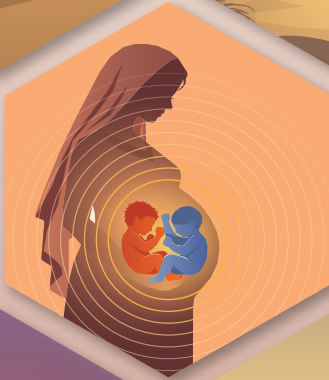




Promises and Inheritance

Volume 5 - Genesis 25 to 36



Meet **Share** Grow

Meet Together, Share Together & Encourage ONE ANOTHER



Coming Together
Once a Week



How to use this Scripture Engagement



Pray to Begin

Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



Read the Bible passage

Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word as you read the passage.



Study the Scripture Engagement Guide

Go through the Scripture Engagement study provided to reflect on the meaning, context, and personal application of the passage you've read.



Reflect on the Scripture Engagement Questions

After every teaching, consider the Scripture Engagement questions listed for personal reflection and application and for your small group discussions.



Listen to Dr. J. Vernon McGee's Teaching

If you'd like to hear the complete audio teaching on the passage, visit ttb.bible or scan the QR code on the last page to download the THRU the BIBLE app in your own language.



Use our recommended **pause and resume icon**. This will guide you to move through the content thoughtfully and at your own rhythm.

For your consideration

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Consequences in God's Hands (Genesis 29:30 - 36)

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The Twins

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 25

Listen: Thru the Bible: [Genesis 25](#)

Dear God,

We come before You with gratitude for this time together. Open our hearts and minds as we reflect. Teach us Your truth, guide our understanding, and help us grow in wisdom and trust in Your ways.

Amen.



The Struggle Between The Flesh & The Spirit



Genesis 25

Isaac and Rebekah **began their life together** and were happy. But Rebekah, like Sarah, was unable to conceive. Isaac **pleaded** with God on her behalf for **20 years** and finally the Lord said, **"It's time."** She then became pregnant **with twins!** Her **pregnancy** wasn't easy. The two babies **struggled together** in the womb and Rebekah asked God about it. She knew **something significant** was happening.

The struggle of these two boys, which began before their birth, represents the struggle that still goes on in the world today.

This is the struggle between light and darkness, between good and evil, between the Spirit and the flesh. Every child of God knows something of this struggle. (Read about it in *Romans 7*).



Dysfunctional Family

Father

Esau - The Favored Son

Isaac loved Esau

- Esau was Isaac's favorite because he was the outdoorsman - the hunter, strong and adventurous.
- Isaac admired Esau's physical abilities and enjoyed the game he brought home.
- This favoritism created imbalance in the family from the beginning.

"And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game..." (Genesis 25:28).

Esau's Nature

- Bold, rugged, and driven by physical appetite.
- Focused on worldly pursuits.
- Had little regard for spiritual inheritance.
- Represented the desires of the flesh.



Mother

Jacob- The Favored Son

Rebekah loved Jacob

- Jacob was Rebekah's favorite, staying close to home and under her guidance.
- Even before birth, God had declared that Jacob would lead.
- Yet Jacob often relied on cunning and manipulation to secure what God had already promised.

"...but Rebekah loved Jacob." (Genesis 25:28)



Jacob's Nature

- Quiet, thoughtful, and spiritually aware.
- Valued God's promises.
- Struggled with self-reliance and deception.
- Though flawed, God was shaping him for His purpose.

The Birthright Incident: Sin seeks to destroy

Esau came in from the field. He had been outdoors, and **he was tired and hungry**. “**Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.**” Apparently Jacob had made a stew; **evidently he was a good chef.**

“**Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary,**” Esau demands. Jacob saw **his chance**. He is a **trickster** and a **traitor**, and he **wanted the birthright legally owned** by the older sibling. Jacob said, “**I’ll sell you this stew in exchange for your birthright.**”

The birthright meant the one who had it was **the head of the house and priest of the family**. In this family, it meant the one who had it would **be the one in the line that would lead to Christ**. Esau attached **no importance** to it, and he didn’t want to be **the priest of the family**. He **didn’t even want to give the impression** that **he was interested in godly things**. “**He had no interest in being in the generational line that led to Jesus Christ.**”

Jacob sees this, and he strategizes, “**if you’ll give me your birthright, I’ll give you a bowl of stew.**” Esau was happy with the bargain.

As much as **Jacob valued God**, he was also **wrong in what he did**. God had already promised, “**The older shall serve the younger.**” The birthright is **coming to Jacob in God’s own time**. But Jacob can’t wait, so he takes what **God has promised him**. He **should have waited for God to give it to him**. Jacob figured he would do **what he could for himself**. As long as he could help himself, **why wait for God?** He was **clever enough**. In the future, Jacob would **learn the hard way** from God; **what you sow, you will reap!**

So “**Esau despised his birthright**” and sat down and ate his stew. **He had surrendered his birthright** because **it meant nothing to him.**



God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from Genesis 25

1

The ongoing struggle between the flesh and the Spirit is a **lifelong conflict**. The **lifelong conflict** between Jacob and Esau, which **began in the womb**, represents the enduring **battle** between **light and darkness, good and evil, and the Spirit and the flesh**. The reality is that **every child of God** will **experience this struggle**.

(Galatians 5:16-17; Romans 7:22-23; Romans 8)

2

God values our desire to be like Christ over worldly pursuits. Esau **represents the flesh**; he was an **athletic, outdoor man who had no desire or capacity for God**. He lived **solely as a man of the world** and **"despised his birthright,"** which **represented spiritual headship** of the family, giving up the lineage of Christ. Jacob, on the other hand, was **deeply flawed and cunning, but deep down, he understood there was more to life and valued God**. God **eventually worked through Jacob's flaws to refine him because of his desire to live for God**.

(Hebrews 12:16-17; 1 John 2:15-17)

3

We must trust God's timing rather than depend on human manipulation. God had already promised before the twins were born that the older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob). The birthright was **meant for Jacob**, but **instead of waiting for God's timing**, Jacob wrongly took matters into his own hands and **used trickery to obtain it**. The lesson for us is to **wait for God to fulfill His promises** rather than trying **to cleverly manipulate them ourselves**.

(Romans 9:10-12; James 4:13-15)



Reflection Questions

Question 1

Where in my life am I currently experiencing the conflict between my fleshly desires and the desire to do what God says in His Word?

Question 2

In my daily habits, am I feeding the "flesh" by prioritizing physical pursuits, or am I actively nurturing a capacity for God, to do what He says?

Question 3

Are there areas where, like Esau, I am sacrificing my long-term spiritual inheritance for immediate, worldly gratification (a "bowl of stew")?

Question 4

Even though I have personal flaws and failures like Jacob, am I allowing God to rub off the worldly "debris" to uncover and cultivate a genuine, deep-down desire for godly things?

Question 5

In what current situations am I tempted to be a "manipulator" or use clever strategies to force an outcome because I feel I cannot wait for God's provision?

Question 6

How can I better surrender my desire to help myself and instead trust that God will deliver His promises to me in His own perfect time?



Isaac's Life

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 26

Listen: Thru the Bible: [Genesis 26](#)

Dear God,

Thank You for Isaac's example of patience, obedience, and trust in Your faithfulness. As we study Your Word, help us trust Your timing, walk in obedience, and rest in Your promises through every season. Shape our hearts to reflect Your peace and follow You faithfully.

Amen.



More About Isaac's Life



Genesis 26

The Lord called men like Abraham, Jacob, and David, who were assertive and men of action. But God also called Isaac, whose great message for us is about patience.

While their twin boys grew up, Isaac and Rebekah had their own journey with God. During one season, Israel was experiencing a famine, just like the one Isaac's father Abraham experienced when he and Lot took off for Egypt.

But God told Isaac specifically **not to go to Egypt**. Why did God tell him that? Because **if he hadn't**, it would have been **"like father, like son."** **There was no generation gap of sin. It just flows right from one generation to the other.** Generally, the son makes very much the same mistakes that the father did, unless God intervenes. And so God did. **He gave Isaac definite instructions on how to survive the famine, and He confirmed the covenant He had made with his father, Abraham.**

God says to Isaac, **"Don't leave this land; don't go down to Egypt. I want to confirm with you the covenant which I made with Abraham."**

And He repeated the three-fold promise about:

1. The land - "for to you and your descendants I give all these lands,"
2. The nation - "I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven,"
3. The blessing - "and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (see Genesis 26:3-5).

God did this because Abraham **obeyed His voice and kept His commandments**. **When God told Abraham something, he believed God and acted upon it. He demonstrated his faith by action. Faith is something that you step out on.** Abraham **believed God**, and God **counted** it to him for righteousness. God is now **telling Isaac** that He **wants him to be that same kind of man**.



Like Father, Like Son

Abraham and Isaac both lived in the southern part of the land of Israel. Isaac obeyed God and didn't go to Egypt, but he did move his family south to Gerar.

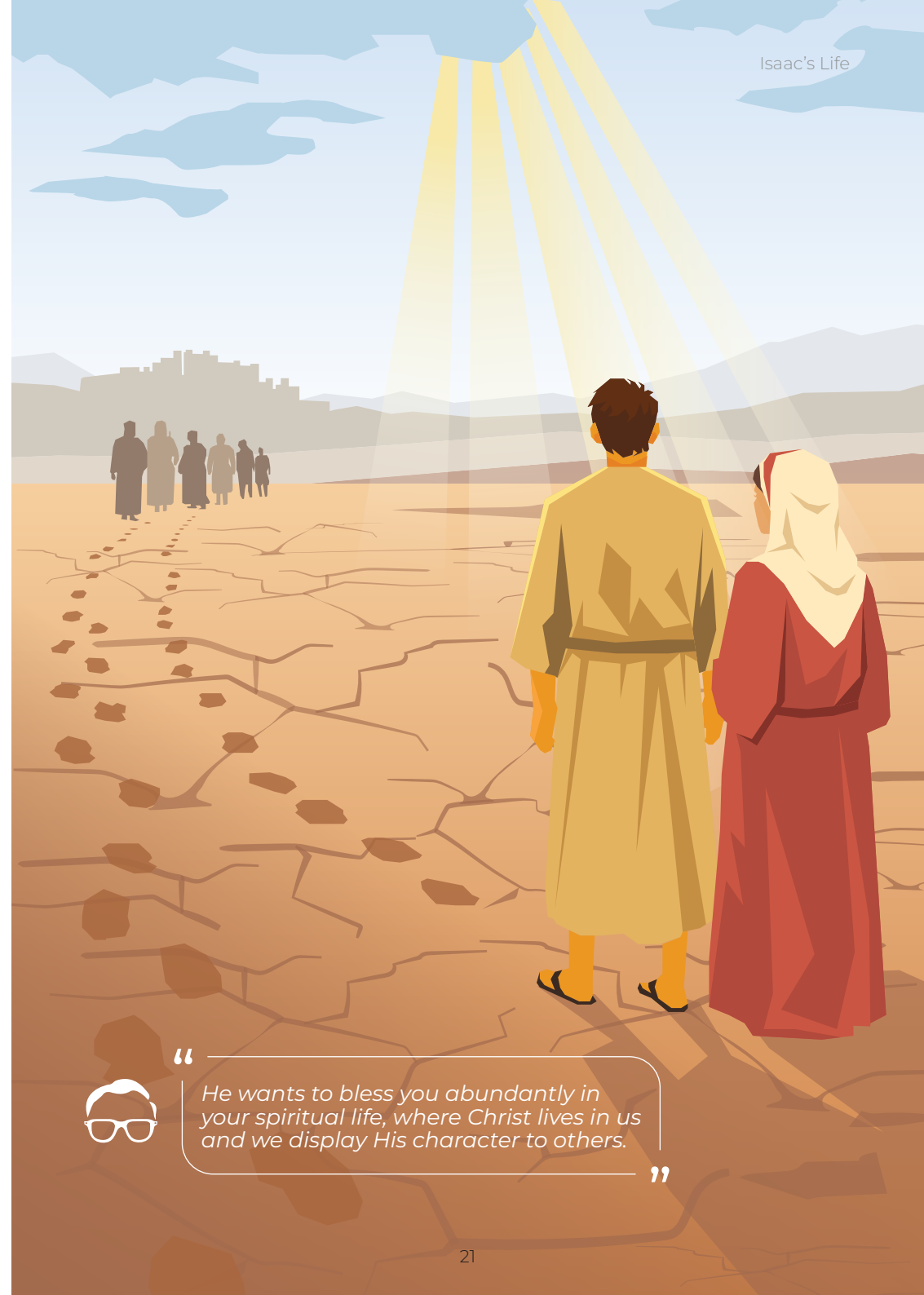
It didn't take long before the men in Gerar were eyeing beautiful Rebekah. **Isaac is afraid they will kill him to take her, so he repeats the sin of his father and says, "She is my sister."** The difference between Abraham's and Isaac's sins is that **Abraham told half a lie and Isaac told a whole lie. But their secret is found out.** After they had been there a while, the king of the Philistines, Abimelech, **saw Isaac showing affection to Rebekah. He knew right away that they were married and not siblings.**

