

JEHOVAH MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH



Bible STUDY

2024 THIRD QUARTER

EVERY WEDNESDAY



**2024 THEME: KINGDOM CITIZENS MOVING FROM EARTHLY
CONFORMATION TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION
(ROMANS 12:1-2)**

JULY EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS EMBARKING ON A JOURNEY WITH JACOB, THE SON OF ISAAC, THE SON OF ABRAHAM

THOUGHT: As we begin our character study this year, we begin with a man named Jacob. Jacob's life and legacy cannot be understood from just his beginning, nor can yours or mine. Like Jacob, each of us began somewhere and with a particular set of circumstances. During this study, we will learn much about Jacob as we see ourselves in his story.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: FAMILY, SCHEMING, DREAMS, DECEPTION

LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN: JACOB'S JOURNEY BEGINS WITH CONTENTION.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Talk about your family dynamic: Are you an only child or do you have siblings? Were you reared by both parents, a single parent, grandparent or guardian? Who are you in your family, your role, your authority, etc.?
2. What are some issues that develop when there is a favorite child in a family?
3. What's one thing that causes strife in your family?

TEXT: GENESIS 25:19-34

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: NEVER MAKE A MAJOR DECISION WHEN YOU ARE TOO HUNGRY.

INTRODUCTION: In Genesis 25, we meet the first twins in the Bible - Jacob and Esau. Our Bible lesson today focuses on decision-making. Decisions are important; they really do chart the course of our lives. Like Jacob and Esau, oftentimes parents are an intricate part of our decisions, and the direction we take in life. A parent's attitude toward a child, or a parent's counsel to a child can be huge. Many of us made better decisions because we listened to our parents, and worse decisions because we failed to listen. As we look at the lives of these two brothers, it is evident that the influence of the parents is prevalent. **Looking back over your life, is there a decision you made at the wrong time? If so, what were the consequences?** Alan Lee reminds us, "Never let yourself get too hungry, too angry, too lonely or too tired, otherwise you'll do something you'll regret."

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT GOD HAS A PLAN AND PURPOSE FOR THEIR CHILDREN. (VV 22-23)

Children come from God, and they come with a purpose. Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." As We consider the text for today, we notice that God blessed Isaac and Rebekah to have children after a twenty-year struggle to get pregnant. Then Rebekah began to experience an internal struggle: **"The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD."**

When there is an issue concerning children, we should always consult the Lord.

The Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.” The Lord lays out a significant part of the future of these two. The key words are, **the older will serve the younger.** It almost causes Isaac to ask the question, “Don’t you mean the younger will serve the older?” So positionally, Jacob will be the leader, and Esau will be the servant. At this point, the boys have not done good or evil. It is God who has predetermined the roles in the family and in this community. **Why do some struggle with this decision? Why do some have a problem with it?** God has a plan for our children, and this plan will not always set right with us; however, God is always right.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS SOMETIMES HAVE FAVORITE CHILDREN WHICH ALWAYS CAUSES CONTENTION. (VV 27-28)

I heard a preacher use this expression recently, “What we ought to do and what we ought not do.” When we consider the idea of favoritism, we might say, “Well, parents, preachers or teachers, should not show favoritism.” However, either of the three can and often show favoritism. The scripture says, **“The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.”** From this statement alone, we know this is not going to end well because we have a house divided - two against two. Favoritism always pits people against each other. **Why do parents at times have a favorite child? What happens in the minds and hearts of the other child(ren) when he or she realizes, ‘I am not the favorite child’?**

Mike Livingstone gives three reasons why God hates favoritism:

1. Favoritism is inconsistent with God’s character. Deuteronomy 10:17
2. Favoritism is contrary to God’s values. James 2:2-3, 5-6
3. Favoritism is sin. James 2:9

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTAND THAT WITHIN A FAMILY, SOME WILL NOT APPRECIATE HERITAGE. (VV 29-34)

The struggle for family leadership is one for the ages. Since Cain and Abel, there has been this internal tension in families, sometimes legitimate, and sometimes illegitimate. Here, we encounter the issues of responsibility and blessing of the ‘birthright.’ The text says, **“And Esau said to Jacob, “Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.” Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright as of this day.” And Esau said, “Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?” Then Jacob said, “Swear to me as of this day.” So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. . . Esau despised his birthright.** Gotquestions.com gives us the following insights about birthrights in the Old Testament: The birthright is emphasized in the Bible because it honored the rights or privileges of the family’s firstborn son. After the father died, or in the father’s absence, the firstborn son assumed the father’s authority and responsibilities. In addition to assuming the leadership role in the family, the recipient of the birthright inherited twice that received by the other sons. The birthright of a king’s firstborn son included his succession to the throne (2 Chronicles 21:1-3). **How can a family achieve harmony when children are very different? How can we help restore peace when a family member has been hurt?**

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CONFORMATION TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION**

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THOUGHT: As we begin our character study this year, we begin with a man named Jacob. Jacob's life and legacy cannot be understood from just his beginning, nor can yours or mine. Like Jacob, each of us began somewhere and with a particular set of circumstances. During this study, we will learn much about Jacob as we see ourselves in his story.

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LESSON TWENTY-EIGHT: THE PLOT TO DECEIVE

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Have you heard of a plot to deceive someone in your extended family? If so, share briefly..
2. What are some ways parents hurt children when they deceive one another?
3. When there is deception in the family, who wins? Who loses? Explain.

TEXT: GENESIS 27:5-25

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: "Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!" Sir Walter Scott

INTRODUCTION: The book of Genesis emphasizes the blessing of a father to his sons. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all gave formal blessings to their children—and, in Jacob's case, to some grandchildren. Receiving a blessing from one's father was a high honor, and losing a blessing was tantamount to a curse. An Old Testament blessing of a father to his sons included words of encouragement, details regarding each son's inheritance, and prophetic words concerning the future. For example, Isaac's blessing on Jacob (which was meant for Esau) gave him the earth's bounty and authority over his brother (Genesis 27:28-29). It also promised that those who blessed Jacob would be blessed, and those who cursed him would receive a curse—words that echo God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3.

Gotquestions.com

How is the blessing of the first born and the sale of Esau's birthright connected? After selling his birthright, was it possible for Esau to receive the blessing of the first born? Why or what not?

