

April 29th

THE FINAL EXAM REVEALS CHANGE

“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. 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.”

GENESIS 44:33-34

The NCLEX exam is the national licensure exam for nurses in the United States. It's computer exam that measures the critical thinking skills of nurses in diverse situations. I'm not a registered nurse, but my wife is. I remember helping her study for the exam and hearing all about the dreaded computer shutoff. You see, there are anywhere from 85 to 150 questions. Each question gets more difficult as you answer correctly. When the computer deems the candidate as passing or failing, the computer just shuts off. There is no warning of a pass or fail. The candidate has to wait for the results. Wow, what a process! Thankfully, my wife passed (there was never any doubt in my mind). Here in Genesis 44 we have a thorough examination that has taken months to complete. What is God teaching us here through these events?

We don't know how much time has passed from the last visit to Egypt. All we know is that Jacob doesn't want to lose any other sons. Chapter 43 describes the famine as "very severe." Jacob had to take action to save his family. But that's Jacob's story. Here in Genesis 44 we are reading about the story of his sons. It's been at least fourteen years since the events of getting rid of their brother. So much time has passed that they believe that Joseph is truly dead. Did you catch what they say in Genesis 44: 20: "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." Only Joseph knows that he is in fact NOT dead. And God (through Joseph) is testing his brothers here.

Did you notice the similar details of the story from Joseph's slavery at 17 and how the brothers respond in Genesis 44? The key phrase that is repeated is the tearing of the clothes. When they threw Joseph into the pit, they tore his robe. Here in Genesis 44 when they find out that Benjamin has the silver cup, they tear their clothes out of grief. They have passed the test! Remember, Benjamin is the son of Rachel, just like Joseph. It appears that the favoritism that Jacob had for Joseph he hasn't recovered from. He doesn't have the remorse for any of the brothers that he shows about Benjamin's possible death: "If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs in evil to Sheol." This favoritism caused the drastic actions by the brothers. So what makes the tearing of their clothes so significant here in Genesis 44? They want their brother to be saved! They've passed God's test.

The reaction by the brothers shows that time has changed their hearts. While they don't quite trust that Joseph won't bring revenge against them (look at Genesis 50 for that), they approach Benjamin with love. They want him to be spared when it appears that he's in danger. God has changed their hearts. God doesn't waste anything. Time may pass; people may be forgotten by us. But God never wastes any moments to transform our hearts. Men, you may have regret and disappointment. But God. God uses all of it to shape you. It's in the Lord that the brothers have hope, and so do you.

Spend some time thanking God his contact shaping of our lives, even our mistakes and disappointments. Ask the Lord to use each moment to make us more like Him.

Genesis 44:1-34

