

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

GENESIS 30-34

Riddle: "What did the rich man say after he married the two poor sisters?"

Answer: "Well, that was mighty big of me."

Here're a few quotes on bigamy...

"A bigamist knows the meaning of double trouble."

"To the bigamist, two heads are better than one."

"Bigamy is proof that there can be too much of a good thing."

"If a wife is a man's better half, what happens if he marries twice?"

Here's a poem I found called "*Polygamy at Christmas*"...

"Peace on earth, goodwill to all men, Christ is born in Bethlehem. But think of the man, who marries multiple wives - he's in a pickle, when Christmas arrives..."

A bunch of wives for which to live - even for a man with so much to give... I think he will have found, there just ain't enough of him to really go around.

Polygamy at Christmas, what's he to do? Spend it with the family? He can't, he's got two. Polygamy at Christmas, he's in a jam - turkey with Cindy, or pudding with Pam? A new dress for Jean, a car for Maxine? Jewelry for Lill, Jessie, and Jill?

A Christmas shopping list, for a polygamist... well, just wait till he gets the bill."

Hey, nobody knew the perils of multiple wives more than

Jacob. He married Leah - then Rachel - then had children by Rachel's maid, Bilhah - and later by Leah's maid, Zilpah. Jacob learned that two is company, but four is a crowd.

Proverbs 21:9 states a truth with which all husbands will agree, "Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman." Now multiply that effect times four and you begin to understand Jacob's predicament.

If ever you doubt God's wisdom in prohibiting polygamy, just wade through this chapter. Jacob lived and his kids were raised in the midst of warring women.

Genesis 30 begins, "Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!" And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" So she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her." Surrogate motherhood was a common practice in oriental culture. This is what Sarah suggested to Abraham when he had a son by Hagar, her maid.

Verse 4, "Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. Then Rachel said, "God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan." Which means "judge". "And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, "With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed." So she called his

name Naphtali. Or “*my wrestlings*”. And now a baby battle begins to rage...

Verse 9, “When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife. And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. Then Leah said, “A troop comes!” So she called his name Gad.” Which means “troop”. Leah is vowing that her maid will have a whole army of babies. She’s determined to have many more kids than her sister, Rachel. “And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. Then Leah said, “I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed.” So she called his name Asher.” Which means “happy”.

Verse 14, “Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field,” The word “mandrake” literally means “love apples”.

The mandrakes were a plant with dark leaves, and blue and yellow blossoms. The ancients believed the mandrakes were able to enhance sexual fertility.

Reuben “brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son's mandrakes.” But she said to her, “Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?” And Rachel said, “Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes.” This is how desperate Rachel is to bear a child, and keep up with her sis. She sells her hubby’s affection for what she thinks is a fertility drug.

“When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, “You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes.” And he lay with her that night. And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. Leah said, “God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband.” So she called his name Issachar.”

Which means *“hire”*... Leah somehow feels vindicated for all she's done in her conflict with Rachel. And imagine how she feels after she trades a night with Jake for a bouquet of mandrakes. She's mad and frustrated. How did Leah give birth?

“Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. And Leah said, “God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons.” So she called his name Zebulun.” Which means *“dwelling”*. “Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.”

Verse 22, “Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. And she conceived and bore a son, and said, “God has taken away my reproach.” So she called his name Joseph, and said, “The LORD shall add to me another son.” And the Lord will. But he comes at a steep price...

In chapter 35, Jacob and Rachel enter the land of Canaan, and as they near Bethlehem Rachel goes into a life-ending labor. She dies birthing Benjamin.

Verse 25, “And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne

Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you." It's time for Jacob to go home.

"And Laban said to him, "Please stay, if I have found favor in your eyes, for I have learned by experience that the LORD has blessed me for your sake." Then he said, "Name me your wages, and I will give it." In other words, Laban is asking Jacob, *what's it going to take to keep you around a while longer?*

So Jacob said to him, "You know how I have served you and how your livestock has been with me. For what you had before I came was little, and it is now increased to a great amount; the LORD has blessed you since my coming. And now, when shall I also provide for my own house?" So he said, "What shall I give you?" And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks: Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and these shall be **my wages**." In the Middle East to this day, most sheep are white - most goats are brown or black. Solid pigmentation is a dominant trait.