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT DECEPTION IS WRONG. (VV 8-12)

Rebekah spoke to Jacob, **"Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves."**

Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death.” And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “Look, 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.” With full knowledge of what she was doing, Rebekah plotted with Jacob to deceive his father. As we look at this text, it seems despicable that a mother would plot to deceive both her husband and her son, yet this is what Rebekah did. Looking at the plan, one of the questions that comes to mind is, **“Does Rebekah love her son Esau?”** When there is favoritism in a family, the relationships are never balanced. **“Does Rebekah hate Esau?”** Favoritism is defined as the practice of giving unfair preferential treatment to one person or group at the expense of another. Favoritism always costs the other person? **What are some of the devastating outcomes of favoritism in a family?**

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT YOU CANNOT BLESS YOUR CHILDREN BY DECEIVING OTHERS. (VV 16-19)

As we consider the deception, we must remember that Esau was not the only one deceived, so was Isaac. Oftentimes it takes us years to realize the far reaching effects of a deception, and the number of people whose lives are impacted by that deception. I am sure Rebekah thought she was helping Jacob, but this deception ran in many directions. Let’s consider her plan . . . **And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. So he went to his father and said, “My father.” And he said, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?” Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.”** Rebekah encouraged Jacob to lie, then Jacob lied to his father. As I think about this passage, the words grace, mercy, forgiveness and restoration come to mind. As horrible as this situation is, our God is a redeemer? **If you were counseling Isaac and Rebekah, what hope would you give them? How would you counsel them?**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT WHEN THERE IS DECEPTION IN THE FAMILY, EVERYONE LOSES. (VV 34, 42-43)

After the deception, Rebekah now has to deal with the disappointment of Isaac, the anger of Esau, and the absence of Jacob. **When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, “Bless me—me also, O my father!” . . . Esau said in his heart, “The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”** And the words of Esau, her older son were told to Rebekah. **So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, “Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran.** Ted Haggard said, “Sin will take you farther than you ever intended to go, it will cost you more than you ever expected to pay, and it will keep you longer than you ever intended to stay.” Rebekah could have never imagined that this deception would take Jacob from her presence for the rest of her life. We never again hear of her. She is now surrounded by Isaac who is both old and blind, and Esau, who no longer has respect for her. ‘Oh what a tangled web we weave/When first we practice to deceive.’ It has been well said, “You can choose your sin, but you cannot choose your consequences.” **How are relationships repaired after a major deception?**

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THOUGHT: As we begin our character study this year, we begin with a man named Jacob. Jacob's life and legacy cannot be understood from just his beginning, nor can yours or mine. Like Jacob, each of us began somewhere and with a particular set of circumstances. During this study, we will learn much about Jacob as we see ourselves in his story.

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LESSON TWENTY-NINE: JACOB ENCOUNTERS GOD

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. When did you first encounter God for yourself?
2. How does the Lord typically speak to you? Has He ever spoken to you through a dream?
3. What's one commitment you have made to the Lord?

TEXT: GENESIS 28:10-22

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: FOR OUR FAITH TO BE REAL, WE MUST HAVE A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH THE LORD.

INTRODUCTION: Jacob's life could be likened unto the Christian life, many peaks and valleys and many twists and turns. As Jacob leaves home, he encounters God in a very personal and powerful way. In one sense, he is no longer under the tent and protection of his parents; he must now trust God for himself. For some of us, this may have been a college moment, for others, entering the military, and still others, moving to a large city for the first time, etc. To know God, one must have a personal encounter. Some of these, like Jacob were borne out of trouble, and for others, they may have been borne out of tragedy. Nevertheless, each met God face to face and life changed. **What led to your personal encounter with The Lord, and how did you respond?** As we reflect on Jacob's personal encounter with God and his commitment, **what are some commitments you've made to God?**

1. EVERY KINGDOM CITIZENS HAS ENCOUNTERED GOD. (VV 10-12)

Life has changed for Jacob in a big way. He has gone from the constant protection and encouragement of his mother, a nice comfortable home and the provisions and protection of his father. He has moved away from not only the immediate, but also the extended family, the servants, the neighbors, etc. Jacob is alone for the first time in his life. He needs God in a way he has never needed him before. The scriptures continue, **"Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.** The words are weighty, **Jacob went out from Beersheba . . .** He is not just leaving; he is being sent away.

His soft pillow has become a stone. He bought his brother's birthright, and tricked his father out of a blessing, but here he is now, alone and without shelter. He is literally homeless. But while he was there, he encountered God. The text says, **"Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it."** What do you think the ladder is a metaphor for? What do you think he understands about the ladder and what confuses him?

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD CHANGES EVERYTHING. (VV 13-15)

Jacob finds himself in a place where he can finally hear God. **Are you in a place where you can hear from the Lord?** The Word says, **"And behold, the Lord stood above it 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.'"** God's hand never leaves us, and his plan never changes. God's words to Isaac and Rebekah concerning their younger son ruling are still in play. All the emotions that might be flooding Jacob's mind have in no way changed God's plans and purposes for his life. Even when we feel lost and alone, God knows where we are. **Have you ever been in a difficult place and the Lord brought you through it? What did you learn from that time?**

3. AFTER AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD, KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING A COVENANT WITH HIM. (VV 18-22)

Jacob now finds himself in a better frame of mind; an encounter with God changes our perspective. The story continues, **"Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel . . ."** Here Jacob makes an altar; here he begins to worship; here he identifies God with a place, BETHEL, The House of God. The text continues, **"Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, 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. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.'"** Wow! What a bold move. Jacob presents his petitions to God and vows to honor God with a tithe. **Have you made a similar commitment at some point in your life? If so, what were the circumstances that led to your decision? What other bold move have you made as a follower of Christ?**



Jacob's Ladder

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LESSON THIRTY: JACOB MEETS HIS MATCH

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Where did you meet your match - the playground, college, on a job, or in a relationship? How did this impact your life?
2. What are some things you learned when you met your match?
3. How do you handle hurt in the context of family relations?

TEXT: GENESIS 29:14-30

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM HOW YOU HAVE TREATED OTHERS?

INTRODUCTION: Jacob has now found a home in the tents of his uncle Laban. His life seems to have taken a turn for the better; he works hard and his uncle treats him well. Life seems to be hunky dory. Not only has he found a job and a comfortable place to stay, but he has also found the woman he wanted to marry. Surely there were times when he thought about his beautiful mother who loved him dearly, and his father who bestowed on him a lifetime of blessings, and occasionally, he even thought about Esau, but all this was behind him now, he must begin to think about his future. **If you were Jacob, what might be one question on your mind?** The truth about life is, no matter how far you run, you are always there, and for most of us, life catches up with us. In ways Jacob could have never imagined, this is exactly what is about to happen to him. He may have seen his uncle deceive others to make a larger profit, or he may have seen him cheat others, but he never envisioned that this might happen to him. People who will lie for you will also lie to you.

**1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT FAMILY CANNOT ALWAYS BE TRUSTED.
(VV 15-19)**

Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what should your wages be?" Just reading this verse, one would think that Laban has honorable intentions. Words are just words until our actions either confirm or deny them.

Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance. Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter." And Laban said yes. Laban agreed to the arrangement, but he was not in agreement with the arrangement. Words are such powerful things. They can be used to say what we want them to say, regardless of whether it's the truth or a lie. Like Jacob, Laban is a deceptive person, so he will do what it takes to get what he wants. Oftentimes, those who deceive others think no one is smart enough to deceive them, or no one can get over on them? For some reason, when we are hurt by family members, the cut goes a little deeper. **Have you ever been deceived by anyone in a way you thought you could never be deceived? Explain.**

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT IT IS A SAD DAY WHEN THE DECEIVER IS DECEIVED. (VV 21-25)

Jacob, out of a great love for Rachel, has worked seven years. The text says, **"Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her."** Jacob is prepared for a very special night; he will finally be able to share a special night with his love. NEVERTHELESS, the scripture continues, **So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob made love to her. . . When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?"** So Jacob, you have met your match. You who prided yourself as a master deceiver has now encountered the grandmaster. Jacob is now playing ball in a different arena; he no longer has home field advantage. **If you were Jacob, what would you have done at this point? What recourse does he have? Can Jacob trust Laban going forward?**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT AFTER A MAJOR DECEPTION, THERE IS FALLOUT. (VV 26-30)

This is what is called a calculated deception. In other words, deception was the intent from the very beginning. **Laban replied, "It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Did Laban know the custom before Jacob worked the first seven years? He tells him, "Finish this daughter's bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work."** If I were Jacob, I believe I would have a few questions. **What question might you have at this point? What concerns would you have? And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. . . Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.** Can the relationship between Jacob and Laban be salvaged? If you were Jacob's best friend, what counsel would you give him at this point?

Some Final Thoughts

Do you like to tell lies? Then you're deceitful — someone who's untrustworthy, two-faced, or fraudulent. Being called deceitful is not a compliment: deceitful words are misleading and deceitful people tend to lie or deceive others.

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CONFORMATION TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION
(Romans 12:1-2)**

AUGUST EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS, LIKE JACOB, ARE BEING TRANSFORMED INTO NEW CREATIONS.

THOUGHT: Tension builds as Jacob grows as a man. Things have changed; he has now become a husband, a father, a son-in-law and a brother-in-law. Jacob no longer makes decisions that just affect him; every decision affects his entire family. As Kingdom Citizens, if we will truly be transformed from earthly thinking to spiritual actions, then we, like Jacob, must embrace the mantle of responsibility.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: COMPROMISE, UNITED, RECONCILIATION, WRESTLING

LESSON THIRTY-ONE: JACOB SEEKS SECURITY FOR HIS FAMILY

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Talk about a time you had to make a difficult choice in spite of what parents or in-laws thought. What was the outcome?
2. How prevalent is witchcraft/divination among the people of God?
3. What steps are okay to provide for your family and grow your business, and what are some things we might do that cross the line?

TEXT: GENESIS 30:25-43

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: PURSUING GOD'S BEST IN SPITE OF MY STRUGGLES

INTRODUCTION: It's time to move on. Jacob must now forge a new path, one that leads him forward and makes provisions for his family. However, life for Jacob has not been easy. He deceived both his father and his brother; he had to run away from home just to preserve his life. Now after 20 years with Laban, he has had as much as he can take. Jacob encountered God on his way to Laban's house, but he has not yet been changed. Sometimes that's where we are, doing good, in the church, but living just outside of God's perfect will for our lives. Jacob is a deceiver who met God, but still has some deception in him. He was deeply hurt by his uncle's betrayal and now struggles to find his place. Behind him is Laban and before him is Esau. **Have you ever experienced a time in your life where you were fed up with the way things were, or just felt the need to move on? Explain.**

**1. KINGDOM CITIZENS WILL SOMETIMES FEEL THE NEED FOR A CHANGE.
(VV 25-30)**

Life and its circumstances will lead us down many different paths. Jacob is about to make another major life move. The text continues, **"After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me on my way so I can go back to my own homeland. Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much work I've done for you."**

This is an honest request on the part of Jacob, and it's obvious that he feels a debt of gratitude to his uncle. But when it's time, it's time. **But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you." He added, "Name your wages, and I will pay them."** He has lied to Jacob, cheated Jacob, and become wealthy because of Jacob's hard work and the blessings of God on Jacob's life; he does not want to lose his golden goose. Now he is ready to give him a raise, Laban added, **"Name your wages, and I will pay them."** Would you share about a time you were on a job, and the company could not pay you enough to stay? The individual must know when it's time to move on.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT ACHIEVING SECURITY FOR YOUR FAMILY MUST INCLUDE A PLAN. (VV 31-33)

Laban offers Jacob a gift, **"What shall I give you?" he asked.** However, Jacob is not looking for a gift; he wants to earn his way. He responds by saying, **"Don't give me anything,"** Jacobs says, don't give me a gift; give me an opportunity. When a man is attempting to provide for his family, he recognizes that a gift is not enough; you need a way, a path, an opportunity. Jacob replied. **"But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them: Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat. They will be my wages. And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen."** Jacob has laid out his plan; he has presented his case. He said, **"And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me."** These are the words of a man who has not been converted. He still has some deception in him.

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS. (VV 34-36)

Well, on the one hand we have Laban; on the other hand, we have Jacob. So then, the question is, **"Is either one truthful at this point?"** Listen to the words, **"Agreed," said Laban. "Let it be as you have said." That same day he removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that had white on them) and all the dark-colored lambs, and he placed them in the care of his sons. Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob continued to tend the rest of Laban's flocks.** Does Jacob trust Laban; does Laban trust Jacob? In the family, we often lose faith in a person, especially when we mistrust someone, or have been hurt by that person. **What in the scriptures above might cause you to think that Laban does not trust Jacob? What are some reasons why you might not trust a person: family, neighbors, co-worker, an employee, or even church members?**



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LESSON THIRTY-TWO: JACOB RUNS AWAY FROM LABAN

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How do you handle family conflicts?
2. How can we grow as individuals when we are surrounded by tension and contention?
3. When making tough decisions in the family, what are some things we should do to demonstrate integrity?
4. What are some of the ways we deceive one another?

TEXT: GENESIS 31:1-21

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: FAMILY STRUGGLES CAN LAST FOR DECADES, SOMETIMES, EVEN FOR A LIFETIME.

