

## Genesis 33-34

### "Some Do's & Don'ts Of Right Relationships"

In Ch 33 we're coming down from *the* Mt top experience of Jacob's life. In Ch 34 we enter straight into the valley. It's not uncommon that trying times, sometimes, *terrible times* are on the heels of some of the high times, the greatest times of our lives. We have a very real enemy who is constantly trying to bring us down; constantly seeking to disillusion us in our walk w/God.

It's interesting that right after Peter, James & John came down off the Mt of Transfiguration; seeing Jesus transfigured before them, shining in glory right in front of them, receiving incredible undeniable revelation about Him; at the bottom of the Mt they were instantly confronted by the demonic. Now greater is He who is in us than he that is of this world, but make no mistake you have an unrelenting enemy who will discourage you, disillusion you or seek to bring you down any chance he gets.

Jacob had just seen the pre-incarnate Christ... The truth is that God picked a fight w/him, broke him & brought Jacob's will into submission. He already had his heart, but He was after his *will*. No longer was Jacob to be scheming, plotting, planning his own way; but he was to rest *in* & rely *upon* the True & Living God.

You recall; God changed his walk (literally). He took his hip out of socket & Jacob left the presence of God that day different. He would never be the same, no longer could he rely upon his own strength, but he would now "walk by faith" trusting in the sufficiency of God's grace toward his life.

Really, he became the picture of the principle that Paul the apostle would later articulate when after his own wrestling match w/the Lord, Jesus said to him *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."* Therefore (Paul said) *most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*<sup>1</sup> Because when I can't do it personally, it has to be Christ in me, then God gets all the glory. Do you want to walk in your strength, or in the power of Christ? If we want His strength than we've got to come to the place where we're no longer relying on *our own* strength.

Now Jacob is a changed man, he was given a clean slate, a new beginning. I'm so glad we serve the God of new beginnings! Whose mercies are new every morning.

<sup>1</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [2 Co 12:9-10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God gave him a new name that day. No longer Jacob, (he's to forsake the old nature) "Israel"; governed by, ruled by God.

It was the dawning of a new day, but each new day will bring w/it new challenges... For Jacob it was the long anticipated 20 yr reunion w/his twin brother Esau who had sworn to kill him the next time they met. Notice.

### Vs 1-7

You talk about a "watershed" moment in Jacob's life! This was like having 20 tons of pressure just taken off his back. All that stress, all that worry, all that "nail biting" kind of tension that he had been suffering, washed away in a moments time.

He was anticipating a sword but was greeted w/a kiss, Esau fell upon him & they wept. What happened; where did all the animosity go? Was Esau initially planning to kill him but then changed when he saw him? Was the 400 men a small army or was Esau traveling w/the entourage of a king? (Because that's basically what he'd become, he was the authority in the area of Seir). I don't know, what I do know is that regardless of his intentions initially, by the time he saw Jacob physically, his heart had changed.

Why do you think that is? I suggest to you that it's because *God* changed his heart toward Jacob. There's at least 3-4 things that we can glean from Ch's 32-33 that will aid us in the restoring/reconciling of relationships (or even maintain an already *right* relationship). The "do's" that our title refers to.

The 1<sup>st</sup> step is found in Vs 9-12 of Ch 32. (No need to look back; let me save you the time). Jacob *prayed*. Prayer is always the 1<sup>st</sup> step toward restoring/reconciling a relationship that's gone bad (& is essential in maintaining a relationship that's right). In Vs 11 of Ch 32 Jacob specifically prayed about the struggles between him & his brother; & he was asking God to intervene & in someway deliver him.

I have no doubt that as Jacob was praying for him (Esau) that God was going before him (Jacob) & dealing w/him (Esau) in a preliminary fashion. The bible says, "*The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes.*"<sup>2</sup> Just fyi, if that be true of kings how much more is God able to deal w/the heart of anyone else? If you're in a relationship that's gone bad; begin to pray & seek the Lord to speak to them, to change their heart, to do what needs to be done to bring restoration, reconciliation to the relationship.

