

Readings

Scripture

¹When Jacob learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?" ²And he said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die." ³So ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt. ⁴But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers, for he feared that harm might happen to him. ⁵Thus the sons of Israel came to buy among the others who came, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

⁶Now Joseph was governor over the land. He was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. ⁷Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them. "Where do you come from?" he said. They said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food." ⁸And Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. ⁹And Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them. And he said to them, "You are spies; you have come to see the nakedness of the land." ¹⁰They said to him, "No, my lord, your servants have come to buy food. ¹¹We are all sons of one man. We are honest men. Your servants have never been spies."

¹²He said to them, "No, it is the nakedness of the land that you have come to see." ¹³And they said, "We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan, and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is no more." ¹⁴But Joseph said to them, "It is as I said to you. You are spies. ¹⁵By this you shall be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here."

- Genesis 42:1-15 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

Tests

Genesis 42-44

Intended for Good
Stephen Baldwin

God designs the tests that continue his work of grace.

What characteristic tests does God design in the narrative of Joseph and his brothers?

God designs the test of falsehood to reveal truth. (Genesis 42)

- The test of falsehood is layered
- ...intentional, and
- ...lays a foundation

God designs a test of love to trigger repentance. (Genesis 43-44)

- The test of love is more penetrating
- ...more revealing
- ...more fruitful

Reflection Questions

- From this section of the narrative of Joseph's life what can you gather—a) about God's interests or aims, and b) about Joseph's interests or aims?
- How do you react when you read how Joseph treated his brothers harshly. Do you think this was punitive? Why or why not?
- How had Joseph's experience of and reflection upon a wicked lie so many years before prepared him for this encounter with his brothers?
- What do you observe in the brothers at this stage in the process?
- What ways do you see that the test of their love for the youngest brother held up a mirror of themselves before them?
- What sorts of things did Joseph have to be prepared to do and follow through with in order to work for the brothers' repentance and reconciliation?
- Applying this passage to ourselves, how do you desire to respond when you discern that you are in a season of testing?