



# *Finer Grounds Bible Study*

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## *Genesis (Part 2)*

### *Lesson 10: Genesis 43:1-44:34*

Welcome back, ladies! I want to thank you for continuing with me in this study. I can see the end in sight! If you have gotten behind, I am certain you are in good company. I want to encourage you not to become discouraged if you are behind. Genesis is a big book and we must cover a lot of the text every week in order to fit it all in our time frame. I am so thankful for each of you hanging in there! So, stop, still yourselves, pray intentionally and sincerely for God to open your heart and mind to His will and His word, and let's begin again.

#### **Read Genesis Chapter 43:1-15**

In our last study, Jacob was adamant that he would not relinquish Benjamin. However, as we will see, time and desperation have a way of convincing us to reevaluate our deepest convictions. Sometimes our circumstances push us toward actions that we would never have come to on our own.

As chapter 43 opens, we see that enough time has passed since Jacob's sons went to Egypt to buy grain, that they have now depleted all they had purchased and are once again in need. Jacob wants them to return to Egypt, but he is reminded of the cost for doing so. Judah makes it clear that they cannot and will not return without Benjamin as it would be unproductive. You can hear the frustration in Jacob when he questions why they even spoke of another brother. Nothing helpful can come from asking that question at this point. Jacob is simply upset because he has been dealt a

situation where he really has no choice other than to let go of the one thing he is clinging so desperately to hold on to. What a fabulous lesson for us! Jacob could not see it, but God was pushing Him to let go of Benjamin and, in return, he was going to preserve the nation of Israel and receive Joseph back! Jacob could not have imagined such a blessing was even possible, but he was wrong. We serve a mighty God for whom nothing is impossible! Sometimes we just need to get out of His way and follow the path He puts before us.

I believe we as parents often have the same struggle as Jacob. We find it hard to let our children go. As hard as it is for me to confess, the reason we struggle is because of our littleness of faith, not our love for them. I believe Jacob hid behind that argument and many of us do as well. We fear they will get hurt or choose the wrong path. Did you hear that? We fear. That kind of fear is not from or of God. It is from faithlessness. If I truly trust God, I will accept that He loves them more than me and no matter what happens, He will get me and them through it if we let Him.

Don't get me wrong, we as parents have an obligation to teach and train our children up in the Lord. The part we struggle with is letting go when it's time for their Creator to teach and discipline them without our involvement. Growth hurts and we do not like to see our children hurt, but it would be worse for them to



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completely stop growing. Once again, this is where the rubber meets the road with genuine faith. Pray ladies, pray that you can let go when you need to. This truth is not secluded to our children. It can apply to anyone or anything. Some of us may need to let go of our husbands. I don't mean leave them, I mean let them make their mistakes and learn. Get out of God's way and stop trying to lead when He has already told you not to. Some of us may need to let go of our parents or a situation at work. Whatever it is, let it go so you can see the Master work.

After Judah makes the situation clear to Jacob, he then pleads with his father to consider the lives of the entire family and offers himself as surety for Benjamin's safe return. We don't know how long it has been since their last journey, but Judah says they "could have returned twice" by now. Canaan to Egypt is a long journey by donkey. It has most likely been several months and I am sure Judah is anxious to return for his brother Simeon. At the end of chapter 42, it was Reuben who was offering his sons as collateral, but now we have Judah stepping up. Remember Judah is the one who convinced his brothers to sell Joseph instead of killing him (Gen. 37:26-27). Perhaps Judah had a more trustworthy or compassionate spirit than Reuben which Jacob trusted more or maybe it was wholly due to Jacob's desperation at this time, but Jacob finally consents.

Jacob proceeds to give his sons direction on what to take with them that they might appease the Egyptian leader and secure more grain for their family. They end up taking several products from their land and double the money in order to also pay for their previous provisions. Now that Jacob is resolved to send Benjamin, he turns to

God and requests "compassion in the sight of the man, that he may release to you your brother and Benjamin" (vs.14). Is that not what we do when we finally let go of something? We have ceased trusting in our own ability. We have turned to God and are learning to rely completely on Him. This process is healthy and growth inducing for all of us. Do the things that force you to lean on God.

**Is there something in your life that you need to let go of, but you have been fighting to hold on to it? If you are, pray to God to give you the strength to trust in Him. If not, pray for God to help you see when you are having a problem letting go of something.**

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**Do you think there is any significance in the fact that Jacob just calls Simeon their "brother" yet calls Benjamin by name in verse 14? Why or why not?**

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**Do you think Jacob would have left Simeon in prison to protect Benjamin if the famine had ended? Why or why not?**

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**If you can remember a time you needed to let go of something and rely on God for the answers, please share what you learned from that experience.**

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**Do some research and find out how long of a journey it may have been for the brothers to go to Egypt and back.**

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**What do you think went through Simeon's mind as the days kept passing without his brothers returning for him?**

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### **Read Genesis Chapter 43:16-44:13**

They have returned to Egypt and Joseph makes plans to dine with them as soon as he sees Benjamin with them. When the brothers are brought to Joseph's house, they are afraid they are in trouble over the money that was returned to their bags on their last trip. As a precaution, they summon the courage to make a defense to Joseph's steward who assures them not to fret. He claims he has their payment in full and their money is a gift from their God. He further proceeds to care for all their needs, including releasing Simeon. It seems as though Joseph has prepared for this day.