INTRODUCTION: To know Jacob's story is to know his life was a never-ending struggle. Jacob's family was characterized by deep-seated hostility. Jacob was a con artist who had been conned, a liar who had been lied to, and a manipulator who had been manipulated. In many ways, he lived up to his name Jacob, which literally means "heel-catcher" and carries the sense of "one who follows after to supplant or deceive." God had promised Jacob that through him would come a great nation through whom the whole world would be blessed (Genesis 28:10–15). Still, Jacob was a man full of fears and anxieties. His brother, Esau, had vowed to kill him. His uncle, Laban, had cheated him for years. His two wives had an adversarial relationship with each other. Like Jacob, many of us have a story of being on the run, and there may be some who are still running. May I encourage you to remember that God specializes in rebuilding broken lives. **What do you think has to happen for a man or woman to start doing life God's way?**

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT ENVY IS DESTRUCTIVE.

(VV 1-3)

Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father." It wasn't that Jacob had taken anything that belonged to Laban. Rather, it was that his wealth was increasing in proportion to Laban's wealth.

The problem wasn't that Jacob stole; it was that Laban's sons were filled with envy. Envy will distort the truth. And envy will lie. **Therefore Laban's sons said, Jacob has taken away all that was our father's. And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been. Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."**

Even if Jacob never knew it, God prepared him for this time. First, God gave him the desire to go back home (Genesis 30:25). Then, his present circumstances became unbearable. Finally, the LORD gave personal directions to Jacob. For us, God may lead people after the same pattern. Jacob now has something that every child of God needs; he has the promise of God's presence: **"and I will be with you."** Share about a time God assured you that He was or would be with you though an uncertain situation.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS WILL, AT TIMES, FIND THEMSELVES BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE. (VV 4-9)

Here Jacob stands on the brink of what could be the biggest decision of his life. **So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come out to the fields where his flocks were. He said to them, "I see that your father's attitude toward me is not what it was before, but the God of my father has been with me.** As he moves forward, Jacob consults with his wives. see their response in verses 16-18. **Why was this a good decision on his part? You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me. If he said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks gave birth to speckled young; and if he said, 'The streaked ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked young. So God has taken away your father's livestock and has given them to me.** As Jacob makes decisions, he needs his family to be with him, and he knows he cannot stay in Haran; it is time to move on. In the course of one's life, he/she will make many moves: from one house to another, from one job to another, even from one career field to another, and for some, from one marriage to another. **What was one of your most difficult moves?**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT THERE IS A RIGHT WAY TO DO EVERYTHING. (VV 17-21)

Jacob intended a quick departure, traveling as fast as possible. Jacob was wealthy enough so that his entire family could travel on camels. The scripture says, **"Then Jacob put his children and his wives on camels, and he drove all his livestock ahead of him, along with all the goods he had accumulated in Paddan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan."** Jacob's fear and deceptive departure showed that he lacked confidence in God and His promise, and he relied more on his own wisdom and ability. God already told Jacob to go and had promised him safe passage. The text continues, **"When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods. Moreover, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was running away. So he fled with all he had, crossed the Euphrates River, and headed for the hill country of Gilead."** It's hard to leave old habits behind. Deceit was a part of Jacob's DNA. To this point, he has lived as a deceiver, but he needs another touch from the Lord. **Is there something in your life you need the Lord to touch again?** - haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies, and a person who stirs up conflict (Proverbs 6:17-19). If any of these represent where you are at the moment, you need another touch.

**2024 THEME: KINGDOM CITIZENS MOVING FROM EARTHLY
CONFORMATION TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION
(Romans 12:1-2)**

AUGUST EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS, LIKE JACOB, ARE BEING TRANSFORMED INTO NEW CREATIONS.

THOUGHT: Tension builds as Jacob grows as a man. Things have changed; he has now become a husband, a father, a son-in-law and a brother-in-law. Jacob no longer makes decisions that just affect him; every decision affects his entire family. As Kingdom Citizens, if we will truly be transformed from earthly thinking to spiritual actions, then we, like Jacob, must embrace the mantle of responsibility.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: COMPROMISE, UNITED, RECONCILIATION, WRESTLING

LESSON THIRTY-THREE: JACOB'S TRANSFORMATIONAL ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What are some of the characteristics of "Encountering God in a new way"?
2. In your mind, what does it mean to wrestle with God?
3. With no chance of winning, why do we contend with The Almighty?

TEXT: GENESIS 32:22-32

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: EACH CHRISTIAN WILL MEET GOD AT AN APPOINTED TIME IN A SPECIAL PLACE. THIS EXPERIENCE IS LIFE CHANGING.

INTRODUCTION: One crisis with Laban has been averted; another looms ahead for Jacob with Esau. A covenant seals the deal between Jacob and Laban so that there may be peace between them and their descendants. "Good fences make good neighbors," it is said. But Esau is a new neighbor that is just over the Gilead horizon to the south. Esau was fiercely angry when we last met him in Genesis 28. Are there still storm clouds in his heart and soul? Life takes us through many twists and turns, many hills and valleys and many ups and downs. Jacob's life is a classic example. Lest I be unclear, like Jacob, many of the negative effects in our lives have a direct correlation to our decisions. It has been 20 plus years, but Jacob must once again face Esau. Facing one's past can be difficult and painful. **Has there been a difficult situation that occurred as a child or as a young adult that you have had to address as an older adult?**

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT MOVING FORWARD AFTER YEARS OF TURMOIL IS NOT EASY.

The Bible says, **"That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions."** This has to be a step of faith. Jacob has no idea what the outcome will be. Faith always causes us to move forward.

There Jacob is traveling between two worlds, Laban behind him; Esau in front of him. It is interesting that the scripture says, **‘That night’**. Is it a metaphor for where Jacob is physically, spiritually, relationally? Life gets dark at times. Jehoshaphat said, “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” (2 Chron. 20:12) We must trust God to fight our battles. “That God will fight our battles means we do not have to anguish, be anxious, or be discouraged when bad things happen in our lives. When it seems a situation is hopeless or the matter at hand is too overwhelming, we may be tempted to doubt God. Like Jacob, we must remember that no problem is beyond the scope of God’s sovereign care for His children. He has promised to take care of us, Philippians 4:19, make good plans for us, Jeremiah 29:11, and love us beyond measure, Romans 8:37–39.

In what area of your life do you need to move forward in spite of challenges?

