

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

STUDY NUMBER SIX – GENESIS 43:1-34

INTRODUCTION:

As the scene of today's episode unfolds, Jacob is fighting God's eternal purpose. We left him with his heels dug in, his jaw set, and he is just not going to budge. The blessings of the land of Egypt could become his possession and that of his family if he would only be willing to turn loose of Benjamin. And thus far he has been unwilling to do that.

God predicted in Genesis 15 at the institution of the Abrahamic Covenant that the children of Israel would end up in Egypt. Joseph, hated by his brothers has been sold there. He has worked there, been falsely accused, tested by temptation, put in prison unjustly, served his term, interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh, been elevated to second in the land. Through all these experiences he has been able to implement grain conservation programs and in doing that the land has flourished in the time of great famine. He has two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Now as the men have come down on this first journey to the land of Egypt, Joseph told them that he was going to keep Simeon a hostage and if they would bring Benjamin back then they could trade in the land and have all the grain they wanted.

But when they got home from that trip as our study ended last time old Jacob just totally refused. Let me remind you what he said, “Everything is against me. 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.”

Can I give you a principle to start this study with?

GOD HAS A WAY OF INCREASING THE PRESSURE AS WE RESIST HIS SOVEREIGN PURPOSE. God has a way of increasing the pressure as we resist His sovereign purpose.

Well as today's story unfolds, with the grain that has been purchased and brought back that has all been used up Jacob has not changed a bit. Everything is just the same as we left it except now they have no means of existence. The grain is all gone.

Verse one of today's study.

v. 1 Now the famine was still severe in the land.

Why does the text tell us that the famine is getting worse and worse? It is Sovereign Stress Seeking Submission from His Servant. He is just flat continuing to increase the pressure.

A lot of times God will use the forces of nature to whip His children into line and we see that throughout the Bible.

You know a lot of people have read I believe Ecclesiastes chapter 3 incorrectly along this line. Ecclesiastes 3 is not just a wonderful little chapter where Solomon is eulogizing the fact that God says, “there is a time to be born and there is a time to die and there is a time to laugh and there is a time to cry.” I am telling you that is a guy that is spilling his insides. He is having a midnight crisis and he is in the throes of fighting God’s eternal purpose and every time he turns around he bumps into another restraining wall. There is a time to be born -- God determined that. And there is a time to die -- He is going to determine that. A time to laugh and there is a time to cry. It is just like it is a bitter wale. And here we have the same thing. And finally when you come to Ecclesiastes 3:1 he says, “there is a time for everything, a season for every activity under heaven.”

May I say to you if you are fighting God’s eternal purpose for your life, it is going to become very lonely and it is going to get terribly tough and I can also tell you something else you are going to lose.

v. 2 So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go back and buy us a little more food.”

Now isn't that something, doesn't that just blow you away? Here is a man who knows what the requirements are but he is going to act like they do not exist. It is kind of like you have no intention of being obedient. And you know that the man down there could not have really meant that so it has been all right if we be disobedient. Certainly he will understand if we do not send Benjamin down there. And he has no desire at all.

He just says to them when the grain is gone, "go back and buy a little more food." And the ruler in Egypt, Jacob, had definitely stipulated the fact that there would be no trading in Egypt if Benjamin did not come back.

Now get in your minds now this man is tough and he is stubborn and bullheaded. In Genesis 32 he fought all night. And now with no thought of complying at all with the wishes of the ruler in Egypt he simply makes a command to his boys "go back and buy us a little food."

Now what does that tell you? That tells you that the hardest thing you have in your life and I have in mine is to recognize the fact that there will be no provision until we are willing to surrender. There is not going to be any provision of salvation until you receive Jesus Christ. There is not going to be any meaningful life until you throw in the towel and begin to do things God's way. Oh we can avoid it until we come to the face-to-face confrontation with Him but what an embarrassing time to have to be rejected.

How oftentimes we are oblivious to the requirements and how easy it is to overlook the disobediences in our lives and wonder why God is not pouring out His provisions upon us.

