

Genesis Chapter Thirty Three

Genesis 33:1-3

Then Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. And he put the maids and their children in front, and Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. But he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

- Immediately following two encounters with the spiritual realm—he makes an entirely natural/fear-based response to his brother
- Just like the disciples on the Mt of Transfiguration—holy exposure does not guarantee a holy response
- Faith needs to be the result of divine encounters
- Though he approaches Esau—he places his 'most valued' assets as a distance
- Bowing—placing himself in the position of complete submission to Esau—speaks of superiority/seniority
- Upon seeing his brother, Jacob puts into action the plan to divide his wives and children into separate companies

Genesis 33:4-9

Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said, "Who are these with you?" So he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." Then the maids came near with their children, and they bowed down. And Leah likewise came near with her children, and they bowed down; and afterward Joseph came near with Rachel, and they bowed down. And he said, "What do you mean by all this company which I have met?" And he said, "To find favor in the sight of my lord." But Esau said, "I have plenty, my brother; let what you have be your own."

- Esau appears to have a changed heart—was this due to Jacob's prayer for God's protection?
- Jacob had presented his gifts—to find favor—rather than trust God and His Word
- Esau's response demonstrates that he has also seen increase in the last twenty years

- This picture of reconciliation will be repeated later in Jesus' story of the prodigal son—Luke 15
- Esau comes to Jacob—not with death—but with grace
- No pretenses in how Esau addresses Jacob—calls him his brother

Genesis 33:10-11

And Jacob said, "No, please, if now I have found favor in your sight, then take my present from my hand, for I see your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favorably. Please take my gift which has been brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have plenty." Thus he urged him and he took it.

- Jacob had just wrestled and faced God—now encountering and facing the one he has wrestled with his whole life
- Receiving a gift is regarded as a pledge of goodwill
- We can offer no gift in order to receive forgiveness from the Lord. We can offer thanksgiving.
- Present—homage offering—acceptance and reconciliation

Genesis 33:12-17

Then Esau said, "Let us take our journey and go, and I will go before you." But he said to him, "My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds which are nursing are a care to me. And if they are driven hard one day, all the flocks will die. Please let my lord pass on before his servant; and I will proceed at my leisure, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord at Seir." And Esau said, "Please 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; and built for himself a house, and made booths for his livestock, therefore the place is name Succoth.

- Esau suggests they journey on together—Jacob's preference is to separate.
- Jacob's decline could reflect fear, suspicion, distrust after initial reunion
- Jacob indicates he will meet his brother after traveling at a slower pace. Instead—he journeys to a different location to settle.
- God had instructed him to return to land of your fathers—and your relatives—I will be with you—Gen 31:3
- Succoth—prolonged stay—built barns/house—long enough for daughter Dinah to mature

- The only time we ever see Jacob and Esau together again is to bury their father—Gen 35:29
- Esau had settled in Seir—not land of Promise. Later prophets pronounce judgments on the region of Seir/Edom—Is 34, 63:1, Jer 49:7
- Edomites gloated over destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians—Ps 137:7

Genesis 33:18-20

Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram, and camped before the city. And he bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. Then he erected there an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

- Instead of complete obedience—returning to land of his father (31:3)—he settles elsewhere—buying property
- Shechem is a day's journey short of Bethel. It was a trading crossroads.
- He is erecting an altar at a place that falls short of obedience to God.
- Shechem is a son of Hamor from whom Jacob buys land (in 34:2—Hamor identified as a Hivite prince in the region)
- Altar: El-Elohe-Israel= God the God of Israel-----He has referred to God of Abraham and God of Isaac—in building this altar, lays claim to Abraham's inheritance.
- Shechem=shoulder

Genesis Chapter Thirty Three Workbook

Key Words:

Harmonize:

Read the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Compare with this reunion.

Dig:

- 1) What was Jacob's first response when he saw Esau?

- 2) What was Esau's first response when he saw Jacob?

- 3) How does Esau regard the gift Jacob had prepared for him?

- 4) What term of affection does Esau use for Jacob? What does this show us about Esau's heart?

- 5) Where does Jacob promise to reconnect with Esau? Does he follow through on his word?

- 6) Does Jacob obey the Lord's direction in this chapter? Explain.

- 7) Is there any reason given for Jacob's move from Succoth (33:17) to Shechem (33:18-20)? Why would you think he might move?

Discuss:

- 1) What aspects of this reconciliation story seem most genuine? Least genuine?
- 2) Talk about the emotions that accompany anxiety and fear and the emotions that accompany relief.
- 3) Did Jacob ever walk by faith? When?
- 4) Discuss the difference between extending forgiveness and being reconciled.

Point of Prayer

Thank the Lord for promises He has made to you—whether or not they have fulfilled.

Integrate:

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

Application:

- 1) Make a list of things you have acquired in the last 20 years. Give thanks.
- 2) Do you have any long term reconciliation issues in your family? Describe.
- 3) How many times have you moved in your life? Do you enjoy moving to a new area?
- 4) Do you ever have family reunions? What is your favorite part of these gatherings?
- 5) What is the most difficult aspect of needing to forgive someone?
- 6) Has someone ever offered you an extravagant gift that you had difficulty accepting? (were there strings attached?)