



INTRODUCTION

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

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: What are some things that must be renewed or refilled?

Regardless of how many times we have failed God, He calls us back to Himself. The God who graciously takes the initiative in establishing our relationship with Himself is the same God who continues to call us to a deeper relationship with Himself. It happened to Jacob in Genesis 35.

Read back through the passage before going through the questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your biggest takeaway? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?
2. Jacob recalled his previous experience with God at Bethel (v. 7). What role should remembering our past spiritual experiences play in our lives today?

The commentators quote below help us see the impact of Jacob recalling his previous experience at Bethel and it can help us as we think about the importance of remembering our past spiritual experiences:

At Bethel "he built an altar and called the place El-bethel ["God of Bethel"], because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother" (v. 7). Jacob then worshiped at the altar, offering joyful sacrifices to God. And as he fulfilled his thirty-year-old vow, he gratefully gave a tenth of all he had to God (cf. 28:22). At last Jacob was in the place where he was supposed to be—worshiping with a heart that was right with God.¹

¹ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 421.

Remembering the past spiritual experiences grew Jacobs faith and spurred him into worshipping God with a right heart.

3. What are some things that can distract us from our commitment to Christ?

Some people let family concerns distract them from their commitment to Christ. Jacob carried out the responsibility of burying Deborah without being sidetracked from his higher purpose (v. 8). Jacob would also bury his wife Rachel later in this chapter (vv. 16-18). Jacob's spiritual renewal, beginning with his obedience to God's command to return to Bethel (v. 1), prepared him to respond appropriately to the sorrow of these losses. God begins to work in His people's lives prior to distressing circumstances. He prepares us for tough times.

4. How were God's promises tied to Jacob's past and future?

God had a purpose with his promises, and they were specifically tied to the past and future. The commentators quotes below show how they were tied:

Abraham had been the first to learn that kings would come from him, and now Jacob heard the same. A thousand years hence the founding of a line of kings in the Davidic dynasty began the fulfillment of this promise, which would ultimately be fulfilled another thousand years later in the advent of Christ Jesus, the King of the Jews. Jacob had just heard the most categorical, most dramatic affirmation of the promises he would ever hear!²

God appeared to Jacob and confirmed the promises made at Bethel. This passage parallels the account in 17:5-8, in which Abram's name was changed to Abraham as a sign of the surety of the promise. The name change to Israel was proof of the promises, and here the promises included nations, royalty, and the land.³

5. How does reflecting on God's promises help us live out our commitment to Him today?

God changed Jacob's name to Israel, signifying that He changed his character. Jacob needed to remember who he was. One of Satan's favorite weapons against believers is his

² R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 422.

³ Allen P. Ross, [Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 581.

attempt to remind us of who we once were and how evil we are by nature. God wants us to remember who we are in Him, and to act on the basis of our new identity. The commentators quote gives us some great examples:

Jacob's experience of expanded understanding is common to all of us. As new, inexperienced Christians we learned some new truth, and it did us much good. Then years later, after the ups and downs of spiritual life, we reflect on the same truth—but with a far deeper level of application and understanding. Once again at Bethel, Jacob's understanding that it was "the house of God" penetrated the depths of his being and informed his way of life as never before. A different Jacob was rising.⁴

6. Despite all of Jacob's faults, God repeated His promise to him in verses 10-12 (see also 28:13). What does that say about God?

God is always good and always faithful. He does not give up on us and will always be faithful even when we are not. We see this truth explained further with the quote below:

The angel-freighted ladder extending up to Heaven from wherever Jacob dwelt had been perpetually busy in his behalf over the last thirty years. God's promise—that he would never leave Jacob until he had done what he had promised—remained unbroken (cf. 28:15). God had kept his word despite Jacob's self-focused scheming and halfhearted obedience. A constant grace rained upon him—most often as a gentle mist and sometimes as a fierce downpour. Grace had etched and watered his stubborn soul—and now he had grown. But life was passing quickly.⁵

7. What can we learn from the residuals in Jacob's life and God's response in this passage and in Genesis?

Through all the ups and downs of Jacob's life we learn how sins can have lifelong residuals, but we also can see God's grace amongst it all. The quotes below explain it well:

But there was also great grace in Jacob's life. Joseph, the son Jacob would receive back as if from the dead, would be used to effect the deliverance and salvation of his people. This Joseph, unlike his brothers, would lead a celebrated, exemplary life. In fact, he is seen as a type of Christ. There in Egypt a people would be formed who would come out in glorious exodus. All would be of grace. God would say to them:⁶

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 423.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 423.

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 425.

Some sins that believers commit bear lifelong residuals. An ethical sin, perhaps in business, though repented of, can bear lifelong residuals. A Christian may enter into an adulterous relationship that destroys his marriage. Though he may later repent, the family residuals will follow him to his death.

But there is always grace. God is written large all over this culminating chapter that records Jacob's repentance and obedience. And more, God's grace triumphs amidst sin's residuals and mediates their effects.⁷

Conclusion

Jacob's life was repetitive. He worshiped again and again at Bethel. He faithfully did the same tasks every day for twenty years in service to his crooked father-in-law (Gen. 31:36–41). Yet, the word God gives to Jacob near the end of his life is even greater than the one he received before he learned to lean on the Lord in even the mundane tasks. No believer is ignored by Him. God sees and rewards our daily service to spouses, children, friends, and neighbors.

Genesis 35 shows us how each generation of God's people must trust Him to do what He says even if the full realization of His promises remains in the future. Jacob affirmed his trust in the Lord when he buried Isaac in the only piece of Canaan the family owned and when he moved to revitalize the faith of his family, calling them to put away their foreign gods. Each generation must likewise reform the church according to Scripture and trust our Father anew.

PRAYER

Close in prayer by praying for group members to hear and respond in faith and obedience to God's call to a deeper relationship with Himself. Pray that they would experience a renewed and deepened sense of God's purpose for their lives and His presence with them.

⁷ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 426.



FURTHER STUDY

Devotionals-

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/promise-confirmed>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/isaacs-final-breath>