

Small Group Guide: The Silver Cup

Genesis 44:1-17 | Week 10 of "The Story of Joseph: Seeing the Bigger Picture"

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

Prayer: Ask God to reveal areas where hearts need change and to help the group be honest about unconfessed sin.

Icebreaker: Share a time when you were falsely accused of something. How did you feel? How did you respond?

Summary of the Sermon

Joseph tests his brothers by planting his silver cup in Benjamin's bag to see if their hearts have changed over the past 20+ years. When they were younger, they sold Joseph into slavery out of jealousy because he was the favored son. Now Joseph wants to see if they will defend Benjamin, the new favored son, or abandon him like they did Joseph. When confronted, the brothers voluntarily return to face Joseph, demonstrating humility and acknowledging their long-standing guilt before God.

Central Question: Is it ever too late for heart change, or to right a wrong?

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **Why did Joseph create this test for his brothers?** What was he trying to discover about them?
2. **Read Genesis 44:7-9.** How does the brothers' confident response reveal how much they had changed since selling Joseph into slavery?
3. **In verse 16, Judah says, "God has found out the guilt of your servants."** What guilt is he referring to? Why is this significant?
4. **How does the brothers' voluntary return to the city (verse 13) contrast with their actions 20 years earlier?**

Personal Reflection

5. **The sermon states: "Time doesn't erase sin and guilt. Only Jesus does."** Why do we sometimes assume that old sins no longer matter just because time has passed?

6. **Have you ever carried unconfessed sin while appearing innocent in other areas of life?** What does this passage teach us about that?
7. **Joseph's brothers were shaken when the cup was found (verse 13).** When has God used a difficult circumstance to expose something in your heart that needed to change?
8. **Read 1 John 1:8-9.** What is the difference between defending ourselves and confessing our sins? Which comes more naturally to you?

Application

9. **Is there an "old sin" in your life that you've never properly confessed before God?** What is holding you back from bringing it to Jesus today?
10. **The brothers showed genuine heart change through their actions.** What evidence of heart change should be visible in our lives after we confess sin?
11. **Joseph was testing whether grace had transformed his brothers' hearts.** How can we create space in our relationships for people to demonstrate genuine change?

Key Takeaways

1. **God uses tests to reveal the true condition of our hearts** – not to condemn us, but to lead us to confession and transformation.
2. **Time does not erase guilt** – only confession and the blood of Jesus can cleanse us from unrighteousness.
3. **True repentance is demonstrated through changed behavior** – The brothers didn't just feel bad; they acted differently when faced with a similar situation.
4. **We cannot defend ourselves by claiming innocence in one area while harboring guilt in another** – God sees the whole picture.
5. **It is never too late for heart change** – God's grace is available for genuine confession and transformation at any point in our lives.

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Confession Set aside 30 minutes alone with God. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any unconfessed sin—especially "old" sins you've been carrying. Write them down, confess them specifically to God, and receive His forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Consider sharing with a trusted friend or mentor for accountability.

Option 2: Heart Examination Reflect on a current difficult situation in your life. Ask yourself: "Is God using this to test or reveal something in my heart that needs to change?" Journal your honest thoughts and pray for transformation.

Option 3: Reconciliation Is there someone you wronged in the past that you've never made things right with? Take a step toward reconciliation this week—whether through a phone call, letter, or conversation.

Option 4: Accountability Share with one other person in your group an area where you need heart change. Ask them to check in with you regularly about your progress.

Closing Reflection

Read Together: 1 John 1:8-9 *"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Reflection Question: What is one specific thing God is calling you to confess or change as a result of this study?

Closing Prayer

Pray together as a group:

- Thank God for His faithfulness to forgive when we confess
- Ask for courage to face unconfessed sin honestly
- Pray for genuine heart transformation, not just behavior modification
- Ask God to help each person take the practical step they committed to this week

Looking Ahead

Next week we'll continue Joseph's story and see how his brothers respond to this crisis. Come prepared to discuss how God's bigger picture continues to unfold.

Preparation: Read Genesis 44:18-34 before next week's gathering.