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS BATTLE PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY BEFORE GETTING A BREAKTHROUGH. (VV 24-26)

This eventful night continues, **“So Jacob was left alone . . .”** When a man or woman does serious business with the Lord, it’s normally, just him/her and God. Jacob has come to a cross-road; he is now ready to forsake his old ways, and a man wrestled with him till day-break. **“When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.” But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”** Jacob has now reached a breaking point; he is no longer able nor willing to journey without the Lord. **Is this night struggle indicative of Jacob’s life? Has he not only struggled with men and women, but has he also struggled with God?** Transformation takes us from a before Christ to an after Christ experience. Because of this night, because of this intimate experience with God, Jacob is no longer seeking the blessings of man; he now wants the blessing of God. With the inner struggle and the outer strength, Jacob acknowledges that he needs more than what he is currently experiencing. His confession is, **“I will not let you go unless you bless me.”** He has already received the blessing of his father Isaac, and he has received a blessing of sorts from Laban, his father-in-law, but he needs more. When a man, woman, boy or girl, reaches this juncture in life, only God can satisfy. **What in life might cause a person to pray this kind of prayer?**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS, LIKE JACOB, KNOW THAT AN ENCOUNTER OF THIS MAGNITUDE CHANGES EVERYTHING. (VV 27-29)

Conviction, Conversion, and a brand new life. **“The man asked him, “What is your name?” Why ask this question? “Jacob,” he answered. Then the man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.”** The man said to Jacob, “You will no longer be who you were; that life is over: **“Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel.”** You are no longer a deceiver, you are now the one who, **“struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.”** Genesis 35:10 reiterates this. The Apostle Paul said, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! Jacob is now ready to live as a man of God, and whenever this happens, it changes everything. **Who were you before you fully and utterly committed yourself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ?** Finally, Jacob said, **“Please tell me your name.” But he replied, “Why do you ask my name?” Then he blessed him there.** Jacob received what he asked for. **What did God do to finally get your attention?**

**2024 THEME: KINGDOM CITIZENS MOVING FROM EARTHLY
CONFORMATION TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION**
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KEY WORDS/PHRASES: COMPROMISE, UNITED, RECONCILIATION, WRESTLING

LESSON THIRTY-FOUR: JACOB IS REUNITED WITH ESAU

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How have you resolved a challenging reunion with family or a friend?
2. How difficult is it to trust God with broken family relationships?
3. What place does humility and forgiveness play in mending relationships?

TEXT: GENESIS 33:1-20

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: FROM ANGER TO JOY, FROM GREED TO GENEROSITY, BOTH HEARTS HAVE BEEN CHANGED.

INTRODUCTION: Life is sometimes funny. We work hard to have certain things, only to discover we were happier when we had less. And we fight for other things, only to realize that they didn't bring us as much joy as we expected. The road up doesn't always lead to a better life, better job or a better relationship. It has been said, "Christians remaining unreconciled can have a DEVASTATING impact on our witness to a watching world." Yet Jacob and Esau remained unreconciled for over 20 years. It might have taken this long to realize that people are more important than things. **Where is there a lack of reconciliation in your family, church, neighborhood, or work place?** As we continue to consider the idea of reconciliation, Pastor Tom Hicks reminds us, "While Christians must unilaterally extend forgiveness, it's impossible to reconcile a relationship faithfully without mutual promises. Forgiveness is a unilateral promise, but reconciliation involves bilateral promises. In order for a relationship to be reconciled, not only must the offended party make the promises of forgiveness, but the offending party must repent of sin, promise to continue in repentance, and bear fruit in keeping with their professed repentance (Matt 3:8)."

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT REGARDLESS TO HOW MUCH WE PLAN, WE MUST STILL TRUST GOD. (VV 1-3)

The day of reckoning has come; Jacob will see his only brother for the first time in 20 plus years. He does not know if Esau will hug him or kill him. Nevertheless, he continues to move ever so close to this reunion. The Lord told him to return, so he is being obedient, but

obedience is not always easy. The drama continues, **“Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.”** “At long last, Jacob presents himself to his brother, going before his carefully arranged wives and children. He interrupts his forward progress seven times to bow low, all the way to the ground, before Esau. In ancient times, a servant may have bowed seven times to show respect to his lord.” **“Jacob looked up and there was Esau.”** I can imagine that fear struck his heart, not just for himself but for his entire family. He tries to put together a last minute plan. **As Jacob approaches Esau, he displays a great deal of humility; why is humility important when one is seeking reconciliation?**

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION ARE THE KEYS TO HEALING. (VV 4-5)

The text continues, **“But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.”** What a reunion? Can you feel the pain, the release of a lifetime of struggles, and hurt, loss and disappointment. But finally, here they are embracing, holding each other, forgiving one another. They can both move forward now; healing can begin. For a while, Esau could only see Jacob. **Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. “Who are these with you?” he asked. Jacob answered, “They are the children God has graciously given your servant.”** It went from a reunion of brothers to a connection of family. **Then the female servants and their children approached and bowed down. Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down.** Because Jacob was willing to humble himself before his brother, then his family followed suit. **What are some of the elements of forgiveness and reconciliation?**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT WE CANNOT FULLY REPAY THE ONES WE HAVE HURT, BUT WE CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT WE ARE SORRY. (VV 8-10)

Because Jacob sent an army of goods ahead of him to pacify Esau, Esau had a question: **Esau asked, “What’s the meaning of all these flocks and herds I met?” “To find favor in your eyes, my lord,” he said. But Esau said, “I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself.”** When you have wronged another, and you are truly sorrowful, you will do almost anything to make it right. Listen to Jacob’s words, **“No, please!” said Jacob. “If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably.** This whole process is a miracle. Many siblings and other family members and friends, never reconcile. **What are some reasons why people refuse to reconcile?**

Family Reconciliation Keys by P. Brian Noble

Reconciliation Key #1: Change your view! If you want to be a reconciler, then view your family through the reconciliation work of the cross.

Reconciliation Key #2: Remember you’re new and they are new also! If your family is in Christ, then they are new. Treat them as such.

Reconciliation Key #3: The Old is Gone! Reconciliation happens because of Jesus. The old is gone because of Jesus. So stop being a gravedigger.

**2024 THEME: KINGDOM CITIZENS MOVING FROM EARTHLY
CONFORMATION TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION
(Romans 12:1-2)**

SEPTEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS, LIKE JACOB, ARE GROWING IN MATURITY AS THEY FACE DIFFICULT CHALLENGES.

THOUGHT: Jacob has entered a time in life when life is more about his family, particularly his children, than it is about him. He must now help them work through their challenges and changes, as well as, prepare to make a major move as he heads for the sunset of life.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: FAITHFULNESS, DEATH, VIOLATED, TRANSITION, VISIONS

LESSON THIRTY-FIVE: A SISTER ABUSED; A DAUGHTER VIOLATED

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. This is an extremely sensitive lesson. How should sensitive issues be handled in a small group?
2. When dealing with an angry person, how can you discern deceit?
3. Why is it that when we have been sinned against that we oftentimes commit a greater sin against our attackers?

