

# New Men

Genesis 43

God saved the world from famine through one man, Joseph, but God is not just interested in hunger relief. He wants to save His people from sin and death. When the grain that Jacob's sons brought back from Egypt is consumed, they have to set out again, and Jacob is deathly afraid he will lose Benjamin like he lost Joseph (42:38). Twenty years have passed since the brothers sold Joseph into slavery, and now God is transforming them into new men with Judah leading the way. We also need men renewed in the image of the man Jesus Christ.

## **Risk**

Jacob wants them to go and buy "a little food", just not so much that it will draw attention to the fact that Benjamin is not there with them (v2). Jacob is unhappy enough to blame his sons, but not faithful enough to confront them (42:36; 43:6). He is crippled by fear. It is true that they couldn't have known the man would require their youngest brother to come down, but they've been suspecting hard things are happening because of their own treachery (v7; 42:21). It's easiest for everyone to stay at home and starve slowly rather go to Egypt and possibly fail, lose another son, or worse. Into the fog of complaining and indecision, Judah speaks. Reuben is the firstborn but he tried to usurp authority (35:22), and the next sons, Simeon and Levi, were murderers (ch. 34). Judah risks being despised by this violent gang, as well as the consequences of failure (vv8-9; cf. 42:1). Jacob follows his lead and comes up with a plan to take goods, money and Benjamin to Egypt (vv11-13). He realizes that he needs to put it all on the line and trust God Almighty's mercy (v14). This is not a conservative gesture, which would be sin, because it's time to cast bread on the waters (Eccles. 11:1).

## **Responsibility**

Men are called to take risks, but also called to take responsibility. Douglas Wilson has defined masculinity as the glad assumption of sacrificial responsibility. Judah takes a risk, and the risk is personal and costly to him. Up to this point Judah had sold Joseph into slavery, married a Canaanite, not raised his sons to fear the Lord, ran with shady guys, lied to his family, sought comfort in a prostitute after his wife's death, and impregnated his daughter-in-law (38:1-26). Now instead of using people, he gives himself for them. Instead of blaming and condemning others, he puts himself to take blame in the event of failure. This is not a momentary decision but a lifestyle, the kind that defines a man's entire existence. Judah's commitment gains the trust of his father and establishes him as the leader because authority flows to those who take responsibility. Joseph continues taking responsibility for whatever is before him, including his endeavor to lead his brothers to repentance even though it hurts (v30). He has disciplined the steward who works for him (v23), and follows up to find out how his father is doing (v28). New men take action and responsibility, but at the same time they recognize that the results are out of their hands. You can plant and water, but God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). Joseph can do everything right and be betrayed again. Men are tempted to shirk responsibility and do nothing, or to take it in an effort for control and vainglory. But biblical masculinity is industrious and humble. The greater the success a godly man has, the greater his humility because he knows it's all a gift.

## **Reward**

Joseph is testing his brothers by seating them oldest to youngest and then quintupling Benjamin's portion. Are they still consumed with envy (v34)? He sits down with his enemies, hoping they have changed, serves and makes merry with them (v34). God's kindness has worked on Joseph and through him it is working on his brothers. This is all because Jesus became a man, taking the known risk that sinners would betray Him to death. He loved His bride the Church and paid the ultimate price, taking responsibility for all of her sins. These new men are offered the peace of God because He provided for them (v23). Joseph's love for Benjamin burned within him, a sliver of a glimpse of how God's love burns within Him. He has taken responsibility for all our sins and brought us to house to feast and be merry with Him (Eph. 1:18).

## NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

### Today's Passage: Genesis 43:8-14

8 Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. 9 I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. 10 For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time." 11 And their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man—a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. 12 Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight. 13 Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man. 14 And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!"

1. Look at verses 8–9. Jacob has already lost Joseph, so he is scared to send Benjamin for fear losing him, too. How does Judah convince Jacob (Israel) to let him take Benjamin?
2. Now look at verse 14. Jacob works through his fear and decides to take a risk. God often calls us to take risks and trust Him, casting all our cares up Him. What is Jacob's prayer, and how does it reveal his faith?  
(Hint: when someone is "bereaved" it means they are saddened because someone they love has died.)
3. Judah sold his brother Joseph into slavery, but now he takes responsibility for Benjamin's well-being. Men are called to lead in taking responsibility, which means gladly being accountable for something. We trust God when we do this, and we rest in the fact that Jesus has taken complete responsibility for all of our sins in His death on the cross. What can you take responsibility for in your life? If you're not sure, just ask your parents!
4. Draw a picture of Joseph eating a big feast with his brothers.

### Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:

*And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!* —Genesis 43:14