

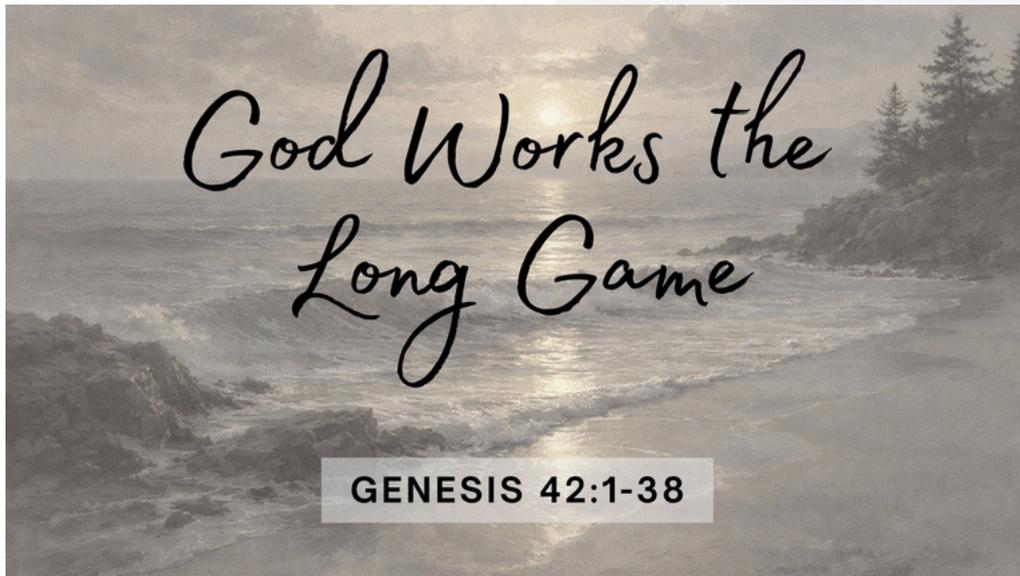
# CCLEB SERMON

## NOTES

SUNDAY MARCH 8, 2026  
GENESIS 42:1-38

PASTOR DUANE MILLER

### GOD WORKS THE LONG GAME



Here are a few themes we will highlight today in this chapter:

#### Chapter 42 Summary

God's providence works in the long game.

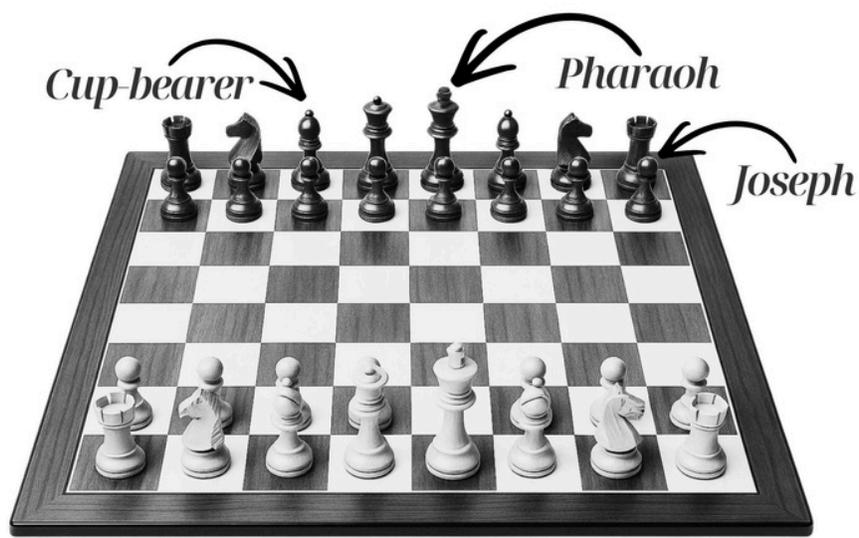
Sometimes guilty consciences surface under pressure.

Sin carries long term consequences.

Blood is required.

Hold those thoughts as we work through the chapter.

In **chapter 42** God's plan to physically save people from famine through Joseph is in full motion. God provided abundant grain for seven years, and Joseph stewarded it wisely. The partnership between God and Joseph worked beautifully! God had positioned Joseph exactly where He needed him so that God could fulfill His plan through Joseph. Remember the chess board.