Can you imagine what Simeon felt as he was finally free again and reunited with his family? He

must have been so relieved. They probably embraced one another and rejoiced together. Joseph has still not yet had that pleasure and may be quite uncertain that his brothers would even receive him back favorably. As he joins them, he immediately begins to question them about their father. As a substantial amount of time has passed and Jacob is getting older, Joseph is obviously anxious to know of his well-being. They answer his questions about Jacob and once again fulfill Joseph's dreams from his youth by bowing down to him yet again.

Having them there must have stirred such a desire for his own familial reunion. As he turns to Benjamin, he is overcome by his emotions. The word "deeply" in verse 30 is *racham* and means "mercy, compassion, tender love". The word "stirred" in the same verse is *kamar* and means "to yearn, kindle". Joseph's compassion and tender love towards his brother was kindled so greatly in him that he had to retreat to his room to gain composure. I think it is hard for us to understand the depth of Joseph's emotions at this moment. So many years have passed without his family's love, support, and familiarity. Finally, a brother who loves him is within reach.

When Joseph returns, they eat the noon meal. It is made clear in the text that it was beneath the Egyptians to eat with Hebrews. Joseph eats alone, which could be for the same reason, but doesn't make a lot of sense as he is second only to Pharaoh in all of Egypt. He may have eaten alone because of his rank. It would have been beneath his social position to eat with the servants. At the brothers' table, they are astonished because they have been placed in their correct order of birth. Now Joseph is not only wealthy and powerful



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socially, but in their minds, he also now appears to possess special knowledge. Benjamin is Joseph's only full brother and he is the one and only brother who did not conspire harm against him. He shows him favoritism by giving him five times more than any of his other brothers.

Chapter 44 is the great test. Joseph has his cup secretly planted into Benjamin's sack and then sends his steward after them to accuse them. Foolishly, the brothers make a bold statement that if any of them are found with the cup, he should be put to death. You would think they would recall the fact that all their money mysteriously appeared back in their sacks the last time. Why would they think it impossible for a cup to end up in there this time? They were so desperate to prove their innocence that they simply spoke too hastily. Haven't we all done that and really regretted it? Being slow to speak is excellent advice.

Can you imagine how their hearts must have sank when the cup was discovered in Benjamin's sack? According to their oath, Benjamin would be put to death, but according to Joseph's steward, Benjamin would now be Joseph's slave and the rest could go free. How heavy their feet and hearts must have been as they headed back to the city!

**How do you think Joseph felt when he first saw Benjamin?**

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**What makes a brotherly bond so unique and special?**

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**Do you think Benjamin had a memory of his older brother, Joseph?**

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**How do you think Joseph's assumed death affected Benjamin as he grew up?**

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**What do you think went through the brothers' minds when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack?**

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**Read Genesis Chapter 44:14-34**

They returned to Joseph and fall before him. Joseph mentions practicing divination. It is not clear if he is just using this as an excuse or if he really has gotten caught up in some of Egypt's practices that are not condoned by God. Either way, Joseph is once again asserting his power over his brothers. Judah seems to have succumbed to the idea that God is taking His revenge on them for their sin against Joseph. He has given up and offers no defense and even claims God has uncovered their guilt. They all subject themselves to be his slaves. I find it interesting that we have no record of any of them trying to get out of it.



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No one yells at Benjamin. No one asks why they should have to pay the price. They know they are guilty of something much greater and maybe punishment will bring them the peace they have been seeking. They had all suffered from their sin by watching the toll it took on their father and by carrying their guilt around year after year. They now knew it was not worth it. This is a lesson that keeps being given. Sin is never worth its cost.

When Joseph says he will only enslave Benjamin, Judah immediately pleads with him to consider an exchange. He seems genuine and compassionate towards his father and what the absence of Benjamin will do to him. It is surprising to me how much these brothers have changed. They have come to understand and accept that Jacob was bound to Joseph and Benjamin in a way that he was not to them. They no longer seem to hold it against their father or their brothers. Instead, they only show compassion for his situation.

Joseph has heard from Judah's lips that he believes Joseph to be dead. Maybe that assumed consequence is what has altered these brothers. His "death" did not change Jacob's heart towards them. None of them suddenly became Jacob's favorite when Joseph was gone. This is another great lesson for us. I believe we often want to change people or situations instead of allowing God to change us. If you are jealous of someone, as these brothers once were, removing that person will not fix your problem because the problem is with you and your jealousy, not that person. It's humbling, but it's true. These brothers learned that lesson the hard way.

In verse 28, Joseph learns what Jacob thought had happened to him. Remember Joseph had no idea what they told his father, but now he knows what lie his father has believed about him for so long. Judah is painting a picture of what he has had a front row seat in witnessing. He has watched the devastation of his father over the loss of his favored son. Judah seems certain Jacob will not recover from this a second time. Finally, he offers himself as a replacement for Benjamin. What joy that must have been for Joseph to hear Judah's love and compassion for Jacob and his willing sacrifice for Benjamin!

**Do you think Joseph practiced divination? Why or why not?**

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**Why do you think punishment sometimes eases our conscience? Why or why not?**

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**Have you ever assumed that if you could just remove someone or something from your environment, it would fix your problem? Does that work? Why or why not?**

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Do you think Joseph was toying with his brothers or do you think he had a specific agenda in all that he did to them? What from the text makes you think that?

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Do you think our prayer requests should more often reflect a change in our circumstances or a change in ourselves? Explain your answer. Share Scripture to support your thoughts.

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**Bonus Trivia:** Which tribe ends up being the only one to remain with Judah when the kingdom is divided?

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