

**Lesson 48**  
**Joseph: Man of Caution and Compassion**

Genesis 42:1-43:34

I. INTRODUCTION

A. These two chapters give the reader insight into the compassion of Joseph. These are some of the most dramatic chapters in the Book of Genesis. NOTE. If a person can read these chapters and not be overwhelmed with emotion, his sensitivity to the feelings of others is very shallow.

B. Literary critics in Boston, a number of years ago, voted by secret ballot the story of Joseph to be the finest short story ever written. It is great literature, but it is primarily religious history and designed to teach spiritual truth.

II. JOSEPH: MAN OF CAUTION 42:1-38

A. Jacob Sends Ten Sons to Egypt to Buy Corn (42:1-4). The scene shifts from Egypt and Joseph to Canaan and Jacob. The famine had hit Canaan and the survival of Jacob's (Israel's) family was at stake. Jacob sends ten sons to Egypt to buy food but keeps Benjamin, his youngest son, home. Jacob was afraid that Benjamin might be killed just like he thought Joseph had been killed and this would have been a great blow to him. NOTE. The pattern of God's plan in using Joseph to preserve the Hebrew race during the famine and the removal of Jacob and his sons to Egypt begins to emerge in detail. God was at work through these circumstances.

B. Joseph's Ten Brothers Come to Egypt and Bow Down Before Him, But Joseph Puts Them in Jail (42:4-20).

1. Joseph was the governor (prime minister) of Egypt, and his brothers came and bowed before him (24:6). This was a literal fulfillment of the dreams of Joseph (cf. 37:5-10), and Joseph remembered the dreams (42:9).
2. Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him (42:7-8). Why did they not realize who he was? First, 20 years had passed. Second, he would have had his head and face shaved in accordance with Egyptian custom. Third, his dress might tend to hide his identity to some extent. Fourth, his Egyptian language created a barrier and prevented their suspecting anything. Fifth, he specifically made himself strange to them (42:7).
3. Joseph accused the brothers of being spies (42:14) and put them in prison (42:17). Why this harsh treatment? Joseph was determined to test their true character and see if there was any change in them. Perhaps he wondered if they would do the same thing to Benjamin that they did to him. He demands that they go and fetch Benjamin to him (42:15).
4. After three days, Joseph tells them to leave one brother in prison in Egypt and to go get Benjamin in Canaan and bring him back to Egypt. They left Simeon (42:24) and loaded up with supplies. NOTE. Benjamin is about 30 years old at this time and Joseph is 39.
5. Joseph lets them know that his actions are governed out of fear for God (42:18). NOTE. This should have tipped off the brothers as to the identity of Joseph. Apparently this made no impression on them. Their spiritual sensitivity was quite low.

C. Joseph's Brothers are Convicted of Their Sin (42:21-24). God used their circumstances to bring to memory their evil treatment of Joseph some 20 years back. Having been in prison for three days, they remembered how they threw Joseph in the pit. They also remembered that they had sold Joseph to Midianite merchantmen on their way to Egypt. The Holy Spirit brought them under conviction and they began to feel guilty for their sin towards Joseph (42:21-22). NOTE. After 20 years their consciences are awakened and they feel guilty about their sin. Time does not blot out sin, nor has it any power over the conscience. They genuinely repented of their sin and Joseph overheard the conversation. Joseph was touched and began to weep. NOTE. Joseph had no revengeful spirit but was ready to forgive. To revenge is human, but to forgive is Divine.

D. Joseph Gives His Brothers Corn and Restores Their Money (42:25-28). When the brothers discovered that the money of one had been restored, they were amazed and afraid, and realized God's hand was somehow in it (42:28).

E. The Brothers Recount the Story to Jacob (42:29-34). They laid special emphasis upon the necessity of returning to Egypt with Benjamin (42:34).