You see everybody else is affected in the family because of his bullheaded, stubborn resistance everybody else is starving to death. They are all affected by what is taking place.

v. 3 But Judah said to him, “The man warned us solemnly, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’”

Now Judah is the fourth born. Reuben is kind of out of the picture here. Judah becomes the great intercessor. In these next two studies you are going to cry with Judah as you watch him work with his dad here and as you see him in the next episode.

“The man solemnly warned us, ‘you will not see my face unless your brother is with you.’” Do you know what he is saying to him in layman’s terminology? “Dad you got to deal with these things. You can’t just leave them hanging fire! You can’t put your head in the sand and hope it will go away and hope that guy down in Egypt didn’t really mean what he said. I can tell you he did.”

And so he comes right back at him in verse 4.

v. 4 If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you.

The big “if.” “Dad, if Benjamin . . . either Benjamin we go or if Benjamin stays, ‘no.’ We are getting right down to where it is dad.”

v. 5 But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’”

He is almost as stubborn as his dad isn’t he?

Jacob, let us have your Benjamin, and then we’ll go.

“Dad, can’t you understand that would be a meaningless 500 mile round trip? Going down there without him He would pack us up and ship us back. We would come home empty handed and we would solve nothing at all.”

What is your Benjamin? Maybe God right now has His finger on one thing in your life and that is the well stopper. It is keeping the living water from bubbling up in your soul and the joyful reality that God is alive and that Jesus Christ lives within.

Is it a relationship? Is it a job? Is it something you just feel you cannot do without? And you know right now the Spirit of God has got His finger on it and He says, “Benjamin baby. Give me the Benjamin and then things will really begin to happen in your life.”

Dad there is no other way than by submission and surrender.

God is going to make a provision but first you are the key to the whole thing. You must surrender.

You know I wonder sometimes how much joy I have missed in my life by being so stubborn by my selfish resistance at times when God has made quite clear what His plan or purpose is for my life. It really kind of makes you feel sad inside when you see how much He does every time you do surrender and turn things over to Him and begin to work His way in His bountiful provision and what blessing. It only encourages us to do it more.

v. 6 Israel asked, “Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?”

You see when you are frightened it is always easy to turn to somebody else and blame them for it.

“You know if you guys had been smart when you were down there before you wouldn’t have spilled the beans that there was another boy back home. It’s your fault that I’m in this mess. I’m not going to send him and you guys are at fault for it. So if everybody starves, you’re at fault. Why did you tell him? Why did you do that?”

Do you see how quick it can fog the issue? And get the beam of the Spirit of God off of our lives.

Don’t you like verse 7? This is a great family feud.

You see first of all it is just Judah and Jacob talking here and Judah says what he says about “give us Benjamin and we will go.” Now Jacob gets his shot. He says “well why did you tell him about it?” And all the other boys are sitting there and they just cannot stand it. They replied. They jump on him like a duck on a June bug. I mean now you got all of them involved.

v. 7 They replied, *[all nine of them]* “The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. ‘Is your father still living?’ he asked us. ‘Do you have another brother?’ We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, ‘Bring your brother down here?’”

We didn’t know anything like that. Then after all the boys chime in verse 7, Judah takes over again.

v. 8 Then Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die.

“Dad, please send him with me and I will see to it that he comes back.” Do you know what I think is happening here? I think Judah can sense that his dad is running out of arguments. I think that he can begin to feel that in the midst of all of this that the resistance is beginning to weaken and perhaps dad is pulling out the old handkerchief and his eyes are starting to get a little bit wet here. “Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die.”

“There is really no choice dad, if you are going to win, you are going to have to surrender. Please let Benjamin go with us. That is our only hope.”

v. 9 I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life.

Now you see Judah does not go quite as far as Reuben does he? Reuben says you can kill my two boys if anything happens and here Judah says you can let me bear the blame if anything happens.

And then he puts it in the clincher.

v. 10 As it is, *[if you hadn't been sitting on your hands for the last three months]* if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice.”

We could have already put in a 1,000 miles and had two tremendous provisions already made for the family if you had not delayed. If you had cooperated earlier we could have been down there and back twice. We are nearly starving because of your unwillingness to submit. The time is urgent, let's get on with the program and quit sitting on our hands fearful of what might happen.