"Why did you put us at this horrible risk?" Abimelech demanded. **"We could have taken her by accident."** Then Abimelech **put a protective ban around Isaac and Rebekah and forbade anyone from touching them.** Abimelech became a good friend of Isaac's. **Isaac had the respect of the community just as his father Abraham had earned.**

The Lord Blessed Isaac

Isaac thrived in Gerar because God blessed him. His crops were bountiful, and so was his reputation. He was enjoying an earthly blessing. **God made good on His promise of blessing as they walked in fellowship with Him. God promises us not that blessing, but spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1: 1-14).** That is our portion today, depending on our walk with God. If you will permit Him, **He wants to bless you abundantly in your spiritual life, where Christ lives in us and we display His character to others.**

Isaac's field brought forth a hundredfold. His life is as outstanding as his father's. **And it's appropriate that we link their lives together.** Isaac's birth and his life is interwoven with Abraham's experiences.



“

He wants to bless you abundantly in your spiritual life, where Christ lives in us and we display His character to others.

”

Although Isaac was important when he was offered there upon the altar, again it was Abraham and Isaac together.

Their experiences together are offered as examples to us. This also presents a wonderful picture of the intimacy between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father. Jesus said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). And in the high priestly prayer of Jesus, He said, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4). Also, He said, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working” (John 5:17). Therefore, it is very appropriate that the story of Isaac and the story of Abraham be told together.

Isaac And His Wells

Now Isaac stands on his own two feet up against the Philistines and it doesn't go too well. The Philistines are jealous of Isaac's prosperity, so they start to sabotage his efforts. Abraham had dug many wells in this land to water his herds, but the Philistines were filling them in. (This conflict with them continued to escalate into David's time.)

Abimelech told Isaac, “You're causing difficulty for us, and it would be better if you left.” The water was causing conflict among the shepherds. Isaac's men would dig a well, and they would take it away from him. He'd move up, dig another one, and they would take that away from him. He would just keep moving up.

Isaac was quite a patient man of peace! At one point, he called a well, “the Lord has made room for us” for them both to be fruitful in the land.



“

Isaac was quite a patient man of peace!

”

God Visits With Isaac

Finally, Isaac moves further south to Beersheba, and it was there that the Lord appeared to him to comfort him. (God appears to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Isaac's son, Jacob.) His decision to move out of Philistine territory must have pleased God.

“And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, ‘I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake.’” (Genesis 26:24)

And on that spot, Isaac built an altar and called on God's name. His servants also dug a well. (You can always put a well down next to Isaac. And you can put an altar down next to Abraham. As we'll see later on, you can put a tent down next to Jacob.)



Isaac's Faith In God Impressed His Neighbors

Soon they had an official visit from their old friend Abimelech of Gerar, accompanied by his advisor and the commander of his army, who **testified to God's blessing on Isaac** and gave God glory (v. 28-29). Isaac asked, "Why are you here, since you sent me away?"

They were afraid that Isaac might attack them, so they proposed a treaty. They said, "Let there now be an oath between us, between you and us; and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, since we have not touched you, and since we have done nothing to you but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD" (Genesis 26:28-29).

So Isaac and Abimelech **made a treaty of mutual non-aggression** and sealed it with a meal, **"a feast" that Isaac prepared for his treaty partners.** Eating together was often a sacred rite in the ancient Near East that sealed an agreement.

Although Isaac seems weak like a pacifist, in his dealings with the men of Gerar, his life and honorable faith in God impressed his neighbours. **Isaac's strength presented in a different way than expected.**

Esau Deliberately Sinned Against God and His Parents

We then learn that **Esau, his son (now 40), married two Canaanite girls from the Hittite tribe.** Of course, this tribe was under God's curse. But **Esau didn't care about the special calling** God had on his family, and instead **wanted to establish himself as a great man of the world.** This decision grieved Isaac and Rebekah.

Peace
that earned
Respect



God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from Genesis 26

1

Sin has a generational impact, but God provides the breakthrough. Isaac repeated Abraham's sin by lying out of fear and claiming his wife Rebekah was his sister. Sin flows naturally from one generation to the next unless **God intervenes = Christ's paying the penalty for our sins** gives us the breakthrough from the generation of sin, and this truth gives us the freedom to live in the newness of life. *(1 Peter 1:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:17)*

2

Fellowship with God leads to spiritual blessings. As Isaac walked in fellowship with God, God fulfilled His promises and blessed him abundantly. For believers today, **the eternal truth is that God desires to pour out abundant spiritual blessings in Christ upon us, which is the Christ-like character we will live out in our daily walk with Him, enjoying His fellowship.** *(Ephesians 1:1-14)*

3

Patience and peace-making are powerful witnesses to the world. When the Philistines grew jealous and maliciously filled in Isaac's wells, Isaac did not retaliate. **He showed great patience and peace by simply moving on and digging new wells to avoid conflict.** This non-aggressive strength and honorable faith ultimately impressed his enemies, leading them to acknowledge that Isaac was blessed by the Lord and to seek a peace treaty with him. *(Romans 12:17-21; 1 Peter 2:23)*



Reflection Questions

Question 1

What negative family patterns or "generations of sin" (such as Isaac repeating his father's exact lie out of fear) do I need God's intervention to break in my own life?

Question 2

What are you doing to enjoy the spiritual blessings in Christ, living out of Christ's righteousness, holiness, and experiencing the fruit of the Spirit?

Question 3

When faced with jealousy, hostility, or unfairness, like the Philistines maliciously filling in Isaac's wells, do I instinctively retaliate, or do I choose the path of peace and patiently move on?



A Broken Home

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 27

Listen: THRU the BIBLE: [Genesis 27](#)

Dear God,

As we gather in Your presence, quiet our hearts and remove distractions. Help us see the cost of deception and the danger of trusting our own schemes over Your promises. Teach us to wait on You with honesty and faith.

Amen.



Unhappiness in the Home



Genesis 27

Isaac loved Esau more, and Rebekah loved Jacob more. How could their home ever be happy? The first issue in the home was **who would get Isaac's blessing?** God had promised Rebekah that, **"the older shall serve the younger"** (Genesis 25:23) and so the blessing was intended for Jacob. Knowing this, Isaac tried to bypass Jacob and give his blessing to Esau. **Jacob schemed to get the blessing on his own.**

Nobody believed God's promise. And the family unit was **broken apart** by deception and would never be whole again.



Nobody believed God. And the family unit was broken apart by deception and would never be whole again.

”



Jacob Takes Esau's Birthright

We've followed Isaac in his travels, making treaties and digging wells. **We know him to be a great man of peace and patience, as well someone who was prominent and powerful.** But now **he is old and his eyes are dim; he knows he's coming to the end of his life.**

All throughout his life, Esau had been his favorite son. He was the outdoor boy who would bring home deer or some other animal and cook it up just as his father enjoyed it. Now he wants to bless his son. **He knew that God said "the older shall serve the younger," but he intentionally forgets that in order to bless Esau.** He tells Esau to go out and hunt some meat, and says he will bless him because of it.

Have you noticed the family strife in this last section of Genesis? First, there was trouble in Abraham's family because of Hagar. Now there's **strife** in this family **over the twins.**

Rebekah overheard what Isaac said to Esau. Since Jacob is her favorite, she conceived a **deceitful counter-plan.** God includes it in His Word because it's historical fact, but it is **absolute deception and cannot be condoned.**

Rebekah tells Jacob to kill two goats, and she will prepare them like she knows her husband likes. Then she says, **"Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death."** (v.10)

Jacob says, "Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and **I shall seem to be a deceiver to him;** and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing." (v11-12)

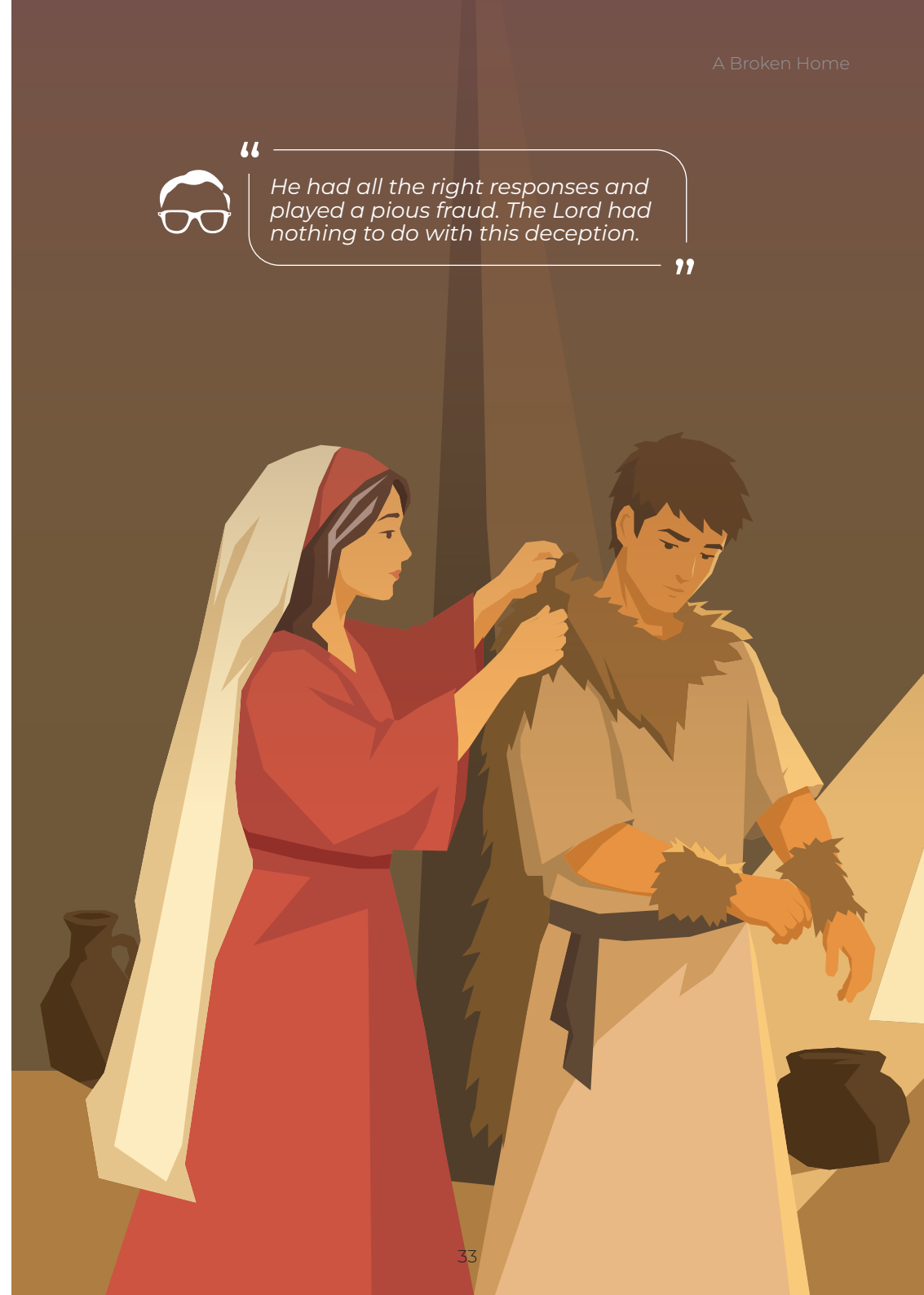
Rebekah told him to do as she asked, and she'd take care of it. **She took some of Esau's clothes and put them on Jacob, and then put the skins of the goats on his hands and neck.** Then she handed him the meat and bread she had fixed and sent Jacob into Isaac's room with them. **When his father felt his hands and neck, he'd think it was Esau. Esau's clothes would make Jacob smell like him too.**

So Jacob went in to Isaac and played his part. **He had all the right responses and played a pious fraud. The Lord had nothing to do with this deception.**



“*He had all the right responses and played a pious fraud. The Lord had nothing to do with this deception.*”

”



He said, "Hello, father."
 "Who are you?"
 "I am Esau, with the venison you wanted, that your soul may bless me."
 "You found it so quickly!"
 "Only because the Lord brought it to me!"

