rocky relationship with him through these previous studies. They are going to believe the worst.

v. 15 Joseph said to them, “What is this you have done? Don’t you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?”

You see he is using the very word the steward used to throw them off that he is a pharaoh and he can use his divination cup to discover things.

And by his divination cup he had determined that somebody was going to be a thief in the house and he knew who to go and where to find what had taken place.

v. 16 “What can we say to my lord?” Judah replied. “What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants’ guilt. We are now my lord’s slaves – we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup.

Have those boys changed or have they changed.

What does Judah say? You see Judah is the fourth born. Judah is the one through whom Jesus Christ is going to come. It is Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah.

Judah steps into the arena here in a beautiful way both here and before his father before this is over. He turns to Joseph after they make their bow before him and he says, “we are guilty, what can we say? We had the cup. What we want you to do is now, all of us, are my Lord’s slaves. We and the one with whom the cup is found.”

Now why does Judah say that? Because Judah heard the steward say out there on the road, “only the one who has the cup will be the slave, the rest of you will be free from blame.”

That is the test. They could go free because after all, the steward said that right.

But when Judah comes in before Joseph he says, “we all have decided on the way into town that we are one for all and all for one and if we don’t hang together we are going to hang separately. We are stuck together. You have all of us for slaves. Not just the one with whom the cup has been found.” Now that probably shocked Joseph a little bit to see the great change in their loyalty to each other. And his opening remarks basically are a surprise.

Now notice Joseph is going push it a little bit further to be sure he heard him.

v. 17 But Joseph said, “Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace.”

You see now the door is wide open. Oh I would not do such a thing to you. I am a just, honest man. I just want the one who had the cup and who is the offender. The rest of you can go on and go back to your families. Does that sound very attractive? Why they know they have got starving families. It is hitting the emotions of every one of those men here trying to make a choice on this.

Now watch Judah. What a beautiful speech.

v. 18 Then Judah went up to him and said: “Please, my lord, let you servant speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself.”

Please do not get mad at me sir but I have got to say something to you. What you are proposing is not going to work so listen please to what I have to say.

v. 19 My lord asked his servants, ‘Do you have a father or a brother?’

v. 20 And we answered, ‘We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother’s sons left, and his father loves him.’

Joseph cannot believe what he is hearing after all this is the fellow that sold him into Egypt and made the proposal for the silver. And Judah is just recounting family history that Joseph is very familiar with.

v. 21 Then you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.’

v. 22 And we said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.’

We told you that before.

v. 23 But you told your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.’

v. 24 When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said.

v. 25 Then our father said, ‘Go back and buy a little more food.

v. 26 But we said, ‘We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.

v. 27 Your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons.

v. 28 One of them went away from me, and I said, “He has surely been torn to pieces.” And I have not seen him since.

v. 29 If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.’

You can just see the emotion written all over his face.

v. 30 So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy’s life,

v. 31 sees that the boy isn’t there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow.

Sir, this is a serious matter. By what we are deciding right here is going to determine the life and death of

our aged father in that distant land. He will die. You see sir, if we leave Benjamin here and go back my dad will die. We will be the ones who will bring our father down to the grave in sorrow.

Jacob's life closely bound up in his son.

Judah says, "I can't go back. His life is so bound up in the boy he will die."

v. 32 Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, 'If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!'

Sir, I have entered into a contract with my father involving this boy.

Okay, here it comes. You talk about love of brothers and change of heart. This is the hooker. Here is where Joseph realizes this is the truth.

v. 33 Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers.

My proposal, sir, is that I would like to take Benjamin's place. I would like to be your slave and would you allow the rest of them to go free in light of what I have just told you.

That is exactly what Jesus Christ said to God the Father.

It is the desire of Judah to become the substitutionary slave for Benjamin, that he might be set free.

v. 34 How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father.”

You are all sitting with bated breath to see Joseph's response. Come back next time!

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What are the lessons I got out that? They are several and I will send you on your way.

LESSON #1: Many times trials and difficulties come into our lives without an explanation from the father. He doesn't have to tell us why He is doing something.

LESSON #2: Silence sometimes is the better part of valor. We don't see Benjamin speak at all here. I think he is so totally torn up he does not say a word. Judah is the one who speaks.

LESSON #3: The brothers have learned to accept responsibility for each other. Are you men to the place where you really, really feel the responsibility for your wife, for your children, for other members of the body of Christ? Or are you just still thinking about yourself, your own happiness and your own fulfillment? These are the challenges that cause people to get close when we learn to really accept the responsibility for one another. Oh you can live a selfish, egotistical life isolated by yourself. Real fulfillment comes when we learn to accept the responsibility for others.

LESSON #4: There is no trace of selfishness they are all in this together. Twenty-two years has really changed the boys.

LESSON #5: As a parent, is your life bound up in the lives of your children?

LESSON #6: Judah's love is so great for his father that he is willing to lay down his life for his brother. That is an outstanding witness.

And I will end today with Matthew 5:11,12

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

STUDY NUMBER SEVEN - GENESIS 44:1-34

NOTES

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v. 5 Isn’t this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? This is a wicked thing you have done.’”

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v. 8 We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the silver we found inside the mouths of our sacks. So why would we steal silver or gold from your master’s house?

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v.22 And we said to my lord, the boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.’

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v.24 When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said.

v.25 Then our father said, 'Go back and buy a little more food.'

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v.34 How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father."

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Genesis 44:1-34 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What does Joseph ask his steward to do, according to verses 1 & 2?

3. Why do you think Joseph puts his silver cup in Benjamin's sack?

4. How did Joseph's brothers respond to the accusation of the steward, according to verse 9?

5. Who now becomes the representative for the brothers before Joseph, according to verse 16?

6. What does Joseph want to do, according to verse 17?

7. What is Judah's plea, according to verse 33?

8. Who is going to be hurt the greatest by Benjamin remaining in Egypt, according to verse 34?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: Many times trials and difficulties come into our lives without an explanation from our Father.

LESSON #2: Silence sometimes is the better part of valor.

LESSON #3: The brothers have learned to accept responsibility for each other.

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ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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