Big question? How much are you missing by your resistance of God's plan and purpose for your life?

Jacob, the choice is yours. It is almost like Genesis 32 replayed. Jacob is all alone and the angel of the Lord wrestled with him until daybreak.

Jacob, as soon as you let go of Benjamin the Lord will bless you.

v. 11 Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift -- a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds.

Oh what wonderful words of surrender: “If it must be”

A wise man knows when it is time to yield and when the wisdom even comes from his son he is willing to receive the advice.

You see the human soul wants independence. The human soul always wishes to play its own way, to protect its ego, to be something that can grant to someone else rather than receive what can be graciously given.

Jacob has made a decision and his decision is to surrender, to cooperate with God's eternal purpose. This is the pivotal point in the whole story as we understand it.

So here now Jacob is not really sure what is going to happen but just to be sure he wants to protect his tracks with a good big gift. And his good big gift here is all described in these verses.

v. 12 Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake.

You see he wants a big gift then he wants to be sure that that silver deal is all right. “You take back the silver that came in the first load of grain and then you take another load of silver with you so that you can get more grain while you are down there because that just might have been a mistake.”

v. 13 Take your brother also and go back to the man at once.

You know something? He saves the worst until last. Take a gift, take the money, and then take your brother. You see how hard that was to get that out? Because that was the hard part and here now he says go.

You know this is a very tough and traumatic time for Jacob just in case you do not fully understand it. This is the first time in his life that he has truly been alone. His wife Rachel is dead and now all ten of his sons are preparing to leave him at one time. He has always had either Joseph or Benjamin to stay with him. Now they are all leaving.

Jacob has lost Rachel in death when Benjamin was born. And it is highly probable that Leah too has already died so all that he has got left there is a bunch of women and grandchildren nothing of his close family.

He is facing the crucible of the EMPTY-NEST SYNDROME when he says, “take him and go.”

May I say something to you that you really need to think about? Right here is your ultimate destiny. You are going to experience your necessary losses. You are going to be stripped of all your supports. And you are going to be standing alone before the Lord. It is going to ultimately come down to this. It is awfully easy to keep putting it off when you have your wife sitting next to you and you have your little kids running all around you.

It is hard to let go isn't it?

Jacob finally decides to do that and follow the path of blessing. He is going to release his Benjamin.

v. 14 And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.”

Jacob's final prayer is for God Almighty, that is, God the keeper of the covenant, that is, God the breasted one, that is, God the sustaining one, that is, God the all powerful one, the almighty one.

May He “grant him mercy before the man so he will let your other brother Simeon and he will let Benjamin come back with you.”

Leaving it all in God's hands.

“As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.” All right, I want you to keep this statement in mind with one we talked about earlier. What did he say when the boys came back? “All these things are against me.” Okay, that is resistance isn't it? He has got the wall up there, He has his heels dug in. All right, what have we now? We have surrender. “If I am bereaved, I am bereaved.” It is time to throw in the towel, to put up the white flag, to say okay. Since children are a gift from God and God is the giver of them it is time to say, “If I am bereaved, I am bereaved.”

Jacob is saying exactly what Esther said in Esther 4:16. The Jewish people were in jeopardy of annihilation.

“Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

There is no choice, I must go, the responsibility to represent the Jewish people.

Is that the same attitude of Job? “The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

The thing that I love about this verse is that Jacob is finally surrendering.

When you and I conform to His pattern and to His will, we will finally be at peace.

v. 15 So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried *[will you circle that word “hurried”]* down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph.

Why? Time is of the absolute essence. If they are going to survive this crisis by all of Jacob's delay the word “hurried” is critical. They have to get there and make that 250 mile trip back northeast to their families to bring sustenance as quickly as possible. And the men “hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph.”

v. 16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare dinner; they are to eat with me at noon.”

Now isn't it amazing when you make a surrender, it never turns out the way that you thought it was going to? I mean they figured that now that they had complied to all of his wishes and that they indeed not only had complied to all of his wishes but it was just going to be a little deal where he would get to see Benjamin, that they did it, he would release Simeon, he would give them the grain, and away they would go.

They are on a quick trip south, heading back north, just an overnight deal. And that is basically the thought that is in their mind even though it involves several days to cover that geography and to reach that place.

