

Scripture Text

Genesis 32-33

Context

In Genesis 28-31, Jacob has dwelt outside of the promised land with Laban and despite being deceived into marrying a woman he didn't want to marry, has ended up being blessed by God with a large family and great flocks. God appears to him in 31.3 to tell him he must now return to the land of his fathers.

Observation and Meaning

1. In 32.1 Jacob begins on his journey and is met by angels. When Jacob left his household to go to Laban in 28.10 he also met with God. What is the significance of this?
2. As Jacob hears that Esau is approaching him he is gripped with fear (32.7). Why is this? What three things that Jacob do in response (32.7, 32.9, and 32.13?) What do these things tell us about how he wants to deal with his fear?
3. When Jacob wrestles with God he appears to lose, yet is told he prevails. What does this tell us about how to 'prevail' with God?
4. What is the significance of Jacob's request whilst he is wrestling with God? God responds by changing his name. What is the significance of this?
5. How does Jacob's summary of this event (32.30) show us what is significant about what has happened?
6. How does Esau respond to Jacob? What does Esau's response remind us of?

Big Idea

Before self sufficient people can enter the Kingdom, God has to change them into people who rely on God.

Connecting to the Bible's storyline

Because God is faithful to His promises, He brings Jacob back to the land he swore to his forefathers. God provides for Jacob by enabling him to return to the land when it seemed that previously he had burned his bridges with Esau and would not have been able to return. All of this shows God's faithfulness in ensuring that His promises are fulfilled.

Sermon Outline

1. The wonderful and dangerous call
2. The only striving that can bear lasting fruit
3. The blessing of God that brings us home

Applications

1. Which commands of God bring great fear to you? How do you normally deal with those fears?
2. What challenges are you currently facing, and what do you think God's purpose in those trials is? How is God wanting to transform you through them?
3. In what areas of your life have you had to 'wrestle with God', and prevail by realizing that only in Him is true blessing?
4. In what ways is God calling you now to submit to his authority over you, as Jacob did with God giving him a new name?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

Who is writing and to whom?
What is the situation of the author and of the readers?
Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?
Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.