Then Isaac asked Jacob to come closer, and he felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." Isaac also smelled his clothes. **He may have suspected something was wrong, but Rebekah knew him well and worked out every detail.**

So Isaac ate the meal and blessed his son, Jacob. "Therefore, may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let people serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!" (*Genesis 27:28-29*)

Isaac is actually blessing Jacob with the blessing he had received - he is passing it on. **This is the blessing that already belonged to Jacob.** God had already blessed him. God does not accept this deception at all.

As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly left the room, Esau came in from hunting. He cooked his meat and brought it to his father. **It only took a moment for them both to realize that they had been deceived.** Isaac trembled with emotion at how he had been taken in by this plot.

And when Esau figured out what had happened, he cried out, "Bless me, too!" But Isaac said, "No, he took your blessing." Esau admitted, "You named him correctly; **he is the usurper.** He stole my blessing." Isaac's word to Esau was prophetic, "By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother." (*Genesis 27:40*)

Jacob's method of obtaining the birthright was despicable. The birthright was already his! The formality of his father giving a blessing wasn't necessary at all. **God didn't condone his fraud and deceit** any more than He condoned Sarah and Abraham's plan with Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham hadn't given the blessing to Isaac - God had! And it is God who gave it to Jacob. **His trickery was not only unnecessary, but God would deal with him because of it.**

On The Run

Esau hated Jacob for what he did and made his own plan. He thought, "Our father is old and won't live much longer. Just as soon as he dies, I'll kill Jacob. I'll get rid of him!" He brooded on this plan and evidently talked about it with others. When word got to Rebekah, she began planning again. She told Jacob, **"You're going to have to leave home."** **She didn't know that she would pay for her part in this sin.**

Her plan was for Jacob to go to her brother, **Laban, in Haran.** "Let him lay low for a while until Esau calms down." But what was supposed to be a few days extended to 20 years.

Rebekah convinces Isaac that Jacob needs to go find a wife in Haran, like Abraham's servant had found her. **Esau's two Canaanite wives were making life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah.** Jacob needed to get out of Canaanite country and find a God-fearing wife from her family, or else he'd probably do the same thing.

This was an excellent excuse to get Jacob away from danger and to find him a wife. She convinces Jacob to go back to her family and to her brother, Laban. **Sadly, she dies before she sees Jacob again.**



God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from *Genesis 27*

God's sovereignty prevails, but He disciplines His children's fleshly actions.

- **The Truth:** Jacob's trickery was complete fraud that God did not approve of. The blessing already belonged to Jacob by God's decision; there was no need for him to cheat. While God still fulfilled His promise, He used the resulting exile and trials to discipline Jacob.



- **New Testament Connection:** *Hebrews 12* reminds us that God disciplines those He loves. The Lord allows trials to come into our lives to strengthen us, give us courage, and correct our deceitful nature so we can stand firmly for God.



Reflection Questions

Question 1

The Trap of Scheming: Where in your life are you currently trying to “help” God fulfill His promises through your own manipulation, control, or deceit, as Rebekah and Jacob did?

Question 2

Living by Faith: True faith rests securely on what God has said. What promises has God given you through Christ that give you confidence to trust His plan rather than scheme your own way forward?



Jacob's Dream

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 28

Listen: THRU the BIBLE: [Genesis 28](#)

Dear God,

As we gather in Your presence, open our eyes to see Christ as our only way to You. Help us release our bargains and conditions, and instead rest fully in Your grace and mercy. Teach us to serve You out of love.

Amen.



Jacob Leaves Home



Genesis 28

As Jacob prepares to leave, Isaac sends him off with a blessing and a command **not to take a Canaanite wife**. All through the Old Testament we find that **God doesn't want the godly to marry the ungodly**. **Intermarriage always leads to godlessness.**

"May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may be an assembly of peoples; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham."
(Genesis 28:3-4)

Isaac understands that **God blessed Abraham**, and that blessing had transferred to him, and now **this blessing is to be passed on to his son, Jacob**. Isaac now sends Jacob to his brother-in-law, Laban (Rebekah's brother). This family was Syrian. Sometimes the question is asked, **"Was Abraham a Jew? Was he an Israelite?" No, not yet.**

Soon God would **change Jacob's name to Israel**. His twelve sons were Israelites. The line came from Abraham. **He is the father of the race, but he wasn't yet called a Jew.**

We also learn that when Esau saw how much his father hated intermarriage with Canaanites, **he went out and married Ishmael's daughter, hoping that it would please his father. But he had no spiritual discernment** whatsoever since the Ishmaelites were as much rejected as the Canaanites or the Philistines.



Jacob's Ladder

On the first day on the road, Jacob covered about 40 miles. He traveled far and fast to get away from Esau. He stopped for the night in a place called Bethel, which means, “the House of God.”

What do you think he was feeling that night? He was likely lonely and homesick. As far as we know, **this was his first night away from home**, out on his own for the first time.

He lies down and uses **a stone for a pillow**. Bethel was a dreary place in the hills with large, bare rocks exposed. Its topography looked bleak and hostile. Yet this was the place that captured the high point in Jacob's spiritual life, both now and also later in his life. So here is where he lay down to sleep.

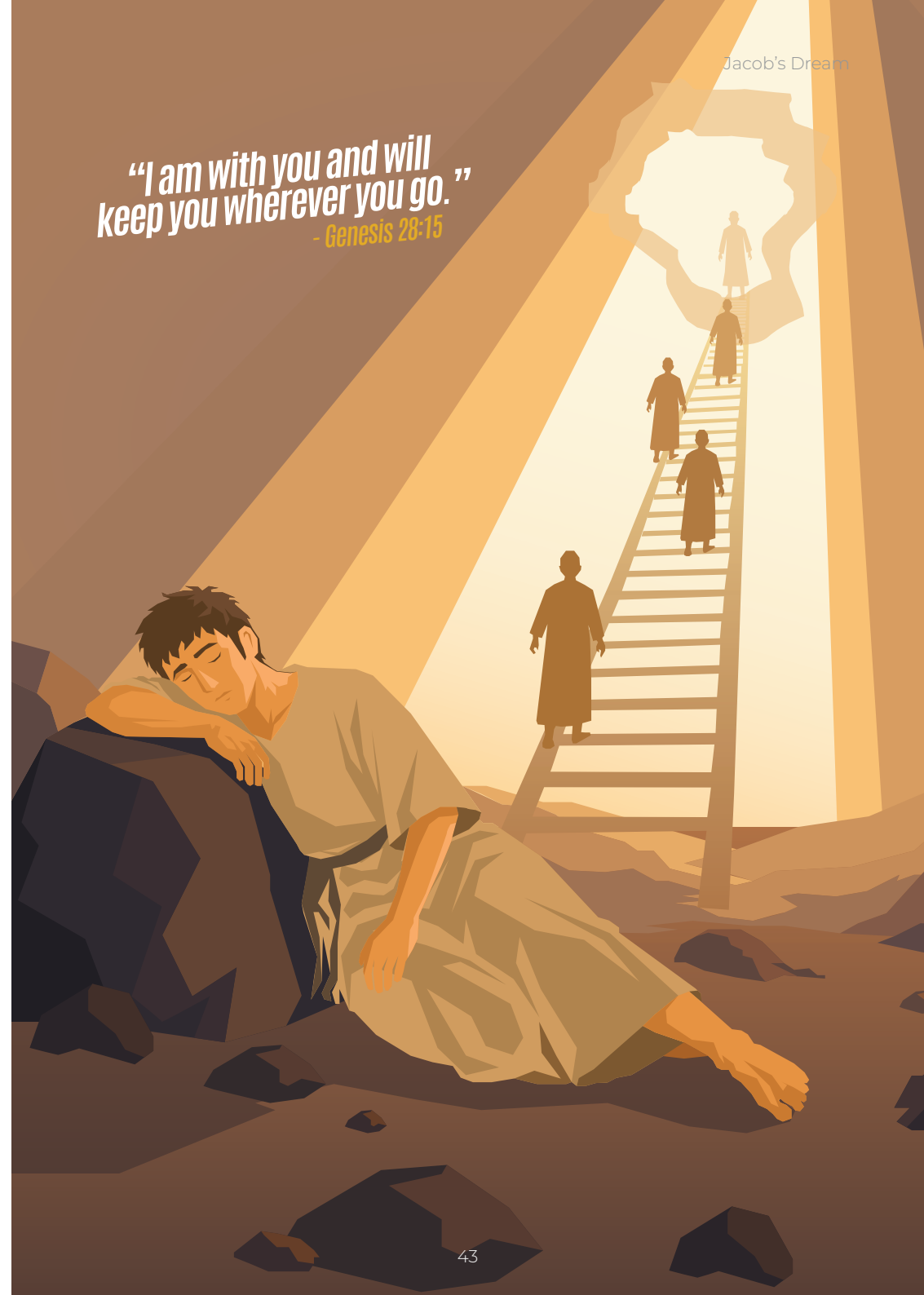
Then Jacob dreamed of a ladder, grounded on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven. Angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood at the top of the ladder and said,

“I am the LORD God of Abraham, your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also, your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”
(Genesis 28:13-15)

This area is where **God first appeared to Abraham** after he entered the land. Now God is giving the **same promise to Jacob**. God had **repeated it to Isaac**, and now **He confirms and reaffirms that He will do this for Jacob**.

What a gift this vision was to a **lonely, homesick young man** who had to leave home in a hurry. He was on **his way to a far country**, and on **that first night** God said to him, “I’m going to be with you, Jacob, and I’m going to bring you back to this land.”

“I am with you and will
keep you wherever you go.”
- Genesis 28:15



Christ:

The Vision of a Ladder

What did this vision of a ladder mean? The Lord Jesus interpreted it when He called Nathanael to be His disciple.

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Because I said to you, "I saw you under the fig tree," do you believe? You will see greater things than these.' And He said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'" (John 1:50-51)

That ladder is none other than Christ Himself. The angels were ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. The angels ministered to Him; they served at His command. Nathanael will later hear God's voice from the top of that ladder, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). We can't come to the Father directly, but we have access to the Father through Christ.

The Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the ladder; not one that we can climb but one that we can trust.

This truth was given first to Jacob, the usurper. About Nathanael, our Lord said, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit." (John 1:47) This means, he is not like Jacob, a trickster. **God will deal with Jacob. God has given him this wonderful, glorious promise. But Jacob has so much to learn!**

Isn't that true of all of us today? No wonder God has to teach us. No wonder God has to discipline us. **He did it to Abraham, and He did it to Isaac. He is going to do it to Jacob. Up to this point, everything has been going Jacob's way.** But now the Lord allows a trial to come to Jacob to discipline him. **Trials strengthen our character; they put courage in our lives and enable us to stand for God.**



That ladder is none other than Christ Himself - not one that we can climb, but one that we can trust.



