



### INTRODUCTION

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As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**ICE BREAKER QUESTION:** Have you ever had to stand up for your brother or sister before? What happened and how did you stand up for him or her?

The events of Genesis 34 are shocking and filled with injustice and violence. Here we see a story of a beloved sister who is raped, a passive father, and a set of brothers who wanted to protect their sister. On the surface, this seems like a good thing, because a brother who does not desire to protect his sister would not be a very good brother. However, the response of Dinah's brothers shows the brokenness in our desire for vengeance and a longing for justice that can only be filled in Christ.

Read back through the passage before going through the questions.

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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. What is your biggest takeaway? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?
2. We see a tragic event happen in Jacob's family in the beginning of Genesis 34. What led to this and did Dinah do anything to deserve it?

As chapter 34 opens, we see that Dinah went to spend time with the women of the land, but her trip was cut short when she was assaulted by Shechem. The word used for raped means "humiliated" and entails a violent interaction. The commentators quote provides more insight into what happened:

*And so here in Shechem young Dinah was pushing at the edges when she "went out to see the women of the land" (v. 1). Girls of marriageable age were not permitted to leave the tents of their people to go about visiting without a chaperone. In fact, the Hebrew term "went out" bears a sense of impropriety. Likely she went out behind Leah's back. And the worst happened! Dinah became a victim of violent rape. "And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he seized*

*her and lay with her and humiliated her” (v. 2). The three verbs (“seized ... lay ... humiliated”) describe a progression of brutality—aggravated rape. Poor Dinah.<sup>1</sup>*

While Dinah was sneaking out of the camp she ultimately was sinned against by the evil Shechem who took advantage of her. We know that Dinah was rebelling in this story by sneaking out of the camp, but we also see something important to note for parents. Jacob’s spiritual leadership had a part to play in why Dinah was responding in this way. The commentator’s quote below helps shed some light on this truth:

*There was only one girl among Jacob’s children, Dinah, the daughter of unloved Leah. Leah’s children, as compared to Rachel’s, were less favored by Jacob, and Dinah appeared to have been of little interest at all to Jacob. This coupled with the fact that Jacob was not where God wanted him to be geographically or spiritually left her particularly vulnerable.<sup>2</sup>*

### **3. Though we see that Shechem loved Dinah, does that excuse his actions? What should we make of this declaration of love?**

The “love” came after and does not excuse his violent actions. Shechem was following the customs of his culture, but his actions are completely unacceptable and worthy of our outrage.

*But unlike the case of Amnon’s rape of Tamar when afterward Amnon despised his victim, “so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her” (2 Samuel 13:15), Shechem became consumed with Dinah. “And his soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob. He loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, ‘Get me this girl for my wife’ ” (vv. 3, 4). Shechem’s brutality was transmuted to tender affection. He was madly in love, though it is doubtful that he could distinguish passion from love. The young prince proposed a proper marriage. Pagan Shechem certainly was not all bad.<sup>3</sup>*

#### **a) How we see this type of behavior and love in our own culture?**

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [\*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing\*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 412.

<sup>2</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [\*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing\*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 412.

<sup>3</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [\*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing\*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 412.

**4. What is noble and beautiful about the brothers' response to the rape of their sister? What all was wrong with Dinah's brothers deception of Shechem's family?**

The brother's initial response of anger was righteous unlike that of their own father. We see in how they respond they truly understood the sin that had been done towards their sister, their family, and their God. The commentators quote below explains this further:

*Amidst their fury, Jacob's sons responded properly to the demeaning of Israel as well as of Dinah. They understood that because Jacob had become Israel at Peniel, the rape of his daughter was a crime against Israel as a people, seeing that the relationship of Israel to God had been ignored and abused. Tragically, their father Jacob had neither stood up for his daughter or his God!<sup>4</sup>*

After there is no action from their father and nothing done to right the wrong done to their sister, the brothers hatch a plan of revenge. Not only were they wrong in trying to take revenge but the way of taking revenge added even further to their sinful act. They used a holy sacrament only given to God's people to take revenge. We see this truth with the quotes below:

*But more, there is here an abuse of the holy. Circumcision, Israel's most cherished symbol of faith, would now become a tool of inhumanity. The desecration of the covenant sign of circumcision as a means to gain revenge, and the widening of the revenge to the murder and plunder of a town, were immense crimes deserving condemnation.<sup>5</sup>*

*The sign of circumcision, however, was not to be used in this manner; for the Shechemites it represented no turning to the covenant God in faith. To deceive the Shechemites was one thing; to use the sign of the covenant in the deceit was another matter entirely.<sup>6</sup>*

**5. Where is Jacob in all of this discussion? Why is this problematic? What responsibility did he have?**

Jacob's passivity began by waiting for his sons to return to deal with the situation and continued in his total lack of involvement in the brothers' plans for vengeance. While we see the beauty of family in the brothers' love for their sister, they created a murderous plot to avenge her. The feeling for vengeance is understandable, but murder destroys another person made in the image of God, and it is inherently wrong. Injustice highlights

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<sup>4</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 413.

<sup>5</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 414.

<sup>6</sup> Allen P. Ross, [Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 574.

the brokenness of our world, but we must trust that the world's most perfect justice system is coming at the return of Christ.