<sup>2</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Pr 21:1]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Having said that you should be aware of this; often times as I ask God to intervene in a situation He will, but it may be *me* that He deals *w/&* speaks *to*. It's been said that prayer changes things; that's true, but generally the 1<sup>st</sup> thing it changes is me. My heart begins to change toward the person, toward the situation.

Understand that prayer isn't about me changing *God's* heart; it's about God changing *my* heart. Jacob prayed that God would intervene (& He did), but 1<sup>st</sup> God needed to work in *Jacob's* life, didn't he? When God got Jacob alone He wrestled *w/him* all night until He brought *him* to the place of willful submission to God's leading in his life. & It changed how *he* would respond to his brother... So I suppose as a sub-point to prayer we might add that though through my prayers I'm praying for that person, that relationship; their heart, I'm open & desiring that if necessary God would change *my* heart, show me where *I* need to change.

Here in Vs Jacob lifted his eyes & saw him out on the horizon coming his way & so he divides his kids in groups *w/their* mothers in what would seem to be an order of least to greatest (you knew where you stood [literally] in Jacob's family.) Btw, this favoritism that he shows throughout his life will bring nothing but problems & strife in his family.

But he takes his place in front of them, then as Esau approaches he bows himself before him 7 times (which was the custom when approaching kings) before they engage one another. This is our 2<sup>nd</sup> step in reconciliation/restoration or maintaining a right relationship. #1 Prayer; #2 Humility, even though providentially it should've gone the other way; Jacob didn't insist on his right as bearer of the birthright & recipient of the covenant that Esau bow before him. Instead he humbled himself & took the lower position. If we're looking for reconciliation; or desiring to maintain something that's presently a good situation; don't be demanding of your rights, be willing to walk in humility. Consider the bigger picture. Follow the lead of your Lord... Turn to Phil 2:1-8

Jesus had the "right" to demand whatever He wanted from whomever He wanted it. But He didn't do that; He humbled Himself & esteemed others as better than Himself & served them. #1 Approach the situation prayerfully, #2 Walk in humility.

### Vs 8-11

#3 Give of yourself generously. Jacob had spent his life seeking to take *from* Esau, now he refuses to be satisfied until he's given *to* Esau, these are the marks of a new man...

Culturally, when Jacob gave these gifts it was his way of saying that he was sorry & when Esau accepted the gifts it was his way of saying he was forgiven/accepted.

Don't miss what's happening here. 20yrs earlier Jacob fled from Esau having *taken Esau's blessing*, now he comes to him & says, "Here, please, take *my blessing*."

Esau says, "What's the deal w/sending all these animals my way?" Jacob says, "I just want to make things right between us." Esau says, "There's no need for that I have *enough*." Jacob says, "Please, take my blessing; because God has dealt graciously w/me & I have *enough*." Interesting that the word Esau used for "enough" & the word Jacob used for "enough" are 2 different Hebrew words. Esau is saying, "I have a lot of things", Jacob is saying, "I have everything." He's recognizing that everything he has is from the Lord, God has given him everything. He says; "God has dealt graciously w/me." Underline that.

*You want to see restoration/reconciliation in that relationship, you want to maintain a healthy relationship. Give of yourself generously to them, recognizing/realizing that God has dealt graciously w/you.*

After everything you've done, said, thought or been apart of; that God has received you, forgiven you, blessed you & saved you; now who are you to hold out on them? Write it down, look it up later, Matt 18:21-35.

*Perhaps you remember the narrative of Zacchaeus? The wee little man ☺? He went up the tree one way, but came down another. Jesus went to his house & having spent time w/Jesus he was changed. Before he was a tightfisted tax collector, ripping people off to benefit himself. After an encounter w/Christ he not only wanted to give back what he'd taken, but he wanted to restore generously (4-fold) above what he'd taken wrongfully.*

When you've had an encounter w/Christ, you understand that God has dealt w/you graciously; that He's given you everything, therefore you can give generously in restoring what was damaged previously. Think of it like this; grace begets grace. When you've received grace, you wanna give grace. Words like "graciously"& "favor" are laced throughout this Ch. Right relationships demand grace...