TEXT: GENESIS 34:1-31

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: A DESPICABLE ACT COMMITTED IN THE NAME OF LOVE

INTRODUCTION: Sexual abuses of all types, including sexual assaults, have been a part of human history since before Old Testament times. Legal definitions of sexual assault identify it as any type of unwanted sexual contact or any crime in which the offender subjects the victim to unwanted and offensive sexual touching. The first allusion to sexual assault in the Bible is in Genesis 12:10–16. Due to a famine in his homeland, Abram and Sarai traveled to Egypt. Abram was worried that, because his wife was so beautiful, Pharaoh would kill him and take Sarai into his harem. To prevent that from happening, Abram begged Sarai to lie and say that she was his sister. While the claim was not entirely false (Sarai was his half-sister), it was still a lie. Abram's fear highlights the fact that in those days kings could do as they wished with the women of the land. Women were considered little more than property, and sexual assault perpetrated against them by those in power was expected. In many parts of the world today, this is still the custom. One of the most infamous incidents of sexual assault in the Bible is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah found in Genesis 18, 19. **When sexual assault takes place in the family or in the church, what resources are available to help with healing and recovery?**

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST HELP PROTECT AND DEFEND THE INNOCENT. (VV 1-4)

As Jacobs works to establish his family in Canaan, he encounters an unfathomable situation; his only daughter has been raped by one of the citizens of the land. The scripture says, **“Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land.”** There is nothing unusual about this. However, **“When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and raped her.”** Against her will and without her consent, he took advantage of her. **How do you feel about the next two verses?** Listen. **“His heart was drawn to Dinah, daughter of Jacob; he loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. And Shechem said to his father Hamor, “Get me this girl as my wife.”**

Sexual assault and all forms of sexual perversion are indicators of the wickedness of the human heart (Jeremiah 17:9). God created sexuality to be a beautiful expression of love and unity between a husband and his wife (Matthew 19:6). But, in our depravity, we pervert everything God created as good. In our sinful world, God’s gift of sexuality is often used to dominate, victimize, and control, resulting in the crimes of rape, sodomy, molestation, and other forms of sexual assault.

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST CHOOSE INTEGRITY OVER DECEPTION. (VV13-19)

This difficult saga continues. In verses 5-12, Shechem makes his plea for Dinah’s hand in marriage. After this atrocious act, what should Jacob and his sons do? We now enter a place of familiarity, this time it’s not Jacob who seeks to deceive, but some of his sons. The text says, **“Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob’s sons replied deceitfully as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor.”** The intent from the beginning is revenge, and yet the sons of Jacob used a spiritual ritual to destroy a community. **“They said to them, “We can’t do such a thing; we can’t give our sister to a man who is not circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us. We will enter into an agreement with you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males. Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We’ll settle among you and become one people with you. But if you will not agree to be circumcised, we’ll take our sister and go.”** The young man, who was the most honored of all his father’s family, lost no time in doing what they said, because he was delighted with Jacob’s daughter.” There is a lot to unpack here. **What are some issues that concern you as you read these verses?** It is said of Shechem **“The young man was the most honored of all his father’s family.”** Is this the way an honorable young man behaves? Is this acceptable?

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST CHOOSE FORGIVENESS OVER REVENGE. (VV 24-29)

“All the men who went out of the city gate agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised.” The act of retaliation is now in motion. Once a person gets to this point, it is difficult to turn back. Many plan acts of revenge for weeks, months, years, before actually going through with it. According to verses 25-26, **“Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male. They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword and took Dinah from Shechem’s house and left.”** From the day they suggested circumcision to Shechem and his father, this was the plan. People often have smiles on their faces, but war in their hearts.

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KEY WORDS/PHRASES: FAITHFULNESS, DEATH, VIOLATED, TRANSITION, VISIONS

LESSON THIRTY-SIX: GOD RENEWS HIS COVENANT WITH JACOB

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. How have you managed spiritual transitions in your life?
2. God changed Jacob's name. Talk about a significant change God made in your life after your conversion.
3. Where is your special place of prayer? Why is it significant?

TEXT: GENESIS 35:1-15

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: JACOB'S LIFE JOURNEY HAS BEEN MARKED BY PRAYER.

INTRODUCTION: Bethel is first mentioned in the Bible in connection with Abram, who built an altar to God there: *"From there [Abram] went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD"* (Genesis 12:8). After visiting Egypt, Abraham returned to Bethel and offered a sacrifice to God (Genesis 13:3-4). Bethel, originally named Luz (Genesis 28:19; Judges 1:23), was renamed by Jacob after the patriarch experienced a remarkable dream there. While traveling from Beersheba to Haran to escape his brother Esau, Jacob stopped for the night in Luz. As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway or ladder that stretched up from earth to heaven. The angels of God were climbing up and down the ladder as God stood at the top (Genesis 28:10-13). The Lord spoke and revealed Himself to Jacob as the God of his fathers. When Jacob awoke, he declared, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:17). Then Jacob set up a sacred pillar, named the place Bethel (verses 18-19), and consecrated the site as a place to worship God (verse 21). Many years later, Jacob returned to Bethel, built an altar to God there, and called the place El-Bethel, which means "God of Bethel." Bethel remained one of the main worship centers of Israel. The ark of the covenant was kept at Bethel for a time, and the people often went there to seek God during times of trouble (Judges 20:18-28). **Where is your Bethel? It may be the place where you were saved, or where God delivered you from a very dark time in life.**

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT SPIRITUAL RENEWAL INCLUDES TAKING OFF AND PUTTING ON. (VV 1-4)

Jacob is now returning home and returning to God. **“Then God said to Jacob, “Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.” So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes.** In essence, Jacob says to his family and to his servant, “If we will worship the true and living God, then, we must forsake all other gods.” When we are preparing to meet with God, we must prepare our hearts. After personal preparation, Jacob issues an invitation, **“Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.” So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.** Transformation from the natural to the spiritual is a change. When you surrendered all to the Lord, what are some things you had to let go of?

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD CHANGES EVERYTHING. (VV 9-13)

Every man, woman, boy and girl needs a personal ENCOUNTER with the Lord. Each one needs to be able to identify a point of conversion, a personal TRANSFORMATION. The text continues, **“After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him. God said to him, “Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.” So he named him Israel. And God said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.” Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.”** Wow! What a great God we serve. After all the evil Jacob has done, God still blesses him. God’s covenants with us are never about our goodness, but rather about His faithfulness. As you read these verses, what encourages you when you consider your own spiritual journey? How does Jeremiah 29:11 and Romans 8:28-29 come into play as you listen to the above verses?

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT OBEDIENCE AND WORSHIP ARE APART OF THE COVENANT. (VV14-15)

As followers of Christ, we must take God’s covenant(s) with us seriously. Transformation says, I understand that God is holy and I am sinful, but He has invited me to walk with Him. And because of this, I must then walk a certain way. One thing I must not do is conform to the pattern of this world. But instead, I must be transformed by a new way of thinking. Then, **“Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.”** Jacob seems to understand that walking with God is more than lip service. What does genuine worship look like? If you were talking to a friend or family member, how would you explain Christian Worship?