God brought Joseph to Egypt first in Potiphar's house, then to prison where Joseph interpreted the baker's and cupbearer's dreams. When Pharaoh needed his dreams interpreted, the restored cupbearer, recommended Joseph to Pharaoh.

Joseph was lifted from prison to Pharaoh's court where God through Joseph then interpreted Pharaoh's two dreams and gave wise counsel. And because of the discernment and wisdom God gave Joseph - Joseph was elevated from foreigner - prisoner - slave to second in command over all of Egypt to oversee the plan that would save Egypt and the surrounding world.

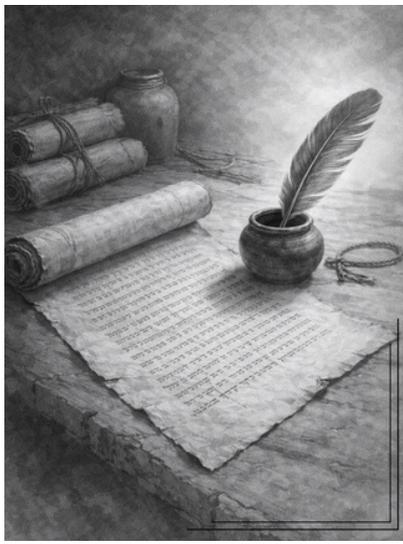
It might feel like the story could end there. "Joseph saved the world from famine! That is a climax! But is that God's end game?"

Genesis says "No". We're only in **chapter 42**; there are eight more chapters still part of the Joseph story.

Think back to **Genesis 37**, when we first met Joseph as a teenager. From that point, every chapter except 38 is about Joseph. And yet we pointed out that Judah, the fourth born son of Jacob, emerges as the most important character within Joseph's story. Why?



Because God chose Judah to be the covenant bearer, not Joseph. The covenant appears as early as **Genesis 1** and defines how God intends our relationship with him to operate. Using last week's language of "partnership", the covenant defines how the partnership between God and man is intended to work.



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The covenant bearer then is the one chosen by God to carry this covenant from generation to generation, leading ultimately to Jesus who ushers in the new and final covenant.

Key covenant bearers in Genesis so far have been - Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and now - Judah. (You can find the complete list from Adam to Jesus in **Luke 3**). **Genesis 42** and the following chapters highlight and elevate Joseph's brother Judah, the one God chose to bear the covenant, not Joseph.

And that is why the scene in **chapter 42** shifts to Joseph's brothers in Canaan... because that's where Judah the brother is. There are many moving parts here, all in play for about for twenty years. Which brings us to our first point:

*Providence works in the long game.*

Let's see how God's providence continues in this chapter.

**In verse 1** it is clear that the famine reached Canaan, affecting Jacob's family. Jacob the patriarch, the chosen covenant bearer of his generation, suffers the famine too. Remember last week's point - Abundance and famine both serve God's purpose. Even Jacob's suffering fits within God's long game.



*Abundance and famine both serve God's purpose.*

And Jacob says in **verse 2** that their situation is life or death, without help they will die.

So, Jacob hears there is grain in Egypt, maybe a text alert, or a social media ping, and he sends ten sons to Egypt to buy grain. Jacob keeps Benjamin the youngest son of his beloved Rachel. Jacob doesn't send Benjamin because he fears losing Benjamin like he lost Joseph.

Two patterns are consistent with earlier Genesis stories. First Jacob still has favorites – and after losing Joseph, Benjamin is the new favorite. Second, once again there is a famine in Canaan, and hope the hope for survival was placed on Egypt.

This is the third famine in Genesis affecting covenant bearers. And each time, hope was placed on Egypt.