According to the laws of genetics there are recessive and dominant traits. Solid pigmentation is caused by dominant genes. Spotted, speckled skins are recessive.

Obviously, Laban thinks he'll end up with far more livestock than Jacob. Verse 33, "So my righteousness will answer for me in time to come, when the subject of my wages comes before you: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if it is with me."

And Laban said, "Oh, that it were according to your word!" This arrangement seems to benefit Laban. By cutting out from the herds the speckled and spotted animals there's less of a chance for them to produce more speckled and spotted.

"So he removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had some white in it, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and gave them into the hand of his sons. Then he put three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks." Laban took Jacob's speckled and spotted herds and put distance between them and Jacob. Jacob continued to care for Laban's herd.

But in verse 37 Jacob employs an unusual practice. "Now Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white strips in them, and exposed the white which was in the rods. And the rods which he had peeled, he set before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, so that they should conceive when they came to drink.

So the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted." Perhaps Jacob engaged in a form of selective breeding. Or maybe the

rods released a chemical in the drinking water that effected the pigmentation? We're not sure what happened, but God blessed Jacob.

Here's a more likely interpretation of what happened...

Chapter 33:10-12 indicate that God gave Jacob a dream where he saw that the spotted and speckled of the herd would be more prosperous. Genetically speaking this was improbable, but God worked in spite of scientific laws to bless Jacob.

God was not blessing Jacob's cleverness but his faith... This was the lesson God had been trying to teach Jacob all along. He needed to *trust* not *scheme*.

Verse 40, "Then Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the streaked and all the brown in the flock of Laban; but he put his own flocks by themselves and did not put them with Laban's flock." The weak sheep bred with the weak - the healthy with the healthy... Thus, it made Jacob's herd stronger.

"And it came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock conceived, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. But when the flocks were feeble, he did not put them in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's. Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys." God prospered Jacob and grew his herds.

Chapter 31, "Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons,

saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has acquired all this wealth." And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it was not favorable toward him as before. Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you." God had put the desire to go home in Jacob's heart earlier, now it's time to act on that desire.

"So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock, and said to them, "I see your father's countenance, that it is not favorable toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me. And you know that with all my might I have served your father. Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me. If he said thus: 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: 'The streaked shall be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked. So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me." Jacob himself admits that it wasn't his breeding techniques that enabled him to prosper, but God's blessing.

This is what frustrates me about all the church growth conferences being held today. It seems every time a church grows the pastor has to host a seminar where he can teach his own particular methods and techniques to other pastors. It's as if we're promoting our own cleverness rather giving the credit and glory to God.

Jacob admits it wasn't his brilliance, but God's blessing that increased his flock.

Verse 10, "And it happened, at the time when the flocks

conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted. Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Jacob.' And I said, 'Here I am.' "And He said, 'Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you.'" Jacob received insider information from God. It was like receiving a stock market tip from an angel.

And notice it's not any angel, but "the Angel (or messenger) of God", notice what this messenger says, "I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family." Here this Angel identifies Himself as God – as the one, true God who met Jacob at Bethel, before he left the land to go to Haran.

Obviously, this Angel has to be none other than as the pre-incarnate Christ.

Verse 14, "Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?" Amazingly, the sisters finally come together, but because they share a common greed. "Are we not considered strangers by him? For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money. For all these riches which God has taken from our father are really ours and our children's; now then, whatever God has said to you, do it." They no longer have any loyalty to their father, Laban. They're ready to move on themselves.

"Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels.

And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.” Jacob loads up his caravan and tries to sneak out of town.

Verse 19, “Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's.” Apparently, this doesn’t mean that Rachel was an idolater. Remember the reason Rebekah sent her son to Haran in the first place, was so he could find a wife that was not an idolater. A better explanation is these idols - or teraphim, as they’re called - symbolized household ownership.

They were her claim to her family’s inheritance.

“And Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river (Euphrates), and headed toward the mountains of Gilead.” 300 miles away.

“And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled.” Jacob had a three day head start. “Then (Laban) took his brethren with him and pursued (Jacob) for seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead. But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, "Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad." God is protecting Jacob.

