



**SESSION OBJECTIVE: GENESIS 43:16-45:15**

To learn about Joseph's reunion with his brothers.

## The Big Reveal

There is something bound up in humanity that loves to see a secret be revealed. In our own culture, we have many shows that relish these moments. Fixer Upper, starring Chip and Joanna Gaines, caps off every episode at the end with a big reveal of the final, remodeled and "fixed up" home. The Biggest Loser has a reveal at the end of each episode to show how much weight has been lost, and a massive reveal at the season finale to see how much the winner has lost in total. Beyond that, we practice gender reveals with appropriately colored cake, balloons, smoke, and other elements. We enjoy seeing something that was once a secret come to light.

In Genesis 45, we see Joseph finally reveal his true identity to his brothers. Before this chapter, Joseph's brothers do not recognize him. He has become the second most powerful person in Egypt, only under Pharaoh himself. He is the lord of the land and the grain dispenser, and the reason that Egypt has fared so well during a difficult famine. His brothers last encounter with him occurred many years prior, and they never dreamed anything positive could have happened to their brother. His reveal is both impossibly difficult to comprehend and at the same time miraculously celebratory.

## A Dinner Party

As soon as Joseph saw Benjamin returning with his brothers, he called for the steward of his house to prepare a meal and invite the men to eat with him (Gen. 43:16-17). The brothers are immediately suspicious, however, believing it to be a trap (Gen. 43:18). Below are a few extra things to consider.

***AN UNNECESSARY PLAN***

It isn't unreasonable to think that a dinner party could be a trap to enslave or possibly even kill someone, as it has been done in other places in the Old Testament (2 Sam. 13:28). However, it never occurs to the brothers that being as powerful as he is, Joseph could simply order the men to be arrested the moment they arrived. There was no need for trickery. Joseph had the authority and power to do whatever he wanted.

***IRONIC FEAR***

There is also some irony in this scenario as well. The brothers specifically fear that Joseph will, "assault us, and fall upon us to make us his servants" (Gen. 43:18). They are afraid they might be unjustly forced into slavery by the same man they unjustly forced into slavery (Gen. 37:28).

***UNSOLICITED INFORMATION***

As a result of their fear of entrapment, they volunteer some information regarding the money in their sacks and the reason for their return. They recall the money they found with the grain, the money they believed they had paid for the grain during their first trip. It is also interesting that, of all of the information they voluntarily surrender, they don't say anything about that which they were asked to do: bring Benjamin! Nothing is mentioned of his presence or their obedience to Joseph's demands.

***AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE***

The brothers are eventually confronted with Joseph and realize that there is no trickery at play. They bow before him, and Joseph asks of his father again, and then sees Benjamin. After greeting him, he is overcome with emotion and departs to weep alone. This is not the first time he has had to excuse himself because of his emotions; he did the same thing when hearing his brothers remorsefully recall what they did to him years before (Gen. 42:24). These moments reveal something about Joseph's character and motives here. These "games" that Joseph plays with his brothers may seem cruel, and while they are certainly meant to apply pressure, Joseph's heart is for his brothers. He loves his family, and he is excited to see Benjamin and hear of his father's wellbeing.

***ANOTHER REVERSAL***

The brothers are then served food, but they are served separately from Joseph and his Egyptian colleagues because the Egyptians forbade sharing a table with Jewish people (43:32). The brothers are astonished because Joseph orders the brother's seating, "the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth" (43:33). Why are the brothers astonished? Because Joseph is able to do such a task without consulting them their ages (they don't realize he is their brother, of course). Benjamin is notable given, "five times as much as any of theirs" (Gen. 43:34).

This is a stark reversal from a seemingly unimportant moment to us, but a likely weighty memory for Joseph. Prior to being sold into slavery, his brothers push him down into a pit from which he could not climb out of. While deliberating what to do with him, the brothers share a meal apart from Joseph (Gen. 37:25). Now, Joseph has separated his brothers from himself again, but he is the one in control this time. Where his brothers deprived him of food, he served them. Again, Joseph's unimpeachable character is seen very clearly.

## Another Set Up

Chapter 44 begins with another benevolent act of Joseph: "Then he commanded the steward of his house, '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, and put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, with his money for the grain.' And he did as Joseph told him." The stage is set for another one of Joseph's staged confrontations. The

brothers depart and immediately Joseph sends a cohort of men to catch up with them and overtake them and confront them for what looks like a stolen cup. But what is meant by the men's statement: "Is it not from this that my lord drinks, and by this that he practices divination?" (Gen. 44:5) Does Joseph really practice divination? It is likely that this type of cup was one used commonly in Egypt to practice divination, not that Joseph himself did so, for that is an abomination to the Lord (Lev. 19:26; Num. 23:23; Deut. 18:10). The practices common in Egypt were known as oleomancy (pouring oil into water) or hydromancy (pouring water into oil). It is more generally known as lecanomancy, an act of observing liquids in some kind of a container. This type of divination was used to dictate peace or war, success or failure, and a number of other outcomes.

There is also some significance to the phrase, "Why have you repaid evil for good?" (Gen. 44:4) It does not mean a simple lack of gratitude, but it carries with it malicious intent to harm (1 Sam. 25:21; Prov. 17:13; Ps. 35:12; Jer. 18:20). The accusation against the brothers is harsh. Luckily, rather than punishing the whole group, the steward will only punish the one who had the cup. Unfortunately for the brothers (and subsequently, Jacob), Benjamin is the one (intentionally) framed. Why does Joseph do this? Perhaps he knows the pressure it will put on his brothers? Or perhaps he still does not trust his older brothers and is attempting to move Benjamin to where he can protect him? It is not completely clear.

