

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

WHEN CHARACTER IS PUT TO THE TEST

GENESIS 43

Character Takes Responsibility

Genesis 43:1-10 Now the famine was severe in the land. ² And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, “Go back, buy us a little food.”³ But Judah spoke to him, saying, “The man solemnly warned us, saying, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.’”⁴ If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. ⁵ But if you will not send *him*, we will not go down; for the man said to us, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother *is* with you.’”⁶ And Israel said, “Why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still *another* brother?”⁷ But they said, “The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, ‘Is your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?’ And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down?’”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.”

- In Genesis 42, when Joseph's brothers first came to Egypt, Joseph accused them of being spies and questioned them. He then gave them a condition:
Genesis 42:15 NKJV: “By this you shall be tested: By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here.”
- Joseph then placed them in custody for three days.
- They were allowed to take grain home and Simeon would have stay in Egypt
- They were required to bring Benjamin when they returned.
- When the brothers return to Canaan and Simeon is not with them, Jacob tells them that they have robbed of his children
- Jacob says *all this is falling on me*
- Genesis 43 opens with the famine continuing and getting worse
- Eventually, Jacob, his sons, their families and livestock, had eaten all they grain they brought from Egypt
- Jacob tells his sons to go back to Egypt and buy a little more food
- But Judah tells Jacob that “the man” warned us we will not see his face *unless* our brother Benejamin is with us
- If you’ll allow Benejamin to go with us we will go to Egypt and buy food
- Jacob asks his Judah why did you bring all this trouble my way, by telling the man you had another brother?
- This man literally asked us if we had another brother
- Judah said to his father Jacob vs.8-9, ***send the Benjamin with me.... I myself will be surety for him***
- This is significant

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- Judah says, ***If I fail to him back and present him to you, let me bear the blame forever***
- This is the same Judah that said in Genesis 37, “Why leave in a pit? We can make for profit if we sell him”
- Twenty years later, Judah has *changed* into a man that is willing to be held accountable for preserving his younger brother Benjamin’s life
- That’s character development
- That’s important for us as well; your past may explain where you’ve been or been through; it doesn’t have to determine who you’re *becoming*
- Character takes responsibility
- The evidence that God is developing you *isn’t* that you’ve never made a mistake; it’s that you don’t keep *becoming* the person who made the mistake
- God can develop character in us even when we have made serious mistakes

Character Requires Sacrifice

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!” ¹⁵ So the men took that present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand, and arose and went down to Egypt; and they stood before Joseph.

- Jacob came to the conclusion that if he wanted grain in the famine, he had to do what Joseph had commanded; which was send Benjamin to Egypt
- Jacob said, if it has to be this way, then here’s what he wanted his sons to do:
 - Take the best fruits and create *a present* for Joseph
 - Take double the money
 - Take back the money they put in your sacks
 - I may have been an oversight
 - Take Benjamin, too
- Why is this significant?
 - He had already lost Joseph and Simeon
 - He doesn’t want to risk Benjamin
- Eventually character requires us to learn, you can’t control everything you love
- Jacob said, if I lose my children, so be it, or to put it another way, I’m willing to make the sacrifice
- Character costs you something
- Character isn’t just about what you believe; it’s about what you’re willing to surrender to do what ‘s right

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- Judah, Jacob, and the brothers all came to the conclusion that doing right was going to cost them something
- To develop our character, we must be willing to ask ourselves some tough questions:
 - What comfort am I *unwilling* to surrender?
 - What relationship requires me to take responsibility?
 - What area of my life am I trying to control?
 - What obedience have I delayed because it *costs too much*?
 - What has God asked me to release?
- Character grows when obedience *costs* you something
- Jesus said, **Matthew 16:24** Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.
- Discipleship has a cost

Character Learns to Trust What it Can't Control

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!”

- Jacob says in vs. 13-14 **“Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man. 14 before the man...”**
- This is a great difference from Genesis 42 where he said. **“All these things are against me!”**
- Jacob has moved from “All things are against me” to **“God is still in this”**
- Faith *begins* where control *ends*
 - Jacob couldn't control:
 - Pharaoh
 - Joseph
 - The famine
- But he could trust God
- Faith is necessary when you *can't* control everything **Proverbs 3:5-6** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.
- We can't guarantee the outcome, but we can trust God *with* the outcome
- There are times when you have done everything you can do; you've *prayed, prepared, worked, planned, got advice*, etc.
- Now there is something you *can't* control
- That's where faith *becomes* character
- You don't know what will happen, but you know *who* God is
- When Jacob said **“And may God Almighty give you mercy”**, his fears weren't imaginary, they were *real*
- Biblical faith is not pretending that the circumstances aren't difficult

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- Faith says, the circumstances *are real*, but they are *not greater* than God

Character Makes Room for Reconciliation (vs.26-34)

26 And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth. **27** Then he asked them about their well-being, and said, “Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?” **28** And they answered, “Your servant our father is in good health; he is still alive.” And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves. **29** Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother’s son, and said, “Is this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?” And he said, “God be gracious to you, my son.” **30** Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought somewhere to weep. And he went into his chamber and wept there. **31** Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, “Serve the bread.” **32** So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians. **33** And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another. **34** Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin’s serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him.

- Joseph came home and his brothers gave him the gift they brought for him and they bowed down to Joseph
- Joseph begins to ask about their wellbeing, he asks about their father’s health, is he still alive,
- Then Joseph saw Benjamin, his younger brother, and said, “Is this your younger brother?”
- Joseph was so overcome with emotion he had to go to another and weep
- Character doesn’t eliminate emotion
- But Joseph doesn’t allow his emotions to dictate the moment
- The table is set for dinner, but Joseph did not eat with his brothers
- So, his brothers ate at a table, the other Egyptians ate a table and Joseph ate a table alone
- Joseph has his brothers sit at a table before him and has them sit in *birth order*; from the oldest to the youngest
- Each brother was served a meal, but when Benjamin was served, he received *five times* what the other brothers were served; this was *another* test
- In the past, Joseph’s brothers resented how much Joseph was favored over them
- Joseph is not simply forgetting what happened
- And at the same time, he’s moving toward reconciliation