

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 44 & 45

GENESIS 44:1-5 - BROTHERS SET UP AGAIN

AFTER A SPECIAL DINNER IN JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE, THE BROTHERS PREPARE TO LEAVE FOR CANAAN AGAIN WITH THE RESOURCES THEY HAD COME TO EGYPT FOR. BUT SECRETLY, JOSEPH ORDERS ONE OF HIS SERVANTS TO INCLUDE THE BROTHER'S MONEY AS WELL AS A "SILVER CUP" THAT BELONGED TO JOSEPH. THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN VALUABLE BEING MADE OF SILVER, BUT ALSO BECAUSE IT BELONGED TO JOSEPH. HE ORDERS THE CUP TO BE PLANTED IN BENJAMIN'S BAG.

AS WE READ LAST TIME, THE BROTHERS ARE PROBABLY ON AN UP AND DOWN EMOTIONAL JOURNEY AT THIS POINT. THEY ARE ACCUSED OF BEING SPIES, THEY ARE ACCUSED OF BEING THIEVES, SIMEON IS IMPRISONED, THEY HAVE DINNER AT JOSEPH'S. THEY MUST BE WONDERING "*WHAT IS GOING ON?*" I MENTION THIS BECAUSE ONE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THEY WOULD HAVE CHECKED THEIR BAGS BEFORE LEAVING BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME! NEVERTHELESS, THE BROTHERS LEAVE EGYPT ONLY TO BE STOPPED BY EGYPTIAN POLICE AS THEY MAKE THEIR WAY HOME. THE OFFICIAL PULLS THEM OVER LOOKING FOR JOSEPH'S SILVER CUP.

GENESIS 44:6-13 - CUP FOUND IN BENJAMIN'S SACK

IMMEDIATELY THE BROTHERS DENY HAVING THE CUP. THEIR DEFENSE IS "WE RETURNED THE MONEY THAT WAS IN OUR BAGS LAST TIME - WHY WOULD WE STEAL?!" IN OTHER WORDS - WE'RE HONEST MEN! THE BROTHERS ARE SO SURE THAT THE MISSING CUP IS NOT WITH THEM THAT THEY DECLARE (FOOLISHLY)

"IF YOU FIND HIS CUP WITH ANY ONE OF US, LET THAT MAN DIE. AND ALL THE REST OF US, MY LORD, WILL BE YOUR SLAVES. (GENESIS 44:9, NLT)"

THE OFFICIAL BEGINS SEARCHING THEIR THINGS AND STARTS WITH THE OLDEST. REUBEN, NOTHING. SIMEON, NOTHING. LEVI, NOTHING. AND SO ON. THE CONFIDENCE LEVEL OF THE BROTHERS MUST BE RISING EACH TIME THEIR BAGS ARE SEARCHED. AND FINALLY THE OFFICIAL REACHES BENJAMIN, WHO SURELY DOESN'T HAVE THE CUP IN HIS BAG. EXCEPT HE DOES. OPPS.

WHEN IT HITS THE BROTHERS WHAT HAS JUST HAPPENED THEY TORE THEIR CLOTHES - AN ACT WHICH DEMONSTRATED TREMENDOUS GRIEF AND MOURNING. IT'S WHAT REUBEN DID WHEN HE SAW JOSEPH WASN'T IN THE PIT (GENESIS 37:29) AND IT'S WHAT JACOB DID WHEN HE HEARD HIS SON WAS DEAD (GENESIS 37:34). AND NOW IT'S WHAT THE BROTHER DO WHEN THEY REALIZE WHAT ALL OF THIS MEANS. THEIR ONE JOB WAS TO SAFELY RETURN HOME WITH BENJAMIN AND MOMENTS EARLIER THEY HAD SWORN THE EGYPTIAN OFFICIAL COULD KILL WHOEVER HAD JOSEPH'S CUP. AND SO THEY ALL MAKE THEIR WAY BACK TO EGYPT.

GENESIS 44:14-17 - JOSEPH WANTS TO HOLD ONLY BENJAMIN RESPONSIBLE

JOSEPH ACCUSES HIS BROTHERS AND ENDEAVORS TO SCARE THEM. "DON'T YOU KNOW I CAN PRACTICE DIVINATION" SEEMS TO BE A THREAT OF SOME SORT RATHER THAN FACTS ABOUT JOSEPH'S ACTUAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICES. PART OF JOSEPH'S TRICKERY AGAINST HIS BROTHERS INCLUDES THIS CONCEPT THAT HE HAS SUPERNATURAL POWERS OF DISCERNMENT - AND THAT THEY SHOULD BE AFRAID. AFTER ALL, IF THIS CUP IS HOW HE HAS THESE POWERS AND THEY STOLE THAT CUP, WHAT IS GOING TO BE THEIR FATE!?

