

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## GENESIS 30-33

Genesis 30... did you read this? Where do you start?... Well, did you hear about the rich man who had pity on two poor sisters? He married both women. Afterwards he boasted, *“That was mighty big of me.”*

Hey, nobody knew the perils of multiple wives more than Jacob. He married Leah; then married her sister, Rachel; then had children with Rachel’s maid, Bilhah; then later with Leah’s maid, Zilpah... *What was this man thinking? He set himself up for double trouble!*

From the beginning, God’s plan for marriage was one man and one woman in a lifelong relationship. But how quickly standards get compromised in a fallen world. Culture compromises and short-cuts get taken. *Fallen humans act as if they know more than God.* And society devolves in its quality of life. **This happened in the days of the Hebrew patriarchs.** *Multiple wives, and concubines, and baby maids convoluted what God had envisioned for healthy families. And Jacob’s dysfunctional family was the quintessential example.*

And this is a warning to people today who want to redefine *“marriage”* and *“family.”* Folks are discarding the nuclear household to experiment with different configurations of family life. Yet *“modern families”* are nothing new. **They’ve been tried, and have failed.**

If you doubt the wisdom of God’s original design for family just read Jacob’s story. This man lived and his children were raised among four warring women.

Genesis 30 begins, *“Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die!”* Jacob’s once beloved Rachel desperately wants a baby, and she blames her lack of one on her husband, Jacob.

Realize, in antiquity barrenness was seen as a divine curse. **“Childless”** meant **unloved by God.** *But I hope you never draw that unbiblical conclusion.* God never ties proof of His love to our circumstances. The cross, and our embrace of Jesus, *is His proof of His love.*

But *“Jacob’s anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”* So she said, *“Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her.”* Surrogate motherhood was common in the ancient world. Remember,

this was how Abram and Sarah tried to solve their barrenness - with their maid, Hagar.

“Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. Then Rachel said, “God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son.” Therefore she called his name Dan.” Which means “*judge*.” In Rachel’s mind this son was God’s vindication. She concludes, “*God has approved of me*.”

Verse 7, “And Rachel’s maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, “With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed.” The child-bearing in this family had devolved into a competition between sisters. “So she called his name Naphtali.” Which means “*my wrestlings*.” And now the baby battle really begins...

“When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing...” In Genesis 29 Leah had birthed four sons: *Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah*. But now to keep up with her sister, “she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife. And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. Then Leah said, “A troop comes!” So she called his name Gad (meaning “*troop*”).” Leah vows her maid will have an army of babies. This is now a *baby shootout*.

“And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. Then Leah said, “I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed.” So she called his name Asher.” Which means “*happy*.” But trust me, Leah is the only person in this dysfunctional family who is happy at this time.

Verse 14, “Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field,” The term “*mandrake*” means “*love apples*.” This was a plant with dark leaves, and blue and yellow blossoms. The ancients believed mandrakes enhanced sexual fertility.

Now Reuben “brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.” But she said to her, “Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband?” Her comment is rife with jealousy. “Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?” And Rachel said, “Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son’s mandrakes.” This is how desperate Rachel is to bear a child, and keep up with Leah. She sells her husband’s affection for what she thinks could be a fertility drug.

So “When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, “You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” And he lay with her that night. And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. Leah said, “God has given me my wages,

because I have given my maid to my husband." So she called his name Issachar." Which means "hire." Leah feels vindicated for what's she's done, *but imagine how Rachel feels!* She trades a night with Jacob for mandrakes... she got the fertility meds, but Leah got pregnant! *That's not how it was suppose to work!*

"Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. And Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she called his name Zebulun." Which means "dwelling." "Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah." Now a little girl gets added to this messy, disordered family.