*Jacob was pathetic—for what he did not say. He did not condemn the massacre. Neither did he condemn his sons for breaking the law of lex talionis. He did not mention that they violated his contract with Shechem. Jacob said nothing about their desecration of Israel's most precious symbol of faith. And, of course, there was not a word of concern about his just-raped daughter Dinah. Jacob's only concern was survival—to save his own skin and, by association, that of his family.<sup>7</sup>*

**6. We clearly see in this story that Dinah's brothers responded in sin to the wrong done to their sister. How can we respond as followers of Jesus when we see blatant injustices like rape, brutality, and murder in the world without sinning ourselves?**

The brothers' murderous crusade is retold in all the bloody details in these verses. The slaughter of Shechem's house, including women and children, went far beyond what was reasonable or what would come to be allowed in the law of God. This understanding can also be seen in the commentator quote below:

*This shocks us. But it was just as shocking to the ancient readers as it is to modern eyes and ears. The ancient law of lex talionis (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth) had been trampled by Simeon and Levi. There had been no equity here, only exponential revenge. The brothers' actions offended every convention.<sup>8</sup>*

We can all sympathize with a brother's desire to get revenge upon a man who defiled his sister. But as Christ followers, we must acknowledge that when Jesus suffered injustice, He did not exact revenge. Instead, He waited on the justice of the Lord—and so should we.

*Young zealots usually react correctly to evil—but their tactics may profane the covenant faith. Attempting to destroy or punish evil through lawless or unrighteous acts should not be confused with righteous indignation. Rather, the righteous must seek justice and oppose evil in a manner that brings honor to God and his covenant.<sup>9</sup>*

**a. How can we exercise care and love for brothers and sisters in Christ who have experienced the type of horrific injustices we see in these verses?**

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<sup>7</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 416.

<sup>8</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 415.

<sup>9</sup> Allen P. Ross, [Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 576.

## 7. What sin do I need to ask my family forgiveness for and seek reconciliation?

We learned on Sunday that all these tragic events in this chapter could have been avoided if Jacob had been obedient to God and he could have also avoided the further sin if he would have asked for forgiveness at any point throughout this story.

*But then came his lie and deception of Esau. And instead of traveling straight to Bethel as God had called him to do, he first sojourned in Succoth outside the promised land. Then when he did enter the land he did not settle in Bethel, but rather twenty miles away in prosperous Shechem. It was almost obedience, which is simply disobedience. If Jacob had gone to Bethel in full obedience, none of this would have happened. The rape, the desecration, the genocide, the disgrace were all due to his disobedience.<sup>10</sup>*

This story is a good lesson for us and the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation in our own lives. Challenge the group to think through these next steps in their own life.

## 8. What do we learn about God's grace through Jacob and his family in this passage?

As we learned on Sunday, God's grace is so fierce in how He responded to Jacob even through this passage and throughout His whole life. God's grace was all Jacob had and we see these truths in the quotes below:

*Jacob's sole hope, and our only hope, lay in the ultimate Son of Jacob, the ultimate Israel, Christ the Savior who bore the wrath of God for our sin, turning it away from all who believe.*

*There for me the Savior stands,  
Shows His wounds and spreads His hands.  
God is love! I know, I feel;  
Jesus weeps and loves me still.<sup>11</sup>*

*The sky had fallen on Jacob. But through it all was a fierce grace. Jacob could see himself for what he was.*

*I have long withstood His grace,  
Long provoked him to His face,  
Would not hearken to His calls,  
Grieved Him by a thousand falls.*

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<sup>10</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 416–417.

<sup>11</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 417.

*Now the withering grace of God would spur Jacob on to Bethel. Sovereign grace would have its way. How absurd Jacob had been. How absurd we all are when we resist the Lord's will. How tragic the consequences.*

*Now incline me to repent,  
Let me now my sins lament,  
Now my foul revolt deplore,  
Weep, believe, and sin no more.*

CHARLES WESLEY,  
"DEPTH OF MERCY," 1740<sup>12</sup>

## **Conclusion**

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We are greatly encouraged that the Lord is true to His word even when His people sin. If His blessings were based ultimately on our faithfulness, we would be totally lost. Still, while God was faithful despite Jacob's unfaithfulness, the patriarch and his family would have avoided a lot of trouble had Jacob been more concerned to be an effective spiritual leader. Can others look to you as an example of a leader in godliness?

## **PRAYER**

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Cry out to God to come and bring His perfect justice to the injustice in our world. Thank the Lord that one day He will return and fix all that is broken in this world. Pray that as a community of faith, we would respond to injustices in a way that honors Jesus and constantly points us back to Him.

The Lord's use of Israel to pour out His wrath on the inhabitants of Canaan was a case unique to that particular time in the history of God's people. As Paul tells us in Romans 12:19, God no longer uses His people (the church) for this task. Instead, we are to trust Him to take vengeance on His enemies. Consider those who have hurt you and those upon whom you have, either now or in the past, desired to take revenge. Pray for their well-being (Rom. 12:20–21).

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<sup>12</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [\*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing\*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 417.



## **FURTHER STUDY**

### **Devotionals-**

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/two-different-responses>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/profaning-holy-sign>

### **Article –**

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/gods-mercy-in-messed-up-families>