

Discussion Questions:

1. What is most people's first response when it seems all hope is lost? Did it seem like Joseph ever lived like all hope was lost?
2. Do you ever realize when the Lord is testing your faith? Why or why not? How can you recognize His testing?
3. What do you think helped Judah develop sacrificial love? What are things that help us develop this kind of love?
4. Are there any other significant marks of Christian maturity besides sacrificial love? Are they greater or less than sacrificial love in your mind? Why?
5. Have you found stepping stones in how you have gotten to the place in life where you are now? Can you see God's hand in them?

Teaching Notes:

So if you remember...

...things have gotten a little strange for this band of brothers.

Their money was returned.

They are getting a feast, and Benjamin is getting 5x as much.

Joseph has not revealed himself but steward mentioned God

44 And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack. **2** Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money." So he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

It seems that Joseph is setting them up.

3 As soon as the morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys. **4** When they had gone out of the city, *and were not yet far off*, Joseph said to his steward, "Get up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good? **5** Is not this *the one* from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices divination? You have done evil in so doing.'"

So Joseph is setting them up to be tested.

Difficulties, false accusations...these are things that test us.

How will you react when you are treated wrongly?

How will react when you are accused falsely?

6 So he overtook them, and he spoke to them these same words. **7** And they said to him, "Why does my lord say these words? Far be it from us that your servants should do such a thing. **8** Look, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house? **9** With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."

They were fine up until that last comment.

They should have stopped short of irrational oaths.

The Bible actually has things to say about swearing and making promises.

Matthew 5:37 But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil.

Ecc. 5:2 Do not be rash with your mouth,
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.
For God *is* in heaven, and you on earth;
Therefore let your words be few.

10 And he said, "Now also *let it be* according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and you shall be blameless."

They thought they were innocent...

...but they didn't realize they had been tricked.

This was a total set up to put them in a place of testing.

There are times where God is testing us.

Keep walking in faith.

11 Then each man speedily let down his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack. **12** So he searched. He began with the oldest and left off with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. **13** Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city.

They tore their clothes.

This is an act of total despair and pain.

They just lost their mind.

Did they blame Benjamin? Did they blame anyone?

No.

14 So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he was still there; and they fell before him on the ground. **15** And Joseph said to them, "What deed *is* this you have done? Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?"

16 Then Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; here we are, my lord's slaves, both we and *he* also with whom the cup was found."

Judah steps up with the maturity of responsibility.

He makes no excuse.

“God has found out the iniquity of your servants.”

Judah says they will all be his slaves.

Their entire life is lost...

...And they just throw themselves on the ground.

17 But he said, “Far be it from me that I should do so; the man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. And as for you, go up in peace to your father.” **18** Then Judah went up to him and said, “Oh, my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not your anger burn against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh himself. **19** My lord asked his servants, saying, ‘Have you a father, or a brother?’ **20** And we said to my lord, ‘We have a father, an old man, and a young brother, the child of his old age. His brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.’

Slavery is better than going back to their dad without little Ben
Judah is at the place of desperation.

21 Then you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.’ **22** We said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.’ **23** Then you said to your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again.’

24 “When we went back to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. **25** And when our father said, ‘Go again, buy us a little food,’ **26** we said, ‘We cannot go down. If our youngest brother goes with us, then we will go down. For we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.’ **27** Then your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons. **28** One left me, and I said, “Surely he has been torn to pieces,” and I have never seen him since. **29** If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in evil to Sheol.’ **30** “Now therefore, as soon as I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us, then, as his life is bound up in the boy's life, **31** as soon as he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol. **32** For your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.’ **33** Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers. **34** For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father.”

Joseph is seeing the maturity and compassion that has developed in his brother.

As a kid, they had ganged up on him.
They had not cared or taken responsibility for his safety.
They left him.
They had heard his cries and sold him as a slave.

...But now Judah is standing in the gap for Benjamin.

Judah was the one with the idea to sell Joseph!

...But now so many years later...Judah is not the same.

This is one of the goals of God: our maturity.

What is maturity? Knowledge? Time? Rule following?

An earmark of Christian maturity is sacrificial love.

John 13:35 By this they will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

*John 15:13 **Greater love** has **no** one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*

Judah is the beginning the line of Christ Jesus.

Judah loves his father enough to sacrifice himself and save his brother.

Jesus loved His Father and was willing to sacrifice His life for His brothers.

But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here. John 14:31

I think this change of heart, this self sacrifice, this desperate compassion hits Joseph.

*45:1 Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!" So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2 And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard *it*.*

Just imagine the decades of pent up emotions that come out!

He is finally reunited, and he finds that they have grown.

*3 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I *am* Joseph; does my father still live?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. 4 And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." So they came near. Then he said: "I *am* Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.*

It reminds me of Jesus...

As He revealed himself to His disciples...they were afraid.

But Joseph and Jesus call them to come near.

Jesus said to Paul, I am Jesus whom you persecuted.

5 But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.

Joseph sees and knows God's plan of salvation.
He sees that his suffering was part of that plan.

6 For these two years the famine *has been* in the land, and *there are* still five years in which *there will be* neither plowing nor harvesting.

You can see how bad it is when they are starving but have five years left!

7 And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 So now *it was* not you *who* sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

God sent me.
That is how he sees it all at this point.
He has enough hindsight to see God's plan.
Do we have enough faith to see God's plan now?

God sent him as a slave.
God saw him wrongly put in prison.
But the slavery and the prison were not the end goals, they were just stepping stones along the way.

Our lives are a series of stepping stones as we come to find our purpose and God's plan for us.

9 "Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. 10 You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. 11 There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for *there are* still five years of famine.'" '

Hurry and go to my faith...

...Joseph longs to reunite with his father.

12 "And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that *it is* my mouth that speaks to you. 13 So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here."

14 Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. 15 Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.

What a scene of restoration and renewal!

16 Now the report of it was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, "Joseph's brothers have come." So it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well. **17** And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and depart; go to the land of Canaan. **18** Bring your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land. **19** Now you are commanded—do this: Take carts out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives; bring your father and come. **20** Also do not be concerned about your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt *is* yours.' "

21 Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them carts, according to the command of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey. **22** He gave to all of them, to each man, changes of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred *pieces* of silver and five changes of garments. **23** And he sent to his father these *things*: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey. **24** So he sent his brothers away, and they departed; and he said to them, "See that you do not become troubled along the way."

They are coming back with tremendous blessings.

25 Then they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father. **26** And they told him, saying, "Joseph *is* still alive, and he *is* governor over all the land of Egypt." And Jacob's heart stood still, because he did not believe them. **27** But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. **28** Then Israel said, "*It is* enough. Joseph my son *is* still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

It is all coming together.

Despite the time that was lost, God will restore them.

He has heard it, he has seen the blessings and he believes.

That is what should be true for us.

Do you hear the truth? And...Do you see the bounty?

We hope that as we share the "good news" people would also see that our words and our works match.

I hear what you say, but I also see how you are.

And this is what motivates him to go.