Of course, the reason for this chapter, with its drama and dysfunction is to introduce us to the founding fathers of the nation Israel's twelve tribes, *which should encourage us.* Just because a family starts out twisted doesn't mean God can't straighten it out and use it in great ways in the future, *just as He did with Jacob's.*

Rachel's problem was she forgot that *our timing* isn't *God's timing.* Verse 22, "Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. And she conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my reproach." So she called his name Joseph (or "Yahweh has added"), and (she) said, "The LORD shall add to me another son." *And He did.*

Many years later Rachel births Benjamin, *but at a steep price.* In Genesis 35, Jacob and Rachel enter the promised land, and near Bethlehem she goes into labor. Rachel dies while delivering her second son.

Verse 25, "And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you." It's time for Jacob and his family to head home. "And Laban said to him, "Please stay, if I have found favor in your eyes, for I have learned by experience that the LORD has blessed me for your sake." Then he said, "Name me your wages, and I will give it." Laban asks his son-in-law, *what is it going to take to keep you around?*

So Jacob said to him, "You know how I have served you and how your livestock has been with me. For what you had before I came was little, and it is now increased to a great amount; the LORD has blessed you since my coming. And now, when shall I also provide for my own house?" So he said, "What shall I give you?" And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything." In other words, *I only want what I've earned.*

"If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks: Let me pass

through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and these shall be my wages.” In the Middle East to this day, most sheep are white and goats are brown. Solid pigmentation is a dominant trait. Speckled and spotted is less common and indicate a recessive gene.

So, if Laban gets the solid-colored herd, he should fare better. But Jacob says, “So my righteousness will answer for me in time to come, when the subject of my wages comes before you: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if it is with me.” And Laban said, “Oh, that it were according to your word!” *Laban realizes Jacob’s deal should greatly benefit him!* Jacob seems to be deliberately defying natural laws and relying on God to multiply his herds.

“So he removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had some white in it, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and gave them into the hand of his sons. Then he put three days’ journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban’s flocks.” The flocks were separated to see how they would reproduce over time.

But in verse 37 Jacob employs an unusual practice “Now Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white strips in them, and exposed the white which was in the rods. And the rods which he had peeled, he set before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, so that they should conceive when they came to drink. So the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted.” It’s not clear what actually happens here. Jacob may’ve engaged in a form of **selective breeding**. Or it could be the rods released a chemical in the water that effected pigmentation. As to Jacob’s motive, this might have been a shepherd’s way of hedging his bet, in case God didn’t bless his flock.

“Then Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the streaked and all the brown in the flock of Laban; but he put his own flocks by themselves and did not put them with Laban’s flock. And it came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock conceived, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. But when the flocks were feeble, he did not put them in; so the feebler were Laban’s and the stronger Jacob’s. Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous (the Hebrew renders it, “*and the man burst out exceedingly, exceedingly*”), and had large flocks, female and male servants, and

camels and donkeys.”

Again the science here is uncertain, but the result is God multiplied Jacob's flock. To me, the most likely interpretation is **God isn't blessing Jacob's cleverness at all, but his faith**. In 31:10 Jacob recounts a dream where God multiplies his flock as an act of faithfulness to him. This was the lesson God was teaching Jacob all along. He needs to *trust God not his own schemes*.

Chapter 31 begins with Jacob hearing the complaint of Laban's sons and seeing the countenance of Laban. Both indicate he's gotten the better end of the deal. God's leading to head home becomes more pressing.

In 31:4, Jacob calls a family meeting. **“So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock, and said to them, “I see your father's countenance, that it is not favorable toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me. And you know that with all my might I have served your father. Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me. If he said thus: ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: ‘The streaked shall be your wages,’ then all the flocks bore streaked. So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me.”** Jacob admits it's not breeding techniques that are multiplying his flocks, it's God's blessing.

Which should be a lesson to pastors. It seems with every new mega-church we get a new church growth conference. The pastor has to disclose his techniques. It's as if his large flock was grown by his cleverness, not God's Spirit. Here Jacob is clear, **his mega-flocks aren't the result of his brilliance, but of God's blessing**.

