

Genesis 44:1-34

How Much Do You Love Your Family?

In a series of events that only God could orchestrate, Joseph is in a prominent position in Egypt

- A severe famine has hit the Earth
- The only place to purchase grain is Egypt
- The person in charge of the grain distribution is none other than Joseph

Joseph's brothers have visited him once before

- Of course, he masked his identity
- He needed to know certain information about the family
 - o Was his father still alive?
 - o Was his younger brother Benjamin still alive?

The only way for Joseph to know the truth about these questions was for him to put these brothers through a series of tests

In Genesis 42, Joseph accused them of being spies

- He was testing their honesty

So he held Simeon captive

- And he demanded that the other brothers return and bring Benjamin back, if they wanted to purchase more food

In Genesis 43, Joseph tested the brothers' potential jealousy of Benjamin

- Joseph gave Benjamin five times the portions of food as the other brothers

If there was any jealousy between the brothers toward Benjamin, then it would be exposed

- But there was no jealousy

This morning, we will look at Genesis 44

- Joseph will test his brothers' love

This will be the most trying and demanding test thus far

Let's read Genesis 44:1-34

Joseph's eleven brothers are put to the test in this chapter

- They have passed the test of honesty
- They have passed the test of jealousy
- But would they pass the test of love?

Joseph formulates a test whereby the brothers would have an opportunity to show their love for their younger brother

- We remember from Genesis 37 that these same brothers, with the exception of Benjamin, were jealous of Joseph and hated him
- That was the opposite of love

Joseph needed to know if things had really changed in the hearts of his brothers

- Did they still have a hateful heart toward him?
- Did they have a hateful heart toward Benjamin?

Genesis 44 confronts us with a powerful question, “*How much do you love your family?*”

- This is an intensely emotional chapter as Joseph threatens to keep Benjamin as a slave in Egypt forever
- Judah puts his own life on the line for the sake of his father and brother

We need to examine our hearts in light of this chapter

- In so doing, we will see two (2) characteristics of Christ-like, God-honoring love
 - o Love suffers with others (44:1-17)
 - o Love sacrifices for others (44:18-34)

I. Love suffers with others (44:1-17)

Then he commanded his house steward, saying, “Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in the mouth of his sack.

At the end of a second journey to Egypt, the brothers are ready to return back to Canaan

- They have food
- They have Simeon
- They have had a great time dining with this powerful ruler

But Joseph isn't quite finished yet

- He has one more test for his brothers

Joseph orders his servant to fill the men's bags with grain

- For the second time, he tells his servant to put their money back in their bags

But the money will not resurface as an issue as it did in chapter 42 and 43

- Something else will become the main focus
- That item is described in verse 2

² And put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his money for the grain.” And he did as Joseph had told *him*.

Each of the brothers was to have his bag full of grain

- The double amount of money was to be restored in each man's bag

In addition to this, Joseph told his servant to plant a silver cup in Benjamin's bag

- Joseph had one more test up his sleeve

Of course, all of this was hidden from the sight and knowledge of the 11 brothers

- As far as they knew, everything was fine

³ As soon as it was light, the men were sent away, they with their donkeys.

Early the next morning, the 11 brothers were sent away

- They had grain
- They had each other
- They couldn't wait to return to report the good news to their father

After all, Judah had put his own life on the line in order to convince Jacob to allow Benjamin to travel to Egypt in the first place

⁴ They had *just* gone out of the city, *and* were not far off, when Joseph said to his house steward, “Up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid evil for good? ⁵ Is not this the one from which my lord drinks, and which he indeed uses for divination? You have done wrong in doing this.’”

Not too long after the 11 sons of Jacob had left, Joseph tells his servant the next stage of his plan

- Now this servant had to know parts of Joseph's plans¹
- Otherwise, this was terribly strange behavior for such a powerful ruler

The servant had told the brothers in 43:23 that God had given their money back to them

- He had been trustworthy enough not to give away Joseph's identity

So the servant takes off in order to catch up with the sons of Jacob

- I bet they were shocked to see him so soon
- I know they were shocked to hear what he had to tell them

The first words from the servant to Joseph's brothers were, “**Why have you repaid evil for good?**”

- These words were intended to shock the men

The servant accused the men of stealing the silver cup

- The servant states that the ruler uses the cup for divination
- Obviously, it would have been very important and significant to him

Egyptians were known to have used divination with liquids

- They would observe the movement of water, oil, or wine as it moved around in a particular cup²
- This was supposedly a way of receiving guidance and direction

⁶ So he overtook them and spoke these words to them. ⁷ And they said to him, “Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing.