*If you're really not a gracious person, I would encourage you to spend a little more alone time w/Jesus that you might understand His grace toward you that in turn you might display grace to others...*

Now when Jacob says that seeing Esau's face was like seeing the face of God. He was acknowledging that he saw God's favor toward him in Esau's reaction.

**Vs 12-17**

Or "shelters, booths". The question comes up; did Jacob deceive Esau here?

It seems plausible, but we don't know for sure. What we do know is that he went the opposite direction (for whatever reason). Ultimately we know they couldn't dwell together because God had said when they were born that they were 2 separate nations, & this peaceful parting achieves that.

### Vs 18-20

Couple things here. #1 It's good that Jacob came to the Promised Land, in that he obeyed. However he fell short of complete obedience because God had told him to return to Bethel (Gen 31:3) & unfortunately this little detour will cost him tremendously.

It's kind of reminiscent of Lot pitching his tent toward Sodom, he survived personally, but it did tremendous damage to his family.

Now the fact that he erects an altar there is great. He called it "El Elohe Israel" or "God is the God of Israel" of course he's Israel so in essence he's saying, "God, You are my God & the God of my family (this nation ultimately)." **But even better than sacrifice (the bible declares [1 Sam 15:22]) is obedience; it's not that God opposes sacrifice, it's that what He wants is our obedience 1<sup>st</sup>. Let's work on being obedient *to* God before we worry about sacrificing *for* God.**

### Ch 34

Ok. So Jacob has built an altar, he's testifying to the True & Living God; he's a changed man; but it's a slow growth & development. We need to learn from this; don't think that you'll blossom (or anyone else for that matter) into full blown maturity as a believer immediately, or in a few months or a couple yrs. **Spiritual growth takes a lifetime (literally). We may learn a lot of bible truth (that's great), but learning to walk in it w/out stumbling here or falling down there takes time.**

Peter spent time w/the Lord but he fell short a bunch too! & I'm glad that he kept getting up & going for it again because it encourages me that as I fall, if I'll get up, repent & press forward God will still use my life. Jacob is changing, but he hasn't arrived... & In Ch 34 a bomb drops; notice.

### Vs 1-4

Couple things; there's been a time gap between the meeting w/Esau & what's happening here. When Jacob & Esau met, all his children were under 13.

Here in a minute we'll see her brothers referred to as "men" so we're looking at what? 8-10yrs anyway...

But do you remember when Abraham went to Egypt he was afraid that Pharaoh might take Sarah & kill him? When Isaac went to Gerar (Philistine country) he said the same thing for the same reason? Well here Shechem (the prince of this Hivite region) did exactly that. He saw Dinah, thought she was beautiful so he took her & lay w/her. & Though he may've acted w/in his rights politically (which shows some of the depravity of the Canaanite country), in reality what he did was rape her.

Now some commentaries blame Jacob for this (& it's true that had he obeyed & gone to Bethel this may've been avoided). Others think that Dinah shouldn't have strayed away & wondered into town to see how the locals lived (that may be true as well). **However let me say this: though as parents we need to be keenly aware of whom our children hang out with & we want to spare them the influence of the world; we also (as believers) need to learn how to function in the world w/out being of the world.** The bible doesn't teach that as believers we're to live in bubbles & be completely w/drawn from society; if we're to *reach* the world we have to at some point make contact w/the world.

It would seem to me that Shechem (not Jacob) should be held accountable. You guys I wish I could tell you that bad things never happen to godly people; that wouldn't be true. Good people, godly people are *often times* the victims of *evil* people.