Verse 10, **“And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted. Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, ‘Jacob.’ And I said, ‘Here I am.’ “And He said, ‘Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you.”** This is like getting a heavenly stock market tip. Invest in the speckled and spotted - they are being sired by God.

And notice this isn't just any **“angel,”** the term means **“messenger.”** This angel says, **“I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me.”** It was at Bethel that Jacob had a vision of a ladder to heaven. *Jesus was Jacob's ladder*. And this Angel is now identifying Himself as the God of Bethel.

This angel had met Jacob before he left for Haran. Now, he tells Jacob it's time to return. **“Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.”**

Verse 14, “Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, “Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?” Amazingly, the squabbling sisters come together, but it's over their shared greed.

“Are we not considered strangers by him? For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money. For all these riches which God has taken from our father are really ours and our children's; now then, whatever God has said to you, do it.” The girls realize Laban had treated them like livestock. They renounce any loyalty to their dad, and pledge to follow Jacob.

“Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels. And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.” Jacob loads up a family caravan and tries to sneak away. But “Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's.”

This doesn't mean Rachel worshipped idols. The reason Jacob's mother, Rebekah, sent Jacob to Haran in the first place was so he could find a wife that wasn't an idolater. What Rachel cares about is her and her sister's inheritance. By possessing Laban's idols, in some way, it strengthened her claim to his inheritance.

Verse 20, “And Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river (the Euphrates), and headed toward the mountains of Gilead. And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled.” Jacob had a three day head start. “Then (Laban) took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead.” Laban chased the caravan 300 miles from Syria to Gilead.

“But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, “Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.” God was protecting Jacob. “So Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob: “What have you done, that you have stolen away unknown to me, and carried away my daughters like captives taken with the sword? Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp?” *Sure... not hardly.*

Verse 28, “And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in so doing. It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad. And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father's

house, but why did you steal my gods?" And here's a funny thought, *what good is a god that can be stolen? Not much.* Thus, the folly of idols.

Last week I heard one of our presidential candidates make the comment, "You don't have to abandon your faith to vote for abortion rights." Well, if your faith is in a god that can be stolen and hidden; then maybe so.

You can use a false god for selfish and self-serving purposes, and put words in an idol's mouth. You can make your idol say whatever it is you want him to say.

But if your faith is in *the Christian God* His Word requires we respect life in the womb. You can't **hold** to a *biblical faith* and a *living God* without **upholding** the sanctity of life. **The real God can never be hijacked.**

"Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force. With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take it with you.'" Jacob worshipped the true God, he had no use for Laban's idols, nor for their worshippers. Verse 32, "For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them."

"And Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the two maids' tents, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find them.

And she said to her father, "Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is with me." This Rachel has been with Jacob too long, she's turned into a schemer herself. She says she can't get off her camel, and blames it on her time of the month. *What father is going to question that?* "And he searched but did not find the household idols."

And this angers Jacob. He's been falsely accused. *If any contraband was found, show us the evidence.* An emboldened Jacob stands up to his father-in-law.

In the next few verses Jacob recounts the faithful shepherd he was for 20 years. He delivered baby sheep, endured predators and thieves, cared for Laban's flock despite drought, frost, sleepless nights. He served 14 years for his wives and six for his flocks. Yet Laban lied to him - changed his wages ten times.

Jacob says in verse 42, "Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night." If God hadn't defended him, he would've left bankrupt.

And notice the unusual name for God, verse 42, "the Fear of Isaac." Recall when

Isaac blessed the younger over the older, it hit him that God had kept His promise, *not because of him, but in spite of him*. This created in Isaac a deep “*fear*” or **respect** for God’s sovereignty.

Verse 43, “And Laban answered and said to Jacob, “These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and this flock is my flock; all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne?” Here’s a classic case of overbearing in-laws. Laban ignores Jacob’s role in siring his kids and lays claim to his family. This is why God said to married couples, “*Leave your father and mother...*” If you’ve got meddling in-laws, you’re wise in seeking a separation.