Jacob Recognizes God's Presence

When Jacob woke up, he was afraid.

"Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it... this is the gate of heaven!" (Genesis 28:16-17)

When Jacob ran away from home, he had a limited view of God. He thought that when he ran away from home, he was also running away from God. But God reminds him that he hadn't left him. He promised to be with Jacob.

The first thing Jacob did in the morning was to take the stone he had used as a pillow, set it up as a pillar and pour oil on the top of it. "Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me... and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God.'" (Genesis 28:20-21)

Jacob's Transactional Deal with God

Jacob has a lot to learn. **He wants to trade with God.** He says, "God, if You will do this for me, then I'll serve You." **But God has already told him that He is going to do every one of these things for him,** "I am going to keep you; I am going to bring you back to this land; I am going to give you this land; and I'm going to give you offspring."

Jacob wants to bargain with God, but God doesn't do business with any of us that way. If He had, Jacob would never have made it back to that land.

God's Grace and Mercy

God brought him back into that land by His grace and mercy. **When Jacob did finally come back to Bethel years later, he came back a wiser man.** That's when he returned to worship and praise God for His mercy.

Even today, many people say they will serve the Lord if He will do a certain thing. But God doesn't do business that way. **He will extend mercy to you, and He will be gracious to you without asking anything in return.** Though He asks nothing in return, He does say that if you love Him, you will really want to serve Him. That will be the bondage of love.

It is the same kind of love a mother has for her little child. She wants to bless him. That's the way God wants us to love Him. **He just wants to become your Father through faith in Christ.**



“
God just wants to become your Father through faith in Christ.
”

God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from *Genesis 28*

1

Jesus Christ is our direct access to God the Father.

- **The Truth:** The ladder Jacob saw reaching to heaven was not just a dream; it was a picture of Christ. We cannot reach God through our own efforts, but God provided a way down to us.
- **New Testament Connection:** Jesus explicitly interpreted Jacob's dream in the New Testament when He told Nathanael, "hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (*John 1:51*). Jesus confirmed, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (*John 14:6*). **Christ is the ladder - not one we climb, but one we trust to bring us to Heaven.**

2

God operates through unmerited grace, not transactional bargains.

- **The Truth:** Jacob tried to trade with God, promising to serve Him if God provided food, clothing, and safety. However, God had already promised to do all these things unconditionally. God does not do business with us on the basis of trade; He brings us into His promises through His grace and mercy.
- **New Testament Connection:** Salvation is the gospel of grace freely given to us through Christ (*Ephesians 2:8-9*). God extends mercy without asking for anything in return because Christ has paid our penalty for sin, and our service to Him should simply be a "bond of love," responding to the grace He has already freely given us through faith in Christ.

Reflection Questions

Question 1

The Purpose of Discipline: Look back at a difficult trial or "exile" in your life. How might God have been using that situation to discipline you, remove your deceit, and strengthen your character?

Question 2

Resting in the Ladder: Jesus is the ladder connecting heaven and earth. Have you trusted Jesus to completely save you from your sins? Is your soul 100% rested fully trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ?

Question 3

Serving Out of Love: God desires our obedience to be a "bond of love" rather than a business transaction. How would you describe your relationship with the Lord? Is it transactional, or in what ways are you experiencing His love and guidance in your life?

Good News

CHRIST

The True Ladder to Heaven

1. **The Revelation of the Vision:** In this lesson, we learned about Jacob's dream of a ladder reaching to heaven. The ultimate meaning of this vision was hidden until the Lord Jesus interpreted it during the calling of His disciple, Nathanael. Jesus told him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man" (*John 1:50-51*).
2. **Christ is the Connection:** By applying this Old Testament imagery to Himself, Jesus reveals great good news: **that ladder is none other than Christ Himself.** He is the sole mediator bridging the infinite gap between a Holy God and sinful humanity. Furthermore, the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man show that they actively ministered to Him and served at His sovereign command.

3. **The Affirmation of the Father:** In Jacob's original dream, the Lord stood at the top of the ladder. In the New Testament, we hear God the Father's voice affirming Jesus from the top of that ladder, declaring, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (*Matthew 3:17*). Christ has the absolute approval and authority of the Father.
4. **The Exclusivity of the Gospel:** The fundamental problem of humanity is separation from God. Christ makes it clear that **we cannot come to the Father directly; our only access is through Christ.** Jesus leaves no room for alternative routes to heaven, clearly stating the fact, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (*John 14:6*).
5. **The Core Application - Faith vs. Works:** The ultimate takeaway for our salvation is how we respond to this ladder. Religion tells people to work hard and "climb" their way up to God's favour. However, God declares that the **Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the ladder, not one that we can climb, but one that we can trust to save us.**

We are saved not by our own exhaustive efforts to reach heaven, but by **resting our full faith in the One who came down from heaven to rescue us.** Jesus paid the penalty for your sins on the cross, died for you, and rose again on **the third day to proclaim you not guilty, and to forgive your sins, and through Jesus (our ladder),** He will bring us home to heaven nearer to God.



Jacob Gets Married

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 29:1-30

Listen: THRU the BIBLE: [Genesis 29:1-30](#)

Dear God,

As we study Your Word, open our eyes to the ways we deceive ourselves and others. Help us recognise that what we sow, we will reap. Give us the humility to accept Your discipline and the wisdom to walk honestly before You.

Amen.



Time to Go



Genesis 29:1-30

Up until now, **Jacob had gotten through life by being arrogant and clever and had perfected deceit.** He would stoop to use any dishonest method to accomplish his purpose, and he was proud of it. **But now he would reap what he had sown.** Jacob is ready to leave Bethel, the place where **he saw a vision of Jesus Christ as the ladder to heaven.** He resumed his journey and, after a time, arrived in Haran.

The first thing he saw was a **well with a rock over its mouth.** The water in this well is so important that it is protected by the rock. At a certain time in the day, the stone was removed from the top of the well, **and then everybody watered their sheep.** Once everybody got the water they needed, the stone was put back on to close the well.

When Jacob arrived, the rock was still in place. **He first asks, "Where are we?" When they answered, "Haran," he asked if anyone knew Laban, the son of Nahor. "Yes, that's his daughter, Rachel, coming with their sheep."**

While they were talking, Rachel arrived with her flock. As soon as Jacob saw her, he **rolled the stone from the well and watered the flocks** for her. Nobody told him to water Rachel's flock, but he did it. Jacob made up the rules as he went through life, that is, the first part of his life. Now he was about to learn a **tremendous lesson**, and Uncle Laban would be the one to teach him.



Time to Reap what Jacob Sowed

When he meets his relative, Rachel, he kisses her and is **overwhelmed with emotion and cries with joy. Jacob is her father's nephew, son of Rebekah, her father's sister.** When Laban heard the good news, he ran out to meet Jacob, hugged and kissed him, and brought him into the house. Jacob likely entertained them at dinner with his stories from the road, and **how he tricked his brother** to get his birthright, and how **he used trickery to get the blessing.**

Laban was convinced now that this was his nephew, and he said, **"You're my relative, so come in and make yourself at home."** Then a month went by. As a nephew from a far country, Jacob was not working. He was also likely spending time with Rachel. One morning, Laban said to Jacob, **"Listen, I don't want you to work for me for nothing, so let's work out an arrangement." Laban is going to deal with his nephew.**

We learn that Laban had two daughters: the older sister was Leah and the younger was Rachel. **He knew Jacob was attracted to Rachel, for she was pretty and sweet. Leah, however, was not.** When Laban asked Jacob what his wages should be, **Jacob said he was willing to work for seven years for Rachel.** Laban accepted that bargain.

Jacob Experiences the Pain of Deception

And so Jacob served Laban for seven years for Rachel, and **"they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her"** (Genesis 29:20). In the early years of Jacob's life, the only hint of anything beautiful or honorable was his love for Rachel. Now that seven years of labor had passed, Jacob was eager to have Rachel's hand in marriage. So, Laban gathered all the men together and threw a party. **And in the evening, Laban took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob.** In those days, at the marriage ceremony, the bride was heavily veiled, so she couldn't be seen. Poor Jacob didn't see the girl he was marrying until the next morning. **And it wasn't Rachel - it was Leah! Jacob stormed over to Laban and demanded, "What have you done to me? I served you for Rachel. Why have you deceived me?"**

Laban dismisses his objection by saying, **"It's not our custom to give the younger before the firstborn."** This was a condition that he had forgotten to mention to Jacob.

When Jacob saw that he had been tricked, did he remember when he had pretended to be the older sibling? He had to leave home because he had deceived his father. Now Jacob thinks he's getting the younger sister, and he gets the older sister instead. The tables are turned, and it's a sad day for Jacob.

Making Decisions Against God's Will

But Laban was **willing to be "generous" in his dealings, so he made an offer:** Work another seven years, and you can have Rachel. That meant that Jacob would have two wives, something he shouldn't have done. He'll be in trouble before it is over. **So Jacob served another seven years and took Rachel to be his wife.**

Some have asked: **"Does God approve of polygamy?"** No, God doesn't approve of everything that is in the Bible. But it tells the truth about history. Jacob had two wives, and this is how it came about. **Jacob had plenty of trouble in his family from here on, and it all can be traced back to him, using his own methods to get what he wanted.**



Jacob had lived by his wits. He was cocky and clever and had perfected deceit. But now he will reap what he has sown.

God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from *Genesis 29*

The Principle of Sowing and Reaping:

- **The Truth:** The core truth in this story is that **"for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."** (*Galatians 6:7*). Jacob spent his early life relying on his deceptive and dishonest tactics to get his father's blessing and his brother's birthright. Because he sowed deception, he reaped deception: he was tricked by his uncle Laban into marrying the older sister, Leah, instead of Rachel. **God allowed Jacob to experience the pain of being deceived to discipline him, which made him reflect on his past sins. This is a fundamental, timeless truth that applies to all generations.**



- **New Testament Connection:** *Galatians 6:7* - "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."



Reflection Questions

Question 1

Reflecting on Sowing and Reaping: Are there areas in my life where I have justified using dishonest methods or "making up the rules as I go" to accomplish my goals, just as Jacob did? How might my current struggles be a harvest of things I have sown in the past?

Question 2

Changing Behavior: What is one "clever" or deceptive habit I need to confess and abandon today to avoid reaping a bitter harvest?

Question 3

Honest Self-Examination: Jacob's deception of his father was mirrored back to him by Laban. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any area where you are currently deceiving others or yourself. What steps can you take this week to walk in honesty before God?



Jacob's Family

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 29:30 - 31:6

Listen: THRU the BIBLE: [Genesis 29:30 - 31:6](#)

Dear God,

Thank You that Your grace is greater than our striving.
Help us see that every good thing we have comes from
You, not our own cleverness. Teach us to place ourselves
fully under Your hand and trust Your provision rather
than our own strategies.

Amen.