**I'm not seeking to say that other measures couldn't have been put in place; but what I am saying is that sometimes bad things happen to good people. It doesn't always mean you've sinned, or that God is judging you. It means we live in world that's fallen & there are people who seek their own at any expense.**

Now in this situation you can see that the Hivites had a different standard altogether. He took her, did what he did, but felt as though he loved her. That tells us that the love of the world is on a totally different plane; it's not even to be compared w/God's love. **The love of this world is self seeking, self-gratifying, it's not in anyway considerate toward the other person (I get what I can from you, when I'm done w/you, I divorce you [that's not uncommon in the world today]).**

But you see, he was infatuated, he wanted now to marry her... This becomes our #1 in what we *don't* do if we want a right relationship. We *don't* seek to serve ourselves. If my motive in building a relationship is predicated only upon what's in it for me, how it serves & satisfies me; it's selfish & already destined for destruction.

**Vs 5-7**



The boys are furious (understandably), Jacob seems passive & unable to pull things together... But notice there's no apology from Shechem; there's no thought for what Dinah wants; though he's kind to her it's really about what he wants & can get from her.

What *does* true love look like? The bible says, "*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*"<sup>3</sup> Question, did Shechem treat her kindly? Considerately? Did he put her interests ahead of his? Did he joy in his iniquity? Than was it really love?

### Vs 8-17

Back in Vs 11 Hamor mentions the "daughters" of Jacob. This makes us believe that he had more daughters than Dinah, however she is the one mentioned due to this atrocity.

Having said that, the sons of Jacob are preparing to commit an atrocity themselves. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> thing we don't do in a right relationship. We don't deal *deceitfully*.

They were using the sign of circumcision, (a sign that was supposed to speak of their dependence upon the Lord & a cutting away of the life of the flesh) to lure these guys in & ultimately (literally) destroy their lives. You can't hope to have a right relationship w/someone if you're building it upon a lie, or how who they are serves your agenda.

### Vs 18-24

These guys will go through the motions of the covenant w/out entering *into* the covenant. It'd be like getting baptized but never really receiving Christ; it means nothing. You may've done to make someone happy or get someone off your back; but it did nothing for you spiritually; it was an empty ritual.

But in reality it was deception on their part as well because their agenda was to absorb the wealth of Israel into their own country & wind up w/all their stuff (how can this end well)?

### Vs 25-29

Question: does 2 wrongs make a right? They waited until these guys couldn't defend themselves & then w/boldness (which speaks to the level of hardness in their hearts) they murdered (not just Hamor &/or Shechem) every male in the city...

<sup>3</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [1 Co 13:4-7]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

This went way beyond justice, “overkill” is an understatement. Even after they slew all the men, they took the women & children captive & plundered all the wealth of the city. Look at Vs 30.

### Vs 30-31

Again we say, 2 wrongs don’t make a right. Their action was just as ungodly as Shechem’s, simply in a different context.

Jacob will speak to this again when he’s about to die (we’ll see it in Ch 49). But this is the danger of anger. Schechem should’ve been held accountable; but to destroy the entire city... The bible says, “...*the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*”<sup>4</sup>

This is definitely a stain on Israel’s history; yet God would go on to use these guys powerfully. You may think you’ve messed up so bad that God couldn’t possibly use your life. Humble yourself in the sight of God; turn from your sin, trust in Him. His grace is sufficient for you; He will use your life; you will be edified & He will be glorified...

Remember; don’t act deceitfully, don’t pursue people selfishly; but reach out to them prayerfully, walk in humility; give of yourself generously & God will do great things. Amen? Amen.

### Prayer Points:

God; once again we want to thank You for Your word, Your wisdom; & Your ways. We thank You for the sufficiency of Your grace; that in our weakness Your strength is made perfect. May we walk reliant upon You, never trusting in our own strength. I pray for every relationship here today; God that they would be strong & healthy, giving You glory. For those that need mended; may we have ears to hear Your Spirit today & may we walk in Your ways.

God wants to do a work in your life. Christ has loved you & has given Himself for you. He shed His blood, poured out His life so that you might have everlasting life. If you need Christ to forgive you of your sin, humble yourself today, give Him your heart; He’ll give you new life.

<sup>4</sup> The New King James Version. (1982). [Jas 1:20]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.