

MAKING LEMONADE

"THE FRUIT OF TRUE REPENTANCE"

GENESIS 42:1-38

This Week's Core Competency

Kindness/Goodness – I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

1 Thessalonians 5:15, *Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.*

It was kindness at first sight. Any way you slice it, Joseph's reaction to seeing the men responsible for mistreating him twenty years earlier was amazing. When Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt to buy grain, "they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground" (42:6), not recognizing that "the governor of the land" (v. 6) was actually "the dreamer" (37:19) they had sold to Midianite merchants for twenty shekels of silver (v. 28). When they left Egypt, after receiving a strong dose of tough love, they returned to Canaan with sacks full of grain, money pouches full of silver, and provisions for their long journey—none of which they deserved, according to one popular author, given their earlier treachery. He writes:

"Joseph's brothers deserved no grain. They deserved no money. They deserved punishment, perhaps even imprisonment, for what they had done to their brother. Instead, they wound up

The reception of undeserved expressions of grace activates a seared conscience.

– Charles R. Swindoll

with freedom, a full sack of grain, and all their money returned.

"They deserved to be on Joseph's hit list, but Joseph didn't have such a list. Remember the cupbearer? Joseph had been in prison two extra years because, at least humanly speaking, the king's cupbearer had forgotten him. The man he had helped and encouraged had forgotten him in an instant. Then, suddenly, Joseph was released, and he eventually became the most powerful man in the land of Egypt apart from Pharaoh. What an opportunity to take revenge against that cupbearer in Pharaoh's court. But he didn't. In fact, we don't find Joseph ever speaking one word of resentment against the cupbearer" (Charles R. Swindoll, *Joseph*, 100).

Not only did Joseph not retaliate against Jacob's other sons, he showered them with grace and abundant mercy. But this band of brothers was in no place emotionally or spiritually at that time to receive their estranged kin's kindness—perhaps, because a guilty conscience deems even random acts of kindness ominous. Another writer comments: "Joseph gave them more than they asked (25) and even returned to their sacks the money they had brought. It was a loving gesture, misunderstood by the brothers, who regarded with suspicion this unexpected generosity. To their minds it could only be mysterious and ominous, an act of God, of whom they were afraid (28). Sheer grace they found frankly perplexing" (Joyce G. Baldwin, *The Message of Genesis 12-50*, TBST, 181).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Read Genesis 42:1-38

1 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" 2 He continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die."

3 Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. 4 But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. 5 So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for there was famine in the land of Canaan also.

6 Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. 7 As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked.

"From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food."

8 Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. 9 Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

10 "No, my lord," they answered. "Your servants have come to buy food. 11 We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies."

12 "No!" he said to them. "You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

13 But they replied, "Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more."

14 Joseph said to them, "It is just as I told you: You are spies! 15 And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. 16 Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!" 17 And he put them all in custody for three days.

18 On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: 19 If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. 20 But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do.

21 They said to one another, "Surely we are being

punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us."

22 Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood." 23 They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.

24 He turned away from them and began to weep, but then came back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.

25 Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them, 26 they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.

27 At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack. 28 "My silver has been returned," he said to his brothers. "Here it is in my sack."

Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, "What is this that God has done to us?"

29 When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. They said, 30 "The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as though we were spying on the land. 31 But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies. 32 We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.'

33 "Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, 'This is how I will know whether you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go. 34 But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade in the land.'"

35 As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man's sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened. 36 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!"

37 Then Reuben said to his father, "You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back."

38 But Jacob said, "My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow."

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 4.
- * Circle "governor" in v. 6.
- * Underline "bowed down" in v. 6.
- * Circle "did not recognize" in v. 8.
- * Bracket "remembered his dreams" in v. 9.
- * Circle "spies" in vv. 9, 11, 14, 16, 31, 34.
- * Highlight vv. 10-11, 13, 31-32.
- * Circle "tested" in vv. 15, 16.
- * Highlight vv. 21-22, 28, 35 in a different color.
- * Bracket v. 36.

day **2** EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Put the meaning of Jacob's rhetorical question (v. 1) in a simple declarative sentence.