“So Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob: "What have you done, that you have stolen away unknown to me, and carried away my daughters like captives taken with the

sword? Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp?" It's hard to buy his sincerity.

Verse 28, "And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in so doing. It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad. And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?" Here's a funny thought.... What good is it to worship a god that can be stolen? This is the folly of idolatry.

"Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force. With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take it with you." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them." Jacob met the true God at Bethel he would never be tempted to worship a false god. In essence, he says find whoever took your idol and have him killed.

"And Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the two maids' tents, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find them. And she said to her father, "Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the

manner of women is with me." Rachel says she can't get up, and blames it on the time of the month. What father is going to question that?

"And he searched but did not find the household idols."

"Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: "What is my trespass? What is my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me? Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found? Set it here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both!" Jacob becomes bold. He stands up to his father-in-law..

"These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. There I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes." Hey, I was faithful shepherd your sheep. I worked long and hard for you.

"Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night."

Notice the unusual name for God in verse 42, "the Fear of Isaac". When Isaac blessed the younger over the older he

realized God had fulfilled His promise – not because of him, but in spite of his lack of cooperation. God had pulled rank on Isaac, and it caused Isaac to have a deep respect for God's sovereignty.

Verse 43, "And Laban answered and said to Jacob, "These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and this flock is my flock; all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne?" Notice, Jacob's part in siring the kids – and in growing the flock goes unnoticed. Here's a classic case of possessive in-laws.

Remember at the creation, God said, "A man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife..." Married couples need to leave - then cleave. Jacob is wise in creating some separation between his family and his meddling in-laws.

Laban suggests, "Now therefore, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me." So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. Then Jacob said to his brethren, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap."

"Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed." Both terms meant "*Heap of Witness*", but Laban's name was Aramaic, while Jacob's name was Hebrew. "And Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me this day." Therefore its name was called Galeed, also Mizpah, because he said, "May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from another." "*Mizpah*" means "*watch*". Laban is saying may God watch you like a hawk.

Verse 50 sounds like a skeptical father-in-law, “If you afflict my daughters, or if you take other wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us - see, God is witness between you and me!” *“If you mistreat my girls, God will work you over.”*

“Then Laban said to Jacob, “Here is this heap and here is this pillar, which I have placed between you and me. This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.” The pile of rocks would be the boundary.

“The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us.” And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.

Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain.”

And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.”

Understand Jacob has returned to Canaan a humble man. When he left he was a double-crosser. He returns having been double-crossed by Laban. In fact, verse 41 says that Laban renigged on his promises, and changed his wages ten times.

But God has been faithful to Jacob. God has kept his promises and prospered his herds – and God has delivered Jacob from the hands of Laban. The man who once trusted

only in his own schemes is now learning that he can trust the Lord.

Genesis 32:1 gives us a brief description of what must've been a profound encounter... "So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is God's camp." And he called the name of that place Mahanaim." or "*double camp*". Jacob realizes God is camping with Him.

There's the physical camp that's occupied by Jacob's family, but there's also a spiritual camp occupied by angels on assignment – angels sent to protect him.

And if you're a child of God, His has an army of angels camping with you too. Hebrews 1:14 refers to angels as "*ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation*". Hey, do I believe in guardian angels? You betcha', and I keep mine working overtime.

Verse 3, "Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, "Speak thus to my lord Esau, 'Thus your servant Jacob says: "I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight."

Jacob left an adversary in Laban. Now he faces a confrontation with Esau. And remember the last time he heard from Esau, his brother wanted to murder him.

"Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and

400 men are with him." He gets no indication of Esau's motive, just that he's coming to meet him with 400 men. And an army of 400 marching troops doesn't sound a lot like the Welcome Wagon.

"So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. And he said, "If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape." He orders an evasive maneuver in case of attack.

Jacob really doesn't know what to expect from his brother. For all he knows Esau's anger and hatred has been brewing for 20 years? Is he on the warpath?

Verse 9, "Then Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you': I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies." There's a humility in his prayer.

"Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children."

