


Messy Life:
The Story of Jacob
Part 14
Revenge or Reconciliation

TALKING POINTS WALKINGPOINTS

Leader's Guide

2025-5-25



A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Observation—*What do I see?*

- 1 Today's message noted the occurrence of the important word "face" throughout Jacob's story.
Review time! Briefly describe episodes from Jacob's life which correspond to each of these faces:



- 2 What caused Jacob's father-in-law's face to no longer be favorable toward Jacob (Genesis 31:2)? Was Laban's displeasure with Jacob justified? Why or why not?
- 3 Jacob hoped for a different reception with Esau (Genesis 32:20). Did he get it? Why or why not?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- 4 Pastor Doug noted that Jacob's encounter with God's face (Genesis 32:30) prepared him to respond properly to having met Laban face-to-face and to the prospect of meeting Esau face-to-face. How so?
- 5 Proverbs 27:19 states that **"As water reflects a man's face, so a man's heart reflects the man."** **Just as** water **reveals** the features of a face, **in the same way** the heart **reveals** the nature of a man. But people can be hard to "read", so what do the following passages reveal about us?

Jeremiah 17:9

Matthew 15:8

Ezekiel 11:19–21

Isaiah 6:10

Jeremiah 29:11-14

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- 6 James 1:22–27 brings us full-circle, back to the concept of accurate perception of face and heart. Mark the words "delude" and "deceive" (v. 22 & 26). What or who is deluded or deceived? Now, look up "delude" and "deceive" at Dictionary.com. What do you learn?
- 7 Does this prospect terrify you? Why or why not? Should it? Why or why not?
- 8 Laban believed that his attitude toward Jacob was justified—but he was self-deluded, self-deceived. What would James 1:22 say Laban is missing? What's producing his self-destructive state?
- 9 What is **your** heart reflecting about **your** real nature (Proverbs 27:19)? Are you OK with that?

- 1 This is just an ice-breaker—enjoy it, but don't spend too much time on it. Suggested answers:
- 😬 could be how Jacob felt when Laban changed his wages ten times (or swapped Leah for Rachel!)
 - 😍 would certainly be how Jacob felt when he fell in love with Rachel
 - 😊 could be how Jacob felt when Esau traded his birthright for a bowl of porridge
 - 😬 could be how Jacob felt when Laban agreed to Jacob keeping all the spotted and speckled flocks
 - 😱 would certainly be how Jacob felt when he wrestled with God in the pitch black of night
 - 😞 could be how Jacob felt when he had to flee his home in order to avoid Esau's wrath
- 2 Laban's displeasure almost certainly had been building for the past six years, after he thought he'd snookered Jacob into a stupid deal (Jacob keeping the spotted and speckled), and then all the best sheep started having nothing but spotted and speckled lambs! No, it wasn't justified. Not only had he agreed to it, but he put the pure white sheep under Jacob's care—the very sheep who should have been genetically predisposed to have only white offspring, yet they produced spotted and speckled.
- 3 Yes—he hoped that Esau would “accept him” (and probably expected his ~~bribe~~, *er*, “gift”, to prepare the way, but the main reason why Jacob was accepted by Esau is because the Sovereign Lord promised that it would happen. See Genesis 27:29.
- 4 It humbled Jacob. He quit trusting in his shrewd ability to out-smart and out-maneuver people, and started trusting in God to protect and bless him.
- 5 The Scriptures are clear: people often project friendliness, while harboring wrath within. For example:
Psalms 28:3b [The wicked] “speak peace with their neighbors, while evil is in their hearts.”
Psalms 62:4b [Men] “delight in falsehood; they bless with their mouth, but inwardly they curse.”
We learn additional important things from the following passages:
Jeremiah 17:9 That our hearts (our inner control centers) are sick, wicked and tricky.
Matthew 15:8 That our lips often express exactly the opposite of what's in our hearts.
Ezekiel 11:19–21 The unsaved have stony hearts, but God gives new, responsive, obedient hearts.
Isaiah 6:10 God sometimes leaves unsaved people in their resistance, confirming their damnation.
Jeremiah 29:11–14 God prefers to save and to bless.
See: Ezekiel 33:11; Micah 7:18–20; Isaiah 62:5 & 65:19; Jeremiah 32:41–42 and Zephaniah 3:17
- 6 We delude **ourselves**, we deceive **our own hearts!** They mean the same thing: to mislead, to fool.
- 7 If it doesn't terrify us, then we are great fools! Nobody likes being tricked by an unscrupulous salesman, but in this case we're tricking ourselves, we're harming and taking advantage of ourselves. Terrifying!
- 8 Laban sinned against Jacob repeatedly: he promised one wife, then in the dark of night swapped her out for another; he changed Jacob's wages ten times; he agreed to the spotted and speckled lambs being Jacob's and then wanted to break the contract... He thought himself pure, but he was wicked.
- 9 Lead your group in honest transparency. Make sure folks are neither too lenient nor too harsh in their self evaluations. Make plans to follow up with any group members who catch your attention here.

