

Monday - Week Six

Lesson Fifteen: Jacob's Flight

Read: Genesis 28:5-22

Summary: Jacob fled from Esau in an effort to save his own life. God used all this to build Jacob's family and ultimately to set the stage for much of Israel's history.

Background and Comments

- The fact that Jacob had to flee from Esau was a chastisement from God for deceiving his father Isaac. As Jacob ran away from his home he must have realized that his deceptiveness was sinful. When Jacob realized his sinfulness God came to him in a wonderful vision to reassure him that God's relationship with him had not changed (Jacob had been forgiven).
- In verse 20 the word "if" ("If God will be with me ...") can be translated "since" (the Hebrew word can go each way). In this context it is best to translate the word as "since". Jacob was promising that He would be faithful to God since God had promised to be with him."
- Carefully read verses 13-15. Can you identify the following promises?
 1. The Promised Land would belong to his descendants
 2. The Messiah would come from his family
 3. God would be with him on this long journey.
- We might shake our heads at the thought of using a rock for a pillow. The Hebrew word means a "headrest". Even to this day there are shepherds in Palestine who use small stones as "headrests" as they sleep outdoors.

Lessons for Today

- God's chastisement against Jacob was fierce. He would never see his mother again on earth. By the time he returned she had gone to heaven. God chastised Jacob because He loved him. God needed to teach Jacob to trust in Him instead of trusting in himself. Why is this such a difficult lesson to learn? How has God been trying to teach you the very same lesson?

Read: Psalm 26; Matthew 26.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, when I need to be chastised so that I remain close to You please chastise me. When bad things happen to me remind me that they will turn out for my good and often teach me things in the process. I pray the very same thing for all the members of my own family and my church family. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Tuesday - Week Six

Lesson sixteen: Jacob in Laban's employ

Read: Genesis 29:1 - 31:16

Summary: Jacob learned what it was like to be deceived when Laban deceived him by giving him Leah instead of Rachel as a wife. God continued to bless Jacob as he lived with Laban.

Background and Comments

- The deceiver was deceived in royal fashion. We might wonder how Jacob could have been tricked into marrying the wrong woman. We need to remember that Leah would have been heavily veiled during the day and then concealed under the cover of darkness at night. Besides that, Jacob was not suspecting a thing. Imagine Jacob's surprise in the morning!
- Laban used Jacob's love for Rachel for his own greedy purposes ... twice! Jacob reacted strongly when he found out about the deception but then agreed to work seven more years. Perhaps the fact that he had deceived his father influenced his decision to agree to such harsh terms.

Lessons for Today

- The Bible says that Rachel was lovely in form and beautiful. Looks are an important in a marriage. Husbands and wives have a responsibility to do what they can to be attractive to their spouses. We need to keep this in mind when we talk to our young people about choosing their future spouse. We Christians emphasize the need for a common faith and common interests when making this decision (and rightly so). We need to be open enough to also talk about the importance of physical attraction as well.
- Abraham and Isaac's families had serious problems. Jacob's family topped them all. Jacob departed from God's will when he took two wives and then again when he agreed to sleep with two other women. When problems crop up in our own families we need to remember that even the patriarchs struggled with family problems. May God give us wisdom and strength to have healthy families.

Read: Psalm 27; Matthew 27.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, You blessed Jacob's family even though they had departed from Your will in several areas. Please continue to bless my life even though I often depart from Your will. In Jesus' name; Amen.

Wednesday - Week Six

Catechism Review

Read Questions 18-24

1. Our conscience is the little judge inside of our hearts. That little judge compares something that we are going to do (or already have done) to the rule book that is also in our hearts to decide if something is right or wrong. Can our conscience ever be wrong? Explain. (Think carefully!)

2. How can you improve your conscience's decision making process?

3. Can you remember what each of the 10 commandments are about?

1 = _____ 2 = _____ 3 = _____ 4 = _____

5 = _____ 6 = _____ 7 = _____ 8 = _____

9 and 10 = _____

4. What one word summarizes the whole law? _____

How can this summary help you to make quick decisions during the day as to how to please God with your actions?

Read: Psalm 28; Matthew 28.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, You gave us Your law in our hearts and in the Bible. Please help me to be in the Word of God on a regular basis so that the law written in my heart can match the law written in Your Word. Help me to listen closely to what my conscience tells me. Motivate me with the wonderful Gospel message. I ask this in Jesus' name; Amen.

Thursday - Week Six

Lesson Seventeen: Jacob's Return to the land of Promise

Read: Genesis 31:17 - 35:29

Summary: God rescued Jacob's family from two potentially dangerous situations: Laban's pursuit and Esau's welcome.

Background and Comments

- Why did Rachel steal her father's household idols? Perhaps it was out of spite ... but it was probably out of superstition that these idols would bring good luck. Later we hear Rachel sinning again (lying) when Laban searches for the idols.
- When Jacob prepared to meet his brother he did two things: divided his camp into two (so that one could escape if Esau attacked one of them) and prayed. In other words, he prayed and took action, he trusted and acted. This is a good lesson for us to learn.
- Jacob wrestled with God! Jacob knew who was wrestling with him (especially after his hip burst with pain); God was teaching him to trust in Him alone.

Lessons for Today

- Despite Jacob's family problems we do see him doing something positive in his family: he talked with the rest of his family about leaving Laban. Rebekah and Leah each supported this decision. How is the communication in your home? Do you set aside time to talk with your spouse or children? Do you communicate well with your friends? How can you work on better communicating with these special people in your lives?
- Jacob's oath in Genesis 31:32 could have been deadly. We need to be very careful not to make rash promises. At the same time we need to remember that a promise to sin is not binding at all. In other words, God does not want us to keep a promise that we made if it causes us to sin. (For example, we might tell someone, "I promise not to tell anyone what you tell me." If the person would then tell us that they are being sexually abused by someone we would have to tell them that we need to tell someone what's happening both because it's legally required and because we have a moral obligation to stop the abuse. The promise we made would not have been a wise one at all.
- Praying is the easiest thing in the world because we simply talk to our loving Heavenly Father. It's also one of the most exhausting things in the world because there are times when we wrestle with God in prayer. We might be praying for wisdom for a challenging problem we are facing. We might pray for days or weeks, pleading with God to show us what to do.

Read: Psalm 29; Romans 1.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, cause me to trust in You as Jacob did. Amen.

Friday - Week Six

Life Questions

Topic/Question: What should we teach our young people about “dating”?

Bible References and Considerations

- Before we discuss this topic we need to define “dating”. There are several definitions that people work with:
 1. Hanging around with a person. (Simply doing things together with someone else ... often in large groups. There is not a great deal of exclusiveness involved.) This is how relationships start.
 2. Agreeing to have a somewhat exclusive relationship with someone. The two people have become a “couple”.
- It seems that years ago there was most emphasis on going out on a date as opposed to “dating”. Going out on a date puts the emphasis on actually doing something with another person and having fun together (going to a movie, a sports event, etc.). “Dating” puts the emphasis on the relationship instead of on the other person. Then it’s too easy for each person to worry more about if they are still “going out” instead of getting to know each other.
- There are not any direct references to dating in the Bible. In the Old Testament there was no such thing because parents simply arranged the marriages of their children. It might be helpful to talk with your young people about what that must have been like. Perhaps parents could ask their children why the divorce rates among arranged marriages in Bible times is so much lower than today’s divorce rates (not to say that we should go back to arranged marriages obviously ... but to explore ideas like commitment, love and marriage).

Practically Speaking

- Have you ever told young people how you and your spouse met? It might be helpful for them to realize that once upon a time your relationship was one of “going out on a date.” One day that young person will go out on a date with their future spouse.
- As with every other aspect of raising children communication is vitally important in this area.
- Are you single? God knows what’s going on in your life. Perhaps His will is that you remain single so you can serve Your Lord in that way. Perhaps His will is that you get married down the road so you can serve Him in that way. No matter what our station in life the Lord can and does use us in special ways.

Read: Psalm 30; Romans 2

Prayer: Dear Lord, guide our young people in this important area of their lives. Amen.