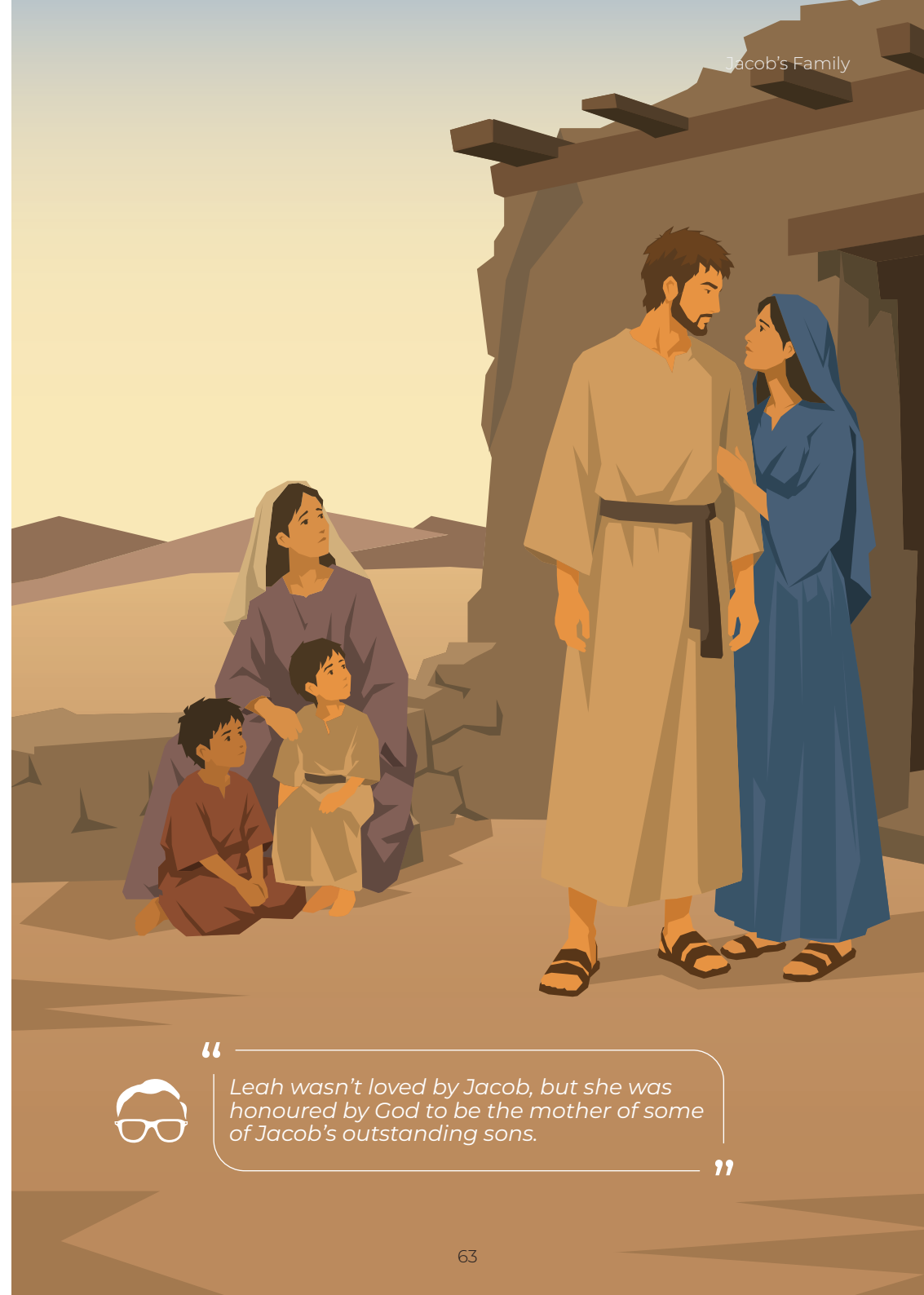
Sons of Jacob



Genesis 29:30 - 31:6

Whether they realize it or not, this young family would become one of the most important families of the Bible. **From these two women and their handmaids will come the 12 sons** (and eventually 12 tribes) of Israel. Jacob's first wife, Leah, is sad because she knows she isn't loved. She hoped that when she had her firstborn, Reuben, Jacob's affections would turn to her. But he continued to only love Rachel.

Reuben is Jacob's firstborn, but the line leading to Christ didn't come through him. **Rather, it was Leah's fourth son, Judah, that began the kingly line.** This is the line that gave us David and, later on, the Lord Jesus Himself. The priestly tribe came from Levi, Leah's son. **Leah wasn't loved by Jacob, but she was honored by God to be the mother of some of Jacob's important sons.**



“ Leah wasn't loved by Jacob, but she was honoured by God to be the mother of some of Jacob's outstanding sons. ”

Meanwhile, Rachel couldn't get pregnant. It led her almost to despair. **In those days, a woman was disgraced if she didn't have any offspring.** The more children she had, the better her position was.

Jacob was frustrated by Rachel's despair, thinking his love should be enough for her. **But Rachel suggested, like Sarah had done generations before, that Jacob have children by her maid.** (God had not approved of it then; He doesn't approve of it now.) Of course, this action brought only trouble.

Jacob's home was filling up with children. Two sons were born through Rachel's handmaid, two sons through Leah's handmaid, and then two more sons were born to Leah.

Then **"God remembered Rachel... and opened her womb"** (*Genesis 30:22*). She had a boy and **named him Joseph.** Later she also gave birth to **Benjamin.**

Jacob had twelve sons in all - the twelve tribes of Israel came from them, and finally the nation of Israel.

Here is the list of Jacob's children:

Born to Leah	Born to Bilhah, Rachel's maid	Born to Zilpah, Leah's maid	Born to Rachel
1. Reuben	1. Dan	1. Gad	1. Joseph
2. Simeon	2. Naphtali	2. Asher	2. Benjamin
3. Levi			
4. Judah			
5. Issachar			
6. Zebulun			
7. Dinah (daughter)			

Jacob's Family Prepares to Leave

When Jacob finally got the courage **to leave Laban and make a home for his own family**, he asked Laban to let them go. He had served him long enough. But Laban wasn't through with them yet. **He had seen how the Lord had blessed them and blessed him for Jacob's sake, and he didn't want to let them go.** He says, **"My boy, don't rush off! I've been blessed because of you. How about I raise your wages?"**

Jacob knew by now that whenever Uncle Laban made a deal, he was the one who would come out as the winner. **Jacob had learned this lesson, and he complained that he had nothing to show for his labor except two wives and a house full of boys.** He says, "God has blessed you, and He has prospered you, but I don't have anything." So Laban said, "Well, let's make a deal."



Jacob's Smart Negotiation with Laban

Jacob, always the strategist, **asked him to give him all the speckled and spotted cattle and all the brown sheep and the spotted and speckled goats.** That would be adequate payment. In other words, the pure breeds will be Laban's, but the off-breeds will be Jacob's.

Jacob said, **"You just let me have these, and they will be my wages."** This seemed a pretty good agreement for Laban. The marking on the cattle would prove what livestock belonged to whom. So Laban agreed to it. **Jacob takes the off-breeds so that only the full breeds would mate and bear offspring, and those would belong to Laban.** The others would be his.

Jacob has made an interesting deal. Laban separated the animals into two groups. He also separated the two flocks by a distance of three days' journey. **Laban's sons oversaw one flock, and Jacob oversaw the other flock. Then Jacob did what he thought would result in his flock bearing additional speckled or spotted or black sheep and goats, and he multiplied his flock.**

God's Grace Amidst Jacob's Self-Reliance

Jacob **displayed ingenuity, either through his own knowledge of animals or through knowledge given to him by God.** He may not have understood the laws of heredity, but he did what he thought would work, and God blessed him. **Whether Jacob was smart or was just guessing, the success of his plan was ultimately God's doing.** Jacob was full of tricks, but God blessed him in spite of them, not because of them.

God blessed Jacob and **made him exceedingly prosperous.** He got more servants, camels, and donkeys, as well as large flocks of sheep and goats. Camels were rare and only for the rich, but Jacob had a lot of them. God allowed him to become wealthy through his own work. **If Jacob had placed himself under God's hand, God would likely have given him even more.** But at this stage of his life, Jacob relied on himself more than on God.



Whether Jacob was smart or guessing, the success of his plan was ultimately God's doing.



God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from *Genesis 30*

God's Grace Operates Despite Our Self-Reliance

Jacob was a man full of tricks and ingenuity. He constantly tried to manipulate circumstances, such as the breeding of the flocks, to his advantage. However, the truth is that **God blessed Jacob despite his tricks, not because of them. Jacob's ultimate success and wealth were God's doing, born out of God's grace and promises (Ephesians 2:8-9).** If Jacob had just placed himself under God's hand instead of relying on himself, God likely would have given him even more.



Reflection Questions

Question 1

Reflecting on Self-Reliance: Where in your life are you currently relying more on your own strategies or manipulations, than on God's provision? Do you truly believe that God's grace is the source of your success, or do you take the credit for your successes?

Question 2

Unseen Faithfulness: Leah was unloved by Jacob but deeply honored by God. Are there areas of your life where you feel overlooked or unappreciated? How does Leah's story encourage you to trust that God sees and honors faithfulness even when people do not?

Question 3

Surrendering Control: What is one specific situation today where you need to stop striving in your own strength and instead place yourself fully under God's hand, trusting that His provision through grace will be more than enough?



Jacob Leaves Laban

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 31:7-55

Listen: THRU the BIBLE: [Genesis 31:7-55](#)

Dear God,

Thank You for being our faithful protector and promise-keeper. When we face hostility or unfair treatment, remind us that You see our affliction and will intervene. Help us trust Your timing, obey Your voice, and leave our grievances in Your hands.

Amen.



God Tells Jacob to Leave



Genesis 31:7-55

Jacob now recognizes that the influence of Laban's household is not good for his growing family. **The boys will be leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel, and God is working to get them out from that environment and back into the country He had promised to Abraham.**

God finally tells him it's time to go. **"Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you"** (Genesis 31:3). Jacob calls Rachel and Leah to meet him in the field because **he is afraid to talk about his plans at home for fear that someone will overhear them.**

Laban's countenance had turned sour toward Jacob, **since his flocks and wealth were growing larger than Laban's.** Jacob explained to Rachel and Leah that it was **God who had blessed them**, so that Laban and his sons had become very jealous of him.

Jacob had worked hard for Laban for 20 years (and Laban had changed Jacob's wages ten times!) But when he was perplexed and frustrated, not knowing where to turn, God intervened.

Then Jacob shared the actual reason why he wanted to leave. **He told his wives about how God had spoken to him in a dream and explained how he multiplied the breeding of the cattle.** God said, **"I did it! I saw what Laban was doing to you, and I blessed you."**



God Reminds of His Promise

"I am the God of Bethel." God reminded Jacob of the night He appeared to him when he was running away from home, that first night he spent at Bethel. **"Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family"** (Genesis 31:13). God wants Jacob to leave Haran because his 11 sons at that time are growing up, and are already beginning to learn bad practices from a home filled with idolatry.

Rachel and Leah **were supportive of Jacob's decision because their father had not been fair to them, either, and they likely would have no inheritance.** They told Jacob to do whatever he thought was best, and that they would stand with him. **So Jacob prepared to leave in a hurry.** Remember this was the same way he left home when he was escaping from his brother. Now he is leaving his uncle, but this time he was not at fault.

Family Deception and God's Intervention

What Jacob didn't know was that Rachel had stolen the household idols that belonged to her father. **Rachel had been brought up in a home of idolatry, and she decided to take her gods with her.**

They waited until Laban had gone to shear his sheep miles away, and they snuck out in the direction of Mount Gilead, which is just east of the Jordan River. They covered a good distance quickly. **But by the third day, Laban found out that Jacob had run, and Laban left quickly to find them.** He was angry enough to kill Jacob and recover all the possessions Jacob had taken, and bring back his two daughters and their children. **But God intervened.**

That night in a dream, **God spoke to Laban, and warned him, "Be very careful what you say and do."** All the while, Laban was coming in anger, but now he changed his pace. How clever Laban was, and so diplomatic! **He tried to make Jacob feel guilty for depriving his family of a wonderful farewell party.** He said he wanted to have a great celebration and a fond farewell. But his words weren't true.

Laban admitted that he wanted to do them harm, but that Jacob's God spoke to him in the night and prevented him from doing anything bad.

Next, he asked about the stolen gods. **Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen the gods, and he didn't believe Laban.** But Laban didn't believe Jacob.

After 20 years, they knew each other well. Laban searched everyone's tents but couldn't find the family idols. Rachel had put them in the camel's box and then sat on it. When he came into her tent, she said she wasn't feeling well and didn't want to get up. Rachel is like her father, so clever and deceptive.

Rachel's taking of the family idols (the teraphim) from her father was much more serious than we know. **Whoever possessed the household gods implied leadership of the family, which meant that Jacob could claim to inherit everything old Laban had!** That is the reason Laban was so upset by it. He didn't want Jacob to inherit his wealth. He felt he had gotten too much already.



“God did not let him get away with it.”

