

all for good
the story of Joseph in Genesis



Genesis 44-45

Introduction

- After the feast, Joseph sent his brothers home with their sacks full of food but also put his silver cup in Benjamin's sack.
- Then he sent his men after them and accused them of stealing it.
- The brothers pleaded innocence and said if it were found in anyone's sack, that man should die.
- The cup was found in Benjamin's sack, and they all tore their clothes and returned to Egypt.

Introduction

- Joseph wept so loudly that the whole household of Pharaoh heard it.
- The brothers were worried that Joseph was angry with them, but instead, Joseph said, “I am Joseph!” and asked about his father.
- He offered to let them live in Goshen and shepherd their flocks there and to provide for them since the famine would last for five more years.
- Pharaoh was pleased to find out that Joseph’s brothers had come and offered to give them the best of the land of Egypt.

Genesis 44

God can change anyone

- The cup that Joseph's steward planted on Benjamin was not only important because it was financially valuable, but because it was considered sacred.
- Divining by means of a cup to find out the future was a widespread practice in the ancient Near East.
- In the ancient Near East, the theft of a sacred object was a serious one, the typical penalty for which was death.
- Joseph's test for the brothers was to see how they would react when their brother Benjamin was found to be guilty of stealing a sacred object.

God can change anyone

- First, Joseph tested them by sending the money back with them in their sacks the first time (42:28). They were honest and brought it back with them and tried to give it back, but he wouldn't take it (43:15–23).
- Then, he tested them by showing Benjamin preferential treatment at the banquet (42:34), just as his father had shown him when they were young, which is what had made them so angry (37:3–4).
- Then, he wanted to test them one more time, to see what they would do when Benjamin, the new-favored son, was singled out for punishment.

God can change anyone

- The brothers suggested that the punishment for taking the cup should be that they would all be made Joseph's slaves and the one who stole it would be put to death (44:9).
- The steward lessened the punishment substantially. No one would die and the rest could all go free. Only the one who had the cup would become Joseph's slave (44:10).
- But they all went back to the city anyway (44:13) and presented themselves as Joseph's slaves (44:16). They would not leave Benjamin behind.

Actions result in consequences

- The brothers were actually innocent of the crime of which they were being accused, yet they willingly accepted the punishment anyway.
- In fact, when the steward told the other brothers they were free to go home, the others stuck with Benjamin and all went back to Egypt together.
- They offered themselves in slavery to Joseph even though they were innocent of the crime themselves.
- They were innocent this time, but they knew they were guilty of horrible things in the past.

Actions result in consequences

- Before, when they first came to Egypt, they had accepted what was happening to them as the consequences of their past sins (42:21–23).
- Instead of trying to get out of the punishment, they willingly accepted the consequences of what they had done years ago.
- They showed humility and maturity, and above all, love. They showed a love for their father that was not there before.
- Before, they were jealous of Jacob's special love for Joseph and took it out on Joseph.

Actions result in consequences

- But now, instead of being jealous of Jacob's special love for Benjamin, they had compassion on Jacob and they protected Benjamin at all costs, out of love for their father and guilt for what they had done to Joseph, which made their father cling so tightly to Benjamin.
- Where before the brothers only had jealousy, they now had compassion.
- Where they only felt slighted by their father, they now cared deeply about how these things would affect him.

Godly love, agape love, is sacrificial

- Judah's motivation in offering himself in Benjamin's place is his father:
 - "... [my father's] life is bound up in the boy's life" (verse 30)
 - "... he will die, your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol" (verse 31)
 - "I fear to see the evil that would find my father" (verse 34)
- Before, Judah resented his father's favoritism toward Joseph. Now, Judah is empathetic to his father about his special love for Benjamin.

Godly love, agape love, is sacrificial

- This is a completely different Judah.
- He has changed so much since he suggested, instead of killing Joseph, that they at least make some money off the deal (Genesis 37:26).
- Genesis 38 provides a heartbreaking picture of Judah and his family.
- Judah lost one son because of the son's wickedness (38:1–7), another son because he failed to perform his duty (38:10).
- Judah himself was caught in sin and a hypocritical moment (38:24–26).

Godly love, agape love, is sacrificial

- The Judah we meet here is so committed to honoring his pledge to his father that he is willing to sacrifice himself for Benjamin.
- In the New Testament, Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).
- The agape love of the Bible (the love that comes from God, godly love) is a love that lays down self (1 John 4:10), that puts others’ needs ahead of our own (Philippians 2:3), that is willing to sacrifice our own comfort, to deny ourselves, for what is right (Luke 9:23).

Genesis 45

Reconciliation is central to the Gospel

- The tone of this passage is tender emotion.
- Joseph wept openly in front of his brothers; Judah's speech pushed him to a point where his emotion was overflowing.
- Joseph let go of old hurt and anger and showed nothing but love and open arms. He asked them to come near (verse 4).
- He spoke to them with his own mouth, his own voice, not through an interpreter (verse 12).
- He showed them intimacy and love with his words and with his actions.

Reconciliation is central to the Gospel

- This reconciliation might remind you of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32).
- An estranged son who has wronged his father deeply returns home. The son expects to be chastised.
- Instead, the father welcomes him with open arms, orders a feast, even killing the fattened calf for him.
- Jesus tells this story as a parable, to represent how God (the Father) feels when one of His wayward children come home.

