

Sermon Questions for Life Groups
The Gospel According to Genesis
Back to Bethel at Last: Genesis 34 & 35
Pastor John Mahaffey
Sunday, October 25, 2015

These questions are generated by several authors for Life Group discussions or family or personal devotions

1. Review the prayer for our election, along with the prayer for our new prime minister, and consider how you/your group can commit to ongoing prayer for Mr. Trudeau and our country.
2. Chapter 34 records one of the most horrific stories in the Bible. It follows Jacob's failure to obey God and return to Bethel. How does this chapter show how catastrophic Jacob's disobedience was? Is there another reason why Moses would record this event?
3. In chapter 34 what evidence is there that Jacob left everything to his sons, instead of taking action himself as the head of the family? When he did finally rebuke them of what was he primarily concerned? What considerations ought to have moved him to think, speak or act differently?
4. God allowed Jacob to go against His will for 10 years before calling Jacob back to Bethel. The stories of Paul, David and even Solomon all include a similar rebellious period. Why do you think God allows us to "get away" with disobedience or partial obedience for so long before calling us back into line?
5. How did Jacob's repentance show itself, and how was it rewarded? In what ways had Jacob's family become contaminated by their stay in Succoth and Shechem? What was necessary for them to do? Outline what Jacob commands them to do. The command to change clothes later becomes a metaphor for a changed life (See Ephesians 4:22-24). What are we to put off and put on?
6. In Chapter 35, we read of Jacob having his sons bury the idols that they had brought with them from the foreign land. Read Romans 6:3-5 and Colossians 2:11-13 and discuss the following: Even though Christ had not yet come, what is the significance of the idols being buried rather than just thrown away?
7. Did you ever have "secret foreign gods" (physical, behaviour, habits) that can be difficult to get rid of? Consider James 4:7-8 and Ephesians 4:17-32. How did/can the grace of God help you in this? How can

we practically resist the devil in our battle for purity? How can we maintain purity in today's media-dominated world?

8. Do you ever have to go to "El Bethel"? What happens there?
9. For a second time we read of God changing Jacob's name to Israel. Why does this happen two times? What does it signify?
10. Note what personal sorrows accompanied God's blessings to Jacob (read also Hebrews 12:6-11; Psalm 119: 67, 71). What does Reuben's sin point to within the family? Three deaths are recorded in chapter 35 and these deaths point to a transition. Who dies and to what transition do they point to?
11. How might God's plan be limited in what He can do for us?
12. In what ways do we see the triumphs of God's grace to Jacob and his family in spite of this record of sin and sorrow?
13. There are two major themes in this story: God's unending faithfulness and the changing power of God's grace.
 - a. Think of an example of God's faithfulness to you, regardless of your own lack of faith or regardless of your turning away. Share it with the group if you are comfortable.
 - b. How does the knowledge of a relentless and life-changing grace make it possible for you to serve God in spite of your failings?
14. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Once we have experienced new life in Christ, the life-long process of sanctification begins. Share common daily struggles in your faith, and suggest how we can better resist our old habits? Read also Luke 18:8. If you were to declare the key secret(s) to maintaining a consistent Godly faith and focus, what would it (they) be?