


**Messy Life:
The Story of Jacob**
Part 18
The Rest of the Story

TALKING WALKINGPOINTS

Leader's Guide

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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

Starter Question

- 1 Pastor Doug noted that God uses very flawed people (ie, "average"!) people to accomplish his plans. Do you tend to find this surprising, embarrassing, disappointing or reassuring—**and why?**

Observation—*What do I see?*

- 1 Jacob's life-long sin was partiality. What does <webstersdictionary1828.com> say about partiality?
- 2 According to Deuteronomy 10:17, Acts 10:34 and 1 Peter 1:17, what is God's take on it?
According to Leviticus 19:15 and Deuteronomy 1:17 & 16:19, what does God require of us?
- 3 Partiality leads us to flatter others for our own personal advantage.
According to Jude 15-16, what sort of person typically exhibits partiality and flattery?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- 4 Webster's notes that partiality flows from our will and affections, **not** from a love of truth and justice. It warps our judgment. We flatter because we wish to gain favor and influence, or to accomplish some purpose. As a group, explore the implications/impact of these truths on family and society.
- 5 According to Psalm 5:8-10, how serious is "a little bit of partiality and flattery"?
- 6 According to Proverbs 29:5, **whose** feet get caught in the net of partiality and flattery?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- 7 Jacob—a leader in the biblical faith—appears **never** to have deeply repented of his sin of favoritism. How do you think that can be?
- 8 How should we think about, and respond to, honest yet less-than-perfect Christian leaders today?
- 9 Study James 2:1-11, extracting principles about self, others and God. How does this apply to you?

- ① This is just a starter question. Enjoy it, but don't spend too much time on it.
- ② Partiality is an inclination to favor one side than another. It is an undue bias of mind which warps our judgment. Partiality springs from the will and affections, rather than from a love of truth and justice.

He absolutely shows no partiality (Deuteronomy 10:17; Acts 10:34; 1 Peter 1:17).

God requires that we show zero injustice in judgment—neither favoring the poor nor the rich (Leviticus 19:15. No **social** justice is allowed. The Bible calls that **distorted** justice (Deuteronomy 16:19)!

- ③ They are ungodly sinners (4x in **one** verse!); grumblers; fault-finding; lustful; arrogant
- ④ How can families and societies hold together if we're making decisions based upon our will and affections, rather than from a love of truth and justice? How can families and societies stay united when our judgment is warped, when we call evil good, and good evil (Isaiah 5:20)? How can families and societies cohere when a desire to gain favor and influence or to accomplish one's own purpose determines our behavior, rather than love for one another? **One can hardly say it better than does AI:** *“The center cannot hold” is a famous line which signifies a time of immense instability and chaos, when the established order, values, and institutions of a society are collapsing and unable to maintain stability and a descent into anarchy in which the forces of order are failing to hold things together.*
- ⑤ The words of flatters are utterly unreliable, their inward part is destruction itself. Their throat is an open grave. God will hold them guilty. They will be ensnared in the trap they themselves set. They are rebellious against God and so he will “thrust them out”. That's pretty doggone serious!
- ⑥ The flatter's own feet get caught in the trap he himself laid.
- ⑦ If we puzzle over this, we lack an accurate appreciation of the power of sinful flesh in the life of a Christian. See the Apostle Paul's own experience recorded for us in Romans 7:14-24.
- ⑧ The operative word here is “honest”. On the one hand, a godly and growing pastor will still have sin in his life. It is likely that that sin area will be one with which he's struggled for some years. He wishes that he still did not struggle, he's made progress in putting to death this deed of the flesh (Romans 8:12-14), yet the flesh remains. You should cherish such a pastor. On the other hand, if he talks a good talk, but his behavior does not match (and, if he's defensive when confronted), that's a very bad sign. Pastors must be examples to the flock—not examples of perfection, but absolutely examples of humble warring against indwelling sin.

⑨ Principles about self:

- It is possible, but not permissible, to hold the Christian faith with an attitude of personal favoritism.
- Doing so makes one a judge with evil motives.
- Doing so dishonors the disenfranchised and contradicts God's estimation of poor saints.
- Doing so is a lack of love (which is the greatest command).
- Doing so is sin, and makes one a condemned transgressor of God's law.

Principles about others:

- All are equally welcome within the Christian fellowship.
- Believers are rich in faith, even if not in worldly wealth. Believers are heirs of God's kingdom.
- Rich visitors to church, although outwardly impressive, often are blaspheming wretches.

Principles about God:

- He does not “look the other way” or “grade on the curve”. He demands holy living.

Sermon Summary

Today I will be drawing our study of Jacob's life to a close, and in doing so I want to tell you "the rest of the story." The bulk of Jacob's story is recorded in Genesis 25-35. He is mentioned in following chapters, but really the focus is on Jacob's son, Joseph, and his brothers.

