

# The Story of Joseph: Seeing the Bigger Picture

## Week 11: Negotiation

### Scripture:

Genesis 44:18-34

### Motivation (Why You Need This):

#### *Where we left off last week...*

- Jacob allowed his sons to return to Egypt with Benjamin to hopefully get food
- Jacob sent them with a blessing
- Upon arrival in Egypt, Joseph's brothers were invited to a feast
- Joseph's brothers shared a meal with him, although his identity was unknown

**Genesis 43:34 (ESV)** Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry with him.

- ✓ They get fed. They get treated kindly. Grace shows up through the hands of this "Egyptian."
- ✓ Why? God didn't send Joseph to Egypt to get even with his brothers. He sent Joseph ahead to keep them alive. This is the BIGGER PICTURE.

Today, we are going to ask a deep question...

**Is it ever too late for heart change, or to right a wrong?**

We will see Joseph clearly drawing out of his brothers the true condition of their heart and whether these many years have changed them.

### Information (What You Need to Know):

## Judah's Betrayal & Transformation

**Genesis 37:23-28 (ESV)** So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the robe of many colors that he wore. **24** And they took him and threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it.

**25** Then they sat down to eat. And looking up they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing gum, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry it down to Egypt. **26** Then Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? **27** Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers listened to him. **28** Then Midianite traders passed by. And they drew Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. They took Joseph to Egypt.

Can you imagine the anger and hatred there must have been to do that to a brother? To ignore his cries and pleading. The indifference in your heart to drag someone out of a pit and sell them, knowing you are going to need to look your father in the eye and lie about the situation. But Jacob was the source of the problems, right? His adoration for Aunt Rachel and wonderkind, Joseph and Benjamin. My mom’s sadness and dad’s neglect of all us brothers (faithfully doing whatever we are told), not to mention our dear sister Dinah. Jacob created and fostered the anger and hatred that led to Joseph being coldheartedly sold into slavery. This is where trouble happens to so many. A quick solution to a very complex problem. They could not have imagined the pain they caused Jacob, the unresolved pain they would cause themselves, and what God had in store.

Judah sold Joseph to the slave traders. He went back and told the lies. He abandoned the family and married a Canaanite girl, was a

horrible father, and spent his life pursuing prostitutes to the point of impregnating his daughter-in-law.

I have so many questions. Chief among them is how Judah is now a leader in the family. The brother who once sold his brother to slaves is offering his own life for the final brother. And today, he is negotiating on behalf of his family and about to say the things he is about to say.

With Jacob, we got to take the journey of the heel-grabbing coniving twin brother through his escape to his duplicitous coniving uncle Laben and his escape from his uncle to his face-to-face with his brother Esau. We got to watch God's slow, transformative journey with Jacob. And when Joseph was removed from the family, things were not all sunshine and rainbows. But Jacob was not the same heel-grabbing, conniving brother.

With Judah, we do not have chapters of narrative to watch this happen, but we do see God's patience with his father and the time and effort God takes in order to transform a life.

What leads Judah to his words in Verse 16 from Last week?

**Genesis 44:16 (ESV)** And Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; behold, we are my lord's servants, both we and he also in whose hand the cup has been found."

Why do the cries of young Joseph in the pit, being pulled from that pit, and finally go from Judah's brain to his heart?

## Judah's Gravity

**Genesis 44:18 (ESV)** 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.

This is serious, as we are about to see. Judah understands. He is not just talking to the Egyptian official, but he is negotiating his own life for Benjamin. So, he humbles himself before the official and shows tremendous respect. Their clothes are torn, and they bow in respect. Now, what we are about to read is one of the most sobering speeches in the Old Testament. Judah does not mince words. He understands that he could very well end up enslaved, imprisoned, or dead.

## Judah's Recap & Implication

**Genesis 44:19-23 (ESV)** 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.’ **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.’

Judah recaps all that has happened and subtly implicates the Egyptian (notice: references to the Egyptian: my lord, me, my & you). They were only there to gain from Egypt. Why didn't the Egyptian official take such special interest in our family? We are nobody. We spoke honestly about our family and situation. We even, at significant risk to our father, brought you our youngest brother. We have done everything you asked.