Of course, the men know that they are innocent of these charges

- This isn't the first time that they have been falsely accused

They speak with one voice and insist that they would never do such a thing to the ruler of the land

¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *NICOT, Genesis 18-50*, 558.

² Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 2*, 424.

⁸ Behold, the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house? ⁹ With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."

As proof of their innocence, the men speak about the money that they returned

- You remember how Joseph told his servant to return their money on the first journey to Egypt

If these men were thieves, they wouldn't have been concerned about making matters right

- If they were financially above reproach about the money, then how would they dare steal silver or gold?

As further proof of their innocence, the brothers make a rather strong vow, "With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves"

- The brothers knew they were innocent
- They knew that they had not stolen the cup

But this rash and flippant promise would soon come back on their heads

- Their overconfidence would soon be their nemesis

¹⁰ So he said, "Now let it also be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and *the rest of you shall be innocent.*"

The servant, apparently knowing some of the details of Joseph's plan, refused to agree to the brother's terms

- The servant knew that the cup was in the bag of Benjamin
- If he agreed to the brothers' terms, then Benjamin would be put to death
- That was not part of Joseph's plan

Only the guilty party would be punished

- The one who has the silver cup would be kept as a slave
- The rest of the men could go free

Joseph's plan was working perfectly

- The servant was doing his job well

¹¹ Then they hurried, each man lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack. ¹² And he searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. ¹³ Then they tore their clothes, and when each man loaded his donkey, they returned to the city.

Imagine what these brothers must have been thinking

- Perhaps they were beginning to feel used

They had been accused of being spies

- Simeon had been thrown into prison
- Now they were being accused of being thieves!

To prove their point, each man lowered his bag to the ground

- They invited Joseph's servant to look through their bags

Verse 12 introduces another twist of God's providential workings

- The servant didn't search in a random order
- No, he began with the oldest and ended up with the youngest

This reminds us of the seating arrangements when they ate with Joseph

- The men were amazed to discover that they sat according to their birth order (43:33)

As the servant went from one bag to the next, I am sure the confidence of the brothers grew

- After all, they knew that they were innocent!

But as the servant of Joseph reached the last bag – Benjamin’s bag – something was found

- Verse 12 tells us that “**the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack**”

Moses informs us that the men “**tore their clothes**”

- This is a sign of deep sorrow
- This was devastating news!

But this was precisely what Joseph had planned

- This was all according to the test!
- Do you see what Joseph was trying to do?

Over 20 years prior, ten sons of Jacob had taken advantage of Joseph

- He was an innocent man
- But they mistreated him, planned on killing him, but decided to sell him instead

Here was another opportunity for these same brothers to manifest their hatred toward Jacob’s favorite son

- Besides these brothers, no one would know what happened
- They could concoct another lie to tell their father, just like they had done about Joseph

Benjamin would be taken back to Egypt to be kept there forever as a slave

- But the rest of the brothers could go free!

What would happen?

- What choice would the brothers make?

The end of verse 13 tells us that “**each man loaded his donkey, they returned to the city**”

- Acting as a unified family, all 11 brothers return to the city!

The brothers didn’t allow innocent Benjamin to be sold into slavery

- Something has changed in the lives of these men

¹⁴ When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell to the ground before him. ¹⁵ And Joseph said to them, “What is this deed that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed practice divination?”

When the brothers return to Joseph’s house, “**they fell to the ground before him**”

- They collapsed at his feet
- They were totally at his mercy

Joseph repeats the same accusation about stealing the cup

- Joseph even states, “**Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed practice divination?**”

I don’t personally believe that Joseph used this cup as a means of divination

- There is no record of Joseph using the cup in this manner

I believe that the whole incident with the silver cup was part of his false identity³

- He had to appear to be a ruthless, powerful Egyptian ruler
- He had to appear to be as Egyptian as he could be
 - o Even to the point of appearing to use mystical means of determining the future

If you go back and look at the times in which Joseph determined the dreams of others, there is no record of him having access to this silver cup

- He was totally reliant upon God alone for the right interpretation
- Pharaoh himself even said that Joseph had a divine spirit (41:38)

¹⁶ So Judah said, “What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found.”