1. Abraham went in **Genesis 12:10**.

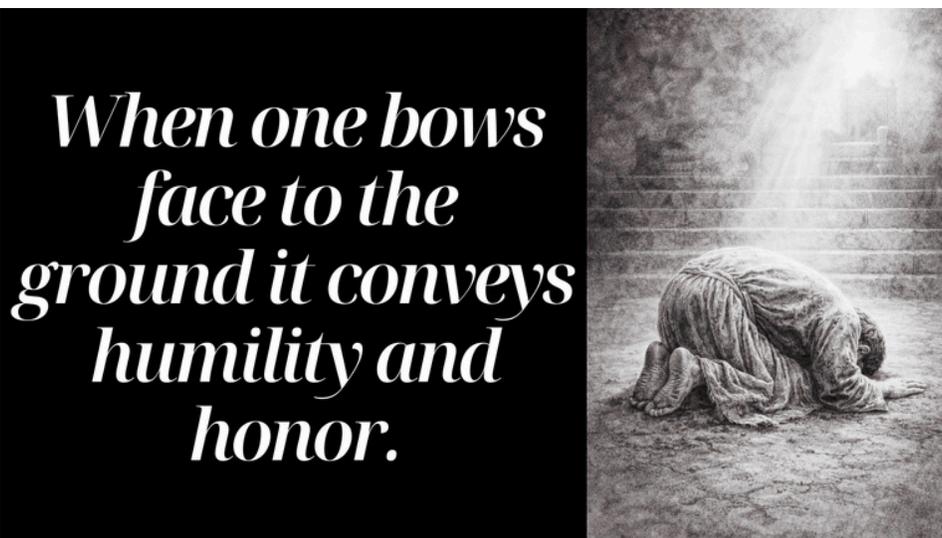
2. Isaac was on his way to Egypt in **Genesis 26:1-2** when God intervened.

3. Now in **Genesis 42** Jacob sends his sons to Egypt. about 300 miles, a 2-3-week journey.

**Genesis 42:5-6** picks up with the brothers in Egypt. So, picture caravans from all over, all hungry, converging on Egypt – specifically Joseph who controls the grain he had stored.

And when Joseph's ten brothers arrive first thing they do is bow... faces to the ground, without hesitation.

A couple quick notes. When one bows face to the ground it conveys humility and honor. Lowering yourself expresses humility and elevates the other—showing honor. It's a beautiful pairing, often more evident in nonwestern cultures.



Second, their bowing fulfills Joseph's dreams from **Genesis 37:7, 9**.

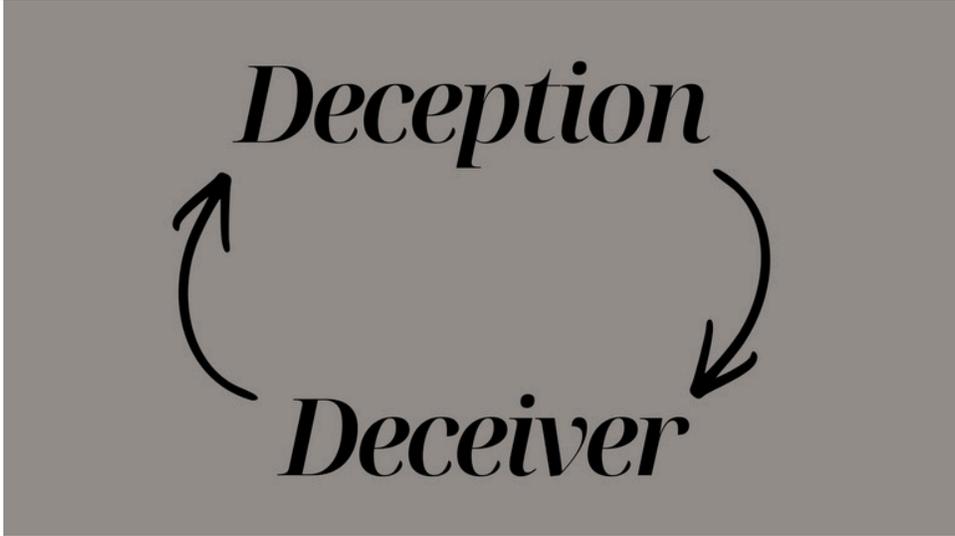
The brothers don't recognize Joseph in his elevated role. They bow and **verse 7** it says, "he pretended to be a stranger". Other translations say, "He disguised himself". Joseph then treats them harshly and sets up a test.

**Verses 8-15**. If we didn't know the rest of the story, Joseph's harshness could feel heartless or vindictive. After all, the last time he saw them, they threw him into a dry cistern and sold him to Ishmaelite traders. Now, twenty years later, the brothers come hungry and vulnerable—and Joseph accuses them of being "spies". Why?