Laban concedes, “Now therefore, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.” So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. Then Jacob said to his brethren, “Gather stones.” And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap. Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed.” Both names mean “*Heap of Witness.*” Laban’s is Aramaic. Jacob’s is Hebrew.

“And Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me this day.” Therefore its name was called Galeed, also Mizpah, because he said, “May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from another.” “*Mizpah*” means “*watch.*” Laban is a skeptical father-in-law. He says, “*may God watch you like a hawk.*” Verse 50, “If you afflict my daughters, or if you take other wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us - see, God is witness between you and me!” “*Mistreat my girls, and God will get you!*”

“Then Laban said to Jacob, “Here is this heap and here is this pillar, which I have placed between you and me. This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.” This pile of rocks will be their border. *And it’s a wise move to set boundaries with domineering in-laws!*

Laban continues, “The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us. And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.

Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain. And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them.” He kisses them good-bye. “Then Laban departed and returned to his place.”

Realize, Jacob’s twenty years in Haran humbled him. He left Canaan a double-



crosser, now returns having been double-crossed himself. It started with Rachel and Leah, yet Laban changed his wages ten times.

God in turn had been faithful to Jacob. He prospered his herds, and delivered him from Laban. The schemer is learning that he can trust the Lord.

All this leads up to the profound encounter that occurs in Genesis 32. “So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is God's camp.” And he called the name of that place Mahanaim” or “*double camp*.” Jacob had pitched his tent and made physical camp, but here he learns there is also a spiritual camp, *in the very same space*, occupied by angels assigned to his protection.

And if you're God's child, angel armies camp with you. Hebrews 1:14 refers to angels as “*ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation*.” Does this mean there are guardian angels? *Yes!* Mine even works overtime.

Verse 3, “Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, “Speak thus to my lord Esau, 'Thus your servant Jacob says: "I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.” Jacob had left one adversary, but now he faces a confrontation with Esau. The last time he'd heard from Esau, he'd vowed to kill his brother.

“Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and 400 men are with him.” He gets no indication of Esau's motive, just that he's coming to meet him with 400 men. *And an army of 400 marching troops doesn't sound much like the Welcome Wagon.*

Jacob doesn't know what to expect from Esau. All he knows is Esau's had 20 years for his anger to boil. Jacob is scared, so he divides his entourage in half. If one company is attacked the other can escape.

Verse 9 is Jacob's prayer for protection. And notice, three things: a newfound humility, an honesty. And in it he reminds God of His promises, *a good way to pray*, “Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you': **I am not worthy** of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; **for I fear him**, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children. **For You said**, 'I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of

the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: 200 female goats and 20 male goats, 200 ewes and 20 rams, 30 milk camels with their colts, 40 cows and 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys and 10 foals." This is a sizable peace offering. And he's sending it on ahead.

"Then he delivered them to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves." In other words, he spreads it out. This will look more impressive if it comes in waves.

"And he commanded the first one, saying, "When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, "To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose are these in front of you?" "Then you shall say, 'They are your servant Jacob's. It is a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also is behind us."

He instructs the second and third wave of servants to say the same. Jacob will send *waves of welcome*, hoping to gradually soften Esau's heart. He'll sleep in camp that night, but the next day he'll meet his brother.

*The only problem?* Again, he's trusting in his own manipulations, rather than God. It's Jacob's perpetual sin, yet God is about to cure him of it once and for all.

Verse 22, "And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok." The name means "emptying." On the one hand, the Jabbok was a stream that emptied into the Jordan River. But the name is prophetic. At the Jabbok, Jacob finally empties himself of his self-confidence and self-reliance.

There "He took (his family), sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. Then Jacob was left alone..." Jacob is now at the end of his rope. He's alone. He's vulnerable. He's worried that at any time Esau might jump out of the bushes, and attack him.

And this time mamma won't be there to save him. Jacob is now solely dependent on God. He faces the dark of night, and the uncertainty of tomorrow, *with only faith at his disposal*. At the brook called "emptying" Jacob empties out himself and sees the face of God.