”

God's Lesson: Whatever a Man Sows, that He Will Also Reap

Jacob gained some confidence. They could not locate the idols, and Jacob is sure they aren't anywhere around. **He wanted to rebuke his father-in-law who had come after him. "So what's my sin?" he demanded.** "Why do you come after me with such anger?"

He had served him well for 20 years, yet he was treated unfairly and harshly at times, while he took care of Laban's investments. Jacob was clever, and thought that he could get by with sin. But God didn't let him get away with any of it, because God made it very clear that whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Jacob refused to submit to God at his home, so he had to submit to Laban. Jacob had come to receive a wife with dignity, but he was made a servant instead, because God respects the rights of the firstborn.

Jacob had deceived his father, so he was deceived by his father-in-law. Jacob, the younger, became like the older. Then he found out that he was given the older, when he thought he was getting the younger. **He revealed a selfish spirit that displayed itself in the way he got the birthright, allowing his mother to cover his hands with the skins of goats.** Later on in Jacob's life, his own sons would deceive him in a similar way. **They killed a young goat and in its blood they dipped Joseph's coat of many colors.** He had deceived his father about being his favorite son, and **he would later be deceived about his favorite son, Joseph.** Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Jacob concluded that God was his judge. "Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and God of Isaac, had been with me, **surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed.** God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night." (Genesis 31:42)

A comparison table illustrating the biblical principle "whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" based on the text provided about Jacob's life:

What Jacob Sowed (His Actions & Sins)	What Jacob Reaped (His Consequences & Harvesting)
Refused to submit to God at his home.	Forced to submit to his uncle, Laban and was treated unfairly as a servant.
Disrespected the rights of the firstborn by taking his older brother's birthright.	Made a servant rather than receiving a wife in dignity, because God respects the rights of the firstborn.
Deceived his father to steal the blessing.	Deceived by his father-in-law, Laban.
Acted as the older brother, even though he was the younger.	Was given the older sister (Leah), when he thought he was getting the younger sister (Rachel).
Used the skins of goats on his hands to deceive his father.	His sons killed a goat and dipped his favorite son's (Joseph) coat in its blood to deceive him.
Deceived his father about being his favorite son.	Deceived by his own sons about his favorite son, Joseph.

Ultimately, though Jacob thought he could get by with sin due to his cleverness, God did not let him get away with it. As Jacob concluded after 20 years of labor, **God was his ultimate judge who saw his affliction and intervened to protect him.**

Now he was ready to leave Laban. They bid each other goodbye and made a contract. Jacob set up a stone for a pillar, a heap of stones was gathered, and a contract was made. **The two agreed that God was their witness.** They agreed: "May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from another" (Genesis 31:49). In other words, this was a contract made between two men who are going to stop stealing from each other. After this, they separate. The pile of stones remained at Mizpah as a boundary line between Laban and Jacob. Each promised not to cross over on the other's side.

God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from *Genesis 31*

God is our Ultimate Protector and Promise-Keeper.

- Despite Jacob's flaws and Laban's unfair treatment (changing his wages ten times), **God faithfully intervened.** (*2 Thessalonians 3:3*) When Laban pursued Jacob with the intent to do him harm, God appeared to Laban in a dream and warned him to be careful, physically protecting Jacob. **God reminded Jacob, "I am the God of Bethel," proving that He honors His covenants** (*Hebrews 13:5-6*), and **protects His people even when they are in messy or hostile environments.**



- New Testament Connection:** *2 Thessalonians 3:3* - "But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one." *Hebrews 13:5-6* - "I will never leave you nor forsake you."



Reflection Questions

Question 1

Reflecting on God's Protection: When you are frustrated, or mistreated by others, as Jacob was by Laban, do you trust that God sees your affliction and will intervene in His timing, or do you try to take matters into your own hands?

Question 2

Hidden Idols: Rachel secretly took her father's household idols with her. Are there "idols" - habits, attachments, or worldly comforts that you are quietly carrying from your old life into your walk with God?

Question 3

Living by Faith: What specific situation in your life right now requires you to stop scheming like Jacob, and instead rest entirely on God's promises and His Word?

Question 4

Cooperating with the Spirit: How can you invite the Holy Spirit this week to help you make decisions built on the foundation of God's truth, rather than relying on the world's methods for success?



Turning Point

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 32:1-32

Listen: THRU the BIBLE: [Genesis 32:1-32](#)

Dear God,

We invite You into this moment of reflection. Help us to stop striving in our own strength and to yield fully to You. Teach us that true victory comes not from wrestling but from clinging to You in humble surrender.

Amen.



Turning Point in Jacob's Relationship with God



Genesis 32

When Jacob reflected on his life as an old man, he remembered this time as **his life's highest point - a turning point in his relationship with God**. Up until now, Jacob didn't really act like God's man. He had been such a poor witness that the world would never have recognized him as a follower of God.

God had to discipline him in order to get Jacob's heart (Hebrews 12:6). It took Jacob 20 years to learn, and he certainly worked for it.

Now Jacob was going to represent God. So God began to deal with him directly in order to bring him **into the place of fruit-bearing, and of true service and witness for Him**.

Jacob's Fear of Meeting His Brother Esau

On his way back to the Promised Land, **Jacob met angels**. He must have recognized who they were from his earlier meeting in Bethel. As he crossed the border into his home country, he knew he would soon meet his brother Esau.

He remembered the last time he saw Esau 20 years ago. Esau was so angry with him. So this time, Jacob sent messengers in front of him and instructed them to say, **"When you get to Esau, my brother, say to him, 'My lord Esau. Refer to me as 'your servant, Jacob.'"** Jacob has clearly changed his attitude. **He had manipulated his way for the birthright and had stolen Esau's blessing**. Jacob had been a rascal, but now his words are different. Perhaps he had learned some hard lessons from Laban.

The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, **"We met your brother, Esau, and he's coming to meet you along with four hundred men."**

Now **Jacob was terrified**, because he didn't know Esau's intent. He may have questioned his servants, "Did he seem upset? Or bitter or hateful toward me?" Even if they said, "No, he seemed glad you were coming," in Jacob's imagination, that could have meant that **Esau was glad for an opportunity for revenge**. Jacob was upset. Since he thought **he was in danger, he divided his group into two and sent them in different directions so that if his brother struck one group, then the other could escape**. Then he showed signs of a different way of thinking.



We take our burdens to the Lord in prayer. Then when we get through praying, we put each burden right back on our back and start out again with them.

Jacob Seeks God for Help

Jacob asks God for help in his distress.

Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you’: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me, and the mother with the children. For You said, ‘I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’” (Genesis 32:9-12)

Jacob cried out to God because **He is the God of his father Abraham and the God of his father Isaac**. For the first time, he says, “**I am not worthy of the least of Your mercies.**”

For the first time, **he acknowledged that he is a sinner in God’s sight**. When any person **begins to move toward God** in this way, God will **communicate with them**.

Jacob’s Plans to Pacify Esau

Jacob had a rough night. He strategized how to pacify Esau. He planned to **send a very generous gift of livestock, goats, sheep, camels, bulls, donkeys**—divided into three sections. When Esau would ride towards Jacob, he would encounter the first one, and the servant would say, “**We are bringing you a gift from your brother, Jacob.**” Then Esau would ride on a little farther and meet the second herd, and then later, a third. **By then, Jacob hoped that Esau’s hatred would be softened.**

Jacob sent all that he owned and all his family across the brook Jabbok, but **he stayed on the other side** so that if his brother Esau came, he might kill Jacob but would spare his family.

When Jacob prayed, he reminded the Lord, “**You told me to return to my country. You said You would protect me.**” But did he believe God? No. He made all these arrangements, **which revealed he wasn’t trusting God at all**. We often take the same position. We might take our burdens to the Lord in prayer. **Then when we get through praying, we put each burden right back on our back** and start out again with them. **We don’t really believe Him, do we? We don’t really trust Him as we should.**



Consequences of Jacob's Poor Choices

Jacob had come to terms with his life's poor choices, and it filled him with fear and doubt. He had mistreated Esau. God had never told him to get the birthright or the blessing in the way he did. God would have gotten it for him. And so now, Jacob was left waiting alone.

But Jacob wasn't alone. Laban was behind him and his brother Esau ahead of him. Jacob was no match for either one. He was now caught in a dilemma, and he didn't know which way to turn. That night he was alone because he wanted to be alone, and he wasn't looking for a fight.

Who Wrestled with Jacob?

Now, we're told **Jacob encountered a Man who wrestled with him all night**. He was not going to give up easily. Who is this one who wrestled with Jacob that night? **It was none other than the preincarnate Christ.** (See also *Hosea 12:1-5* for more descriptions of this night.)

Here's how the night went. "Then Jacob was left alone, and **a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day**. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, **He touched the socket of his hip, and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint** as He wrestled with him. And He said, **"Let Me go, for the day breaks."** But he said, **"I will not let You go unless You bless me!"** So He said to him, **"What is your name?"** He said, "Jacob." And He said, **"Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."** (*Genesis 32:24-28*)

Jacob wasn't wrestling; he was holding on to the One. **Jacob found out that you don't get anywhere with God by struggling and resisting. The only way you get anywhere with Him is by yielding and just holding on to Him.** Abraham had learned that, and that is why he said "amen" to God. **He believed God, and He counted it to him for righteousness.** Abraham reached the end of his own strength and put his arms around God.

This lesson is for all of us when we get in that position, when we need to trust God. When you are willing to hold on, He is there ready to help you. Jacob resisted Him until the touch of God crippled him. Then, recognizing at last who He was, Jacob clung to Him until He blessed him. From this point on we see a change in Jacob. God marked this change in Jacob's heart by changing his name to Israel. He was a new man.



God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from Genesis 32

1

God communicates with us when we acknowledge our unworthiness.

- **The Truth:** For the first time, Jacob admits he is "not worthy of the least of all the mercies" God has shown him. When any person begins to move toward God on the basis that they are a sinner in God's sight, God will communicate with them.
- **New Testament Connection:** *Luke 18:13-14* is about the tax collector who beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" went home justified. God draws near to the humble, not the self-sufficient.

2

Spiritual victory comes through yielding, not struggling.

- **The Truth:** Jacob wrestled all night, but he didn't prevail until God touched his hip and crippled him. Only then did Jacob stop fighting and start clinging. He learned that you don't get anywhere with God by resisting - the only way forward is yielding and holding on to Him.
- **New Testament Connection:** *James 4:7-8* "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." *2 Corinthians 12:9* "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."

3

True faith leaves the burden with God.

- **The Truth:** Jacob prayed for protection and reminded God of His promises, but then made elaborate backup arrangements out of fear - revealing he wasn't truly trusting God at all. We often do the same: we pray, but when we finish praying, we pick the burden right back up and carry it ourselves.
- **New Testament Connection:** *1 Peter 5:7* "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." *Philippians 4:6-7* "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Reflection Questions

Question 1

Acknowledging Unworthiness: When you approach God in prayer, do you feel entitled to His help because of your efforts, or do you come to Him with a humble heart that recognises you are undeserving of His mercies?

Question 2

Yielding vs. Struggling: Jacob's hip was touched to make him stop wrestling and start clinging. What "limp" or weakness in your life might God be using to force you to stop relying on your own strength?

Question 3

Leaving the Burden: After you pray about a worry, how quickly does it return to your mind? If it returns immediately, did you truly "cast" the burden on God, or did you merely describe it to Him?

Question 4

Think of a current conflict or problem you are trying to "fix" through sheer willpower. What would it look like to stop struggling and instead ask God, "What are You trying to teach me through this?"

Question 5

When a specific worry returns after prayer, practise treating it as a prompt to praise God for His promise rather than re-analysing the problem.



Jacob Meets Esau

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 33:1-20

Listen: THRU the BIBLE: [Genesis 33:1-20](#)

Dear God,

Thank You that Your transforming work in us produces real change. Help us to move from taking to giving, from scheming to trusting. Where relationships need reconciliation, soften our hearts and theirs and let Your grace write a new chapter.

Amen.