**I HAVE DECIDED TO FOLLOW JESUS.
NO TURNING BACK.**

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LESSON THIRTY-SEVEN: DREAMS, DIVISION, DESTRUCTION, AND DECEPTION

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What are some of the issues that have caused division in your family?
2. When there is strife in a family, what are avenues you can take to deescalate the situation?
3. How can parents work to unite their children? What are some things parents do that can divide their children?

TEXT: GENESIS 37:1-10, 19-28

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT LIFE ISSUES HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO SEPARATE FAMILIES.

INTRODUCTION: The Lord created families as a beautiful extension of His image. Sadly, in our fallen world we are born in a natural sinful state and can only be redeemed by our Creator. Our natural state is selfish at best and pathological at its worst. Dysfunction comes naturally to us. That is why salvation through Jesus is the key to breaking generational sin. Jesus offers us forgiveness, cleansing of sin, and real, unconditional love (1 John 1:9). Jesus gives His followers the power to love like He does, a love that is filled with grace and compassion. He is our example for how to love rather than loving ourselves or pleasures (John 13:34). Gotquestions.com. When we look at Jacob's family, we see our families. Like most families, there are patterns. Because we are sinful, we often repeat the same sins. Jeremiah 32:18 says that the consequences of sin from one generation are visited on the next generations. Sin's destructive consequences hurt the person committing the sin as well as those around him. Each generation has the choice to let their natural inclination repeat the cycle or to find a better way.

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT GOD IS SOVEREIGN IN THE AFFAIRS OF OUR LIVES. (VV 1-4)

Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

After fleeing from his brother, and being separated from his parents for over 20 years, Jacob has now returned to the promised land. The reader wants to know, "How is this going to make his life different?"

As we consider this chapter, let's remember that much of the chapter is about Jacob's family; we don't see him as the main character. Let's enter the text, **"This is the account of Jacob's family line. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them."** Some see Joseph as a tattletale; however, gotquestion.com comments that Joseph valued integrity more than his older brothers. **How and why does a parent have a 'favorite child'?**

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him. When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. How is a family unit impacted when there is an identifiable favored child? Why might parents favor one child over another?

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT FAMILY DIFFICULTIES ARISE FROM MANY DIFFERENT SOURCES. (VV 5-8)

It's worth noting that every family has problems, and they sometimes emerge from a multitude of sources. In this chapter, we have a family prophecy showing up in the form of dreams. The fact that Joseph is the favored child, and he is the one having the dreams does not help the situation. As our young people might say, 'it is what it is.' Now his brothers have a new reason to hate him.

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. The dream is present, but the interpretation is left up to the individual. The question the brothers have is, **"Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?"** Even if the scripture didn't say it in verse 8, we already knew it, **"And they hated him all the more."** How do you feel about the brothers' response to the dream?

3. KINGDOM FAMILIES STRUGGLE OFTEN WITH THE WORK OF GOD WITHIN THEIR FAMILIES. (VV 9-10)

Why is it difficult to see God in things we don't understand? If the coat of many colors and the first dream were not bad enough, Joseph has a second dream. **Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."** Where the first dream only covered the brothers, the new dream included the father and the women. Now there is new tension. The life of a kingdom family is fluid; God is always at work. The problem is, we don't always recognize it.

"When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind." I wonder if this was the first time Jacob had rebuked Joseph. Some of the greatest misunderstandings among family and friends are when we hear or see something we don't understand. **What is your evaluation of how Jacob handled this? Would you have handled this differently? If so, how?**

**2024 THEME: KINGDOM CITIZENS MOVING FROM EARTHLY
CONFORMATION TO SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION
(Romans 12:1-2)**

SEPTEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS, LIKE JACOB, ARE GROWING IN MATURITY AS THEY FACE DIFFICULT CHALLENGES.

THOUGHT: Jacob has entered a time in life when life is more about his family, particularly his children, than it is about him. He must now help them work through their challenges and changes, as well as, prepare to make a major move as he heads for the sunset of life.

KEY WORDS/PHRASES: FAITHFULNESS, DEATH, VIOLATED, TRANSITION, VISIONS

LESSON THIRTY-EIGHT: JACOB IS REUNITED WITH JOSEPH

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What's one of the most difficult transitions you've experienced?
2. Have you ever been disconnected from a family member or good friend for a long time, but God reconnected the two of you? Talk about how that felt.
3. We often talk about the people who hurt us, but was there ever a time when you hurt someone else, and in your time of need, that person helped you? Talk about how you felt and what you experienced.

TEXT: GENESIS 46:1-7, 26-34

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: TRUSTING GOD'S DIRECTIONS DURING A NEW SEASON OF LIFE

INTRODUCTION: I believe Jacob would agree with the Psalmist, **I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.** (Psalm 37:25) God is faithful to provide; He doesn't always do it the way we expected, but He is faithful. His life has been a faith journey; he was transformed by faith, and now God is sending him to Egypt with the instructions, continue to walk with me by faith. Jacob has experienced so many different things: the love of family and home, the separation from family (especially his brother) and friends, the thievery and deception of his uncle, the challenge of rearing and providing for a large family, etc. YET. God has been with him all the way. The journey has not been easy, but the Lord kept him, and now God has called him to leave the land of Promise and move, not just go, but move to Egypt. **How difficult is it to follow the call of God at times?**

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST TRUST GOD TO LEAD THEM. (VV 1-7)

So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. It has been said, we need 'purposeful pauses' in our lives. On his journey, Jacob stopped and worshiped. This is more than symbolic; this is true worship. And God responded to this 'purposeful pause.' **And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, "Jacob! Jacob!" "Here I am," he replied. "I am God, the God of your father," he said. "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a**

great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes" The word of God and the voice of God are anchors when we are in transition. **What verse or assurance did the Lord give you when you were in transition?**

Faith causes us to move in the direction God is leading. The Scripture says, **"Then Jacob left Beersheba, and Israel's sons took their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the carts that Pharaoh had sent to transport him. So Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt, taking with them their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in Canaan. Jacob brought with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters—all his offspring. Jacob concludes, "Where He leads me; I will follow."** Is this your commitment?

