



LIFE FROM CHAOS: GENESIS
STUDY 11: THE DREAMER'S TEST
Genesis 42-46:27



 **Key Idea**

Like Joseph, we have knowledge of what God has planned for our future, and that can have a profound impact in the present.

 **Listen**

This study is written to be used together with the sermon preached at Trinity Church which you can find on our church website.

www.trinitybay.church/sermon-archive/

 **Talk About**

1. Do you enjoy taking tests (i.e. academic testing, but also think testing yourself in different ways)? Does anyone enjoy tests, maybe not? But what can be good about tests.

 **Explore**

Last week in the story of Joseph we saw that after great suffering, Joseph was finally raised up. He was taken out of prison, given power, and because of the knowledge of the future, given to him by God, he was able to save Egypt from a coming famine. The story now shifts back to focus on Jacob and his sons. The famine has reached them too.

Note - today's study involves lots of reading. This is an epic back and forth and it isn't sparing on the details. We'll do a few big slabs of reading with only a short question or two between, and I've also noted some bits you can skip if you need to move a bit quicker.

 **Read Genesis 42:1-28**

2. As the brothers went off to Egypt, why was Benjamin left behind? What's special about him?
3. Are you surprised by the way Joseph receives his brothers?
4. Our big question for today will be what's behind Joseph's treatment of his brothers? Why's he seemingly so negative towards them? Do you have any sense of why he's treating them this way so far?

Explore

Genesis 42:29-38 describes what happens when Joseph's brothers get back to see their father. If you have time you can read through, although lots of it is them recounting what we've already read. Some of the brothers want to take Benjamin back to Egypt as soon as possible, remember Simeon is still a prisoner there. But Jacob concludes in verse 38: "My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left". He's too afraid of losing Benjamin to let them take him on a dangerous journey.

Read Genesis 43:1-15

5. Why does Jacob eventually relent and let the brothers take Benjamin to Egypt? What offer does Judah make?

Read Genesis 43:16-34

6. How do you read Joseph's emotion towards his brothers? What does he seem to feel towards them?

Read Genesis 44:1-34

Note, in verses 18-32 Judah does a lot of recounting of what's happened. Feel free to skip this section but note what he offers in verses 33-34.

7. Why do you think Joseph seems to be setting a trap?

8. What does the situation in verse 17 remind you of from Joseph's own story? What test has Joseph constructed?

9. It'd be easy to read this whole story and see Joseph as cruel or vengeful. Read this quote from Kidner's commentary on Genesis and see if you agree with what he thinks about this question:

"At first sight the rough handling which now dominates the scene to the end of chapter 44 has the look of vengefulness. Nothing could be more natural, but nothing further from the truth. Behind the harsh pose there was warm affection (42:24, etc.), and after the ordeal overwhelming kindness. Even the threats were tempered with mercy (cf. 42:16-19; 44:9, 10), and the shocks that were administered took the form of embarrassments rather than blows. A vindictive Joseph could have dismayed his brothers with worthless sackloads, or tantalized them at his feast as they had tantalized him (37:24, 25); his enigmatic gifts were a kinder and more searching test. Just how well-judged was his policy can be seen in the growth of quite new attitudes in the brothers, as the alternating sun and frost broke them open to God."

Derek Kidner, Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 1, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 210.

10. What sorts of changes have we seen in the brothers from the beginning of the Joseph story?

Read Genesis 45:1-15

11. Who is behind the events of Joseph's story? What has God achieved for the brothers and in the brothers? Finally have a look at 46:3-4 - what is God's purpose for Israel in bringing them to Egypt?

Application

12. What do you think are things God most wants to bring about in us? You might like to go to Romans 8:28-29, which we looked at in the sermon on Sunday?

13. How can testing be a part of God's good plan for our lives? How does this make you feel when you consider hard times of testing you might have endured or might be enduring currently?

Some Extra Notes

As flagged in the introduction, today's study covers a long section. I think it's appropriate to consider the whole thing together, however, because it's really one big chunk with lots of back and forth and lots of retelling. The study keeps coming to back to the simple question of what Joseph's doing with all the tests and traps and back and forth. I think there are two levels to what he's on about - at one level he's trying to recreate the scenario from Genesis 37 where his brothers sold him into slavery. He wants to test the waters to see if they've changed. To go even a bit deeper, God seems to be using Joseph to teach the brothers and to make them into the people he wants them to be.

- Question 2 - Remember that Jacob only had two children with Rachel - Joseph and Benjamin.

- Question 4 - Don't linger on this question too long. Just note your initial feelings and keep going with the story.

- Question 8 - Here's the point to really notice the similarity between the situation the brothers are now in, to the sin they committed in Genesis 37, selling Joseph into slavery. Now they have the chance to leave Rachel's second son as a slave, but this time not only do they not wish to do that, Judah even offers his own life to stop it happening. The turnaround in Judah is particularly remarkable, And no coincidence that Judah's line goes onto be the royal line of Israel, the line from which Jesus our substitute came.

- Question 9 - I agree with the quote by the way. I think there's too much here to show us that Joseph can't be just vengeful or playing with his brothers.

- Question 11 - Notice that this isn't just Joseph working to change the brothers. God is behind this. Note the link to Genesis 12 and the Abrahamic promises too - we're seeing here him fulfilling his promises.