## **Shocking Transformation**

I want to pause here before we read further.

The Bible warns against bitterness. It grows out of uncontrolled anger that breeds resentment. Unchecked can lead to bitterness.

Just so we are all on the same page: Bitterness is an intense emotional state of anger, resentment, and disappointment that rises from perceived injustice or betrayal.

Tim Keller says that, “Worry is not believing God will get it right, and bitterness is believing that God got it wrong. - Bitterness with God is a bad path. If God loves their family so much, why is their father so dismissive or uncaring about them?”

They say that, “Being bitter is like drinking poison and expecting the one who hurt you to die.”

**Hebrews 12:15 (ESV)** says, "See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no 'root of bitterness' springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled." Bitterness

is a sin that catches us by surprise. It begins by peeking through the surface as a seedling of negative thoughts or complaining. Bitterness doesn't discriminate—it can spring up in any person. And if it's not uprooted quickly, it will overtake our hearts by growing into a full-grown forest of trees that yields nothing but hurtful, destructive, and deadly fruit.

20+ years ago these brothers were so thrived in anger and resentment over their own and their mother's neglect and rejection and the adoration received by aunt Rachel and her sons that it bred a deep seated bitterness to the point that they did not care about what they would do to Joseph (hurt, murder, sell) and ultimately their father Jacob (destroy emotionally).

Judah represents his brothers in all that he says. Once unified in their hatred and bitterness, but now something very different.

**Genesis 44:24-31 (ESV)** “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.

Judah has a genuine concern for Benjamin and Jacob. The favoritism that bred bitterness is completely GONE. This is only something that God can do. I don't know about you, but I wish I had more chapters and details to see, know, and understand. We know that God stopped Judah dead in his tracks with Tamar. All of his accusations and threats to her fell back on his own head, and he had to face how far he had fallen. God humbled him. What an awful thing he did, but thankfully, God does not give up and uses our broken failures to mercifully restore us and draw us back.

Now, Judah shows a genuine concern for Benjamin and Jacob. God brought compassion from Bitterness and anger. Genuine concern for the pain and sorrow of someone other than himself.

A man who lacked mercy and compassion is now filled with it, not to protect himself, but to show mercy for Benjamin and Jacob.

Paul discusses bitterness, among other things, in Ephesians 4 as he speaks about the New Life found in Jesus. He gives us the idea of replacement. The thief is to go serve others with their hands. If you have a problem tearing others down with your words, you should spend time building others up.

**Ephesians 4:25-32 (ESV)** Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. **26** Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27** and give no opportunity to the devil. **28** Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. **29** Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. **30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

The transformation that happens to us in Christ grows and flourishes as we are in God's Word and we mature.

Let's close by looking at The New Man, Judah.

### **Judah, a New Man**

**Genesis 44:32-34 (ESV)** 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.”

Judah is pleading for mercy with the Egyptian. Twenty years ago, he ignored pleas for help and mercy. God’s work in us has a profound effect. . . if we allow it.

Here, Judah is willing to lay down his life for his brother and father. It should resonate deeply in us. His willingness to sacrifice himself speaks to the one who would one day come (from Judah’s own family line), who would lay down his life for us, for sinners (those who hate him).

God can take a heart of stone and make it beat for him.

**Ezekiel 36:25-27 (ESV)** I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. **26** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

God does this all through the work of Jesus. And he can do this for anyone.

Grace Alone by Dustin Kensrue (one of my favorite worship songs: list to this verse

I was in darkness all of my life  
I never knew the day from the night  
But Spirit, You made me see  
I swore I knew the way on my own  
Head full of rocks, a heart made of stone  
But Spirit, You moved in me

At Your touch, my sleeping spirit was awakened  
On my darkened heart the light of Christ has shone  
Called into a kingdom that cannot shaken  
Heaven's citizen by grace and grace alone

**Application (What You Need to Do):**

How is your life? Do you have unchecked anger or bitterness controlling you?

Do you need him to take that heart of stone and give you a new heart that beats for him?