Judah becomes the spokesman for the group of brothers

- He realizes that there is no need to try and justify himself
- After all, the evidence was in Benjamin's bag!

Notice what Judah tells Joseph, “**God has found out the iniquity of your servants**”

- Now that is an interesting statement, isn't it?

How can Judah confess to be guilty of a crime that he didn't commit?

- They didn't steal that cup, right?
- But who is saying that Judah is confessing the sin of stealing the cup?

Many faithful expositors of God's Word agree that Judah is seeing further evidence of God's justice against the men for their mistreatment of Joseph⁴

- Even though it has been over 20 years in the past, God is still bringing their mistreatment of Joseph into clear focus

These sons of Jacob firmly believe that God is allowing them to reap what they had sown 20 years earlier

- Their sins were finding them out!

Throughout Genesis 44, it is amazing to see how many times “**we**” is used

- I counted 18 uses of this collective term

What we are seeing before our very eyes is amazing!

- The family is sticking together
- The family is not being fragmented by division and hatred!

Technically speaking, only Benjamin would be expected to serve as a slave in Egypt

- But notice what Judah says in verse 16, “**behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found**”

Judah says, in essence, “**We are all guilty!**”

- They refuse to treat Benjamin as the scapegoat while the rest go free
- They rise or fall together – as a family

³ Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 613.

⁴ Leon J. Wood, *A Shorter Commentary on Genesis*, 136.

¹⁷ But he said, “Far be it from me to do this. The man in whose possession the cup has been found, he shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father.”

Of course, Joseph’s plan is working brilliantly

- I am sure that it is hard for him to hide the smile on his face as he sees his brothers saying exactly what he anticipated them to say

Joseph, acting as the ruthless ruler of Egypt, tells the brothers that only the guilty will suffer

- “the man in whose possession the cup has been found, he shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father”

Here was a second opportunity for the ten sons of Jacob to walk away from Benjamin, allowing him to bear the punishment

- They could fabricate a good story to tell their father
- After all, Jacob lived despite Joseph’s supposed death, right?
- He would be ok with the news of Benjamin’s death

This was a test of real love

- This was a test to see if the brothers had any hatred toward Benjamin
- If so, this was the perfect time for that to be manifested

Better yet, if there was hatred, then someone would speak up and recommend that they just leave Benjamin behind

- After all, no one else was in trouble

But what we see in these 10 brothers is a universal truth about true, Biblical love

- Love suffers with others

With Joseph over 20 years earlier, the brothers disposed of their problem

- They hated Joseph
- They didn’t care about Joseph or what Jacob would say

But we see a difference in these men

- They have changed
- They display love for one another

They display a characteristic of Christ-like love

- Love suffers with others

But there is a second characteristic of Christ-like love that we see in this chapter...

II. Love sacrifices for others (44:18-34)

¹⁸ Then Judah approached him, and said, “Oh my lord, may your servant please speak a word in my lord's ears, and do not be angry with your servant; for you are equal to Pharaoh.

After admitting guilt over his sin, Judah issues a passionate plea to Joseph

- This is the longest speech in Genesis⁵

⁵ Kenneth A. Mathews, *NAC, Vol 1B*, 803.

Acting as the spokesman for the brothers, Judah ventures to speak with Joseph

- He asks permission from this powerful ruler
- He certainly doesn't deserve the opportunity to speak, since the evidence is clearly not in his favor

Judah also asks the ruler not to be angry

- This is probably because for 17 verses, Judah launches into a lengthy monologue
- He is the only person who speaks in this second half of the chapter

In actuality, Judah goes back and reviews the past history of the family

- Most of this is information that we, the reader, know
- But some of this information Joseph doesn't know

Judah is careful to give honor where honor is due

- He confesses that Joseph is equal to Pharaoh

Throughout this second half of chapter 44, notice how many times Judah uses the word “servant” and “father”

- He uses “servant” eight (8) times
- He uses “father” fifteen (15) times

Judah is clearly showing love for his brother Benjamin

- But even more so, Judah's focus is on his father

¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?' ²⁰ And we said to my lord, 'We have an old father and a little child of his old age. Now his brother is dead, so he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.'