And then he reminds God of His promises... This is always a good way to pray. "For You said, 'I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'" It's interesting, that this is the first recorded prayer in the Bible, and the prayer prays *the promises of God!*

“So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: 200 female goats and 20 male goats, 200 ewes and 20 rams, 30 milk camels with their colts, 40 cows and 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys and 10 foals.” It was a sizable peace offering. He’s going to send it on ahead...

“Then he delivered them to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, “Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves.” In other words, spread it out. It’ll appear more impressive.

”And he commanded the first one, saying, “When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, “To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose are these in front of you?” “Then you shall say, ‘They are your servant Jacob’s. It is a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also is behind us.”

So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, “In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; and also say, ‘Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us.” For he said, “I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.” So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.” Jacob’s approach was calculated out for maximum effect. He sent his gifts in waves of welcome hoping to gradually soften Esau’s heart.

Here’s the only problem, once again Jacob concocts a plan and relies on his own ingenuity. He’s trying to manipulate the situation rather than trust God. This has been his lifelong

problem, and God is about to cure him of it once and for all.

Verse 22, "And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his 11 sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok." The name means "emptying" – it's a tiny stream that empties into the Jordan River.

But this name is prophetic. Here at the Jabbok, is where Jacob empties himself of his confidence, and self-reliance, and self-assurance. "He took (his family), sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. Then Jacob was left alone..."

At the Jabbok, Jacob comes to the end of his rope. He's empty. He's alone. He's vulnerable. Jacob is worried that any time now Esau might jump out of the bushes, and try to kill him. And mamma isn't around any more to save his skin.

Jacob knows that this time he's totally dependent on God. He faces the dark of the night, and an uncertain tomorrow - and all he has at his disposal is faith alone.

At the brook called "emptying" Jacob empties himself and sees the face of God.

"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day." I'm sure at first, Jacob thought it was Esau. His brother wants to kill him with his bare hands. And remember Esau was a tough guy. He was an outdoorsman – a hunter and killer. Imagine, Jacob is flailing and fighting for his very life.

Verse 25, "Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him." Jacob

fought so furiously and tenaciously, the man he was wrasslin' had to loosen Jacob's grip. He touched Jacob's hip socket, and his threw his hip out of joint. It must've been painful. Like a football player who goes down with a pulled hamstring, or an blown knee, I can imagine Jacob grabbing for it with his hands.

And (the man wrestling with Jacob) said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" As dawn approaches it dawns on Jacob this is not Esau with whom he's been tangling – it's a divine wrassler.

The man asks him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." The name "Israel" means "*Prince of God*".

Guys, let me ask you, have you been wrasslin' lately?

Perhaps you thought you were wrasslin' with your wife, or your kids, or your x-spouse, or your boss, or a bully – but in reality you've been wrasslin' with God.

All your life you've manipulated and connived to get your way, but now you've met your match... You've encountered a situation where you need help...

That's what happens to Jacob, and notice what he does... when he dawns on him he's wrasslin' with God, he stops fighting and starts praying. He tightens his grip. He refuses to let go until he receives a blessing. He finally admits his need.

Hey Jacob is desperate for God's blessing. He surrenders. He no longer fights with God. He now embraces God. He

replaces a headlock with a hug. But here's what's intriguing - he puts as much effort into his *faith* as he did in the *fight*.

This is how God wants us to approach him. Take all the effort you once put into *fight'n Him*, and put it into *follow'n Him*. Hey, cry out for God's highest, and holiest, and richest blessing - and don't let go until you receive all God has for you...

Verse 29, "Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.

And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel (which means "*face of God*"): "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

I believe it was none other than our Lord Jesus with Whom Jacob wrestled that night. And I've known many a person - myself included - who wrestled with His Lordship before they sincerely surrendered, and sought His best for their lives.

Verse 31, "Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip." Notice he wrestled with God, but it cost him. It took away his pride and self-sufficiency. For the rest of his life, Jacob limped - a sign of his own weakness. It was a permanent reminder that he should walk by faith, not his own cleverness.

"Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank." This is a tradition still practiced by the orthodox Jews.

Chapter 33 tells us what happened the next morning, “Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were 400 men.

So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last. Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, "Who are these with you?" And he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." God is restoring a broken family.