F. Jacob's Unbelief (42:35-30)

1. As each son emptied his sack of corn, he found his money returned. What a great provision from God!
2. Jacob was not impressed with God's works and went into a state of depression and unbelief. He took a complete human viewpoint towards his circumstances, and said, "All these things are against me" (42:36). He had a complete negative viewpoint because he had his eyes on circumstances rather than God. He concluded that Joseph was dead, that Simeon was about to die, that he would lose Benjamin forever and that everything was working against him. NOTE. He was totally wrong about everything and at that very moment, God's providence was working mightily for him. God's plan was more evident now in Jacob's life than at any other time since Jacob first came to know him; yet poor Jacob did not see it because he was looking at life from a human viewpoint. The divine viewpoint knows that "all things are working together for good" (Romans 8:28).
3. Reuben pleaded with Jacob to change his mind about Benjamin and said he would offer his two sons if anything would happen to Benjamin. But Jacob refused out of a selfish love for Benjamin. NOTE. Jacob had a spiritual problem and his selfish love for Benjamin was holding back the Divine blessing of God. He was not ready to turn Benjamin over to God.

### III. JOSEPH: MAN OF COMPASSION 43:1-34

A. Jacob Sends His Sons Again to Egypt But They Refuse to Go Without Benjamin (43:1-7).

1. ***The famine became worse and the desperation for food caused Jacob to send his sons again to Egypt (43:1-2). The brothers refused to go without Benjamin, for they knew Pharaoh would not sell them corn unless Benjamin was brought to Joseph.***
2. Jacob fought the will of God and complained at his sons for being so honest with Pharaoh's governor (43:6-7). NOTE. Jacob did not want to give up Benjamin and tried to blame his sons for the circumstances. He wished they would have lied a little and never mentioned Benjamin. Jacob's deceitful nature shows up, for when anyone is fighting the will of God they blame others.

B. Jacob Agrees to Let Benjamin Go (43:8-14)

1. Judah gave Jacob assurance that he would protect Benjamin, for Benjamin was the key to life and death for Israel's family (43:8). NOTE. God used hunger to change Jacob's mind about Benjamin. God often uses severe discipline to get His children in the center of His will.

2. Jacob suggested that a gift be taken to the governor and that the restored money be taken back, for it was an oversight (43:11-12).

3. Jacob finally yielded to God's will, and said, "If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved" (43:14). He decided to let God be God, and what He wills, He wills. NOTE. Jacob came to the place of: "Not my will, Lord, but yours."

C. Joseph's Brothers Are Entertained in Joseph's Home (43:15-25)

1. Joseph commanded the head servant of his house to bring his brothers into his home to dine. The brothers were afraid because they thought something terrible was going to happen to them. They thought that they were being accused of stealing money (43:18), and they would be made slaves. NOTE. These brothers thought twice when they might be made slaves but thought it amazing when they sold Joseph into slavery. NOTE. They were afraid and were thinking the worst possible things when actually God was about to bless them mightily. To think negatively brings fear, and most things we worry about never happen.

2. The brothers confessed to the head servant about the money (43:20-22), hoping that this would get them off the hook. The servant told them that he put the money in their sacks. The servant in reality was only an instrument used by God, for he said, "Your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks" (43:23). NOTE. Apparently Joseph had led his chief servant to a saving knowledge of the true God.

D. Joseph's Love for His Family (43:26-34)

1. Joseph dined with his brothers and asked them many things. One of the most touching verses of scripture is verse 27: "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?" How he yearned to hear that his father was alive so that he might be re-united with him.

2. Then Joseph saw Benjamin and asked if this was the younger son. Joseph pronounced God's blessing on him (43:29), and swiftly left the room because he was overwhelmed with emotion (43:30). He went into private room and wept. NOTE. A real man knows how to weep, but notice that Joseph did it in private.

3. Joseph separated himself from the Hebrews as the custom of the Egyptians was (43:32), and lined up his brothers by their ages (43:33). The brothers were marveled, for they could not understand why the governor was doing all this.

4. They ate and drank heartily, but Joseph gave five times as much food and drink to Benjamin (43:34). Why? Joseph was still testing his brothers to see if there was any jealousy towards Benjamin as there was towards him in those earlier years.