Joseph leans over to his steward and he says, "I want these men to eat at the White House today. I want you to go get lunch ready for them. I'll meet them at noon." What happened is they evidently arrived there real early in the morning. It is just like us. We travel late so we can get there early. And he says "take them to the house."

There are several things that Joseph needs to do before he reveals himself to his brothers.

v. 17 The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph's house.

How would you feel standing in line and all of the sudden an official comes up to you and says, "Come along with me?"

These fellows are feeling some guilt. The house steward is getting ready to take the ten men to Joseph's house and what do they do?

v. 18 Now the men were frightened when they were taken to his house. They thought, "We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys."

You see guilt just does all kinds of things. Fear and guilt causes us even to be suspicious of gentle kindnesses and things that are done for us by others. And we misinterpret it thinking people have ulterior motives in what they are trying to do for us. And all this guilt creates that and makes them think in this way.

v. 19 So they went up to Joseph's steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house.

They are not even going to go in. They just come to him right away. They want to deal with the silver first.

v. 20 "Please, sir," they said, "we came down here the first time to buy food."

v. 21 But at the place where we stopped [*that first night at the KOA*] for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver-- the exact weight -- in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back with us.

We hurried back down here and we wanted to be sure that if there was a mistake on that and it is showing up on the books and that is the reason you brought us over here for what you are getting ready to do, we want you to know we have already covered that base and we are honest men and we have brought that money back and we want that right, right now.

v. 22 We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don't know who put our silver in our sacks."

Honest, we are innocent. We didn't do it.

Now watch the steward because it tells you a lot about Joseph.

v. 23 "It's all right," he said. "Don't be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver." Then he brought Simeon out to them.

Who made the decision about the silver to be put back in the sack? Joseph. You see Joseph wants to remain anonymous because he is doing something for God in this way.

What a pleasure it is to give sacrificially to help someone else and to let God get the glory knowing that someday even a cup of cold water given in His name will not be unbeknownst to Him.

Just in a quiet way this steward has been impressed by Joseph and he recognizes Joseph's position and relationship to God the Father in some unique way just like Pharaoh had.

And he says, "I had it. Don't worry about it."

Then what next does he know? Well they are concerned about their brother who has been a hostage for almost two years through all this delay. "Then he brought Simeon out to them."

Having done that he also has several other things that he wants to do.

v. 24 The steward took the men into Joseph's house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys.

You know they practically ran the wheels off of those animals trying to get them down there on that hurried trip and so here he is doing everything he can to alleviate and to give them comfort and to get ready for the lunch that is going to take place.

The steward is aware of their needs and he has an appreciation for them and he graciously serves and anticipates their every need and cares for them unselfishly.

v. 25 They prepared their gifts for Joseph's arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there.

Now that all their fears have subsided, and they have all had a shower and gotten cleaned up, the next thing is to unpack the gift that dad sent down for Joseph and to get it all set up here. They are in this fabulous place where they are going to eat lunch. And while all this is going on, they get the gift ready. It is almost like getting ready for a surprise birthday party. That is kind of what it is like.

Now, get ready, here it comes. What is significant about verse 26? This is the first time in over 22 years that 12 boys have been together. It was way back there at the pit 22 years ago that they were last all together. And so it is altogether fitting that the fulfillment of the dreams also takes place in that same verse.

v. 26 When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground.

What an emotional and dramatic moment.

v. 27 He asked them how they were, and then he said, "How is your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?"

v. 28 They replied, "Your servant our father is still alive and well." And they bowed low to pay him honor.

v. 29 As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin his own mother's son, he asked, "Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son."

Look how disciplined he is. Wow! Charged with all the electricity of the moment. His only brother from his much-loved mother and all the flood of memories that when he was born his mother died. Those scenes come before him once again. "God be gracious to you, my son."

v. 30 Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. *[He just couldn't hold it together so he excused himself for a few minutes to weep]* He went into his private room and wept there.

Now I know some of you have looked at this and you have got the cool, macho image of the 20th century that men do not cry. Tough guys never admit when they hurt. Jesus did. As he was stirred with the pain and the hurt of Mary's crying over the death of Lazarus, Jesus did.