 2. Explain the *contrast* in verse 4.

 3. Why would Joseph accuse his brothers of being spies?

 4. What more does he learn by persisting in his accusation?

 5. What does Joseph hope to accomplish by keeping Simeon in custody?

 6. What does he hope to accomplish by returning his brothers' money?

 7. When nine brothers return home to Jacob, how do they "spin" their story of what happened?

 8. What does Jacob's reaction to the whole affair, including the discovery of the money pouches, indicate to you?

 9. **Discussion:** Talk about the *contrast* in verse 38.
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day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

At this point in the story of Joseph, surveying the events of past episodes will put the events of future episodes in proper perspective. One commentator does this very well. He writes: "Chap. 42 begins a new phase in the family history of Jacob (cf. 37:2). For twenty years, Jacob, with eleven of his sons, has lived in Canaan mourning the loss of his favorite, Joseph. Meanwhile, the latter, after various trials, has risen to head the Egyptian administration and claims that 'God has made me quite forget all my toil and my father's house' (41:51). The career of Joseph in Egypt has been told in three acts, each of which paralleled the other and demonstrated that the Lord was with Joseph (39:1-20; 39:21-40:23; 41:1-57). In the first act, Joseph rose to be head of Potiphar's household, in the second to be head of the royal prisoners, and in the third to be vizier of Egypt, deputy of the Pharaoh. This next section of Genesis likewise falls into three acts, each of which describes a journey to Egypt: the first by his hated older brothers (42:1-38), the second by them and his younger brother Benjamin (43:1-45:28), and the third by all his brothers and his father (46:1-47:12), each one more momentous and emotional than the previous one" (Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2, *Genesis 16-50*, 405).

The episode about Joseph's brothers' first trip to Egypt is narrated in Genesis 42:1-38. The chapter can easily be divided into three scenes based on its three settings. The first scene is set in Canaan (vv. 1-5). The second is set in Egypt (vv. 6-28). And the third is set back in Canaan (vv. 29-38).

In scene one, Jacob sends his ten sons to buy grain in Egypt. His question to them amounts to a harsh condemnation of their inaction. These are the words of a father frustrated by his sons' idleness: "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" (v. 1). Jacob's extended family is facing starvation unless something is done about the famine in Canaan, and yet, his sons stand around doing nothing. So he takes the initiative and sends them to the only place he hears they might get grain. He sends ten because he wants them to return with as much food as possible, and ten asses would be able to carry about half a ton of grain, which would make a significant difference. In verse 3, the narrator refers to them as "Joseph's brothers" (from other mothers) rather than "Jacob's sons" before he refers to Benjamin, Joseph's younger brother (from the same mother), in anticipation of their roles in upcoming scenes. Although twenty-something by this time, Benjamin stays home. Jacob is not about to lose Benjamin like he lost Joseph, since "Benjamin is now

the apple of Jacob's eye as earlier his brother and mother had been; Leah and her sons still matter less to Jacob" (405).

In scene two, Joseph sees his brothers for the first time since peering up at them from the bottom of a cistern two decades earlier. Egypt is a sprawling land; thousands are coming to buy grain; their meeting is clearly providential. And while they don't recognize him—which comes as no surprise since he's much older, clean shaven, and the governor!—he recognizes them but pretends he doesn't. Immediately upon seeing them, he remembers his dreams (37:5-11) and at once, devises an ingenious plan to test them. He accuses them of being spies, a real possibility in that day. To which they offer a four-fold response: "Your servants have come to buy food;" "We are all sons of one man;" "Your servants are honest men;" Your servants are "not spies." By affirming they are brothers, they hope to rebut the charge, for spies would not travel together and risk the whole family by being caught. But Joseph persists in his accusation seeking additional information, and his tough interrogation is rewarded. His brothers add, "Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more." By repeating the accusation, he learns Jacob and Benjamin are still alive. What's more, he pricks their guilty consciences at the same time.

