

JACOB HAD TO GO BACK (Genesis 35:1-3)

I. Jacob had to get his focus right.

- A. Somewhere along the way, Jacob had gotten away from his relationship with God and began focusing on other things.
- B. Notice what he told his family (vs. 2 - put away the strange gods).
 - 1. He had allowed his family members to have idols in their midst.
 - 2. His favorite wife, Rachel, had taken her father Laban's idols when she snuck away from Padan-aram (Genesis 31:19).
 - 3. She was able to hide them from her father when he caught up with them and she must have kept them.
- C. Her having these must have influenced others in the family to at least have them, giving Jacob the reason for saying they needed to get rid of them.
- D. His focus, and that of his family, had not been fully on following God's will.
 - 1. We see this in the rash way the two sons had just acted.
 - 2. We also see this in the way that Jacob had divided his family in three groups when he found out his brother Esau was coming to meet him.
 - a. Jacob had divided them by the handmaids and their children in one group, Leah and her children next and then Rachel and Joseph.
 - b. This shows that Jacob didn't believe God would protect him.
- E. Our focus is to be on heaven but we know that at times, we lose sight of what is most important.
 - 1. Life gets busy and we take our eyes off what is most important.
 - 2. Those that run in track and field events will tell you that as soon as they take off and get their heads up out of the starting blocks they begin to look at the finish line and don't take their eyes off of it.
 - 3. They keep their eyes focused on the end of the race.
 - a. Numerous times in scripture, our lives are compared to a race.
 - b. Hebrews 12:1 is the most notable of those.
 - c. Paul talked about keeping on the right path (Philippians 3:13-14).
- F. Whenever we lose focus spiritually, we need to get back to the starting point and this is Biblical advice (Revelation 2:5).
- G. The same holds true when we lose focus on our families.
 - 1. We get busy earning money for them but we lose them.
 - 2. Before we lose them, we need to get our focus back on what had made our families work.
 - a. It may be the way we used to spend time together.
 - b. It may be going back to having a Bible study time together.
 - 3. We need to focus on our marriages as well.
 - a. We can't lose sight of how our spouses need us to be there

for them.

b. We can't let someone get between us and our spouse.

H. Going back to the beginning when things were working and our focus was on what was important will allow us to get things back to being the way they once were.

II. **Jacob had to get his family right.**

A. The preceding chapters discuss some of the problems that existed in Jacob's family as do many of the following chapters.

1. What we see in Jacob, is a parent that did not exercise the greatest of control and discipline over his children.

2. He showed weakness when it came to his wives.

a. We see his first problems arise when he took multiple wives.

b. It could not have been easy being married to sisters, especially when he openly preferred one over the other.

3. He showed further weakness when giving in to the wives idea about taking their handmaids to raise up children through them.

B. As you read through the account of the life of Jacob in these chapters, you see that because his focus had not been right, problems arose with his children.

1. Jacob was focused on work in the oldest children's formative years.

2. As they came into the new land, Jacob was focused on finding a place to settle his family and had not fulfilled the vow that he had made to God so many years ago at Bethel.

3. Now, two of his sons had exacted revenge for the rape of their sister.

C. Jacob addressed his family in the need to prepare themselves to go to Bethel (vs. 2).

D. Sadly, going back to Bethel didn't fix all the things wrong with his children.

1. By this time the oldest children were in their 20's and it is possible that they had been so influenced by the things around them that they were somewhat set in their ways.

2. In this same chapter, we read that Reuben had relations with his father's concubine Bilhah.

3. We read in chapter 37 how that Joseph had brought a report to his father of his brothers evil actions.

4. We then read how his brothers treated Joseph.

5. Later we read of how Judah had relations with a woman he believed to be a prostitute.

E. We should see from this that Jacob realized his family needed to get right and remove some things from their lives but that it is possible he had waited too late for some of them.

F. If our lives are not right with God, our children see that.

1. We are to bring up our children in the instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

2. We are to bring them up in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6).

3. We can't instill in them that which is not in us because the biggest

lessons we teach our children are through our actions.

- G. If Jacob had not focused on work and lost focus on God in the children's earliest years, things may have been different in his family.
- H. As we take inventory of our lives, we must make sure that what we are teaching our children is God's word and how He wants them to live and that our actions are in line with what we are teaching our children.
 - 1. Even then, it is possible that as the children grow, they may go a different way.
 - 2. We need to pray for our children and they need to hear us pray for them while they are in our homes.
 - 3. Most of all, we need to model for them how God wants us to live and what God wants us to have in terms of focus.

III. Jacob had to get his faith right.

- A. When Jacob got the command from God, he realized there were some things he and his family had to get rid of.
 - 1. He had to get rid of the things on which he had been focusing and put God first.
 - 2. He had to get rid of the idols his family members had been paying homage to instead of God.
- B. He also realized that those voids that change would bring had to be filled.
 - 1. Because of this he told his children to first clean themselves.
 - a. They were to purify themselves.
 - b. This was to symbolize the purification of their hearts by the removal of the idols.
 - 2. He then told them to change their clothes.
 - a. They were to put on their best clothing.
 - b. This was to symbolize their change of hearts on the inside.
- C. When they did this they could then go to Bethel and begin to worship God properly (vs. 3).
- D. It had been nearly 10 years since Jacob had returned from Padan-aram.
 - 1. In that 10 years he had not fulfilled the vow he had made at Bethel so many years ago.
 - 2. His faith was not what it should be and that can be seen in his actions.
- E. Now, he realized that God had always been there for him all the time he had been away and he needed to make things right with God.
- F. What is wonderful about this is that as soon as he made up his mind to do right, God again showed His care and protection for Jacob and his family (vs. 5).
- G. It is not enough to put off sinful things in our lives.
- H. We must also replace those sinful things with spiritual, faith building actions and attitudes.
 - 1. We discussed this last week in our adult Bible class from Colossians 3.
 - 2. We have to put off those sinful things but we must replace them by putting on spiritual things.

- I. This is what Jacob did and it is what we must do.
- J. We do that by going back to where we started spiritually.
 - 1. Just as Jesus told the church at Ephesus.
 - 2. We return to our first love.
 - 3. We do those things we did when we were first excited to be a Christian.
- K. We must get our faith right or the other work we've done will be of no value.
- L. We will go right back to the way we had been.