Robert Foster says the lack of "tears" in the heart and eyes of most men could be a signpost of a cold heart, unbroken spirit and unrepenting will.

What God's Word has put together . . . don't try to tear asunder.

We need sowing and reaping, weeping and shouting; passion and production, ardor and advance.

When a man weeps, we say that he is broken down. True tears are the signs of brokenness. No more hardness or resistance...staggered by a sensitivity of sin, this is the heart of Godly religion.

How easily we become hard, proud, “intellectually-balanced” and soul-dry.

Psalm 126 says they that sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

v. 31 After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, “Serve the food.”

Now I want you to watch because here comes the first part of the test.

v. 32 They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians.

Now I do not think this was an inferior-superior social conflict. I think it is the same old Arab-Jewish conflict. And Arabs just do not eat with the Jews. And here way back here the Egyptians do not eat with the Hebrews. And so they will sit over here in a group and Joseph has got his little group here and the rest of them here.

Now what strange thing happens when they come to this wonderful, wonderful feast out of the land of being totally starved? And they are sitting down to this table, wanting to watch all their P's and Q's because they are getting to eat with the President. It is a big White House dinner with crystal and everything else.

Look at verse 33.

v. 33 The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment.

You know I come up to the table and the host says just look for your nametag and sit down. And they start looking for their nametags and pretty soon they cannot believe. Reuben is sitting at the head of the table, and Simeon is sitting next to him, and Levi is next to him, and Judah is over here next to him, and Dan and Naphtali and Gad and Asher in that order, and then Issachar and Zebulun, and then down at the end is Benjamin. Hey there is sure something that is kind of crooked in this place! I mean we are sitting in order and somebody knows something that we don't know that they should have known.

I love this next verse, it just tickles me to no end.

v. 34 When the portions were served to them from Joseph's table, Benjamin's portion was five times as much as anyone else's. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

You know what happened don't you? They fixed Reuben's plate. Brought it out to him. The menu was a steak, salad, baked potato, corn on the cob, homemade rolls, iced tea, and for dessert, deep-dish apple pie a la mode. So these black coated waiters come over you know at this big formal dinner party and set out a big steak in front of Reuben and come out with Simeon and Levi and Dan and Naphtali after they get Judah taken care of and Gad and Asher and Issachar and Zebulun and then there is kind of a little pause everybody is kind of waiting to see when Benjamin is going to get served. Pretty soon through the swinging doors comes a huge tray of food. There are five steaks, five baked potatoes, five corns on the cob, five homemade rolls, five glasses of iced tea, and five dishes of deep-dish apple pie a la mode and they just come in and set it down in front of Benjamin.

You know sometimes you are tested in your life and you do not even know it? If one of those guys had opened their mouths to say "just like back home" that would have been the end of the test babe. The only reason he gives him that preferential treatment is to discover their attitude toward Benjamin. And the fact that it says "they feasted and drank freely with him" without saying a word tells you baby they passed the test.

And in this situation Benjamin is getting all the preferential treatment.

And it is all in anticipation of a response from those brothers to determine their attitude toward him. And if there is any inkling that it is the same that sold Joseph into Egypt they are not going to get any grain.

Now it is altogether fitting too that we leave the story right here because it is going to take Benjamin until tomorrow to eat all this stuff (laughter) so let's just leave him sitting there at the table tonight.

Here are the lessons from this study.

LESSON #1: God sometimes kindly uses natural circumstances to get us to be responsive to His will. God sometimes kindly uses natural circumstances to get us to be responsive to His will. The stress to continue to increase upon Jacob was to make him fall in line with God's purpose. God sometimes kindly uses natural circumstances to get us to be responsive to His will.

LESSON #2: It is the place of wisdom to hear the appeals of others and then be receptive to a change of heart. It is the place of wisdom to hear the appeals of others and then to be receptive to a change of heart. Can I say one thing else? The older we get the harder that is to do that. Usually older folks say, "well we've always or don't confuse me with the facts, my mind is already made up." It is the place of wisdom to hear the appeals of others and then to be receptive to a change of heart.

