

Date : 16 April 2023
Theme : The men who walked by Faith
Topic : Jacob's journey of Faith
Key passage : *Genesis 28-35*
Key verse : ...*Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. Genesis 28:16*

Introduction

Jacob had a godly father and grandfather, Isaac and Abraham, respectively. His family was one that believed in God's promises to Abraham. However, he had never really allowed God to take hold of his life. He was still living for himself and not trusting God. Jacob himself must personally embark on his own journey of faith with God. No matter how spiritual his parents or grandparents, they produce no merit for Jacob. He must experience God Himself.

This is often true for those raised in Christian homes. At a young age, they develop head-knowledge but still live on the faith of their parents. However, at some point, their faith has to become their own. God has to become their God and not just their parents' God.

What can we learn from Jacob's faith journey, especially for those who have the blessing of being born with a Christian heritage?

1. Jacob's going out faith (from Beersheba to Haran) *Genesis 28:10-22*

a) A God-fearing home

- He started off facing distractions, muddling through life without a sense of direction.
 - A deceiver who did not hesitate to cheat on his twin brother, not once but twice.
 - He had the privilege of observing his grandfather and father's relationships with God. He could testify about this knowledge later in his life ...*If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me... Genesis 31:42.*

b) A Run-away for his life

- Yet, he was worse than most of us.
 - He was in **BIG** trouble! He had tricked his brother Esau and his father Isaac to give him the father's blessing. Esau was furious enough to kill his younger brother. Rebekah, his mother, heard his threats and advised Isaac to get out fast!
 - Solitude (alone, away from home)
 - Jacob ran, without stopping to look back, until night came and he collapsed in exhaustion.
 - He was accustomed to being around a booming estate with many servants and business activities around him. His grandfather, Abraham, was very wealthy with 318 trained servants. Isaac, his father, had inherited all of Abraham's wealth and increased it.

Now, however, he was all alone (thus he worried about basic needs, like food to eat and clothes to wear, and safety *Genesis 28: 20, 21*).

c) A God-encounter *Genesis 28:10-15*

Each of us needs an experience with God. Some, an experience that leads to salvation, others, a fresh experience, leading to greater intimacy and commitment. That was Jacob's first experience that would lead to many other fresh experiences – including another dream *Genesis 31:11, 35:9*, a Peniel experience and God renaming him *Genesis 32:28,30*.

i) To experience a God-encounter, recognise our brokenness

Jacob was hurting in various ways. Certainly he had fear, as he ran for his life. He was experiencing shame for he had manipulated his brother, and deceived his blind father. With these conflicting internal emotions, he camped alone (instead of finding lodging at Luz *Genesis 28:19*).

When we are broken, weak, lost, destitute and lonely, God gets our attention.

ii) We must receive revelation of God's Word *Genesis 28:12-15*

Jacob's first encounter with God happened when he was enroute to Paddan Aram.

- A stairway to heaven
God spoke to him in a dream. The ladder speaks of Jesus – the way into heaven

iii) We must respond with faith and commitment. Covenant making *Genesis 28:16-22*

*...Then Jacob made a vow, saying, If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will give you a tenth... *Genesis 28:20-22**

- Make a vow *...Jacob made a vow... *Genesis 28:20**
- Accept God's Lordship *...then the Lord shall be my God... *Genesis 28:21**
- Commit with a sign *... as a pillar will be God's house... *Genesis 28:22**

He named the place Bethel *Genesis 28:19*

2. Jacob's going on faith (Paddan Aram)

i) The COST of going on faith

- Facing and overcoming disappointments
 - His agreement with Laban, 7years service bride price for Rachel, became 14years.
 - Total time of waiting turned out to be 20years.

ii) The REWARDS of going on faith

- He came with little but left with plenty *Genesis 30:30*
God turned everything out for good. He had 11 sons by the time he returned to Canaan.

3. Jacob's going in faith (Canaan)

- Obeyed God's instructions immediately to return to Canaan *Genesis 31:3, 13*
- Persevering prayer. Experienced God at Peniel. Saw the face of God *Genesis 32:24, 30*
 - Change of name *Genesis 32:28*
- Trusted God. Faced safety issues *Genesis 32-34*
 - Fear of revenge by Esau *Genesis 33*
 - Hamor the Hivite *Genesis 34*
- Practised no other gods. Took the lead in his household to get rid of foreign gods *Genesis 35:2*
Led them to Bethel to build an altar of worship *Genesis 35:3-6*
- Confirmed in his role as father of the nation of Israel. *Genesis 35:9-12*

Application

- What is one principle you can learn from Jacob's journey of faith?
 - Jacob's time of solitude at Bethel.....
 - His persevering prayer at Peniel.....
 - His blessing from little to plenty.....