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT OUR GOD IS A REDEEMER AND A RESTORER. (VV 26-29)

This move is strategic for many reasons. **1.** Not only did Jacob move to Egypt, but his entire family. **2.** Jacob finds himself in a position where, once again, he has to start over. **3.** Jacob was 130 years old when he left Canaan for Egypt. The text continues, **"All those who went to Egypt with Jacob—those who were his direct descendants, not counting his sons' wives—numbered sixty-six persons. With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family, which went to Egypt, were seventy in all."** God used Joseph to save his father and his family. He is now preparing Jacob and His descendants to fulfill the promise of Genesis 12:3-4. *"I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."* They were only 70 in number when Jacob moved to Egypt, but in Goshen, they will multiply greatly. **Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen. When they arrived in the region of Goshen, Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time. Israel said to Joseph, "Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive."**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT GRACE IS A KEY ELEMENT IN REDEMPTION AND RESTORATION. (VV 31-34)

Joseph could have been cruel, callous and cold toward his brother, but because of the grace he has received, he is now about to offer grace and forgiveness to his brothers. And here, he goes beyond to demonstrate generosity and compassion. Listen to Joseph's words: **And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. (Gen. 45:5)** It's a wonderful thing to forgive others. Once we forgive others, we are then free to love them. These words come from a heart of love: **"Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were living in the land of Canaan, have come to me. The men are shepherds; they tend livestock, and they have brought along their flocks and herds and everything they own.'** All of us have been sinned against; nevertheless, the question is, **"Who has the Lord allowed you to forgive and then help?" When Pharaoh asks, 'What is your occupation?' you will answer, 'We tend livestock . . '** Then you will be allowed to settle in Goshen. Goshen has the richest soil in the country. Ain't the Lord good?

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LESSON THIRTY-NINE: THE DEATH OF JACOB

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What would be some of your final instructions to your family?
2. Do you desire to be buried or cremated? Why? Also, if you are planning for a burial, where would you like to be buried and why?
3. Why do you think death is often a difficult subject for many to talk about? If you were writing an epitaph for your tombstone, what would it say?

TEXT: GENESIS 49:29-33 (Please review verses 1-28.)

THE HEART OF THE LESSON: LIFE'S JOURNEY HAS ENDED.

INTRODUCTION: *Oh, when I come; To the end of my journey; Weary of life And the battle is won; Carrying the staff; And the cross of redemption; He'll understand, oh yes; And say "Well done".* Jacob may not have known this song; however, his last days may reflect its lyrics. Jacob the man who wrestled with God and won; the man who fathered the 12 tribes of Israel, and the man who became the progenitor of the nation of Israel- The giant of a man has come to the end of the road. He, like his father before him, and his grandfather before him, must stick his sword in the sands of time; never to study war again. Soon it was said, "This was Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham."

1. KINGDOM CITIZENS ACKNOWLEDGE THE NEED TO PREPARE FOR THE END OF LIFE. (VV 29-30)

Although this is a somber moment, it is also a model for final preparation before departing this life. I heard a preacher say once, "Either you plan your funeral service, or someone else will do it for you." This is also a blessed moment. Everyone does not get the opportunity to bless children and grandchildren, or give final instructions just before dying. But God granted Jacob this special moment. **"Then he gave them these instructions: 'I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite.'** There are people who will not talk about death and refuse to make any arrangements for their eventual end. The unusual thing about this is many of these people attend funeral services often.

Not only did Jacob make preparations, his grandfather prepared a burying place for his family two generations ago.

- **What are some reasons why people fail to make final preparations for their homegoing services?**
- **Have you made proper preparations for your final demise? How much or how little have you done? What do you still need to do?**

2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT WE NOT ONLY NEED A MODEL FOR HOW TO LIVE, BUT ALSO ONE FOR HOW TO DIE. (VV 31-32)

For many, a visit to the cemetery is a necessary evil: they only go if they have to. Some visit graves on annual days such as Mother's Day/Father's Day, birthdays, or on the date that commemorates the death of a loved one. Still others, only visit when there is a family death, or that of a friend. If you are afraid of the dead and things associated with the dead, Google tells us that you are not alone: *Necrophobia is a specific phobia; it is the irrational fear of dead organisms (e.g., corpses) as well as things associated with death (e.g., coffins, tombstones, funerals, cemeteries)*. Abraham demonstrated the truth that we need not fear death, but we should prepare for it. Isaac felt the same way and now Jacob does also.

“There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites.” We should not fear death either. Listen to the words of Christ to the Apostle John, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: *“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”* **Revelation 1:17-18.** The Lord has taken the sting out of death. The Apostle Paul helps us as well. **1 Corinthians 15:55-57** *“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ..* **How would you help a friend who expressed his/her fear of death?**

3. KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT LIFE ON THIS EARTH AS WE KNOW IT WILL END. (V 33)

When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people. Jacob demonstrates no fear of dying or death. The follower of Christ should display the same confidence. Here are a few thoughts from gotquestions.com.

The Bible presents death as separation: physical death is the separation of the soul from the body, and spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God. Death is the result of sin. “For the wages of sin is death,” Romans 6:23a. The whole world is subject to death, because all have sinned. “By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). In Genesis 2:17, the Lord warned Adam that the penalty for disobedience would be death—“you will surely die.” When Adam disobeyed, he experienced immediate spiritual death, which caused him to hide “from Lord God among the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3:8). Later, Adam experienced physical death (Genesis 5:5). On the cross, Jesus also experienced physical death (Matthew 27:50). The difference is that Adam died because he was a sinner, and Jesus, who had never sinned, chose to die as a substitute for sinners (Hebrews 2:9).

QUARTER 3: JULY - AUGUST - SEPTEMBER

Kingdom Citizens Embarking on a Journey with Jacob, the Son of Isaac, the Son of Abraham

JULY 7	JACOB'S JOURNEY BEGINS WITH CONTENTION
JULY 14	THE PLOT TO DECEIVE
JULY 21	FAMILY, SCHEMING, DREAMS, DECEPTION
JULY 28	JACOB MEETS HIS MATCH

Kingdom Citizens, Like Jacob, are being Transformed into New Creations

AUGUST 4	JACOB SEEKS SECURITY FOR HIS FAMILY
AUGUST 11	JACOB RUNS AWAY FROM LABAN
AUGUST 18	JACOB'S TRANSFORMATIONAL ENCOUNTER WITH GOD
AUGUST 25	JACOB IS REUNITED WITH ESAU

Kingdom Citizens, Like Jacob, are growing in Maturity as they Face Difficult Challenges

SEPTEMBER 1	A SISTER ABUSED; A DAUGHTER VIOLATED
SEPTEMBER 8	GOD RENEWS HIS COVENANT WITH JACOB
SEPTEMBER 15	DREAMS, DIVISION, DESTRUCTION, DECEPTION
SEPTEMBER 22	JACOB IS REUNITED WITH JOSEPH
SEPTEMBER 29	THE DEATH OF JACOB