

Messy Life:
The Story of Jacob
Part 15
Covenant Danger

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

2025-6-1



A publication of **THE DISCIPLE**, 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

- From Sunday's sermon, what did you *like best*, or what *caught your attention most*—and *why*?

Observation—*What do I see?*

- Pastor Doug noted that, in Rachel, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah, Jacob essentially had four wives—and a lot of tension in the home! He then pointed out that the Bible often **records** things which it **does not** condone. From Genesis 34:1-31, which events do you think are evil and which good?
- Pastor Doug also observed that Genesis 34 is a **godless** chapter. God is not mentioned even once—and when we fail to consult God, we do wickedness! List the various "forks in the road" of this chapter.
- According to Genesis 33:18-19, Jacob and family have pitched their tents "in the land of Canaan". Yet **what** do Jacob's sons call that place in which "a disgraceful thing" was done (Genesis 34:7)?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- Jacob's family are dwelling on the bit of land he's bought from the Canaanites (Genesis 33:18-20). He's erected an altar and named it "*El-Elohe-Israel*" ("God, the God of 'he who strives with God'"), and now the place where Dinah was raped—which was **outside of** Jacob's property—Jacob's sons call **that** place "Israel" (Genesis 34:7). What does that suggest to you about their view of themselves?
- Back to the critical observation that the Bible **often records** things which it **does not** condone. So, how do we sort it all out? For example, we **applaud** the fact that David killed Goliath—but **should** we? If so, **why**? **What's the difference**? What do we do with Exodus 20:13?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- Jacob—rather, "**Israel**" (see Genesis 32:24-28)—is an island of chosen people in a sea of pagans. Likewise, we Christians are an island of chosen people in a sea of pagans. What applications can and should we draw from Genesis 34 to our own identity and choices today?
- Circle every occurrence of "I/me/my" in Genesis 34:30. Jacob was self-focused. But his sons viewed their family collectively (v. 31). To what do you typically react—threats to your own personal safety, reputation or comfort, or threats to the honor of God and to the reputation of church of Jesus Christ?
- Still, we don't condone the actions of Jacob's sons. So, how should we Christians respond today?

Sermon Summary

Genesis 34:1-31

As we learned last week, the reunion between Jacob and Esau brought reconciliation! Esau graciously forgave his brother and after a celebration, Esau returned to his home. Jacob decided to settle his family in a place called Shechem. It was located in Canaanite territory—where they worship the god Baal, among other gods. This was not a good place to raise a family, but for some reason, Jacob decided to set down roots there (Genesis 34:1-34).

I. The Defilement of Dinah (v.1-3). The moral standards of the Shechemites were much lower than those of Jacob's people. Dinah was a teenager and teenagers tend to push against the boundaries and sometimes it comes back to bite them. We live in a fallen world and there are certain places and certain times that we should not be out by ourselves. This advice should not be controversial. It should be obvious, and it should be stated. Dinah may have been naïve or she may have been hardheaded. Whether naïve or hardheaded, what happened to her was tragic—and she deserves all of our sympathy and Shechem, the perpetrator, deserves all the blame.

Sexual promiscuity was rampant in Canaanite society, as it is in our society. It was not considered immoral. This attitude was not shared in Jewish culture. Sexual intercourse was reserved for a man and a woman in the context of marriage. God's ideal was demonstrated by our first parents, Adam and Eve. One man with one woman for a lifetime. But sadly, God's people often sink to the morality of the prevailing culture. The truth is God's people have always struggled to remain morally and spiritually pure. The downward pull of our culture is an ever-present obstacle to living out our faith. In general, it is easier to be pulled down than it is to be pulled up. God's covenant people, ancient and contemporary, face the pull to not live distinctly, the pull to fit in with the current culture and to go with the flow. As God's people, we must determine to be thermostats rather than thermometers. A thermostat sets the temperature while a thermometer merely reflects the temperature. God calls us to be moral and spiritual thermostats.