At this point Joseph puts his twofold plan into action. First, after placing them in custody for three days, he tells them that one of them must stay in prison while the others take grain back to their starving households. To secure the prisoner's release, they must return with Benjamin in order to confirm that they were telling the truth all along. This aspect of the test only exacerbated their feeling of guilt. One commentator explains: "When the brothers begin to talk among themselves about the distress they had brought upon Joseph, the reader can again catch a glimpse of where Joseph's plans were leading. Reuben's words focus our attention of the central point of the narrative: 'Now we must give an accounting for his blood' (42:22). At this point we can see that Joseph's plans were not in revenge for how his brothers once treated him; rather, they were to show how, in God's world, the guilt (v. 21) of the brothers came back upon them and called for justice. The remarkable message of the narrative, however, is that Joseph had already forgiven his brothers of the evil they had done to him. As verse 24 shows, Joseph had to turn away from them to hide his sorrow for the distress his plan now caused"

(John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 218). Next, before they leave, he plants each brother's silver back in his sack to plant the fear of God in their hearts. In the words of the previous commentator, "Though nothing was said about Joseph's intention, the words of the brothers as they discovered their money tell the whole story: 'What is this that God has done to us?' (v.28). We, the readers, know that it was Joseph who put the money in their sacks, but the brothers give expression to the underlying lesson of the narrative. God was behind it all, and through it all was working out his purposes (cf. 50:50)" (218). When they stop for the night, one of them finds his silver in the mouth of his sack, and it has the desired result: "Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, 'What is this that God has done to us?' (v. 28).

In scene three, Joseph's nine brothers tell Jacob what happened. Events of the chapter, previously told by the narrator, are now retold in the words of the brothers, themselves, but in an abbreviated and less ominous form. Jacob's words to them are important and form a

fitting conclusion to the episode: "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!" (v. 36). Again the commentator above writes: "As if he knew all that had happened between his sons and Joseph, Jacob's words ring truer than he would ever have suspected. To the sons, and to the reader, his words were curiously true. The brothers had deprived him of Joseph, and it was because of them that Simeon was not now with them and that Benjamin was to be taken away. Thus now, in the words of their father, there was a reminder of the guilt that lingered over their treatment of Joseph" (218).

As far as this episode is concerned, the *upper story* is about the initial fulfillment of Joseph's dreams and the salvation of Jacob's family. God will providentially use Joseph's plan to bring "Israel's sons" to Egypt where they will become the "sons of Israel." The *lower story* is about Joseph who freely forgave his brothers, and instead of taking revenge on them, showered them with kindness and grace.

The Message of the Passage

*Rather than pay back evil for evil, forgive those who wrong you
and be kind and gracious to them.*

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the three "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

• Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 6 **governor** Or "vizier" (Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis*, 545); cf., "lord" in v. 33. "Governor is a rather strong Hebrew word, emphasizing Joseph's complete mastery" (Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, TOTC, 210). "Joseph is ruler over all the land, whereas his brothers are just a small group among the many hungry foreigners coming to Egypt for food supplies. Thus it is remarkable that Joseph and his brothers should ever have met (v. 5)" (Wenham, 405).

v. 6 **bowed down** Joseph's dreams are fulfilled sequentially—first ten brothers bow down, then the eleventh, and finally, his father. "This fulfillment does not exactly match the original dream, which included his father (sun) and mother (moon) and eleven brothers (stars) coming and bowing down to the ground before him (37:10). Here there are only ten brothers and no parents" (406).

v. 9 **remembered** "The repetition in 42:8 just prior to Joseph's recollection of the dreams links 'he remembered' with 'they bowed down to him' (42:6). But there are only ten bowing down. Where is the eleventh of the dream? When the narrative is read as a whole, it seems apparent he constructs a series of events, in accordance with the dream, and in so doing disciplines, punishes, and tests his brothers to transform their character and to heal the rift between them and him. Without God's providence the strategy would fail. Just as Joseph planned a strategy for saving Egypt based on Pharaoh's dream, now he plans a strategy to save the family both physically and spiritually based on his dreams" (Waltke, 545-46).

v. 9 **spies** "Frontier guards at Egypt's Asian border routinely checked travelers to discover spies who might herald an imminent attack. Famished armies could be expected to seek out any weaknesses in the fortification in order to plunder stockpiled grain" (546). "He [Joseph] played the role of a prosecutor before them, charging them with a crime ('you are spies') punishable with death in Egypt. Such a serious accusation encouraged his brothers to be as honest as possible, which is what Joseph wanted. A family will rarely risk almost all of its sons in a dangerous spying mission, which probably explains the brothers' statement that they were all sons of one man (v. 11)" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Genesis," 2016 ed., 281, www.soniclight.com).