LESSON #3: It is the pattern of human nature to want to cover our fears and guilt with gifts. It is the pattern of human nature to want to cover our fears and guilt with gifts. Jacob says, "take a gift along," He just cannot believe that it is going to be all right.

LESSON #4: Fear misinterprets kindness. Fear, and guilt if you want to use that word too, misinterprets kindness. They are just so afraid of the steward and what happens when they get down there.

LESSON #5: We are oftentimes tested when we are unconscious of it being so. We are oftentimes tested when we are unconscious of it being so. Joseph tests them through these circumstances.

LESSON #6: Joseph's kindness and faith in God has affected the other members of his household. Joseph's kindness and faith in God has affected other members of his household. The steward recognizes that he believes in God.

LESSON #7: Peace comes when you surrender your Benjamin. Peace comes when you surrender your Benjamin.

Now I want to get serious for just a minute. What is your Benjamin? What is your Benjamin? Why did God allow this study to be included in the series? What is it that God is saying to you right now? I know what you

are saying, “Oh I can’t give it up. I just can’t do this. I can’t do that.”

From *Happiness is a Choice* I want to tell you the truth. You won’t do it. You won’t give it up. You see if you really want to know where you are truthfully, change all your can’ts into won’ts and you will be right on target. A rebel at heart you would rather resist, refuse, rebel and in the process restrain the mighty hand of God in doing something beautiful in your life right now.

Could you sing with the hymn writer?

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,
Now ever murmur nor repine,
Content whatever lot I see,
Since ‘tis my God that leadeth me.

He leadeth me, He leadeth me,
By His own hand He leadeth me.
His faithful follower I would be,
For by His hand He leadeth me.

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v.14 And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved."

v.15 So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph.

v.16 When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare dinner; they are to eat with me at noon."

v.17 The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph's house.

v.18 Now the men were frightened when they were taken to his house. They thought, “We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys.”

v.19 So they went up to Joseph’s steward and spoke to him at the entrance to the house.

v.20 “Please, sir,” they said, “we came down here the first time to buy food.

v.21 But at the place where we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver—the exact weight—in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back with us.

v.22 We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don’t know who put our silver in our sacks.”

v.23 “It’s all right,” he said. “Don’t be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.” Then he brought Simeon out to them.

v.24 The steward took the men into Joseph’s house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys.

v.25 They prepared their gifts for Joseph’s arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there.

v.26 When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground.

v.27 He asked them how they were, and then he said, “How is your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?”

v.28 They replied, “Your servant our father is still alive and well.” And they bowed low to pay him honor.

v.29 As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother’s son, he asked, “Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?” And he said, “God be gracious to you, my son.”

v.30 Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there.

v.31 After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, “Serve the food.”

v.32 They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians.

v.33 The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment.

v.34 When portions were served to them from Joseph’s table, Benjamin’s portion was five times as much as anyone else’s. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Genesis 43:1-34 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. Describe the situation for Jacob and his sons in the opening verses of Genesis 43.

3. What does Jacob command his sons to do in verses 11-14?

4. What is Joseph's response to their return and obedience, according to verse 16?

5. What is the brothers' response to the invitation, according to verse 18?

6. Describe the response of the brothers to Joseph and also Joseph's concern in verses 26 & 27.

7. What is Joseph's response, according to verse 30?

8. Describe in your own words the feast that followed.

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: God sometimes kindly uses natural circumstances to get us to be responsive to His will.

LESSON #2: It is the place of wisdom to hear the appeals of others and then to be receptive to the change of heart on the basis of the information received. The older we get, the harder this is. Many of our statements are begun with: “We’ve always . . .” or “Don’t confuse me with the facts.”

LESSON #3: It is a pattern of human nature to want to cover our fears and guilt with gifts.

LESSON #4: Fear misinterprets kindness.

LESSON #5: We are oftentimes tested when we are unconscious of it being so.

LESSON #6: Joseph’s kindness and faith in God has affected other members of the household.

LESSON #7: Peace comes when we surrender our Benjamin, and we resign ourselves to the sovereign will of God. “If I am bereaved, I am bereaved.”

ADDITIONAL NOTES:
