**Explore the Bible Lesson Preview**

**January 27, 2019**

**“Assurance”**

**Background: Genesis 34:1-36:43**

**Lesson: Genesis 35:1-15**

**Motivation:** As sometimes happens, a great mountaintop experience is followed by a valley of depression. Satan doesn’t want us to stay close to God! The meeting with God (32) and reconciliation with Esau (33) was followed by mass murder of chapter (34). Surely Jacob was in turmoil thinking “**What kind of spiritual leader am I?**” Miserable failures by ourselves or members of our families can become life-changing opportunities for good. We must hear God’s voice and follow God’s plan.

**I. Brutal Revenge** (34:1-31) Less

This is a sordid chapter in the life of Israel’s family! First, Dinah is raped by Shechem (2); then her brothers gain revenge by murdering an entire city! (25) This incident helps us know how far Israel and his entire family had yet to grow in faith. **J. Vernon McGee** provides this summary: **“‘And they said, ‘Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?’”** (Gen. 34:31).’ That’s a good question. I would say that if they wanted to take the judgment into their own hands, they first of all should have heard this boy out and let him marry their sister. It would have been the best thing to do under the circumstances, but it is not the right thing, by any means. Certainly, that would have been better than to go to the extreme of murdering the inhabitants of that land. There is no excuse that can be offered, and I have no defense to offer for them at all. They should not have done the thing that they did, but we must understand that they were not living in the light of Romans 12:19-21 which says: **‘Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirsts, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good.’** For a Christian today Romans 12 is the policy that he should follow. The very minute we attempt to take revenge or get vengeance, it means that we are no longer walking by faith. We are saying that we cannot trust God to work it out. However, I am not sure that you could bring Jacob - and certainly not his sons - up to such a spiritual level at that particular time. But you cannot justify this terrible deed which they have committed. You can well understand that they acted because of their feeling for their sister and the shame which had been brought upon the family. Jacob was beginning to see that a whole lot of chickens - not just a few - were coming home to roost.” (**Thru the Bible**, Vol. 1, pp. 140-141)

**II. Purify Yourself**

“**God said to Jacob, “Get up! Go to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.” 2So Jacob said to his family and all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods that are among you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes. 3We must get up and go to Bethel. I will build an altar there to the God who answered me in my day of distress. He has been with me everywhere I have gone.” 4Then they gave Jacob all their foreign gods and their earrings, and Jacob hid them under the oak near Shechem.**” (35:1-4) This is a study concerning what to do when you fail miserably:

**A. Receive the Lord’s Instruction “God said to Jacob, Get up! Go to Bethel. . .”** (1) Jacob was willing to listen to God. Unfortunately, in times of miserable failure, many Christians turn away from God due to bitterness or shame. To Jacob’s credit, he was willing to let God take him back to his spiritual roots. Often, the best thing we can do in times of disappointment and failure is to remember times when we were close to God.

**B. Repent of Sin “Get rid of the foreign gods that are among you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes.”** (2) At first glance, the repenting seems to be on the part of Jacob’s family; however, upon further reflection, we realize that Jacob had to repent first and foremost. There’s no “if” in the sentence. Jacob knowingly tolerated idols in his camp. As soon as he learned of Rachel’s household idols (31:19), he was responsible for getting rid of them! It was to Jacob that God appeared and later blessed. The position and authority of spiritual leadership was his alone. To spiritualize a moment, we could identify three steps that were associated with repentance:

1. **Put away idols** - J. Vernon McGee (**Thru the Bible**, Vol. 1, pp. 142-3) makes this observation: “There are too many folk who six days a week are serving some other god, and on Sunday they try to serve the Lord. Many Christians, even fundamental believers, have their strange gods, and then they wonder why their service in the church on Sunday is not a thrilling experience. My friend, you are going to have to put away your strange gods. I don’t know what yours might be. It could be covetousness. (Col. 3:5) There is many a good fundamental businessman who is out after every dollar he can get. He gives more devotion to getting the dollar than he does to serving the Lord on Sunday. And then he wonders what is wrong with his spiritual life. If you are going to come back to Beth-el where you met God at the beginning, then, my friend, you must put away those things that are wrong.” Someone once wrote that real repentance involves taking steps to avoid the source of temptation.

2. **Purify** - In Jacob’s household, this would have referred to outward ritual purification. Christians can only be purified from the inside (I John 1:8-10). Every great revival has begun with serious prayer followed by confession and repentance of sin (II Chron. 7:14). At work we put an emphasis on quality-control and zero-defects. Yet in our spiritual lives we rationalize sin by saying “Everybody’s doing it” or “At least it’s not as bad as my neighbor’s sin.” The sin of Achan in Judges 7 instructs us that God is not nearly as tolerant of sin as we would want to believe.

3. **Progress Forward** “**Change your clothes**” An inward spiritual decision should be reflected by outward, measurable change. When the villagers encountered the Gadarene demoniac after his healing by Jesus, they saw him, “. . . **sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.**” (Mark 5:15) Why were they afraid? Because they could not comprehend the power that changed a man who “**No one was able to restrain him anymore-even with chains**-” (5:3) A tremendous inner change was evidenced by a change in attitude, appearance and actions.

**C.** **Reaffirm your Calling** “**We must get up and go to Bethel**. . .” (3) Abraham had a back-to-Bethel experience after his sojourn in Egypt (13:3-4). Now Jacob reaffirmed his faith in the one, true God. Two qualities of God are mentioned:

1. “**Who answered me in the day of my distress**” (4) God had gotten Jacob out of several “jams”; in all likelihood, this passage refers to the night when he was fleeing Esau that God revealed Himself in a dream (28:10-22). God not only is **available** to us but wants to provide an **answer** to our problems.

2. “**has been with me everywhere I have gone**” God promised “**Look, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.**” (28:15). Jacob affirmed that God keeps his promises! (Matt. 28:20; Hebrew 13:5)

**D. Respond in Obedience** **“Then they gave Jacob all their foreign gods. . .”** (4) Probably the emphasis should be placed upon **all** - partial obedience usually means disobedience. When their spiritual leader took a stand, the family and retainers willingly followed. The responsibilities of spiritual leadership include sensitivity to God’s will, responsiveness to His commands, and the initiative to lead obedience. “**Earrings**” were associated with idol worship in that day.

**III. Obey God’s Directives**

“**When they set out, a terror from God came over the cities around them, and they did not pursue Jacob’s sons. 6So Jacob and all who were with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan. 7Jacob built an altar there and called the place God of Bethel because it was there that God had revealed Himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.** **8Deborah, the one who had nursed and raised Rebekah, died and was buried under the oak south of Bethel. So Jacob named it Oak of Weeping.**” (35:5-8)

**A. Respect of the surrounding cities “a terror from God came over the cities around them”** (5) It may seem strange to us that everyone would become terrified simply because Jacob’s household changed clothes. Here’s our lesson: When God does a work in your life, outsiders can’t help but notice! Your talk will change; your walk will change. **I believe your very appearance will change as you walk closer to God.**

**B. Respect of the people - “So Jacob and all who were with him came to. . . Bethel. . .”** (6) When the spiritual leader gets right with God, his family and friends are willing to follow his leadership. Contrast this to chapter 34 when we see a shattered family with no leadership.

**C. Respect to God “Jacob built an altar there and called the place God of Bethel”** Worship will be a major beneficiary of repentance! When we realize the depth of our sin and the magnitude of our forgiveness we cannot help but exalt and worship God.

**D. Respect for the deceased “Deborah, the one who had nursed and raised Rebekah, died…”** (8) We don’t know under what circumstance Deborah came to be in Jacob’s camp, but her presence and the honor shown to her certainly leads us to believe that Rebekah had previously died. The name given to the tree under which Deborah was buried is “Oak of Weeping.” It’s important to note that they showed her proper respect and then went on with the task God had given them. **The Explore the Bible Commentary** (Winter, 1998; p. 66): “Deborah’s death and burial also illustrate the sort of life events that may distract or discourage some adults from pursuing their relationship with God. Jacob’s resumption of the journey following Deborah’s burial illustrates the importance of keeping our spiritual lives on track even when important issues clamor for our attention. We dare not lose our ultimate focus.”

**IV. Remember God’s Promises**

“**God appeared to Jacob again after he returned from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. 10God said to him: Your name is Jacob;** **you will no longer be named Jacob,** **but your name will be Israel. So He named him Israel. 11God also said to him: I am God Almighty.** **Be fruitful and multiply.** **A nation, indeed an assembly of nations,** **will come from you,** **and kings will descend from you.** **12I will give to you the land** **that I gave to Abraham and Isaac.** **And I will give the land** **to your future descendants. 13Then God withdrew from him at the place where He had spoken to him.** **14Jacob set up a marker at the place where He had spoken to him—a stone marker. He poured a drink offering on it and anointed it with oil.15Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.**” (35:9-15)

Many aspects of this story will remind us of events at Jacob’s ladder (28:10ff) and at the Jabbok river where he wrestled with God (32:22ff): 1) name changed from Jacob to Israel, 2) promise of descendants, 3) promise of land, 4) monument, 5) offering, 6) name of Bethel. Since we have already studied the significance of these items in previous lessons, let’s look at the importance of renewing covenants. (Gal. 3:26-29)

In marriage, couples sometimes have a formal ceremony to renew their wedding vows. Observers don’t assume that they have loved less; in fact, just the opposite. People appreciate the fact that they desire everyone to know that they are more in love now than ever.

Another comparison might be a public rededication of life. Sometimes this does follow a period of drift and becomes a refocusing of spiritual priorities. By making the decision public, the individual desires public accountability and prayer support.

Whether in public ceremony or in the privacy of our hearts, we should take opportunity to regularly reaffirm our commitments both to our God, our church and our families. Without a clear focus, we can take for granted those things most precious to us. We can affirm with certainty that Jacob was forever grateful that he got right with God prior to the passing of his beloved Rachel (16-22).

**V. Keeping Up with People** (35:16-36:43)

The emphasis on names in this section may give the feel of a telephone directory. However, we should be reminded of the value God places on each individual. As we look over our Life Bible Study rolls, some names “jump off the page” at us because we’ve taken the time to know them (and their problems and victories). Other names are just words on a page. To God, every name is precious. He has given us the responsibility of keeping up with people.

In reading through Esau’s family, note 36:31 **“These are the kings who ruled in the land of Edom.”** God’s promise to Abraham (17:6) was realized even in the non-messianic lines of Ishmael and Esau.

**Application**

1. When we fail miserably, God expects us to turn toward Him, not away from Him.

2. When God gives us a promise, He expects us to claim it and review it.

3. When God entrusts us with His people, He expects us to keep up with them.

**Leader Pack Item 7:** Handout: **Genesis Timeline**

**Biblical Illustrator:** InSites **“Canaanite Gods”**

**Notes:** *\*\*You may access David’s Lesson Preview in MP3 format at:* [*www.hfbcbiblestudy.org*](http://www.hfbcbiblestudy.org/)*;*

**Dates: 1/23-5/8** – Midlink on Wednesdays; **1/25** – Midnight Madness in WC & Gyms; **1/27** - FBA Day @ HFBC; **1/27** – Fitness Expo; **1/29** - Staff Retreat @ CYP Campus; **2/8** - Night to Shine/Tim Tebow Foundation; **2/8-9** - Superstart (Preteen) WC; **2/8-10** - LIFT weekend (AFC); **2/10** – MIYCO; **2/14-24** - Summit trip to Israel – Don Munton (TL); **2/15** - Marriage Matters; **2/24** - Parent Commitment; **3/1-2** – Men’s Ministry Mentoring Conference; **3/6** – Midlink bonus night; **3/9-14** – RUSHMORE; **3/30** – Men:Serve.