v. 11 **sons of one man** "A family does not risk almost all of its sons in the dangerous venture of spying. This is dramatic irony, for the statement unwittingly includes Joseph" (Waltke, 546). "The ten brothers, of course, are throughout the object of dramatic irony, not knowing what both Joseph and we know, for example, when they announce, 'We are all the sons of one man' (verse 11). (The double-edged of this statement was not lost on earlier commentators. Thus Rashi, the great medieval French Hebrew exegete, observes: 'They had a sudden flash of divine inspiration and included him with themselves.') But this is dramatic irony which outdoes itself through a series of psychologically fraught double meanings that trace the chief convolutions of their troubled fraternity . . . Only the two sons of Rachel are distinguished from the twelve: the youngest one is with his father and another, also unnamed, is no more" (Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 164-65).

v. 15 **tested** "As Joseph's plan unfolds, he indeed is testing his brothers as he says (42:15), but not concerning whether they are spies. The purpose of Joseph's test is to determine whether his brothers have reformed . . . (1) By keeping Simeon (42:24) he gives them the chance to abandon one of their brothers to prison and slavery as they previously did to him . . . (2) Joseph also requests that they bring Benjamin back with them. He needs to have Benjamin there for the test he has in mind to discover whether his full brother is being treated in the same way he was" (John H. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis*, 678).

v. 21 **distressed, distress** "They realize that under God they are reaping what they have sown (Gal. 6:7)" (Waltke, 548). "There is a word play in verse 21 that shows the link between their crime and this dilemma: they had seen the anguish, and now distress had come on them. Their infliction of anguish was the crime; this trouble was the just punishment" (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 653). "A taste of retribution (*distress* . . . *this distress*) was awaking feelings which a brother's and father's rears had left totally untouched" (Kidner, 211).

v. 27 **his silver** "The discovery of their money certainly caused consternation among the brothers. They saw the hand of God upon them in judgment . . . Clearly, their aroused consciences (cf. v21) are interpreting every unexpected development as a sign of God's wrath on their deeds" (Wenham, 409).

vv. 28, 35 **hearts, frightened** "They appear to be thieves . . . Jacob probably found their story credible. The money, however, makes them look guilty, especially since he probably knows that they are not always trustworthy. Does Jacob think they sold Simeon? The money in the sack widens the breach between Jacob and his sons but binds the sons more closely together" (Waltke, 549).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Our text this week gives us, as parents, a great illustration to teach the principle of sowing and reaping to our kids. This is one of those lessons that will have a major impact on them for their rest of their lives. Many people in our culture live as though their actions will never have consequences. We know, however, that sowing and reaping is both a physical and spiritual law. When Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt, they recognized that they were probably reaping some consequences for their earlier sin. Every action and word has a ripple effect. The Bible is clear - we will reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7). We will also reap in kind to what we have sown (Galatians 6:8). If we sow good things, we will reap the blessings of that fruit. If we sow evil, we will suffer consequences. We also usually reap more than we sow (Hosea 8:7). Who knows the impact of your random act of kindness? It could have effects far beyond what you ever know. I want my kids to know that their words and actions are powerful and can either blossom into beautiful things that honor God or destructive things that tear others down. What a gift it is to our kids to have parents who are intentionally teaching them how to sow good things. Let's raise a generation of ripple-makers for God's glory!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Genesis 42

1. Why did Joseph brothers go to Egypt?
2. Who did they meet when they got there?
3. What did they find in their sacks when they got home?

What Do You Think

1. Why do you think Joseph didn't tell them who he was?
2. Why did Joseph have their money put back in their sacks?
3. How do you think Joseph felt seeing his brothers?

What R U Going To Do

It's Random Act of Kindness Week! Do something unexpectedly kind for someone you know or a stranger this week. You may never know the ripple effect of your kindness, but God does!

Core Comp

Kindness/Goodness – I treat others better than myself.

Memory Verse

Ro 8:38-39 – For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

KIDPIX COUPON

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Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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