


Messy Life:
The Story of Jacob
Part 16
Drawing Near to God

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

2025-6-8



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

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

Observation—*What do I see?*

- Read Genesis 35:1-7. What is commanded in v. 1? Who commanded that it be done?

Do you find it surprising that Jacob's clan still had idols and were unclean (v. 2-3)? Why or why not?

According to Exodus 19:10–14, **how** must God be approached? Why that way?

According to Psalm 15, **who** may approach God?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- Pastor Doug noted that Jacob's family were **not** originally idol worshipers—Abraham and Isaac had passed down to him the worship of the One True God. Fast forward to Genesis 35. What's happened?
- Ten years have passed since God faithfully protected Jacob from Laban's and Esau's wrath. Many people think of God as impatient and inclined to wrath. What does Genesis 35:1 suggest?
- Review again God's standards for who may approach him (Psalm 15). Do **you** fulfill those criteria? Does **anyone** fulfill them? If not, **what hope** do we have?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- **God** sought Jacob to be his worshiper. According to John 4:21–24, whom does God seek today?

Do you worship God "in spirit"? Do you worship God "in truth"? How can you know that you do?

- How do you react to the fact that God **seeks** worshipers? Is he a megalomaniac? Why or why not?
- How can we help others become true, spiritual worshipers of the One True God? What's our role?

Sermon Summary Genesis 35:1-7

Last week we read about how Jacob unwisely had his family settle down in the Canaanite town of Shechem. Note that when we have an option to choose where we live—we should choose wisely. We live in a world where Satan is referred to in the Scriptures as “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). In this world, we face temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil! Even if we could escape the world and the devil, we still have temptations that emerge from the human heart. We can’t escape ourselves.

God is absent from Genesis chapter 34. He is not mentioned one single time. When God is absent from our thoughts, he is often absent from our actions. We say and do things we never would if God were on the forefront of our thoughts. No doubt, the rape of his daughter and the vengeful mass murder committed by his sons was a shock to Jacob’s spiritual sensibilities. It served as a spiritual wake-up call for Jacob. Have you ever had one of those? James 4:8 is a step towards God’s grace after a wake-up call. God wants to have a relationship with you, no matter how far away from him you may have drifted, no matter what you have done. He is a God of endless grace.

God was absent from chapter 34, but he is up front and center in chapter 35. Please note that God took the initiative. There are four commands in verse 1: (1) Arise, (2) Go up to Bethel, (3) Live (dwell) there, and (4) Make an altar there to God. God is now holding Jacob to the vow he made in Genesis 28:20-22. He had been back in the land of his father for probably 10 years now, and apparently had not been back to Bethel – probably because he knew he had not been following God’s will. When we are not walking with God, we tend to avoid those places, those activities, those people who remind us of what we are not doing.

Jacob had his household put away foreign gods and purify themselves before going to Bethel (v. 2-3). Jacob knew that God desires genuine worship from repentant people; not perfect people, but repentant people (Psalm 15:1-5). Jacob and his family had experienced considerable slippage in their walks with God while living at Shechem. Like so many professing Christians today, I suspect they were trying to worship God, while at the same time, hanging on to some of the superstitions and practices of the world around them. There are three commands in these verses in Hebrew: (1) Put away the foreign gods among you, (2) Purify yourselves, and (3) Change your garments.

Exodus 19:10 is a picture of spiritual cleansing—both inside and out. This verse speaks of repentance, of confession of sin, of a turning from sin to God. The good news of the gospel is that no matter how far away we may have strayed from God, he invites us to draw near to him. But drawing near involves repentance with a resulting change of behavior (James 4:8-9). When the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin—he also gives you the power to turn from that sin—and to replace it with godly, loving actions. Don’t misunderstand. We don’t clean up our acts in order to come to God, but we come to God so that He can empower us to clean up our acts! It all begins with a repentant heart—and God is the one who grants repentance.

Our God is faithful. He keeps his promises to us. So why do we go after other gods? Why do we pursue idols of materialism and sex and drugs and gambling? We know that they overpromise and underdeliver! We know their influence is ultimately destructive. In the midst of our insane, empty pursuits, God says, “Put all those things away. Purify yourselves. Change your clothes” (v.4). It’s difficult to live in such a spiritually contaminated environment and not be impacted.

We should ask ourselves some penetrating questions:

- In my walk with God, where am I today in relationship to where I once was?
- Have I fallen away?
- Am I pursuing the values of my culture of the Kingdom of God?
- Who is the real king of my heart? Is it me? Is it someone else? Is it Jesus?
- If Jesus were to appear to you today, what do you think he would tell you to put away?
- What might it look like to purify yourself?
- How might that reflect itself in how you present yourself to the world—how you dress?

In verse 5, we see that God stepped in and protected his people. God is acting in grace again! God is simply abiding by the protection-clause included in his covenant. Jacob called the place where he built the altar El-bethel - “the strong God of the House of God” (v. 6-7). Jacob’s family had been forgiven much, and they knew it (Luke 7:47).

Our spiritual life is like a garden. To maintain its fruitfulness, you must constantly cultivate it. You have to water it, fertilize it, and pull the weeds. Wherever there is continued fruitfulness, you know there is an active gardener at work. If we want to remain productive in our Christian walks, we must cultivate the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible study, Scripture memory, fellowship and service. We must consciously depend upon Jesus and constantly draw upon his wisdom and power. If you are not as close to God as you once were, guess who moved (James 4:4)? Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Drawing near to God" is a concept with rich Old Testamental roots—a special privilege only the priests could experience. Now, as New Testamental priests, we too can draw near...

Monday— Study Exodus 19:22; Leviticus 10:3 and Ezekiel 44:13.

Tuesday— Study 1 Peter 2:1-5 and 9-12.

Wednesday— Study Psalm 73:28 and Isaiah 29:13.

Thursday— Study Hebrews 4:16; 7:19 and 10:22.

Friday— Study Psalm 27:8; 42:1-2 and 63:1-2.

Saturday— Study Psalm 84:2 and 143:6; Matthew 22:37.

Need blank copies for doing more

"Five Question Bible Study"?

e-mail: Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com

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?]