



Viewfield Baptist Church

To enable people to become fully devoted
followers of Jesus Christ

Joseph Study Leaflet

Sunday 18th August

Sermon 15

“An attitude problem”

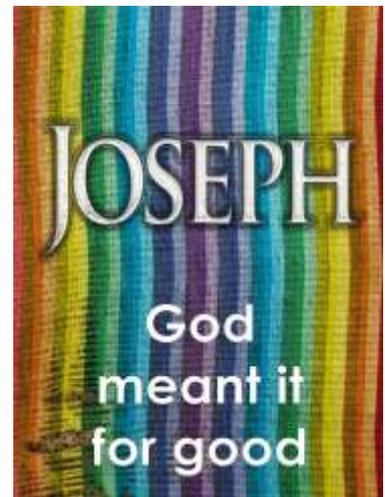
Genesis 44

This study guide will be used in our Small Groups, but can also be used by individuals.

You can download or listen to a recording of the sermon at this link:

<http://www.viewfield.org.uk/media/podcasts>

Leaflets about our small groups are available on the teabar. If you would like to join a small group, please speak to our Pastor, Rae, or to Pete Hutchison.



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Sermon 15 “An Attitude problem”

Why was Joseph considered so great? Why does the Spirit of God inspire Moses, the author of Genesis to tell us so much of his story? Joseph certainly was not superhuman. He was merely a man. He never walked on water. He never performed any miracles. He certainly wasn't perfect and in his early years was a bit of a diamond in the rough. With the Lords help and by his own admission he interpreted some dreams and he showed great wisdom in coming up with a plan to help Egypt with the impending famine. He was great because of his faith in God, which manifested itself in a magnanimous attitude towards others and his magnificent attitudes towards difficulties. This is quite remarkable considering how he had been wronged and all that he had faced.

Joseph was someone who had learned to guard his heart. We are told in Proverbs 4v23: *“Above all else guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”*

Joseph was someone who knew how to guard his heart as he walked with God. He guarded his heart from bitterness, from resentment, from pride. Through guarding his heart what flowed into his mind was honouring to God. A strong faith leads to a good attitude. How is your attitude?

Joseph had seen his own attitude tested in high places and in low places. However, as we consider Genesis chapter 44 we become very aware that Joseph wants to see in his brothers some of the same attitude that God had kindled within him. A positive faith in God and a positive response to others. Their attitudes had stunk. There was pride, rivalry, jealousy, greed, bitterness, envy. The list goes on. He wants to see a change in their attitude. He wants to see if they are repentant.

Let's consider the story and see what we learn. As we do this let us reflect upon our own heart and our own attitudes.

1/ The Test - Silver in the Sack v1-5

There is a tangible tension in this part of the story. The big question is *“Have these brothers changed?”* That is why they have been facing these tests. During Joseph's first meeting with his brothers he had told them not to return to Egypt unless they brought their youngest brother, Benjamin, back with them. Many months later, they reluctantly returned with Benjamin.

During this second meeting, Joseph ordered his steward that the sacks are filled with grain, that their silver is returned in their sacks and that his silver cup be put in Benjamin's sack. v1-3

Then in the morning when the brothers had begun their journey home Joseph ordered his steward to go after the men and to challenge them about the theft of his cup v4-5, and consequently, Benjamin would be arrested for stealing. For his punishment he would become a slave in Egypt while the other brothers would go free. v17.

This was a test to see if his brothers had changed. Joseph watched to see how they might respond. The brothers are unaware that this is a test and that it is Joseph their brother who is testing the sincerity of their hearts. This is a reminder to us that we cannot always see what God is up to. We may feel at times that God doesn't care or maybe even that he is against us. God allows us to go through trials and testings to build our

faith and to mould and shape our lives. James 1v2-4. Often God in his sovereignty uses these seasons to bring us to repentance and to change our hearts and consequently our attitudes and actions.

2/ The Response - A Repentant Attitude

The question continues to hang over this story: *“Have the brothers changed?” Are they repentant?* Joseph is watching and waiting with anticipation. We hold our breath and pause at this point in the story.

What are they going to do next? Without trivialising these moments in any way it is almost like a moment from one of those candid camera shows whereby they are put in a situation where unbeknown to them people are watching to see how they will respond. Joseph is at the end of the camera. He is watching the footage and he is waiting to see how they will respond to the dilemma he has left with them.

Already there have been glimpses that the brothers are changing. They are showing signs of repentance. A couple of poignant moments already in the story illustrate this. Firstly, they had already confessed honestly with one another their guilt and wrongdoing with regard to Joseph. *Gen 42v21.*

Secondly, they had accepted Joseph spoiling Benjamin at the banquet without the slightest hint of envy or hostility. *Gen 43v34.* The hand of God has been at work changing these brothers' hearts and attitudes.

How do they respond to the accusation in Genesis Chapter 44 after the cup is found in Benjamin's sack? We see here more evidence of a change as we see their response.

So sure are they of one another that they deny it outright and invoke the death penalty on anyone who was found with the cup. *Gen 44v7-9.* Earlier in their lives it was unlikely they would have felt so sure about one another.

They are also beside themselves with grief. They act as one man and turn back to Egypt, refusing to abandon Benjamin. *v13.* Wenham says: *“When Joseph disappeared it was only Jacob who tore his robe; now all the brothers do, the first sign of fraternal solidarity.”*

On their return to Egypt Joseph challenges them about what they have done *Gen 44v15*

In Judah's response we get a real insight into the change of heart and attitude in these brothers. Judah speaking on behalf of his brothers insists that they are not guilty in this instance, but they confess their guilt because they remember their abuse of Joseph. *Gen 44v16.*

In the Bible such a reorientation of life is called repentance. Here they were confessing their sin before God. As Christians there are times when we will fail God. There will be times when our hearts are not right and when our attitudes stink. If we want to grow in our faith and walk closely with God we need to regularly repent and confess of our sins. *1 John 1v8-9.*

Just to test the sincerity of their repentance Joseph gives the brothers one last chance to escape at the expense of Benjamin *Gen 44v17*

What will they do? Judah's response reveals that their repentance is heartfelt and that their hearts and attitudes have been changed as God has been at work. The brothers

are repentant, they have changed and Joseph cannot conceal his identity any longer. *Genesis 45v1-3.*

As we read on in the story we see that Joseph forgave them and showed extravagant grace. So thirdly we see

3/ The Result - A Restored Relationship.

In these holy moments as we have considered Joseph's attitude and the brother's attitudes I want us to reflect on our own lives. How is your walk with God? How are your attitudes?

You may not have done anything as terrible as what the brothers did to Joseph but maybe your heart is not right before God. Maybe your attitude is not as it should be. Maybe your heart is riddled with resentment or bitterness or anger or jealousy or envy or others sins. This sin is affecting your walk with God. God loves you. Come in repentance before him today and confess your sin. Our God is the God of second chances. Ready to give us grace and mercy.

Bible study questions

Icebreaker: "Describe an occasion when you really let somebody down?"

1. Why is our attitude so important?
2. Why was Joseph considered great?
3. In what ways can we guard our heart? Why is it so important to do this?
4. What is repentance? Why is it so important in the life of a believer?
5. Why did Joseph order a silver cup to be put in their sacks? What was the purpose of this test?
6. How did the brothers respond? Was there a change in their attitude? Look at Judah's speech. What does this reveal?
7. Why is repentance necessary before there can be reconciliation?
8. In what ways can we ensure that our hearts are right with God and that we have a godly attitude? How do we ensure we are walking closely with the Lord?

Application: "Is there any area of your life where by you need to repent?"