Sermon Summary Genesis 33:1-20

The word 'face' is going to become an important word as we continue through this section of Genesis. Depending on your English translation, the Hebrew word behind it may show up in different ways, as different words. But I'll note when it's the same word face in the original Hebrew. We will see that this word is being deliberately and repeatedly used to tie together what God is doing—closing one door and opening another. We've all experienced this, in one way or another, where God just seems to close a door. God is ending a chapter in our life and he is asking us to turn in another direction.

You will recall from our previous study that the night before Jacob crossed the border back into his land, a man leapt out of the shadows and a fierce wrestling match ensued. This man was God, in human form, determined once and for all to break Jacob. This event proved to be a defining moment in Jacob's life - a moment when Jacob decided to trust God, rather than continuing to do things his own way. Jacob named the place of this wrestling match, Peniel, which means "the face of God." Why did he give it that name? He explains in Genesis 32:30. Having seen the face of God, now he's ready to trust God as he moves toward the face of his brother Esau. Will God open that door? We will find out in Genesis 33:1-20.

The change in Jacob, brought about by his face-to-face experience with God, is demonstrated by the courageous lead he took in going ahead of his family. Clearly, he was prepared to take the brunt of his brother's murderous attack. The all-important question of whether God will open the door with Esau is answered in Genesis 33:4. All the bitter enmity that had separated these two men for twenty years was swept away by the forgiving love that flooded their beings in that moment. Barriers of resentment and hatred and fear all fell away in a moment.

When Esau asked who was with Jacob, his response shows that he understood that God was responsible for Jacob's success. He hadn't achieved all of this on his own. Jacob was a changed man. He was not returning as the same person he was when he left. He has even been given a new name by God. Jacob has become Israel!

A few questions to ponder:

- Are you a different person today than you were a few years ago?
- Has God changed? Is He continuing to change you? Are you becoming more like God's Son?
- Do you recognize that God is ultimately responsible for any success you enjoy?
- Do you see how over the years he has opened doors and closed doors to bring you to where you are today?

When Jacob calls his wave-upon-wave gift 'my blessing' in verse 11, he may have been making a kind of restoration of the blessing he stole from Esau back in Genesis chapter 27. While it was impossible for Jacob to give back the blessing, it was not impossible for him to share some of the fruit of that blessing with Esau! I think Jacob was trying to make restitution to Esau. You can't go back and change the past, but you can act wisely and justly in the present and therefore alter the future.

Are you at odds with anyone today? If so, does it go back to some wrongdoing you committed in the past? What might restitution look like for you? Perhaps you are the one who was wronged by someone else. Were they to come to you in repentance, would you forgive them as Esau did his brother? Or will you continue to nurse that injury and hold that grudge? In verse 10, Jacob explains that seeing Esau's face was like seeing the face of God. Jacob is saying to his brother, "I see reflected in you the face of the God who has brought me safely home. I'm seeing another open door." When you are convinced that God is for you, that he is making his face to shine upon you, the face of the future is full of promise and joy. A door behind you may have been closed, but it's only because God is opening one up ahead of you.

Esau offered to accompany Jacob on the journey, but Jacob declined (vv.11-15). After their reunion, the brothers separate. Esau heads toward his home and Jacob heads toward the Jordan River. God has fulfilled his promises to Jacob—that he would watch over him, bring him safely back, and give the land to him (Gen.28:13–15). And now Jacob fulfills his vow to God (Gen.28:20-21). God had been faithful to Jacob. Over the years God had opened doors and closed doors. All of this was designed to bless Jacob and to bring him into the land he wanted him to possess.

Worship is the right response to God's faithfulness. But I think as Christians we have an incomplete notion of what true worship looks like. It goes beyond singing worship songs and prayer. It is reflected in how we live. Romans 12 details the nature of true worship. It involves a whole-person response to God and to others all throughout the week. It is reflected in a life that is not overcome by evil - but overcomes evil with good.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

*Christians are to live life "coram Deo," Latin for living life "before the face of God."
Whose gaze—yours, others' or God's—controls your thoughts and behavior?*

Monday— Psalm 22:22–24 What is the godly but afflicted man promised? Do you want that?

Tuesday— Psalm 11:4–7 What are the two categories of people—and what is the end of each?

Wednesday— Psalm 34:4–7 Will your face ever be ashamed? Why or why not?

Thursday— Psalm 51:7–9 What do we want to be hidden from God's face?

Friday— Psalm 80:3 7 & 19 What happens when God's face shines upon us?

Saturday— Psalm 24:3–6 Are you part of the "verse six generation"? How do you know (Psalm 27:7–10)?

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]