JUDAH PLEADS WITH JOSEPH TO PUNISH ALL OF THEM, RATHER THAN JUST BENJAMIN. AS HE BEGINS HIS APPEAL TO JOSEPH HE CONFESSES:

"OH, MY LORD, WHAT CAN WE SAY TO YOU? HOW CAN WE EXPLAIN THIS? HOW CAN WE PROVE OUR INNOCENCE? GOD IS PUNISHING US FOR OUR SINS. MY LORD, WE HAVE ALL RETURNED TO BE YOUR SLAVES-- ALL OF US, NOT JUST OUR BROTHER WHO HAD YOUR CUP IN HIS SACK." (GENESIS 44:16, NLT).

HOW INTERESTING. IT'S ALMOST LIKE JUDAH IS ADMITTING BEING IN OVER HIS HEAD IN ALL OF THIS. AND HE CONNECTS THE TROUBLE THEY ARE HAVING WITH PUNISHMENT FOR THEIR SINS. REMEMBER, WE HEARD THEM DISCUSS TOGETHER IN GENESIS 42 HOW THEY ATTRIBUTED THE TROUBLE BEFORE THE EGYPTIAN OFFICIAL/JOSEPH (WHEN THEY WERE ACCUSED OF BEING SPIES AND SIMEON'S IMPRISONMENT) WITH THEIR SINS FROM 20 YEARS BEFORE AGAINST JOSEPH. THIS IS RIGHT AT THE SURFACE OF THEIR MINDS. JUDAH WILL CONTINUE HIS HEART WRENCHING APPEAL.

GENESIS 44:18-34 - JUDAH PLEADS WITH JOSEPH

JUDAH APPROACHES JOSEPH AND BEGS THAT HE LISTEN WITH MERCY. JUDAH RECOUNTS THE WHOLE STORY TO JOSEPH. THE END GOAL OF HIS STORY IS TO APPEAL TO JOSEPH IN LIGHT OF THE LIFE AND WELLBEING OF HIS FATHER. FOR JUDAH NOT KNOWING THAT THIS EGYPTIAN OFFICIAL IS ACTUALLY JOSEPH, THIS WILL END UP BEING A PRETTY GOOD STRATEGY.

WHY IS JUDAH THE ONE MAKING THIS APPEAL? WE DON'T KNOW FOR SURE - HOWEVER IF WE REMEMBER WAY BACK TO THE DAY JOSEPH WAS SOLD AS A SLAVE, IT WAS THIS SAME JUDAH WHO PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN JOSEPH'S FATE. REMEMBER, INITIALLY THE BROTHERS WANTED TO KILL JOSEPH, BUT REUBEN CONVINCED THEM TO PUT HIM IN A WELL, SECRETLY HOPING TO RESCUE HIM LATER. HOWEVER, WHEN REUBEN WAS NOT AROUND, LET'S REVISIT WHAT HAPPENED:

GENESIS 37:23-27 (NLT) - SO WHEN JOSEPH ARRIVED, HIS BROTHERS RIPPED OFF THE BEAUTIFUL ROBE HE WAS WEARING. 24 THEN THEY GRABBED HIM AND THREW HIM INTO THE CISTERN. NOW THE CISTERN WAS EMPTY; THERE WAS NO WATER IN IT. 25 THEN, JUST AS THEY WERE SITTING DOWN TO EAT, THEY LOOKED UP AND SAW A CARAVAN OF CAMELS IN THE DISTANCE COMING TOWARD THEM. IT WAS A GROUP OF ISHMAELITE TRADERS TAKING A LOAD OF GUM, BALM, AND AROMATIC RESIN FROM GILEAD DOWN TO EGYPT. 26 **JUDAH SAID TO HIS BROTHERS, "WHAT WILL WE GAIN BY KILLING OUR BROTHER? WE'D HAVE TO COVER UP THE CRIME. 27 INSTEAD OF HURTING HIM, LET'S SELL HIM TO THOSE ISHMAELITE TRADERS. AFTER ALL, HE IS OUR BROTHER-- OUR OWN FLESH AND BLOOD!"** AND HIS BROTHERS AGREED.

