



The Test

Genesis 43 - 44

The Test

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 43 - 44

Listen: THRU the BIBLE - [Genesis 43](#), [Genesis 44](#)

Dear Heavenly Father,

You test us not to condemn but to change us. Search our hearts, reveal what needs to change, and give us courage to face it honestly. Where we've caused harm, let repentance lead to transformation. Above all, let Jesus, our Surety who took our place on the cross, move us from guilt to grace. Transform us from the inside out.

In Jesus's Name. Amen.



Tested by Grace: How God Proves and Transforms Us

In Genesis chapters 43 & 44, the famine drives Jacob's sons back to Egypt, this time with Benjamin. Joseph, still unrecognized as their brother, orchestrates an elaborate test: a silver cup hidden in Benjamin's sack, a confrontation, and an offer to hold only one brother (Benjamin) as a slave. The key question this chapter poses is: Have Joseph's brothers truly changed? Judah's speech in *Genesis 44:18-34*, in which he offers himself as a substitute slave to spare his brother and his grieving father, is one of the pieces of evidence of change in these brothers' lives.

STEP 1 Grasp the Story - What situation was Jacob and his family facing?

- A prolonged famine threatened the survival of Jacob's entire family. Their repeated trips to Egypt were driven by sheer desperation, not choice.
- Simeon is still in prison in Egypt. Jacob won't release Benjamin to go to Egypt.
- Weeks, maybe months, go by. Eventually, all the corn the brothers bought in Egypt is gone. They would starve to death if they didn't go back to Egypt to buy more food. What did the brothers do?
- Judah's offer to act as surety for Benjamin (*Genesis 43:9*) was a legally binding commitment in the ancient Near East: he was essentially saying, 'Hold me accountable if I do not bring Benjamin back,' risking his life and reputation on his brother's safety.



- The brothers knew their guilt. When accused, they immediately confessed: “God has found out the iniquity of your servants” (*Genesis 44:16*). They did not name Joseph, but 22 years of buried guilt surged to the surface.
- Judah’s final speech (*Genesis 44:18–34*) recalled Jacob’s words, ‘His brother is dead,’ referring to Joseph. The irony would not have been lost: Judah stood before the very brother Jacob mourned (Joseph), pleading for the brother Jacob feared losing (Benjamin).
- The transformation of Judah, who had proposed selling Joseph (*Genesis 37:26–27*), into the man willing to take his brother’s place was a stunning reversal that only God could accomplish.

Jacob’s sons, once callous enough to sell their brother for twenty pieces of silver, had been so profoundly transformed by guilt, time, and God’s providential work that they were now willing to sacrifice their own freedom for their youngest brother and their grieving father.



STEP 2 Measure the Differences and Identify the Similarities

Differences Between Jacob’s Family and Us

- **Covenant context:** Jacob’s sons lived under the Abrahamic covenant, before the Mosaic Law, and centuries before the New Covenant. **They did not yet have the full revelation of God’s plan of redemption through Jesus Christ.** The institution of surety was a familiar legal and social concept in the ancient Near East, **but for us, Jesus is the surety of our salvation.** (*Hebrews 7:22*).
- **Situation:** The famine was a specific historical crisis engineered by God to accomplish His purposes. Our lives may not involve literal famines like in Joseph’s days or Egyptian slavery, but we face our own pressures that God uses as testing grounds.
- **Culture:** Reuben, the eldest son, bore the shame of his sin and lost the unique honor granted to the firstborn. In our culture, many may not face the same loss of firstborn privileges as Reuben did because of his sin.
- **Dispensation:** These events occurred during the patriarchal period, before the full written revelation of Scripture. The brothers could not look back at a completed canon to understand what God was doing. We have the full Bible, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the completed work of Christ.

Similarities Between Jacob’s Family and Us

- **Universal guilt of sin:** Every human being carries the weight of sin and the fear of exposure and judgment, just as Joseph’s brothers did.
- **God tests His people in every age:** Testing is a consistent pattern of God’s dealings with His people across all dispensations (*James 1:2–4*).

- **The longing for a substitute:** The brothers' desperate situation, in which they need someone to take another's place, speaks to the universal human need for a mediator and redeemer. Christ is our mediator and redeemer!
- **Repentance produces transformation:** The change in Judah demonstrates that genuine sorrow for sin produces a changed life, a truth that is equally applicable to believers in Christ today (*2 Corinthians 7:10*).

