

THINGS UNSEEN

Joseph's Character Tests

Genesis 42 – 44

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MESSAGE NOTES

Tests...

- strengthen our character.
- reveal the true motives of our heart.
- prove the reality of our faith in Christ.

CRUCIBLE — *def. A place or set of circumstances where people or things are subjected to forces that test them and often make them change.* — Encarta Dictionary

1. The brothers, except Benjamin, go to Egypt and are given an audience with Joseph. He recognizes them, but they don't recognize him. This gives Joseph a unique opportunity to test them.
2. The character testing begins. The brothers are instructed to go back and get Benjamin, while Simeon is held hostage. God uses their own guilt and fear to get their attention.
3. Back with their father in Canaan, Judah reveals a changed heart — a willingness to sacrifice himself for his brother.
4. Returning to Egypt the second time with Benjamin as instructed, they're hit with one perplexing event after another.
5. All this testing finally reveals the kind of character Joseph (and God) was looking for.

Tests...

- What tests are you up against right now?
- What are they revealing about your heart?
- How might God be using these things to refine your character?

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

— James 1:2 – 4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Walk back through the story we covered on the weekend at ENCOUNTER.
- Why do you think Joseph chose to put his brothers through all this testing?
- Why do you think God allows us to face tests all the time?
- What was Jacob's reaction to hearing that the brothers had to return to Egypt with Benjamin or else Simeon would never be released?
- Why do you think Joseph wanted the brothers to bring Benjamin back to Egypt?
- If they failed to return with Benjamin, and left Simeon abandoned in prison, what might that have revealed about their hearts?
- How does Judah reveal a massive change of character?
- When the brothers came back with Benjamin as instructed, what was that like for Joseph?
- When all the brothers were returning home, they discovered not only had their payment for grain been put back in their grain sacks, but they discovered Joseph's personal silver cup? What was the implication? What is Joseph testing?
- When they return and Joseph threatens to keep Benjamin in prison, who steps up to offer his own life in place of Benjamin's? Why is that significant?
- What sort of tests have you experienced recently?
- Can you see ways in which God is strengthening your character through any of those tests?