

Jacob: Returnings

Week 11 Study Questions

[Genesis 35:1-29](#)

The story of Jacob's life reminds us time and again that God is the hero of every story. Although we can learn from Jacob's choices and the promises of God fulfilled through his life, we are ultimately directed toward God as our only need and greatest satisfaction. God requires more from us than half-hearted obedience; as Jacob decides in Genesis 35, we have to decide it's time to bury our idols and bring our half-hearted devotion to God to a close.

Application

1. One of our responsibilities as believers is to remember. The world is always dragging us away, deflating our memory of who we are in God and what he is doing. How has your view of God been deflated? How can the local church help us to remember? What are the spiritual disciplines in your everyday life or week that feed your soul and give you opportunity to remember? If you don't have them, what is something you can commit to starting this week?
2. Even though we say we worship one God, oftentimes we are actually "covering our bases" with other functional gods at the same time. How have you seen this to be true in your life? How might you be living out of the comfort, drive, ambition, life, or happiness of something other than God? Why does it seem easier to us to add him to the list instead of replacing the list with him?
3. Sometimes God takes everything away and offers nothing in return except himself. What do you need to bury under the tree like Jacob? What is the action step for you to separate yourself from the thing that is separating you from God? How can you actively choose him and let go of something that is pulling you away, distracting you, and dividing you from him? (Examples: addictions to material things, money, a dating relationship, friendships or a friend group, time, comfort, ambition, long-life, sin you have been harboring or not confessing)
4. Following God does cost at some point. When has it really cost you something or someone to obey him? What is your "trifecta of comfort" that keeps you from actually sacrificing anything? What would it look like to dismantle all of that and trust God with the consequences?
5. In what ways does Jacob's story contradict the "health and wealth (prosperity) gospel" and the idea that if we follow God, all things will go well for us? In what ways can we fall into the trap of bargaining with God and thinking that if we do our part, he will be kind and gracious to us?

Key Points

- God doesn't save us because of us, but in spite of us.
- Worshiping one God leaves us vulnerable and dependent—unable to hedge our bets in ways that bring comfort and satisfaction in case God doesn't come through.
- Jesus isn't an add-on to our list of gods; he replaces all of them with himself.
- When something is broken, we have to deal with it, or it produces bad fruit. Out of obedience, we separate from it and let it die, and God will either bring it back to us in a redeemed way, or he will take us to a different place.
- The reality of our world is that we cannot get rid of loss to just enjoy God's blessings; we actually get both. We live in the tension that the abundant life embraces both the incredible sorrow and the incredible blessing of God.
- God is incredibly kind and gracious, and he calls us to respond and turn towards him.

Scripture References

[Matthew 18:9](#)