II. The Deceptive Negotiation between Tribes (v.4-17). Shechem wants this sexual liaison to become a permanent arrangement and he suspects his dad can make that happen. In those days marriages were arranged by the parents. They worked all the details out with the other family. Jacob's first response to this news was a non-response. Maybe he just needed some time to think about his next actions. An immediate, rash response is usually not wise. From a Jewish perspective, a clear moral line had been crossed. It had been obliterated. This rape was characterized as a “disgraceful thing”. Two strong emotions are shared by the brothers—grief and intense anger. Hamar does not offer an apology to Jacob or to his sons. So warped was his moral compass, so broken was his parental sensibilities, that Hamor apparently thought nothing about the moral implications of what his son had done. Hamar says let's use this unfortunate incident to bring our people together (v.8-10). This invitation was a dangerous moment for God's covenant people.

But Jacob's family knew of God's purpose to raise up a holy nation through their family, and that the maintenance of national integrity and purity was essential to assure God's continued blessing on them. However, Jacob's sons answer Shechem with deceit (v.14-17). They had seen their father Jacob act deceitfully many times over the years. The Bible says that the sins of fathers are visited on their children. This is a case in point. Again, they were being deceptive. This was not a genuine offer, as we will see in a moment.

III. The Persuasion of the Townspeople (v.18-24). Hamar and Shechem spoke to the men of the city and sold the idea to be circumcised as a great way to improve their economy and blend their people.

IV. The Retribution Against the Town of Shechem (v.25-34). The justification for this slaughter is stated in verse 27, where it simply says, “because they had defiled their sister.” Not content to take vengeance against Shechem only, they felt that the whole city deserved judgment. After all, no one in the city had protested Shechem's despicable behavior toward their sister; no one had tried to protect her and, in fact, they seemed rather pleased with Shechem's conquest of this beautiful young foreign girl. Jacob finally speaks in v. 30. He is angry that his sons have taken vengeance into their own hands. Making them enemies is yet another threat to the continuance of God's covenant people. Notice God is not mentioned once in this chapter. When you take God out of the equation, you see what happens. When we fail to consult Him, bad things happen.

Four observations with obvious implications:

1. The world in which we live is both a mission field and a minefield.

It serves as both a threat to God's people and an opportunity for ministry. Will you be a friend of the world, or a friend of God?

2. When mistreated or misunderstood, we must not take our own vengeance.

We are to leave that in God's capable hands (Romans 12:19; James 1:19–20).

3. In times of peril, spiritual leaders must act decisively lest young zealots act irresponsibly.

Leaders need to lead. When they don't, it opens the door for someone less wise, less measured to do so.

4. The sinful responses of individual Christians tarnish the reputation of the entire faith community.

The Bible teaches that a little leaven can spoil the whole lump of dough. Put another way, Christianity gets a bad rap because of the sinful, irresponsible behavior of a few. Therefore, as followers of Christ, we must live circumspectful lives. We should be very cautious lest we give an unbelieving world ammunition to criticize our faith and reject our God.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Jacob's sons' sinful actions recklessly endangered God's covenant. Let's see how Psalm 105 shows God protecting and ensuring the covenant.

Begin by marking all 70 or so references to God ("He/Him/His", "God/Lord", "I/Me/My").
(Note that in v. 18-22 the references are to Pharaoh and Joseph, not to God.)

Monday— Read Psalm 105:1-7. What commands are given to us, by the Lord our God?

Tuesday— Read Psalm 105:8-15. Circle "covenant" in v. 8 & 10. What provisions did God make?

Wednesday— Read Psalm 105:16-24. Note the "suffering precedes glory" dynamic.

Thursday— Read Psalm 105:25-36. Again, notice that suffering (v. 25) precedes glory (v. 26-36).

Friday— Read Psalm 105:37-45. What was the purpose for all of God's saving acts (v. 45)?

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?]