

**Beneath Joseph's Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat:
God's Tests His Family (Genesis 44)**

Please attempt to answer the following questions before reading the overview at the bottom of the page.

1. Read Genesis 43:32 - 34. Why does Joseph show this blatant favouritism to Benjamin?
2. Read 44:1 - 13. Having shown such favouritism toward Benjamin, why did Joseph set him up to bring false charges against him?
3. Why do Joseph's brothers throw themselves before him in 44:14 - 16?
4. Why is Judah's selfless intercession on Benjamin's behalf so significant? (Genesis 44:17 - 34)
5. Why do Judah's words and actions finally cause Joseph to burst into tears and make his identity known to his brothers? (45:1 - 3)
6. Reflect on the events that God used to change the hearts of Joseph's brothers between Genesis 37:31 - 35 and 44:33 - 34.
7. Can you think of a time when God used testing to develop your character and faith?

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2 - 4) These words go a long way towards explaining what is happening to Joseph's family in Genesis 42 - 44. In Genesis 42:14 - 17 Joseph twice declares to his brothers that he is testing them. Of course his brothers didn't know at the time that Pharaoh's second-in-command was actually their long lost brother whom they had sold into slavery as a teenager. Furthermore, Joseph claimed that he was testing these men to find out if they were spies. But in the larger context of this story it appears that it is actually God who is using Joseph to test and train the hearts of these men. The critical point of this testing comes when Joseph begins to show blatant favouritism toward his youngest brother, Benjamin. But then Joseph falsely accused Benjamin and threatens to throw him in prison. This gave Joseph's brothers the perfect opportunity to get rid of Daddy's other favourite son. But now Joseph's brothers were prepared to act sacrificially to save Benjamin and spare their father the grief they had watched him experience after losing Joseph. So Judah begged Joseph, "*Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father.*" (Genesis 44:33 - 34) At this point Joseph burst into tears and revealed his identity to his brothers, knowing that they had truly changed (Genesis 45:1 - 2). None of us would ever ask for the trials that God uses to mature and perfect us. However, anyone who would come after Jesus must, like his great ancestor Judah, take up the cross of self-sacrifice and follow him.