

The Foundry Church

Devotions



Week of May 27-June 2

Day 1

Prayer

Lord, quiet my mind. Fill me with your Holy Spirit, and help me to understand what you have written for me. Teach me through your Word, and show me how to apply it to my life. Let me not end this time with simply knowing more, but *knowing You more*, and becoming more like you.

Background on Text

This summer we are studying the life of Joseph, so it seems strange that this first text doesn't even include his name! However, we need to understand where Joseph came from before we begin to study his life. This passage deals primarily with who Joseph's father was, Jacob. Maybe you have heard the phrase "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob..." Abraham was the man that God called out of obscurity, and told him that he would become a great nation, and God would bless all people through him. Though Abraham was nearly 100, with no children *when God first called him*, he became the father of what is now the Jewish people. God gave Abraham and his wife Sarah a son, who was named Isaac. Isaac was the father of Jacob. Jacob had a twin brother named Esau. In the text you'll see that there was a point in his life when Jacob was running away from his brother Esau. That is because though Esau was the older twin (born first), Jacob tricked him into selling his birthright. Then Jacob deceived his father Isaac into giving him the blessing of the firstborn, instead of Esau.



Miraculously, over time God had healed the brother's relationship.

Jacob was a complex character. Though he made his share of mistakes, he also valued the Lord's blessings over anything else.

Scripture

Genesis 35:1-15

Jacob Returns to Bethel

35 Then God said to Jacob, “Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.”

2 So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes. **3** Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.” **4** So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem. **5** Then they set out, and the terror of God fell on the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.

6 Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz in the land of Canaan. **7** There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

8 Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died and was buried under the oak outside Bethel. So it was named Allon Bakuth.

9 After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram, God appeared to him again and blessed him. **10** God said to him, “Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.” So he named him Israel.

11 And God said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. **12** The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.” **13** Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.

14 Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it. **15** Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.

Time to change

Have you ever had to be reminded of a new identity? It happens a lot throughout life. I can hear the Mom and toddler talking:

“I want my binky (pacifier)!” pleads the two- year- old.

“I know, but remember, your a big kid now. You don’t use that anymore, but let’s talk about all the big things you get to do!” says Mom, as she lovingly redirects the little one.

Or, maybe you remember wondering why school seemed to suddenly involve more work, and fewer naps and crafts, and hearing the phrase: “You’re a third-grader now...”

Some of us even remember hearing, “Your a grown-up now” or thinking “I’m a parent now.”

New identities come with changes. Although some of the changes involve letting go, others involve wider horizons and greater opportunities.

Jacob needed to be reminded of his change. Notice in verse 9 it says, “God appeared to him again.” Verse ten recounts the changing of his name from Jacob to Israel. But that is not the first time God told Jacob of the name change. Earlier, before he had met and reconciled with his brother, God had blessed Jacob and changed his name. He had changed it from Jacob which meant grasper or deceiver to Israel, which is a combination of the words like wrestle, strive or contend and God. We can understand it as clinging to God.¹

Did you notice what Jacob (Israel) did once God told him to return to the place where He had first blessed him? He gathered his family and had them purify themselves and get rid of all their foreign gods. It appears that though Jacob had been given a new identity by God, he hadn’t fully lived into it yet. There were still things from the past lurking around that he needed to be done with. God had plans for his future, but just like the little toddler and the pacifier, it meant letting go of the old things. Jacob was to no longer to grasp at this world, he was to cling to God.

What about you?

Do you need to be reminded of your new identity in Christ?

¹ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/israel/>

Are there things from the “old” you that you are still holding onto?

It might be a habit.

It might be a bad temper.

It could be a mindset, a way of thinking or seeing the world or yourself that God wants you to change.

Ask God to remind you of your identity in Him, and if there is anything you are still holding onto that you need to let go of, so that you can fully embrace the new life He has for you.

Day 2

Prayer

Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit illuminates the word of God. This means, the Holy Spirit helps us understand. Pray and ask the Lord to help you and guide you as you study His word, in order to know Jesus more.

Background

This is the first time we see Joseph's name. It is only once, and it is included among some other sad, interesting, and even disturbing details. The text begins with the death of Rachel. Jacob loved his wife Rachel. In fact, when he had first met her, he agreed to work seven years for her Father in order to marry her. The Bible includes a wonderful line that shows Jacob's heart for his bride, in Genesis 29:20, "but it seemed like only a few days to Jacob, because of his love for her." There was no storybook happy ending for these two though. Rachel's father tricked Jacob, and had him marry his other daughter first. I know this seems hard to imagine, but it was a very different culture. The Bible mentions that things around the marriage took place at night when it was dark. Couple that with a heavy ornamental veil over Leah, and the fact that young couples did not spend time together dating the way we do now, it is more understandable how Jacob could have been fooled.

Jacob did complain to his father-in-law after, who then agreed to give Rachel as his wife as well, if he worked another seven years. He did. As you can imagine, this is not a healthy set-up, and things got worse. At different times Rachel and Leah were unable to have children, so they had their servants bear sons for them. This all resulted in a very complicated family system.

Scripture

Genesis 35:16-29 The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac

16 Then they moved on from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty. **17** And as she was having great

difficulty in childbirth, the midwife said to her, “Don’t despair, for you have and their son.” **18** As she breathed her last—for she was dying—she named her son Ben-Oni (Son of my trouble) But his father named him Benjamin (Son of my right hand).

19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). **20** Over her tomb Jacob set up a pillar, and to this day that pillar marks Rachel’s tomb.

21 Israel moved on again and pitched his tent beyond Migdal Eder. **22** While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father’s concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard of it.

Jacob had twelve sons:

23 The sons of Leah:

Reuben the firstborn of Jacob,
Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun.

24 The sons of Rachel:

Joseph and Benjamin.

25 The sons of Rachel’s servant Bilhah:

Dan and Naphtali.

26 The sons of Leah’s servant Zilpah:

Gad and Asher.

These were the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan Aram.

27 Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed. **28** Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years. **29** Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Discussion

Wow! And we think some of our families have issues!

This is the home that Joseph was born into. We will see some remarkable qualities in Joseph over the summer, and hopefully it will help us to understand that though your past shapes you, it does not define you, God does.

For today, let's take a closer look at Joseph's father, Jacob, once more. Did you notice what happened when his last son was born? His beloved Rachel was with him no longer. I can't imagine his grief. At the same time, here before him was a little life that knew nothing of the turmoil around his entry into the world. None of it was his fault, yet he would live within it from now on. Jacob's first action toward this new little blessing shows a man who is learning to cling to God. Rachel, in her despair, named the child Son of my troubles. To some, it might seem inappropriate that his father would change the name given by a mother as she dies. I think it shows Jacob's growth. Though he loved Rachel dearly, he could see clearly enough to know it wasn't the right choice. He had learned in his own life that names matter. He changed the child's name into a blessing, knowing there would be enough for him to deal with as he grew up the youngest of this motley bunch.

Application

Has your growth been tested lately? Have you come upon situations where you had to choose to do what is right, over and above your emotions, loyalties and traditions? Have you had to be honest with a friend, child or spouse and say "I love you, but that is not the direction God wants us to go."

Or maybe, someone has had to be honest with you. Our first reaction is to be defensive, I know I have struggled with that. Try and see their words from another perspective.

Perhaps they love you so much, that they can't bear to see you do something you would later regret. Consider their words, and bring it before the Lord. Ask him to help you understand.