With an attitude of deference, Judah refers to this ruler as “my lord” and himself and his brothers as “servants”

- They were very much at the mercy of Joseph, without realizing his true identity

On the brothers' first trip to Egypt, Joseph had recognized them (42:8)

- With only ten of the brothers present, Joseph had some obvious questions
 - o Where was Jacob, his father?
 - o Where was Benjamin, his younger brother?

Judah revisits that conversation and discusses the high points

- Jacob is painted as an “old” man
- He is very frail, unable to travel to Egypt on his own

Verse 20 gives us the first time that Jacob's sons speak of Joseph as being “dead”

- Until now, Joseph was “no more” (42:13, 32)

How ironic this is that Joseph's brothers think he is dead, when in fact he is the one with whom they have been corresponding!

- Joseph is the very one who is taking care of them and their families!

The favoritism of Jacob toward the sons of Rachel is highlighted by Judah

- Joseph is dead
- Benjamin “alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him”

This last phrase underscores the importance of Benjamin to Jacob

- Benjamin means a lot to their old father

20 years prior, the brothers of Joseph were jealous and envious of their father's love for him

- Now they don't seem to mind the special love of their father toward Benjamin

²¹ Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.' ²² But we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' ²³ You said to your servants, however, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again.'

Naturally, Joseph wanted to see Benjamin with his own eyes

- He wanted to see if the brothers were telling the truth
- Of course, these are the events of Genesis 42

Joseph made the stakes a little higher for his brothers

- If they didn't bring Benjamin back, then they wouldn't receive any additional food

²⁴ Thus it came about when we went up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. ²⁵ And our father said, 'Go back, buy us a little food.' ²⁶ But we said, 'We cannot go down. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.'

The commentary of verses 24-31 is information that Joseph had not heard before

- This is part of the conversation that took place after the first trip to Egypt

After a short amount of time, Jacob told his sons to return and purchase some more food

- However, Judah reminds his father that unless Benjamin goes with them, they won't be able to purchase more food

Joseph is hearing that his brothers didn't manipulate the situation

- They acted with honor and respect toward their father

²⁷ And your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons; ²⁸ and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn in pieces," and I have not seen him since. ²⁹ And if you take this one also from me, and harm befalls him, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.'

Jacob's own comments are given in verses 27-29

- Some of this is new even to us the reader
- All of this is new to Joseph

Jacob told his sons, "My wife bore me two sons"

- Wait a minute
- Didn't Jacob have four wives?

Once again, the favoritism of Jacob toward Rachel and her children is brought to the forefront

- He isolates Rachel and speaks of her as his wife
- As if she was the only wife that he had

Verse 28 continues the comments of Jacob

- This time, father Jacob speaks about Joseph
- You had better believe that Joseph was listening intently

Joseph learns what his brothers told their father after they sold him⁶

- “Surely he is torn to pieces”
- This is what the old father had believed for over 20 years
- No one had dared to contradict that story

With one of his favorite sons dead, all Jacob had was Benjamin

- Verse 29 records the emotional words of Jacob, “And if you take this one also from me, and harm befalls him, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow”

In other words, if Benjamin didn’t return from Egypt, then he would die of sorrow and grief

- It would be too much for the old man to deal with

³⁰ Now, therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life, ³¹ it will come about when he sees that the lad is not *with us*, that he will die. Thus your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant our father down to Sheol in sorrow.

Judah speaks to Joseph in a “what if” scenario

- What if Benjamin is kept in Egypt
- What if the other sons of Jacob return to Canaan without Benjamin
- What then?

Judah puts the matter rather bluntly, “it will come about when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die”

- There is no question about it
- Without Benjamin, Jacob will die

And who would be responsible for Jacob’s death?

- The sons
- Why?

³² For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him *back* to you, then let me bear the blame before my father forever.’