The first thing I want you to see is an ongoing flaw that Jacob retains. It is glaringly obvious in Genesis chapter 42. You will recall that Joseph was the oldest of Jacob's two sons through Rachel. He had twelve sons in all, with Joseph being number eleven. Joseph was his favorite son, which caused jealousy between him and his brothers. One day the brothers finally acted on their jealousy and sold Joseph into slavery. Through a series of events, Joseph rises from slavery through the ranks and becomes the food czar of Egypt. Jacob hears that there is food available in Egypt and he sends his sons to purchase some. After recognizing his brothers and disguising himself, Joseph asks them to bring Benjamin to him. This upset Jacob because Benjamin was his second favorite son (Gen. 42:38). Jacob is displaying the same blatant favoritism he has always shown. Favoritism has a long history in Jacob's family. It seems to have started with his parents Isaac and Rebekah who each favored a different son (25:27-28). With Jacob, it probably goes back to his first wife Leah, who was deceptively pawned off on him by her father Laban (29:23-25). Even though Leah was his most 'prolific' wife in terms of giving him children, Jacob preferred her sister Rachel, whom he also married (29:30-31). His favoritism of Rachel also applied to Rachel's children—Joseph and Benjamin. Even in preparation for his meeting with Esau, Joseph lines the family up in the order of their expendability (33:1-2).

When Jacob's daughter Dinah was raped (34:2), Jacob took no action until his sons came in from the fields and applied pressure (34:5). Did he wait to act because he wanted the entire family to weigh in on what should be done in response, or was it partly due to indifference? Because after all, Dinah was Leah's daughter, not his favorite wife Rachel's? This pattern of family favoritism hits the fan in chapter 37 when Joseph's jealous brothers hurl him into a pit and sell him into slavery. And afterwards Jacob is reluctant to let Benjamin go with them back to Egypt. What I want you to see is that despite all of the positive changes that had occurred in Jacob's life over the years, the sin of favoritism remained. He was still very much "under construction". Jacob had this habit of repeating the same mistakes, over and over again, no matter what the cost. I'm not saying that Jacob made no progress in his faith - he did. But sometimes God's servants keep falling into the same sinful habits over and over again. Our "favorite pitfalls" should not drive us to despair. What they should do, however, is drive us to prayer—asking God for a heart of wisdom and the grace we need to be set free from those sins which bind us.

In chapter 45, Jacob has just been staggered with the news that his beloved Joseph is still alive and ruling in Egypt (45:26-28). Jacob receives assurance from God as he sets out on his reunion trip to Egypt where he will be reunited with his long-lost son. This assurance happens at a place called Beersheba where God speaks to Jacob in a night vision (46:3). Then God says, 'I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will surely bring you back' (v. 4). Please notice that Jacob's God is a 'mobile' God. God is omnipresent, which means that he exists in all places at all times with his entire being. Throughout our study of Jacob's life, at crucial times, God has reassured him that he is a promise-keeping God. I think he does that because he knows how much we need ongoing assurance. We need to know that he is still with us, that he still loves us, that our sins have not run him off. We need assurance that he will walk through trials with us. We need to know that the promises God makes, he will keep (Psalm 139:8-12).

There is a third snapshot from Jacob's life that I want you to see. It's found in his 'Pharaoh interview' (47:7-10). Jacob described his life as unpleasant, hard, evil. In this context, I think that it connotes a life of distress and misery. Some of Jacob's trouble was of his own making. Across the ages, many of God's people have experienced trials, not necessarily of their own making. God does not guarantee his servants a trouble-free life. I find it refreshing when people are honest about their struggles—it helps me be honest about mine! While Jacob was candid about his troubles, he wasn't without joy, which is also encouraging. This brings us to another observation I'd like to share with you today. It relates to the testimony Jacob leaves. While Jacob was candid before Pharaoh, he was grateful before Joseph. We see it in chapter 48 when Jacob, here called Israel, is reunited with Joseph, the son he thought was long dead (48:11, 15-16). Here thanksgiving blends with testimony. He talks about "The God who has been his shepherd", the God who has cared for him, defended him, sustained him, disciplined him, stayed beside him. Perhaps the best insight into a person's faith is what they believe about their Lord as they look back over their life and marvel at what God has done.

Charles Hodge's letter is an incredible testimony of God's grace and one man's appreciation of it! Many of us have experienced God's grace in many ways—not in every particular like Charles Hodge or even like Jacob, but we too have a testimony of God's shepherding and redemption. The life of Jacob is yet another reminder that God uses imperfect people, just like us, to bring about his redemptive purposes in the world. The question is, will you trust God to direct your life? Will you adopt his values as your own? Will you ask God to reveal your own blind spots, and once revealed, will you allow the Holy Spirit to change you? Will you choose to participate in God's Kingdom purposes which he is carrying out in the world through his church?

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

1 Corinthians 15:33 says, "***Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals***", so it really matters who we let influence us. Let's explore this important topic...

Monday— Study 1 Peter 5:1–3. Who are trustworthy examples to follow?

Tuesday— Study Philippians 3:17–19. Whose example must we not follow?

Wednesday— Study 1 Timothy 4:12 and Titus 2:6–10. Are you too young to be a good example?

Thursday— Study Matthew 18:6. What danger must we avoid? How serious is it?

Friday— Study Isaiah 9:16. What do you risk if you follow the wrong people?

Saturday— Study Matthew 7:15-20. How can you recognize a corrupt leader?

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?]