IT WAS JUDAH WHO WAS INITIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR SELLING JOSEPH AS A SLAVE. SURE THE BROTHERS ALL AGREED - BUT IT WAS JUDAH'S IDEA TO BEGIN WITH. WHY IS JACOB'S HEART BROKEN, BECAUSE OF JUDAH'S IDEA. WHY IS JOSEPH GONE NEVER TO BE SEEN FROM AGAIN? BECAUSE OF JUDAH'S IDEA. WHY IS THE FAMILY FILLED WITH GUILT AND SHAME BECAUSE OF ALL THESE EVENTS - BECAUSE OF JUDAH'S IDEA.

AND SO WE CAN UNDERSTAND A LITTLE BIT MORE WHY AT THIS STAGE IN THEIR LIVES, JUDAH HAS NOT ONLY VOLUNTEERED TO HIS FATHER TO BE PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR BENJAMIN'S SAFE RETURN HOME, BUT IS NOW PLEADING WITH JOSEPH FOR THEIR LIVES AND THE LIFE OF JACOB.

GENESIS 45:1-9 - JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF

AS JUDAH FINISHES HIS PLEADING, JOSEPH CAN NOT CONTAIN THE EMOTION OF THE MOMENT. AS WE DISCUSSED ABOVE, THE VERY ONE WHO HAD THE IDEA TO SEND JOSEPH AWAY IS NOW ON HIS KNEES BEGGING JOSEPH TO SHOW THEM MERCY FOR THEIR SINS.

JOSEPH SENDS OUT THE EGYPTIANS THAT WERE IN HIS COURT AND IS ALONE WITH HIS 11 BROTHERS. EVEN THOUGH THE EGYPTIANS LEAVE THE ROOM, THEY CAN HEAR HIM WEEPING! AT LAST JOSEPH UTTERS THESE POWERFUL WORDS "I AM JOSEPH."

SURELY THE BROTHERS HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IS GOING ON. THEY ARE PROBABLY STRUCK WITH A MIX OF TERROR, FEAR, SURPRISE AND SHOCK. THEY ARE SPEECHLESS FOR SURE. IN FACT, JOSEPH HAS TO CALL THEM CLOSE TO HIM AND SAY IT AGAIN AND WITH A LITTLE MORE EMPHASIS: *"I AM YOUR BROTHER JOSEPH WHO YOU SOLD INTO EGYPT."*

OH.

MY.

GOSH.

WHAT A MOMENT. AND YET THE REVEALING OF HIS IDENTITY ISN'T THE MOST AMAZING PART OF THIS. IMMEDIATELY AFTER TELLING HIS BROTHERS HE IS JOSEPH, HE JUMPS INTO CONSOLE AND RESTORE MODE. *"DON'T BE ANGRY AT YOURSELF! GOD SENT ME HERE! I WAS ALL PART OF GOD'S PLAN - DON'T BE SAD ABOUT THIS!"* WHAT KIND OF HEART IS IN THIS MAN JOSEPH?

A FREE AND FORGIVING ONE. A HEART OF FAITH AND TRUST IN GOD. A HEART THAT IS FULFILLED IN GOD AND GOD'S PURPOSES THAT EVEN WHEN THE VERY PEOPLE WHO CAUSES JOSEPH HARM AND HEARTBREAK ARE STANDING BEFORE HIM, HE IS CONSOLING THEM RATHER THAN ATTACKING THEM. WOW.

WITHOUT EVEN GIVING THEM A CHANCE TO RESPOND JOSEPH IS RAPID FIRING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONDITION OF HIS FATHER AND AN INVITATION TO BRING HIS FATHER TO EGYPT.

GENESIS 45:10-15 - JOSEPH INVITES HIS FAMILY TO LIVE (AND BE CARED FOR) IN EGYPT

JOSEPH THEN CONTINUES ON BY INVITING HIS BROTHERS AND HIS FAMILY TO MOVE TO THE LAND OF GOSHEN IN EGYPT, SO THEY CAN ALL BE REUNITED AND SURVIVE THE FAMINE. JOSEPH IS SO OVERJOYED AND AMAZINGLY FILLED WITH LOVE TOWARDS HIS BROTHERS. CAN YOU EVEN IMAGINE WHAT THIS MUST HAVE FELT LIKE FOR THEM? CAN YOU EVEN IMAGINE WHAT THIS FELT LIKE FOR HIM!