**Verse 15** says plainly it is a test... but why this test?

Go back to **verse 7**. In **verse 7 NASB** that key word "disguised". Throughout the Jacob cycle in Genesis, disguise and deception show up repeatedly. The NLT says "pretended." Why do people disguise? Often to "deceive".

The answer to Joseph testing his brothers lies in earlier Genesis stories built around disguise and deception.



We first encountered disguise and deception in **Genesis 3**. **Genesis 3** – The adversary appears “disguised” as a wise serpent to “deceive” Eve.

In **Genesis 12**: Abraham disguises himself as Sarah’s brother to deceive Pharaoh.

In **Genesis 20**: Abraham repeats the disguise/deception with Abimelech.

In **Genesis 27**: Young Jacob disguises himself as Esau to deceive Isaac for the firstborn blessing.

In **Genesis 29**: On Jacob’s wedding night, Laban uses darkness to disguise Leah and deceive Jacob.

In **Genesis 37**: Joseph’s brothers disguise his royal coat with animal blood to deceive their father.

And in **Genesis 38**: Tamar disguises herself to deceive Judah.

From this lens, Genesis reads almost like a soap opera of disguises and deceptions.

But here’s the spiritual pattern we observed in Jacob’s story the deception returns to the deceiver –creating an opportunity to become honest before God.

*The deception  
returns to the  
deceiver.*

Let me explain. Jacob first disguised himself as Esau and deceived his father, Isaac. Then Jacob was deceived by Laban many times over. God used the deception returning to the deceiver cycle to form Jacob into an honest man before Him. This is grace on God’s part. God in his love and patience, playing the long game, creating an opportunity for honesty in relationship to him.

Joseph's brothers also need to become honest men. In **Genesis 37** they deceived their father; now, in **Genesis 42**, the deception returns—Joseph is disguised from them—to create an opportunity for their honesty before God.

That's the test. As Tim Mackie summarizes, "The disguised deceiver (Joseph) accuses his brothers of treachery in order to test their integrity".

In this test Joseph even recreates a parallel scenario to what happened to him in **Genesis 37. Verses 16-20**. In **Genesis 37** the brothers put Joseph in a pit, sold him and went home to deceive their father.

In **Genesis 42** Joseph throws them in prison; on the third day, he releases all but one to go home with their grain. This is a "third day resurrection" foreshadowing. One brother is stays in prison in place of all of them, so the others can go free. Sound familiar?

Note the pattern - one of the brothers is captive, the rest of the brothers go back to their father - just like **Genesis 37**. Joseph was the one captive brother and the rest went back to their father. But now comes the question. What will they tell their father this time? Will they lie and lose Simeon forever? Or will they tell the truth and ask their father to send Benjamin, risking the loss of another son?

The pressure of Joseph's test begins to work immediately. In **verse 21** the brothers start to get honest about what they did. **Verse 21- 22**.

And here we see guilt and honesty emerge under pressure. That leads to our next point.

*Guilty  
consciences  
surface under  
pressure.*

The brothers face two choices: go home and lie and lose Simeon and inflict more sorrow on their father. Or go home and tell the truth and ask their father to give up Benjamin.

Under that pressure... they acknowledge their wrongdoing. And they say a striking phrase in **verse 22**, "and now we have to answer for his blood". Other translations say, "his blood is now required of us". They sense that what they did to Joseph is now coming due. One of them will be forfeited while the others go free. The deception has returned to the deceivers to set the stage for honesty. And this is our third point. Sin carries long term consequences. After twenty years now they face the consequences.

*Sin carries  
long term  
consequences.*

“His blood is required” becomes the central verse and central concept of this chapter and it sets up why Judah emerges as the covenant bearer and central figure in the story. Judah’s rise grows clearer in the next chapter.

But let’s pause and ask, “why blood”? Why did the brothers think that their blood would be required?

In **Genesis 9:6 NASB** God already established that blood is required for blood. And if you take that concept forward 400+ years when the LORD was instructing Moses about sacrifices in **Leviticus 17:11**. The life is in the blood. A sacrifice is a substitutionary death. A life given in place of another life. Blood for blood, life for a life. This is our fourth point.



*Blood is  
required.*

Back in **Genesis 42** the brothers recognize their guilt and assume one life must pay. One of the remaining brothers is going to pay with his life for what happened to Joseph.