Brothers Meet Again



Genesis 33:1-20

In the morning, Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming with 400 men. He didn't know if Esau was coming as friend or foe.

But when they got closer, **Esau ran to meet him, embraced him and kissed him and they cried.** Well, they are twin brothers after all. **God must have touched Esau's heart,** because the last we saw of him, he had sworn vengeance that he would kill Jacob.

Then Jacob introduced his family to his brother. Esau then asked about all the flocks and herds that Jacob had sent ahead of him. **"They are for you, Esau!"** Esau might have laughed when he replied, **"I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself."**

"And Jacob said, **'No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.'** So he urged him, and he took it."
(Genesis 33:10-11)



Up to now, each brother was trying to get something from the other, especially Jacob. Before, he had traded a bowl of stew to get a birthright; now he is willing to give flocks and herds to his brother for nothing!



Jacob's Transformation

What a switch! **Up to now, each brother was trying to get something from the other, especially Jacob. Before, he had traded a bowl of stew to get a birthright; now he was willing to give flocks and herds to his brother for nothing in return!** He insisted that his brother take his gift. **Something radical has happened to Jacob.**

Esau then invited Jacob to travel with them, to show them the way and protect them. But Jacob was mindful of his young family and the young in their flocks and herds. They couldn't travel fast. **"We can't keep up with your army, Brother Esau. You go ahead."** So Esau left some servants to help Jacob's family and went ahead to southern Canaan in Seir, the **land of Edom**. After their father's death, he moved to Mount Seir, which **God gave to Esau for a possession.** (see *Deuteronomy 2:5*)

A New Life for Jacob

A great change had come over Jacob. All his clever scheming amounted to nothing. God had warned Laban not to harm Jacob, and God prepared Esau to reconcile with his brother. Now Jacob had peace on both fronts. God had arranged all of this for him. If Jacob had relied on his own cleverness, he may have come to a violent death.

Later, as Jacob looked back over his life, he would see the hand of God and would give God the glory. But for now, Jacob was learning how to walk in faith.

In his new home, Jacob built an altar, just like his grandfather Abraham had done wherever he went. **He called the new place El Elohe Israel, which means "God, the God of Israel."** Jacob identifies his new name with God's name. This indicated real growth in a man who was just learning to walk in faith. But it was a slow growth.

He would need to grow more as the next chapter in his family's life would bring tragedy.



"Jacob is learning how to walk with his spiritual legs."

"



God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from *Genesis 33*

God's transforming work produces genuine change - from taking to giving.

- **The Truth:** Jacob was defined by taking: he took the birthright, took the blessing, took every advantage he could. But after his encounter with God at Peniel, something radical happened. He now insisted on giving generously to the very brother he once cheated. God had arranged peace on both fronts - with Laban behind him and Esau before him. If Jacob had been left to his own cleverness, he may have come to a violent death.



- **New Testament Connection:** *2 Corinthians 5:17* "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." *Ephesians 4:23-24* "be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."



Reflection Questions

Question 1

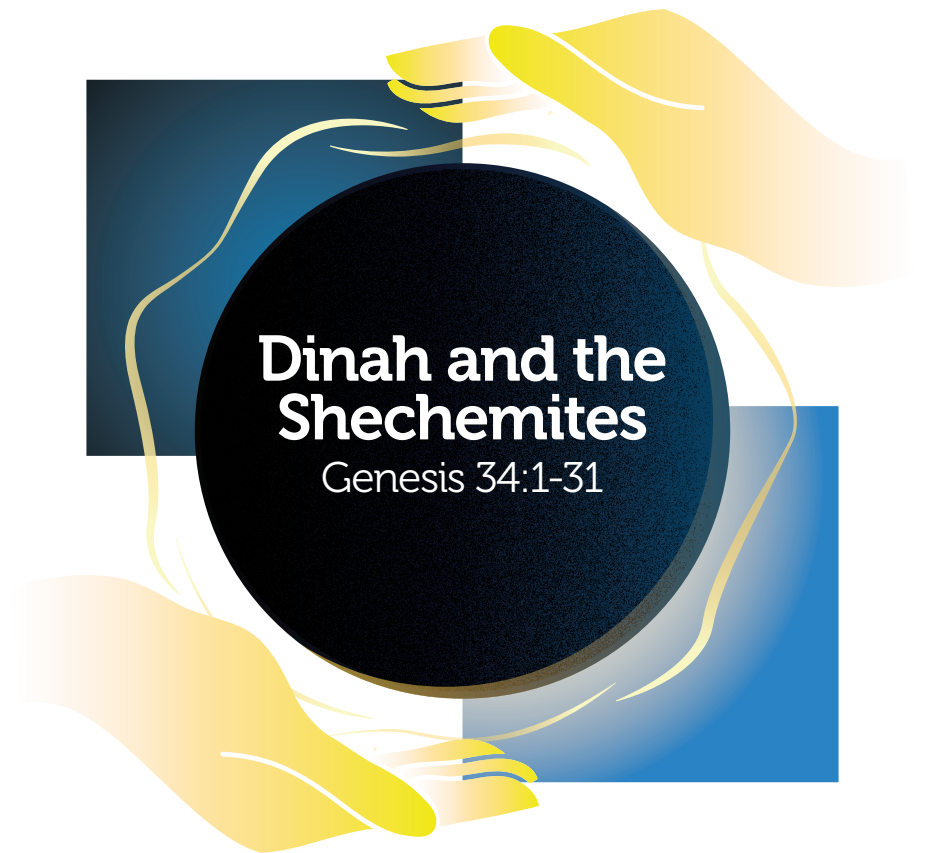
Evidence of Transformation: Jacob went from taking to giving. What concrete evidence of God's transforming work can you point to in your own life? Are there areas where your character has genuinely changed, or areas where the "old Jacob" still operates?

Question 2

Trusting God's Arrangements: God softened Esau's heart and arranged reconciliation that Jacob's schemes could never have achieved. Is there a broken relationship in your life where you are trying to reconcile in your own strength rather than trusting God to work in the other person's heart?

Question 3

Jacob built an altar and named it "God, the God of Israel" which publicly linked his new identity to God. What is one practical step you can take this week to publicly acknowledge what God has done in your life, even if your growth feels slow?



Dinah and the Shechemites

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 34:1-31

Listen: THRU the BIBLE: [Genesis 34:1-31](#)

Dear God,

Guard us from acting in the energy of the flesh. When we are wronged, help us to trust Your justice rather than seize our own revenge. Give us the courage to lead with wisdom and the faith to leave vengeance in Your hands.

Amen



A Family Scandal



Genesis 34:1-31

One of the reasons God prompted Jacob to get his family out of Laban's house was the ungodly environment the children were exposed to there. Family trouble was not new to Jacob. We witnessed strife in Abraham's family as well as Isaac's. Jacob's family suffered trouble, especially with Leah's four sons. This may be because of fallout from multiple marriages or from the fact that Jacob didn't love Leah, and her children took lesser priority to Jacob. These four sons - Simeon and Levi in this story and Reuben, the firstborn, and Judah in the future - all turned out rather badly because of blatant sin in their lives.

When Jacob settled his family in Canaan, he hoped to get them reoriented to their home culture. One day, his daughter Dinah visited the local town. A man from town, the son of Hamor the Hivite, saw her and raped her. After the fact, this guilty young man wanted to marry her.

Dinah and the Shechemites

When her brothers found out, they held a counsel. Hamor, the father of this man, Shechem, came to ask for Dinah's hand for his son. He also wanted to propose that other marriages take place between their families so they would be one community (and Jacob's wealth would become theirs through inheritance).

As intermarriage would have been wrong according to God, Jacob should have stepped up to lead his sons. But he didn't know they planned to trick Shechem and Hamor.



“We can’t allow our sister to marry someone uncircumcised,” they said deceptively. (But nothing was mentioned of the crime against their sister.) Jacob’s sons posed the challenge. “If you’re willing to go through the rite of circumcision, everything will be all right.” (This is like saying if you join a church and use all the right words, then you are a Christian. But that’s not true. If you have trusted in Christ, something has happened, and you are a different person.)

So the men of Shechem and Hamor agreed to be circumcised. And while they were recovering from this delicate surgery, Dinah’s brothers, Simeon and Levi, went into town and killed all the men as an act of revenge. Then the other brothers joined them in stealing all the city’s livestock, wealth, and women and children.

When they came home, Jacob said, “You have spoiled my name among the people of my land.” He yelled at them for giving him a bad name, but says nothing about the sin they’ve committed. Jacob is growing, but he hasn’t yet grown far enough.

Then the boys defended themselves and their sister. “Somebody had to do something!” But obviously they took it too far.

Today we know God’s direction to let Him take vengeance rather than taking it for ourselves (see *Romans 12:19-21*). The minute we attempt to take revenge, it means we are no longer walking by faith. We are saying that we can’t trust God to work it out.

Reliance on Oneself Leads to Lifelong Regret

The tragic things that took place in this chapter of their lives were the result of Jacob walking in the energy of the flesh. At Peniel when he wrestled with God, Jacob learned not to trust himself but not yet how to trust God. He wasn’t a godly leader to his family and wasn’t equipped to herd his 11 sons. After this tragic event, Jacob now is beginning to see God’s hand in his life, and next he makes a decision he should have made a long time ago.



The tragic things that took place in this chapter of their lives were the result of Jacob walking in the energy of the flesh.

Summary Table: The Jacob Transformation

Principle	Old Man (Jacob)	New Man (Israel)	NT Command
Status	Self-Sufficient	Unworthy / Mercy-bound	Luke 18:13-14
Method	Wrestling / Striving	Clinging / Yielding	2 Corinthians 12:9
Trust	Elaborate Backup Plans	Resting in the Word	1 Peter 5:7
Justice	Fleshly Vengeance	Trusting God’s Wrath	Romans 12:19

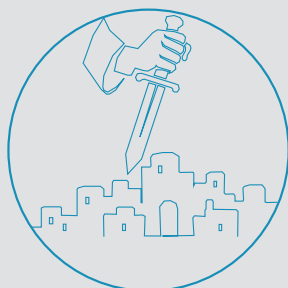


God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from *Genesis 34*

Truth: Walking in the flesh leads to tragedy, and vengeance belongs to God.

- **The Truth:** Jacob's sons took brutal revenge for the assault on their sister, using deception, their father's old method, to slaughter an entire city. But the New Testament makes it clear: we are to leave vengeance to God. The minute we attempt to take revenge, we are declaring that we cannot trust God to work it out, which shows we are no longer walking by faith.



- **New Testament Connection:**
Romans 12:19-21 "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."
Galatians 5:16 "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."



Reflection Questions

Question 1

Flesh or Spirit: When someone wrongs you, is your first instinct to protect your testimony or to protect your ego? How does taking your own revenge reveal a lack of faith in God's justice?