GENESIS 45:16-23 - PHARAOH HEARS. PHARAOH & JOSEPH PROVIDE FOR THE BROTHERS

PHARAOH, WHO IS ETERNALLY GRATEFUL FOR JOSEPH (AND REALLY GOD'S WORK THROUGH JOSEPH TO SAVE EGYPT) REJOICES AT THE NEWS OF JOSEPH BEING REUNITED WITH HIS FAMILY. HE SUPPORTS JOSEPH'S INVITATION TO HAVE THE FAMILY MOVE TO EGYPT AND ACTUALLY "ORDERS" JOSEPH TO GIVE HIS BROTHERS ALL THAT THEY NEED TO MAKE THIS MOVE HAPPEN. PHARAOH TELLS THEM TO JUST LEAVE ALL OF THEIR STUFF IN CANAAN - WHAT THEY WILL FIND IN EGYPT WILL BE FAR BETTER! AND THE BROTHERS JOURNEY HOME, FILLED WITH PROVISIONS FOR THE JOURNEY AND AN AMAZING STORY TO TELL THEIR FATHER.

GENESIS 45:24-28 - JACOB HEARS THAT JOSEPH IS ALIVE

JACOB'S LIFE RETURNS TO HIM AT THE BEST NEWS A FATHER COULD EVER HEAR. THE NASB SAYS JACOB WAS "STUNNED" AN ENGLISH WORD THAT COMES FROM THE HEBREW WHICH MEANS "HIS HEART GREW NUMB". CAN YOU EVEN BELIEVE IT! AND NOW JACOB WILL GET INTO ONE OF THE EGYPTIAN MOVING WAGONS TO TRAVEL TO HIS ONCE THOUGHT TO BE DEAD BELOVED SON JOSEPH, FACE TO FACE.

LET'S CONSIDER JOSEPH'S HEART FOR ANOTHER FINAL MOMENT. I AM BLOWN AWAY AT JOSEPH'S HEART TOWARDS HIS BROTHERS AS HE REVEALS HIS TRUE IDENTITY. AS WE SAID ABOVE, JOSEPH IS ABLE TO SHOW LOVE AND KINDNESS TOWARDS THE VERY PEOPLE WHO HATED HIM AS A BOY, WHO ABUSED HIM AS A YOUNG PERSON AND WHO ARE NOW KNEELING BEFORE HIM AS A MAN. LOVE AND KINDNESS TOWARDS THOSE WHO HURT HIM, THOSE WHO ABUSED HIM AND THOSE WHO PLOTTED AND ENACTED EVIL TOWARDS HIM.

IS JOSEPH A PUSH OVER OR WET NOODLE? SURELY NOT. HIS ABILITY TO SHOW LOVE TOWARDS HIS BROTHERS IS NOT BECAUSE HE FEARS THEM OR IS LOST WITHOUT THEM. HIS ABILITY TO SHOW LOVE TOWARDS HIS BROTHERS IS BECAUSE HIS HEART HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED AND FULFILLED IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. DID HIS BROTHERS DO HIM WRONG, YES. DID HIS BROTHERS DESERVE CONSEQUENCES FOR THEIR SINS, YES. BUT YOU SEE JOSEPH LEFT HIS CAUSE OF JUSTICE IN THE HANDS OF THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH AND SO NOW THAT HE WAS NO LONGER SEEKING REVENGE OR JUSTICE HIMSELF HE WAS FREE.

THIS IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TO FORGIVE. THIS IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TO TRUST GOD. THIS IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TO BE FREE FROM THE HOLD OTHER PEOPLE HAVE ON YOUR ACTIONS AND EMOTIONS BECAUSE YOU HAVE A SOLID RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

THIS IS SPIRITUAL *AND* EMOTIONAL MATURITY.

MANY CHRISTIANS ENDEAVOR TO GROW IN SPIRITUAL MATURITY - PRAYER, SERVING, WORSHIPPING AND BIBLE KNOWLEDGE, ETC. - YET DO NOT INVEST TIME AND ENERGY INTO *EMOTIONAL* MATURITY. MANY OF US HAVE BEEN RAISED TO STUFF OUR FEELINGS, PRAY AWAY "NEGATIVE EMOTIONS" OR IGNORE CONFLICT BY "PRAYING IT AWAY" OR SIMPLY AVOIDING CERTAIN PEOPLE.

SURELY THERE IS A TIME TO SET GODLY BOUNDARIES, PRAY FOR PEOPLE AND THE LIKE, BUT OFTEN TIMES WE COVER AND OVERLOOK IMPORTANT ISSUES IN OUR HEARTS THAT **MUST BE DEALT WITH** BECAUSE THE WORK IS EITHER TOO HARD OR PAINFUL. MANY "MATURE" CHRISTIANS AVOID CONFLICT, CHANGE CHURCHES TO AVOID CONFRONTATION, AND OVER SPIRITUALIZE EVERY PROBLEM AS AN ATTACK FROM THE DEVIL WHEN IT REALLY MAY BE OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW IN OUR EMOTIONAL MATURITY!