But notice what happens around this confession – Joseph hears what they say and weeps. **Verses 23-24**. After two decades of living with the consequences of his brothers’ sin, Joseph’s heart is still tender. He weeps! Not many leaders feel free to weep—especially in front of those they lead. Yet Joseph does. Perhaps this tender heart helps explain why Joseph’s partnership with God worked so well: he embraced pain and trusted God’s providence even when he couldn’t see the long game.

The story continues, in the end of **verse 24** Joseph chooses Simeon to remain while the other brothers are released to go home. Joseph knows Simeon is the 2nd born. I wonder if God had a purpose for Simeon sitting in jail connects to **chapter 49**. We’ll see when we get there.

**Verses 25-28**. Now the brothers are convinced God is orchestrating events in response to their sin. Note their language, “What has God done to us?” I think they’ve just realized they’re on the wrong side of the chess board—and they’ve just figured out who they’re playing against.

And so, the brothers return home. **Verses 29-38**. Jacob is undone! He has now lost two sons. Joseph and Simeon. Reuben tries to convince Jacob to send Benjamin to secure Simeon’s release even offering his own sons in exchange, but Jacob refuses. The scene closes with Jacob repeating his lament for Joseph from **Genesis 37:35**.

Let me close with some thoughts for your meditation and application.

In **chapter 42** we’re reminded once again that God is always playing the long game. His purposes are never rushed, never random, never reactive. What feels like delays or disruptions are, in His hands, precise and intentional moves that advance His redemptive story. The same God who positioned Joseph over the course of twenty painful years is the God who is still weaving our stories today.

But as we’ve seen, when God works in the long game, He often uses pressure to surface what’s hidden.

The famine pressed Jacob's sons, Joseph's tests pressed them as well, and what rose to the surface was a guilty conscience that had been buried for two decades.

And isn't it true in our own lives? Pressure—whether from circumstances, relationships, or trials—has a way of revealing what lies beneath. Not to condemn us, but to invite us into truth, healing, and honesty before God.

We also saw that sin has long-term consequences. The brothers' deception in **Genesis 37** didn't disappear with time; it reemerged twenty years later - demanding attention. Scripture never hides this reality. Our choices create ripples—sometimes years later—because God loves us too much to let unconfessed sin quietly rot our souls. But in His mercy, He brings those consequences to light as part of His redemptive work, not to shame us, but to transform us.

And finally, at the heart of the chapter, we hear the haunting phrase: "His blood is required." The brothers understood—even dimly—that guilt demands payment. Throughout Scripture, blood represents life given in place of life taken. And **Genesis 42** whispers forward to the ultimate fulfillment of that truth.

Because while the brothers feared that one of their lives might be required as payment for sin... the gospel tells us that God Himself stepped in. In Jesus, the true covenant-bearer from the line of Judah, God provided the blood that was required—not from the guilty, but from the innocent Lamb.

So, as we leave this passage, let these truths settle into your heart:

- **God's providence works in the long game**—so trust Him, even when the story feels slow.
- **Guilty consciences surface under pressure**—so when God presses you, lean into honesty rather than hiding.
- **Sin carries long-term consequences**—so deal with it while the Spirit is drawing you, not after it hardens.
- **And blood is required**—so rest in the finished work of Jesus, who paid what none of us ever could.

May this chapter lead us not only to understand Joseph's story more clearly, but to trust God more deeply, repent more sincerely, and cling to Jesus more fully. God is writing a long game in your life too—and He's faithful in every move.

Amen.

# BONUS

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## CONTENT:

**Genesis 42:7** “pretended”. This is a “disguise and deception”: it is important to note that a “disguise” sometimes goes beyond physical appearance – a disguise can also include words or actions.

**Genesis 42:18** “on the third day” – interesting allusion to the resurrection regarding the brother’s being set free from prison because one brother’s sacrifice! It is also interesting that Jesus tells Mary to tell his “brothers” to go to Galilee!!

**Genesis 42:23** Joseph weeps. We will see Joseph weep two more times in Genesis – read ahead and see if you can find them.

**Genesis 42:28**. “What has God done to us?” This sounds like the same concept behind Naomi’s statement in **Ruth 1:21**. “...the LORD has dealt bitterly with me...” God uses hard things in life to bring about his purposes and sometimes his purpose involves pain and/or correction.