Question 2

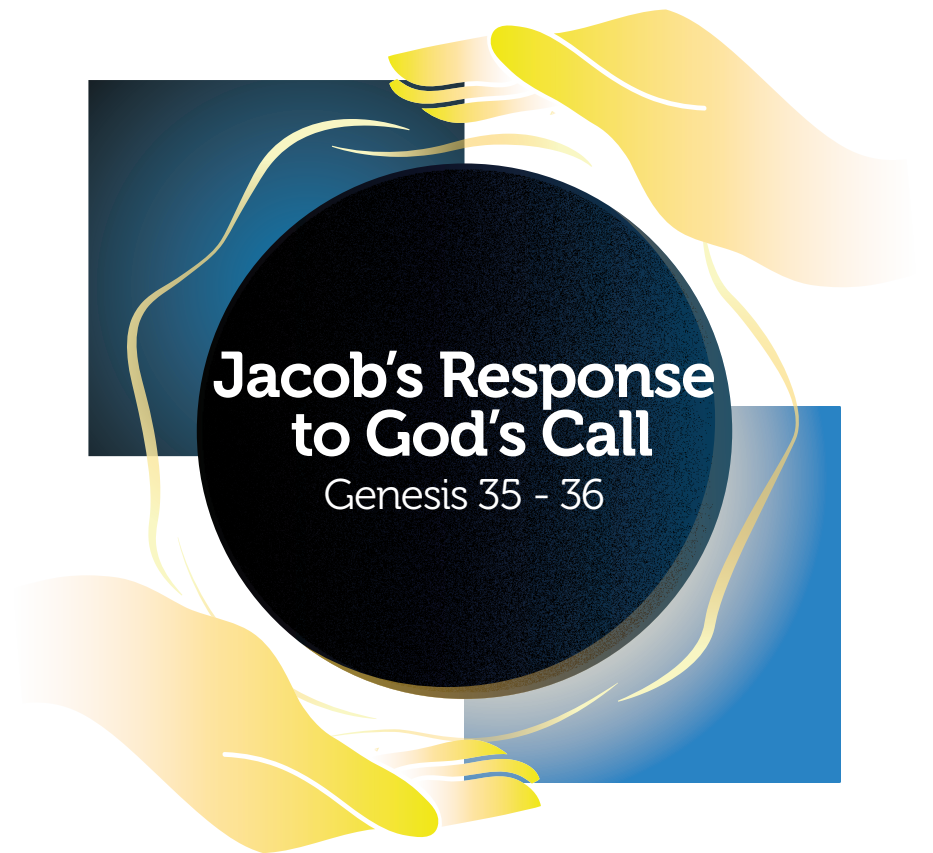
Leadership Gaps: Jacob failed to lead his sons in a moment of crisis, and the consequences were devastating. Are there areas in your family or relationships where you are avoiding difficult leadership because it is uncomfortable?

Question 3

Is there a "Simeon and Levi" moment in your life - a situation where you reacted in the flesh rather than the Spirit? Consider reaching out to offer a blessing or a kind word to someone who has wronged you, consciously leaving the repaying to the Lord.

Question 4

Jacob rebuked his sons for the damage to his reputation but was silent about the sin itself. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where you may be more concerned with how things look than with what is actually right.



Jacob's Response to God's Call

Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 35 - 36

Listen: THRU the BIBLE: [Genesis 35:1-29](#), [Genesis 36:1-43](#)

Dear God,

Thank You for this opportunity to pause and reflect on Your Word. Help us see the bigger picture of your story. Deepen our understanding, strengthen our faith, and guide us to walk forward with wisdom and purpose.

Amen



After the sad experiences that Jacob's family had experienced, **God instructed Jacob to go back to Bethel**. Just the mention of that location would have brought back many important memories for Jacob. As a young man, when he ran from his mother's house to get away from Esau, **Jacob spent his first night in Bethel**. Using a rock as a pillow, **Jacob dreamed of a ladder from earth to heaven** and he saw angels going up and down on it.

Jacob Begins His Spiritual Leadership in His Home

Now God called Jacob back to Bethel, and he finally began to **take the spiritual leadership** in his home.



God gave Jacob three instructions:

First, they were to **"put away the strange gods that are among you"** ([Genesis 35:2](#)). Why would they have idols? When Jacob, Rachel, and Leah ran from Laban, Rachel had taken the family idols.

It would be easy to assume that Jacob would have gotten rid of them because he knew the living and true God. But he hadn't, and now we find that **his entire family was worshipping these strange gods**. Now Jacob said they've got to get rid of them.

Secondly, God says, **"Be clean."** For the believer, that means **dealing with sin in your life** (see [1 John 1:9](#)). **God will forgive, but we must confess.**

Third, **"change your clothes."** In other words, get rid of the old garments. In Scripture, **garments speak of habits**. Like a football player wearing a uniform, that is his habit.

Jacob Started Living for God

The day Jacob went back to Bethel, he began to live for God. When Jacob thought of Bethel, he remembered **how God met him when he was in distress**. He was running away from home, homesick and lonely, and came to Bethel **where God promised to be faithful to him**. Now, years later, Jacob saw how God had certainly been faithful to him. **Now God invited him to, "Go back where you started. Begin again."**

As they traveled back to Bethel (that had previously been named Luz), **Jacob and his family were protected by God** so no one pursued them. **He built an altar there and called the place El-Bethel, which means "God of the house of God."** This reveals **spiritual growth in Jacob's life**.

God Renews His Promise

There at that place where God had met with Jacob decades before, God appeared again to him. All those years God had been trying to deal with Jacob, but in many ways **those years spent with Laban were wasted years**.

"And God said to him, **'Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.'** So He called his name Israel. Also God said to him: **'I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.'**" *Genesis 35:10-11*

"I am God Almighty" This is the same name God used to introduce Himself to Abraham.

"The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land." *Genesis 35:12*

This now is the **third time God has promised this important land** to his family- first to Abraham, then to Isaac, and now to Jacob. The Lord had to tell each one of these men about it at least two or three times. **Jacob built a pillar of stone** on the place where God talked with him. On the pillar, he poured out a drink offering and called this place, Bethel.

This is the first mention of a drink offering. Leviticus tells us of five offerings, but not a drink offering. The drink offering was just poured on the other offerings, and it went up in the steam. The apostle Paul told the Philippians **that this is the way he wanted his life to be just poured out like a drink offering** (*Philippians 2:17*).

Benjamin is Born

With his beloved wife, Rachel, Jacob had one son, Joseph. Now as they traveled from Bethel, **Rachel went into labor with their second son**. As the child was born, **Rachel was dying**. She called him Benoni, meaning **"son of my sorrow,"** but Jacob looked down at him and said, "I've lost my lovely Rachel, and this little baby looks like her, so I'll just call him Benjamin, 'son of my right hand.'"

While it was true that the boy was the son of Rachel's sorrow, Jacob could not call him Benoni. He was not the reason for his sorrow; he was the son of his right hand, his walking stick, his staff, **the one he would lean on in his old age**. This helps us understand the great sorrow Jacob will go through later on. **All of it has its roots in Jacob's sin.**

God doesn't approve of the wrong in our lives. We won't get away with it.



Jacob's love for Rachel was perhaps the only fine thing in his life during those many lost years. He was totally devoted to her and allowed her to get away with anything (like keeping her father's idols). She had given Jacob his son Joseph, and now she gives birth to Benjamin. His life meant her death. It was a great heartbreak to Jacob.

The other ten boys were no joy to him at all. **God reminded him, likely every day, that it was sinful to have more than one wife.** This is especially obvious in the treatment Joseph received from his half-brothers.

Jacob loved Joseph and Benjamin, and the other boys were jealous of them. He shouldn't have shown such partiality to Joseph, because he knew how painful his own growing up years had been when his father had pushed him aside. He knew the trouble it had caused.

Isaac Dies

Isaac, **the old patriarch, full of days, died and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.** This was the only time, after Jacob's return to the land, that the brothers are together again.

God Knew Esau Before Esau Knew Himself

Esau and his family **became the nation of Edom**, which settled southeast of the Dead Sea. If we listed their names, they would be the same as circulate the Arabian desert today. It is a mountainous area. **The capital city, the rock-hewn city of Petra, stands there today.** Prophecy in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Obadiah **concerning Edom has been remarkably fulfilled.**

Esau was an attractive young man, but **he was a man of the flesh.** But so was Jacob for most of his life. Could God have made a mistake about His choice of Jacob over Esau? Esau looked so good on the outside. A little prophecy in Obadiah shows us Esau unveiled. By now, one little Esau has become about 100,000 Edomites. Each one of them is a little Esau. Look at that nation and you'll see what came from Esau. What do we see? **A nation filled with pride (Obadiah 1:3-4). The pride of their heart was a declaration of independence, a soul that says it can live without God** and does not have a need for God. That is Esau.

In the last book of the Old Testament God says, **"Yet Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated"** (*Malachi 1:2-3*). God never said that until over 1000 years after these men lived, but **God knew the heart of Esau at the beginning.** After they worked their way out in history, God chose correctly.

If we follow Esau and his three wives, we'd move with them out of the Promised Land to the land of Seir in Canaan. Here, **Esau's family welcomed Amalek, which is the beginning of the Amalekites.** Down through the centuries those tribes in the desert pushed out in many directions, some across North Africa. **All the Arab tribes came from Abraham, through Hagar,** the Egyptian, and through Keturah, whom he married after Sarah died. The tribes have intermarried, but they belong to the same family as the Israelites.

This is the family history of the Middle East, which extends farther back than any other source and reaches us in today's headlines.



God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from *Genesis 35 -36*

1 Cleansing and Confession of Sin:

Jacob's instruction to his family to **"Be clean" and remove their old garments symbolizes addressing sin and letting go of old habits.** This Old Testament physical cleansing is compared with the spiritual truth found in **1 John 1:9**. For the New Testament believer, this means that while **God offers forgiveness, we also have a duty to actively confess and deal with sin in our lives.**



2 The Drink Offering as a Life Poured Out:

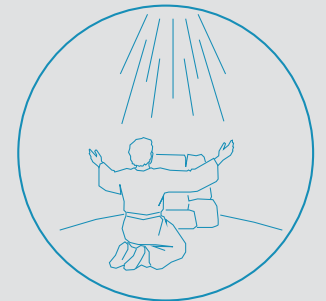
In response to God speaking with him, Jacob sets up a stone pillar and pours a drink offering over it. This is the **first time a drink offering is mentioned in Scripture**; it was an offering that evaporated into steam as it was poured out.

- This truth aligns this with **Philippians 2:17**, noting that **the Apostle Paul used this exact imagery to describe his ultimate spiritual goal**, wanting his own life to be **poured out completely as a drink offering** in service to God.



3 God's unwavering faithfulness to His covenant and the evidence of a believer's spiritual maturity through obedient worship.

- When Jacob obeyed God's call to return to Bethel, he showed that he had **finally begun living for God and taking spiritual leadership in his life.** In response to his obedience, God appeared to him, officially changed his name to Israel, and declared, **"I am God Almighty."** The sources point out that this is the same name God used when He first introduced Himself to Abraham. At this moment, **God renewed His eternal covenant**, promising Jacob the same land He had previously promised to Abraham and Isaac.



- Jacob's response to this divine revelation **perfectly illustrates his maturing journey.** He responded rightly by **building an altar and naming the place El-Bethel**, which translates to **"God of the house of God"**. Just like his grandfather Abraham, **Jacob's faith in Almighty God became evident through his actions.** By making the right decision to follow God's direction back to where he started, and by building an altar of worship, **Jacob's actions revealed genuine spiritual growth in his life.**



Reflection Questions

Question 1

When God introduced Himself as “God Almighty” and renewed the promise of the land, Jacob recognized God’s immense faithfulness and responded by naming the place El-Bethel, which means “House of God”.

Looking back at your own spiritual journey, how has God proven Himself faithful to His promises in your life, and what specific moments or decisions reveal how much you have grown spiritually since you first began walking with Him?

Question 2

Jacob’s spiritual growth was made evident through his tangible actions; he obeyed God’s direction to return to Bethel and built a physical altar of worship to mark his commitment.

What is a practical “altar” you can build in your life such as establishing a dedicated time and place for prayer, stepping into spiritual leadership in your home, or making a specific decision of obedience to actively demonstrate your trust in God Almighty?

Question 3

Putting Away Idols: Even though Jacob knew the true God, he had allowed his family to keep “strange gods” for years. Are there any hidden idols, compromises, or old habits (garments) in your life or home that you need to finally put away to walk in spiritual leadership?

Question 4

Returning to Bethel: God told Jacob to return to the place where He met him in his distress and proved His faithfulness. Where is your “Bethel”, a specific season or moment you can look back on where God met you in a hard time-and how can remembering it help you “begin again” today?

Question 5

Pouring Out Your Life: Jacob’s drink offering models a life wholly dedicated to God, a concept mirrored by the Apostle Paul. In what practical ways are you pouring out your life, time, and resources as a “drink offering” for God’s purposes?

Question 6

Examining Your Heart for Pride: While Esau was an attractive man on the outside, his descendants became a nation filled with pride, living as souls who believed they could live without God. Are there areas in your life where you are operating in the “flesh” or declaring independence from God, rather than relying on Him in humility?



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