Judah takes charge with attempting to negotiate with Joseph. He recognizes Joseph's power and authority (Gen. 44:18), recalls the death of Joseph and the significance of Benjamin (Gen. 44:19), summarizes the story of how they ended up in Egypt (Gen. 44:24-29), and warns that Jacob will surely die if Benjamin is not returned (Gen. 44:34).

## Joseph is Revealed

Judah also reveals that he has become a pledge to his father to insure the safe return of Benjamin, and this is almost certainly what causes the breakdown for Joseph. Joseph, "could not control himself before all those who stood by him," "he cried," and, "he wept aloud," and then revealed his true identity. His emotional response likely came from both the emotional vulnerability that Judah had with him, and the reality that keeping Benjamin any longer would almost certainly spell out doom for his brothers and father, a fate he pretty clearly did not want for them. He weeps, and tells his brothers of his fortune as a result of his fate set upon by them. He also calls for them to share of his honor with his father, and to bring his father to him. It is a beautiful scene of forgiveness, redemption, purpose, and restoration. His brothers' response is not detailed, because the thrust of this passage is Joseph's reckoning with his past treatment, and so the focus remains on Joseph and his words and actions.

## A Foreshadowing?

Joseph is often compared to Jesus, almost as a foreshadowing of His coming. Joseph is able to not only demonstrate total forgiveness but also blessing to his brothers who wronged him, and this is often connected to Jesus' forgiveness on the cross. He is loved mightily and favored by his father. He also, in the eyes of his family, dies and comes back to life. He even conceals his identity to those around him until he decides the timing is right to reveal his identity. He is pure, generous, equitable, and faithful, and God reveals much to him as a result. It is not hard to see why some might be tempted to make the connection.

However, foreshadowing, or what is formally known as *typology*, operates by a strict set of guidelines that are important. There are three important rules of typology. One, the type or shadow *must come before* the substance. Joseph's narrative happens many hundreds of years prior to the coming of Jesus, and so this rule is *fulfilled*. Two, the substance *must be greater* than the shadow. Jesus is greater than Joseph without question, and so this rule is also *fulfilled*. However, an important rule is that *the New Testament must acknowledge the Old Testament typological connection*. This is an important rule because otherwise anyone can connect anything in the New Testament with anything in the Old Testament, a sort of "typology gone wild." This third rule *is not met in the Joseph/Jesus connection*. The New Testament never compares Joseph to Jesus, nor makes any connection between the two. While there may be similarities, it would be imprudent to make the claim that Joseph is a type of Christ.

## Study Questions

### Day One

1. Read Genesis 43:16-25. What does Joseph command the steward of his to do? What are the brothers worried about and what do they tell the steward? What does Joseph say to the brothers?

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2. Read Genesis 43:26-34. What does Joseph ask of his brothers? What is their response to him? Why does Joseph excuse himself from the group? How does Joseph arrange the seating of his brothers, and what is their response to it, and why? How much is given to Benjamin in comparison to the rest of the brothers?

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### Day Two

1. Read Genesis 44:1-5. What does Joseph command the steward of the house to do? After the brothers had left, what does he command the steward to do? What kind of cup is stolen from Joseph?

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2. Read Genesis 44:6-13. What did the steward say to the brothers when he overtook them? How did the brothers respond? Who was found with the cup? How did the brothers respond to this?

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### Day Three

1. Read Genesis 44:14-17. Which of the brothers comes to plea with Joseph? What is Joseph's response?

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2. Read Genesis 44:18-23. In your own words, summarize what Judah says to Joseph?

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## Day Four

1. Read Genesis 44:24-34. In your own words, summarize what Judah says to Joseph.
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2. Read Genesis 45:1-15. What is Joseph's response to Judah's plea? How do the brothers respond to Joseph's revealed identity? In your own words, summarize what Joseph says to them. What message does Joseph want to send to Jacob, his father?
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## Week 35 Discussion: Forgiveness

Joseph's story is nothing short of amazing. He is faithful to God throughout so much difficulty, from familial betrayal to judicial injustice, to interpreting dreams and becoming one of the most powerful lords in Egypt, Joseph has quite the journey. Perhaps more incredible than anything, however, is that he fully forgives his brothers after what they did to him. He is clearly wronged, and yet when given the opportunity to avenge this wrong, he chooses forgiveness and restoration and even blesses them. Talk as a group about the power of forgiveness, and the need for both giving and receiving it.

1. Icebreaker: Have you ever had to forgive someone that did not deserve it and did not ask for it? How difficult was that? How did you feel afterwards?
2. Are there any relationships you currently need forgiveness in? Why?
3. Is there anyone you currently need to forgive? Why have you not yet?
4. How are forgiveness and reconciliation different?
5. How is your spiritual walk affected by the absence of forgiveness? In other words, does your relationship with your heavenly father suffer when you have not forgiven others?
6. Does everyone need forgiveness? Why or why not?

## Takeaways:

1. Joseph is reunited with Benjamin.
2. Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, and forgives them.

### *PRAYER REQUESTS:*