STEP 3 God's Eternal Truths Relevant to us

Genesis chapters 43 and 44 reveal timeless truths relevant to us today.

Eternal Truth 1: God tests His people not to destroy them but to refine and reveal their transformation.

Joseph's test was not an act of cruelty; it was a form of surgery. He had to determine if his brothers had changed before revealing himself and healing the family. Similarly, God orchestrates seasons of testing, not to condemn us, but to confirm the sincerity of our faith and to finish the work He has started within us. These tests expose what genuinely resides in our hearts.

Eternal Truth 2: Genuine repentance is evidenced by changed behaviour, especially toward the vulnerable.

Judah once exploited his position and power to sell Joseph for financial gain. However, in a nearly identical situation involving another younger brother (Benjamin) who was vulnerable, he used that same position to defend and protect him. This shift illustrates true repentance: breaking the cycle of sin. Those who once exploited others now take responsibility for protecting them, like a guarantor.

Eternal Truth 3: God provides a substitute who takes the place of the guilty, pointing us ultimately to Jesus Christ.

Judah's offer, "let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord" (*Genesis 44:33*), is a beautiful human picture of the divine reality completed in Jesus Christ. Just as Judah placed himself between Benjamin and condemnation, so Christ placed Himself between us and the judgment our sins deserved. This is the gospel woven into the very fabric of Genesis.



STEP 4 How Do God's Eternal Truths Fit with the Rest of Scripture?

God confirms and clarifies His eternal truths throughout the rest of the Bible.

Hebrews 7:22 “By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.”

The concept of surety finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Judah was a temporal, imperfect surety for one brother. Jesus is the eternal, perfect Surety for all who believe, the guarantee of the better covenant.

Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

The transformed brothers passed their test: they chose to stay with Benjamin rather than save themselves. Christ did infinitely more: He chose to die for those who were His enemies. **The pattern of substitution in Genesis 44 is perfected at Calvary.**

1 Peter 1:6-7 “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

God tests faith to prove it genuine. Joseph's test of his brothers had the same purpose: not to destroy them but to establish that their repentance was real. Our trials serve the same refining function.

2 Corinthians 7:10 “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

Joseph's brothers' initial sorrow at being caught was simply the “sorrow of the world,” driven by fear of punishment. However, Judah's words reveal that their feelings had deepened into a genuine godly sorrow, one that leads to action, sacrifice, and reconciliation. This reflects the true path of repentance.

STEP 5 Apply God's Eternal Truths in Your Life

Embrace God's eternal truths from Genesis 43 and 44, allowing them to shape your thoughts, beliefs, and actions. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide you in applying these truths to your life.

For Personal Reflection and Application:

- When God allows confusion, delay, or painful circumstances in your life, consider: might He be conducting a test? Not to harm you, but to reveal and refine who you truly are. Ask Him to show you what the test is designed to produce in you.
- Examine your life for the mark of genuine repentance. True repentance is not merely feeling sorry; it produces a reversal of the sinful pattern. In what area of your life has God been working a Judah-like transformation? In what areas of your life are you yet to experience genuine repentance?



- Rest in Jesus as your Surety. He has stood in your place before a holy God and declared: “Let me take what they deserve.” This is God’s Mercy. Because Christ is your Surety, you approach God not as a guilty sinner before a Holy God, but as a beloved child before a gracious Father. How would you respond to Jesus’s surety to save you, making your salvation eternally secure, so that you will not lose your salvation?
-
- When others are vulnerable at home, at work, in your community, ask God to make you a “Judah”: one who steps forward with courage and love, willing to bear a cost so that someone else is protected. Who is God reminding you to protect?
-

Personal Prayer Response:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I thank You that You test me not to condemn me but to mature me in the character of Christ. I thank You that Jesus Christ is my Surety that He has taken my place, borne my guilt, and secured my standing before You. Let the reality of His substitution shape every relationship and every decision I make.

Amen.



These studies are based on the THRU the BIBLE Genesis Bible Companion by Dr. J. Vernon McGee and the TTB Study · Interpret · Apply method, following the five-step Interpretive Journey outlined in Grasping God’s Word by J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays. All Scripture is from the New King James Version (NKJV).



Access Our Resources



Download THRU the BIBLE app and listen to audio bible teachings available in over 200 languages.

Visit ttb.bible



Discover our interactive digital flip book of more volumes in the Scripture Engagement book series on our website.

Visit ttbsa.org