Reconciliation is central to the Gospel

- Through Christ, we are reconciled to God; our relationship with Him is made whole again (2 Corinthians 5:11–21).
- The relationship with God that was broken in the Fall has now been healed. Things are made right between us. God reconciles us to Himself through the death of His Son (Romans 5:1).
- Like a bank statement that has been reconciled, Jesus paid our debt on the Cross (Galatians 3:13–15). Our sin no longer keeps us from being in His holy presence.

Reconciliation is central to the Gospel

- Joseph treats his brothers the same way. Notice there is no “but” to his forgiveness.
- He even says to them, “do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here” (verse 5) and he helps them see the bigger picture of how God was orchestrating all of this through them (verses 5–8).
- Joseph’s grace for them is so amazing; it is divine. As the old hymn “When I Survey the Wonderous Cross” says, “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.” That kind of mercy can only come from God.

God orchestrates all for His good purposes

- We have seen God's sovereignty weaving together every step of the way:
 - God sent me before you (verse 5).
 - God sent me before you (verse 7).
 - So it was not you who sent me here, but God (verse 8).
- Joseph has a very firm theological interpretation of this situation.
- God did this (Psalm 105:16–22). This was all part of God's plan from the beginning.

God orchestrates all for His good purposes

- Joseph's theological point is that God was using all of this for good.
- Genesis weaves that same point into every episode of the story. God is really the subject of every action in this story. God is the main character of the story.
- This is the story of God's grand plan to rescue the world. Joseph gives God all of the credit for orchestrating all of this.
- For putting him in this position in Pharaoh's house. For giving him Pharaoh's trust (verse 8). For using him to preserve life (verse 5).

Believers should reflect God's generosity

- Not only did Joseph offer to provide for the brothers and their families.
- Pharaoh offered to provide for them the best of the land of Egypt.
- This is how loved Joseph was by Pharaoh: “God has made me father to Pharaoh” (verse 8).
- Not that he was higher than Pharaoh, but that Pharaoh looked up to him like a father, coming to him for advice, trusting his wisdom and judgment to make all the decisions.

Believers should reflect God's generosity

- Both Pharaoh and Joseph delighted in sharing their blessings with Joseph's brothers.
- They lavished upon them wagons, so the women and children wouldn't have to walk from Canaan (verse 21).
- They gave them provisions for the journey. Pharaoh sent 20 donkeys loaded with food, provisions and "the good things of Egypt" (verse 23).
- Joseph had promised them the land of Goshen in which to live, because it had excellent pastures in which to graze their flocks.

Ask Kerby



How should we think about the recent decision by Chick-fil-A?



Chick-fil-A history

- Chick-fil-A and Truett Cathy first made headlines in 2011 after their foundation made contributions to Family Research Council and Exodus International.
- The next year, CEO Dan Cathy stated his support for traditional marriage and had helped pro-family groups and conferences.
- That same year, an armed man with a backpack filled with Chick-fil-A sandwiches rushed into the headquarters of the Family Research Council intent on killing the staff and smearing their faces with chicken sandwiches.

Chick-fil-A history

- A number of colleges and cities prevented or tried to prevent Chick-fil-A from opening a Chick-fil-A restaurant on campus or in the city.
- For a time, Chick-fil-A was kept out of the Denver airport. At the moment, the city councils of Buffalo, San Jose, and San Antonio have been able to keep the restaurant from being located in their airports.
- There have been protests at a number of Chick-fil-A restaurants (the most recent in Toronto). Some malls have refused to renew their lease.
- Even so it is the third largest fast-food chain with \$10.5 billion in sales.



Chick-fil-A[®] Foundation

NEWS

Starting in 2020, the [Chick-fil-A Foundation](#) is introducing a more focused giving approach to provide additional clarity and impact with the causes it supports. Staying true to its mission of nourishing the potential in every child, the Chick-fil-A Foundation will deepen its giving to a smaller number of organizations working exclusively in the areas of **education, homelessness and hunger.**

Chick-fil-A

- The announcement says what the foundation will fund, but the real news was about what it would NOT fund: Salvation Army and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.
- The Chief Operations Officer of Chick-fil-A said “as we go into new markets, we need to be clear about who we are.” He added that none of the organizations they will support in the future “have anti-LGBT positions.”
- Another executive said that after years of “taking it on the chin” they were concerned that the latest publicity “was impeding the company’s growth.”

Conclusion

- Think of who was hurt by this decision:
 - Salvation Army - Chick-fil-A and the Red Kettle controversy
 - Fellowship of Christian Athletes - Chick-fil-A and San Antonio
 - LGBTQ community - Salvation Army serves 23 million people each year, and are “the largest provider of poverty relief to LGBTQ population.”
 - Chick-fil-A - groups like GLAAD are already demanding much more from the organization and will probably not be satisfied any time soon.

Some Lessons

- Even in America, taking a biblical stand for morality comes at a price.
- When the pressure comes, many won't be there to stand with you.
- Pay attention to who runs your company - the Chief Operations Officer of Chick-fil-A also serves on the advisory board of the Boy Scouts (they just put the BSA crown jewel - Philmont Ranch - on the market).
- Pay attention to who sits on your board - board members enacted term limits, called for more diversity on the board, brought on board members who served on other fast-food boards.