Judah had convinced his father to become surety for Benjamin

- He had put his own life on the line for him

Joseph would have heard this and interpreted it that the brothers loved both their father and their brother

- Concern and compassion were shared by one another toward one another

These 10 sons of Jacob had witnessed the grief of their father once before when they lied to him about Joseph’s supposed death

- They can’t bear to see him go through this again

⁶ Wenham, 427.

Judah's words to Joseph say, in essence, "I am personally responsible for this boy's life. I told my father that I would return him back to Canaan."

- Judah was serious about his commitment
- How serious?

³³ Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. ³⁴ For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest I see the evil that would overtake my father?"

Judah was so serious about his commitment to his father that he offered to switch places with Benjamin

- The cup had been found in Benjamin's sack
- He was the guilty party

But Judah offered to suffer the penalty that he deserved

- If Benjamin's punishment was slavery in Egypt, then Judah would take that penalty
- Just so that Jacob would not die of grief over his son

The last verse is so full of emotion, "**For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest I see the evil that would overtake my father?"**

- How can I return without Benjamin?
- I can't return without Benjamin!

Judah has plead his case to Joseph

- But the verdict will be handed in next week
- Will Benjamin be reunited with his father?
- What will happen to Judah?

One thing is sure about Genesis 44

- This chapter reminds us of the need to love our families

Besides the servant of Joseph, what we have here is one family unit

- Father Jacob and his twelve sons

20 years ago, their relationship was characterized by jealousy and hatred

- Now, the sons are willing to suffer together

Instead of hatred, Joseph sees love

- Instead of jealousy, Joseph sees trust and fellowship

The last few chapters of Genesis focus on Joseph

- For some of you, this is one of your favorite portions of God's Word

We have seen Joseph mistreated

- We have seen Joseph promoted

I would submit to you that Joseph is a noble character worthy of our study

- But let's not overlook Judah

In Genesis 37, Judah was the one who gave the idea to sell Joseph instead of kill him

- But here in Genesis 44, Judah is pleading for the life of his brother Benjamin
- What a change!

Let's also keep in mind that Joseph is not the seed through whom the Messiah will come

- That privilege belongs to Judah

Judah's passionate plea for the release of Benjamin is filled with love and concern for his father and brother

- That love reaches its highest point when he offers to switch places with Benjamin
- He offers himself as a substitute for Benjamin

One of Judah's descendants did, in fact, offer Himself as a substitute for others

- That Person is Jesus Christ

I don't know where you are spiritually this morning

- I would pray and trust that you have a relationship with Jesus Christ
- If so, I rejoice with you and count you as my spiritual family

But for others of you, you may not have a relationship with Jesus Christ

- You have never seen the penalty that your sins deserve
- You have never seen why you need to trust in Jesus Christ

The Bible says that we have all sinned and fallen short of God's perfect standard (Rom 3:23)

- Because we are sinners, what we deserve is to be separated from God after we die physically
- **"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"** (Rom 6:23)

Isn't that amazing?

- You and I deserve to be separated from God forever
- But Jesus Christ stepped in and took our punishment for us

Isn't that what Judah offered to do for his brother?

- He had more concern and love for his father than for himself
- So he offered himself as Benjamin's substitute

Friend, if you are here this morning and you have never asked God for forgiveness, I pray that you will do that right now

- You are a sinner – deserving God's judgment
- But Christ died for sinners – like you and like me

You can ask God for forgiveness right where you

- In your mind, you can pray and ask God to forgive you for your sins

This morning's lesson has revolved about Joseph testing his brothers to see if they truly loved one another

- And they passed the test

If you were given a test of how much you love your family, how would you fair?

- Would you pass?
- Would you fail?

If you were given a test of how much you love your church family, how would you fair?

- Would you pass?
- Would you fail?

You see, the reality is that you either hate or love people at CBC

- “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35)

You are to love others as God has loved you

- That’s a pretty high standard, isn’t it?

The apostle John also had this to say about our love for one another,

- “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16)
- “If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also” (1 John 4:20-21)

My prayer is that we would love one another here at CBC

- Because true, Christ-like love
 - o Suffers with others (44:1-17)
 - o Sacrifices for others (44:18-34)