Verse 6, “Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down. And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down.

Then Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company which I met?" He's talking about the gifts Jacob had sent in advance. “And (Jacob) said, "These are to find favor in the sight of my lord." But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." And Jacob said, "No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me.”

Isn't it amazing that once a man makes peace with God, he

can make peace with everyone else in his life. Jacob realizes the hostility with Esau had been his own fault. Esau wasn't his enemy. Jacob's biggest enemy had been himself.

Hey, **when a man makes peace with God, peace with his brother follows...**

Jacob is so grateful for what God has done, in verse 11 he begs Esau to take his gift. **"Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough."** And he urged him, and he took it.

Then Esau said, "Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you."

But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir."

Even though the reunion and the reconciliation was wonderful, Jacob knows that spiritually speaking he and his brother are headed in different directions. There's no need for them to travel together. They've made their peace...

Verse 15, **"And Esau said, "Now let me leave with you some of the people who are with me." But he said, "What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord." So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths (or shelters)**

for his livestock.

Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.” Or “*booths*”.

“Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city.” Jacob made a wise decision to separate himself from Esau, but as we’ll see in chapter 34, it was a poor decision to settle near the pagan city of Shechem.

“And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for 100 pieces of money.

Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.” Which means “*God, the God of Israel*”. For the first time Jacob builds an altar and worships.

Chapter 34, “Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.” Remember Dinah was an only sister in a family of 12 brothers. All she wanted to do was find a girlfriend to hang out with.

But sometimes such an innocent desire can lead us astray. Guys understand the likelihood of finding *the right kind of friend* in *the wrong kind of place* is not very good. And Shechem was the wrong kind of place. Shechem was a Canaanite city. It was full of wickedness and idolatry. And Dinah is about to meet it head-on.

“And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of

the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.” The prince was a pervert.

The son of the king of Shechem raped the daughter of Israel.

And “His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife.

And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter.” On the heels of Jacob’s spiritual breakthrough, his newfound faith is tested with a tragedy.

And the most difficult tests of faith by far are those which harm your kids.

“Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came. Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done.”

But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves. So you shall dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it." Notice, an apology never gets offered.

Verse 11, “Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you

say to me I will give. Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife." The rapist doesn't try to apologize either. Instead he tries to cover up his crime with a huge dowry. He wants to buy their approval.

And this only made Dinah's brothers mad. Verse 13, "But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. And they said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a reproach to us.

But on this condition we will consent to you: If you will become as we are, if every male of you is circumcised, then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone." They give a religious reason for the circumcision, but the brothers have ulterior motives. They are planning to avenge their sister.

Verse 18, "And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son. So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter.

He was more honorable than all the household of his father. And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying: "These men are at peace with us. Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For indeed the land is large enough for them. Let

us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters.

Only on this condition will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they are circumcised. Will not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs be ours?

Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us."

Verse 24, "And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son; every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city. Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain..."

Remember these are adult men who've undergone surgery without any anesthesia. These guys were sore, and hurting, and totally incapacitated. They were sitting ducks.

And "two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males." And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out." It illustrates the old phrase, "Don't get caught with your pants down." Here's a serious case of just that.

"The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what was in the city and what was in the field, and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that was in the houses." And all the brutality was done without Jacob's knowledge or approval.

This is an important point. Jacob had lost control of his family. Later we'll see this when the brother's sale Joseph into slavery – and lie to him again.

Jacob was a weak leader at home. He played favorites among siblings, and was a stranger to his kids. It could be that one of the reasons Dinah fell into the hands of the prince is she went out looking for a love her father never provided.

Fathers, we need to love our daughters. If they don't find a wholesome and healthy love from dad, they'll find an unhealthy love in the arms of a pagan.

Verse 30, "Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I am few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I."

Here's an example of Jacob's parental leadership – all he cares about is his own reputation and what might possibly happen to him. If he'd cared as much about Dinah, and her needs, the whole incident might've never happened.

Verse 31, "But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a harlot?" It took the boys of the family to care about their sister. What they did was wrong, and savage, and excessive - but at least they cared. And Jacob certainly shared the blame.

Hey, it's a rule - when a father refuses to take charge, his kids take over.