"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day." I'm sure at first, Jacob thought it was Esau. His brother is trying to kill him with his bare hands. And remember Esau was a tough guy. He was an outdoorsman - a hunter, a killer. Imagine, Jacob flailing, and kicking, and fighting for his very life.

Verse 25, "Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him." Jacob was fighting so tenaciously, the man he's wrasslin' has to loosen Jacob's grip. He touches his hip socket, and it throws his hip out of joint. It must've been painful. Like an athlete going down with a blown knee, Imagine Jacob grabbing for his hip.

"And (the man wrestling with Jacob) said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." Its had been all night. "But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" As dawn approaches it dawns on Jacob he's not fighting Esau, he's wrasslin' with the divine. The man asks him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." "Israel" means "Prince of God."

Let me ask you, *have you been wrasslin' lately?* You thought you were fighting your spouse, or kids, or an ex-spouse, or a boss, or a neighbor - but really you've been wrasslin' with God. All your life you've schemed to get your own way, but now you're being forced to surrender to His will, *not your own*. It's time to give up!

That's what Jacob realizes. When it dawns on him he's been wrasslin' God, he stops fighting and starts praying. He tightens his grip on God. He refuses to let Him go until he receives His blessing. Jacob finally admits his need. He is desperate for God's blessing.

Instead of fighting God, he now embraces Him. He goes from a headlock to a hug. And here's what's intriguing, Jacob puts as much effort into *his faith* as he did in *his fight*. This is how God wants us to approach him. Take the vigor you put into *fight'n Him*, and put it into *follow'n Him*. Cry out for God's highest and richest blessing. Don't let go until you get all God has for you!

Verse 29, "Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel (or "face of God"): "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." I believe it was none other than our Lord Jesus with Whom Jacob wrestled that night. And I've known many a person, myself included, who wrestled with His Lordship long before they sincerely surrendered, and sought God's very best for their lives.

Notice too in verse 31, "Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip." Jacob wrestled with God, but it cost him... *his pride, his self-sufficiency*. For the rest of his life, Jake limped. He had a permanent sign of his weakness. It was a reminder to walk by faith, not by his own cleverness.

“Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.” This was a tradition practiced by observant Jews until the time of the writing of Genesis.

Chapter 33 tells us what occurred the next day, “Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were 400 men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last.” In order of his affections.

“Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.” Jacob is now a humble man. “But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.” *What a reunion!*

And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, “Who are these with you?” And he said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.” God is now restoring a broken family.

Verse 6, “Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down. And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down. Then Esau said, “What do you mean by all this company which I met?” He’s talking about the waves of gifts. “And (Jacob) said, “These are to find favor in the sight of my lord.” But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.” And Jacob said, “No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me.”

Jacob realizes the former hostility with Esau was his fault. Jacob’s biggest enemy wasn’t his brother, but himself. It’s amazing, **when a man makes peace with God, peace with his brother will ultimately follow!**

Jacob is so grateful for what God has done, in verse 11 he begs Esau to take his gift. He takes it, and wants to travel with Jacob. Though their reunion was sweet Jacob knows spiritually he and his brother are headed in different directions. There’s no need for to travel together, they’ve made peace, now they can move on.

Verse 15, “And Esau said, “Now let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.” But he said, “What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.” So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths (shelters) for his livestock. Therefore the name of

the place is called Succoth.” Or “booths.”

“Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city.”

Jacob made a wise decision to separate himself from Laban - then Esau - but as we'll see he makes a poor decision by settling near this pagan city of Shechem.

“And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for 100 pieces of money. Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.” Which means “*God, the God of Israel.*” And for the very first time we're told Jacob builds an altar and worships.

Abraham built altars everywhere he went, but this is the first time Jacob builds an altar. He has finally given in to God's will. He's surrendered his life to the Lord. Now he wants to worship Him. *Are you a worshipper?*