PETE SCAZZERO ARGUES THAT "WE CANNOT BE SPIRITUALLY MATURE WITHOUT BEING EMOTIONALLY IMMATURE." NONE OF THIS IMPLIES SINLESS PERFECTION OF COURSE, BUT AS DISCIPLES OF JESUS WE ARE CALLED TO GROW IN AREAS OF THE HEART AND NOT JUST THE MIND. AFTERALL, IS NOT THE GREAT COMMAND TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART, SOUL, MIND AND STRENGTH? CAN WE REALLY DO THAT IF WE HAVE CORNERED AREAS OFF IN OUR LIVES THAT ARE "OFF LIMITS"? WE LIVE IN A TIME OF TREMENDOUS ACCESS TO UNPARALLELED BIBLICAL INFORMATION, YET WOULD ANY OF US CLAIM THAT WE ARE LIVING IN A TIME OF UNPARALLELED CHRISTIAN MATURITY AS WELL? HAS ALL OF OUR KNOWLEDGE AND REALLY MADE US MORE CHRIST-LIKE? IT SEEMS LIKE THERE A DISCONNECT BETWEEN THE TWO. I BELIEVE THE MISSING COMPONENT IN OUR DISCIPLESHIP IS A DESIRE TO GROW EMOTIONALLY MATURE ALONG THE WAY.

THIS WOULD INCLUDE US LEARNING HOW TO COMMUNICATE BETTER, LEARNING HOW TO PROCESS OUR EMOTIONS, LEARNING HOW TO DEAL WITH CONFLICT IN GODLY WAYS, LEARNING HOW TO NAVIGATE TRAUMA OF OUR PAST, LEARNING HOW TO OVERCOME (AS OPPOSED TO JUST COPE) WITH FEAR AND ANXIETY. THESE THINGS DON'T JUST GO AWAY BECAUSE WE MEMORIZE "BE STILL AND KNOW I AM GOD." BE SURE, THIS APPEAL IS BIRTHED FROM MY OWN DEEP AND PERSONAL LONGING FOR THIS IN MY OWN LIFE.

JOSEPH MODELS AMAZING SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL MATURITY HERE. HE HAS COME TO TERMS WITH THE TROUBLE IN HIS LIFE, SEES GOD'S BIGGER PLAN AND PURPOSE FOR IT ALL AND IS NOW FREE TO LOVE AND FORGIVE AND ACT WITHOUT FEAR OF WHAT HIS BROTHERS MIGHT DO OR SAY TO HIM. WHAT THEY HAVE DONE TO HIM HOLDS NO SWAY ON WHO HE IS OR HOW HE FEELS ANYMORE. NONE OF THAT CHANGED BECAUSE HE'S THE BIG EGYPTIAN HOT SHOT - IT CHANGED BECAUSE FOR THE LAST 20 YEARS HE HAS HAD A LOT OF TIME TO THINK ON THESE THINGS AND FIND THAT THE LORD IS HIS ONLY HOPE AND COMPANION. HE HAS AN IDENTITY ROOTED IN GOD AND GOD'S PURPOSE FOR JOSEPH'S LIFE - WE HEAR THIS SATURATING HIS WORDS WHEN HE TELLS HIS BROTHERS " *IT WAS NOT YOU WHO SENT ME HERE, BUT GOD.* (GENESIS 45:8)."

WE HAVE ALL BEEN THROUGH VARYING DEGREES OF DIFFICULTY IN OUR LIVES. MANY OF US ARE STILL IN THE MIDST OF RELATIONAL OR EMOTIONAL TURMOIL. WE'RE ON A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERING WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST. KEEP WALKING DOWN THAT ROAD WITH HIM. THERE WILL BE TWISTS AND TURNS AND HIGHS AND LOWS. DAYS OF DARKNESS AND DAYS OF SUNSHINE. BUT WE CAN COURAGEOUSLY WALK DOWN THE ROAD OF SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL MATURITY BECAUSE WE ARE NOT WALKING DOWN THE ROAD ALONE - THE GOD WHO HAS BIRTHED US IN LOVE IS LEADING, CALLING AND WALKING BESIDE US. IT'S NOT YOUR PARENTS OR SPOUSES OR CHILDREN OR TRIALS THAT HAS SENT YOU HERE, BUT GOD.

IF YOU AND I KEEP WALKING, IT'S GOING TO BE OK. IF GOD IS FOR YOU, WHO OR WHAT CAN BE AGAINST YOU?