

Lessons From Jacob

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[0:00] Genesis 35, we've kind of got the context of it, just in the introduction to the reading.

! And I want to look at six lessons that Jacob learned in the course of his life and that he kind of details in this chapter.

And these are six lessons that we can and should seek to import into our lives. You could say these are six resolutions. This is New Year. It's still the early part of the year.

I imagine if you've made resolutions, they're long since smashed. But resolutions are things that we often come to at the beginning of a year.

And Jacob resolves to do six things in this section. Number one, resolution number one, Jacob says he is recommitting his life to God.

[0:59] So, resolution one, point one, lesson one, recommit your life to God. I'll give you the roadmap for this. Lesson two, resolution two, repent of idolatry.

Lesson number three, relax. Learn to relax because we know if we are God's people that he is with us. Lesson number four, remember your name.

Lesson number five, be realistic. Know that even though we are God's people, we will experience joy and sorrow in this world.

Lesson number six, be reconciled first and foremost to God. If we're reconciled to God, seek to be reconciled to the others that God puts around us.

So, lesson number one is recommit your life to God. Because in verse one, as we'll just step through the verses here, that's what God calls Jacob to do.

[2:16] God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.

Now, if you go back tonight and you read chapter 34 in particular, and if you read the chapters prior to that as well, and look at some of the things that had happened in Jacob's life, some of his failures and his faults and his unfaithfulness, we would be amazed at the patience and the grace of God.

And Genesis 34 is such a dark chapter that we would almost expect God to close the book and say, I'm done with this people.

After everything that I've done for this family, I just can't put up with any more. That's what we would do in the face of such unfaithfulness and stubborn rebellion and dark sin.

But thankfully, our God is not like us. And in his great patience, in his abounding love, he calls Jacob to come back.

[3:44] And Jacob hears that call. Jacob's walk with God over the whole of his Christian life, his life as a believer, to put it in Old Testament terms, was intermittent, to say the least.

He hadn't walked steady. He had often strayed. And remember, although we've only got a chapter or two, Jacob had been out of God's will, straying for the last 15 years.

He was out of the place of God's will, settled in Shechem, rather than persevering to Bethel, for the last 15 years. But God, in his great patience, doesn't cut Jacob off, but rather calls him back to Bethel.

And Jacob hears that call, and he responds, essentially by recommitting his life to God.

So the first thing that Jacob says to us as we venture out into this new year is recommit your life to God. Stop going your own way.

[5 : 04] I don't know you very well. But as believers, we know how prone we are to wander.

We know how ready we are to want to take our own way rather than God's way. And Jacob, having learned all these lessons the hard way, and still learning, is saying to us through this text, stop going your own way.

Don't do what I did. Stop pleasing your selfish self as I so often did, to my own cost and to the cost of my family. Instead, resolve to go God's way.

seek to live in a life that pleases him and glorifies him. So the first thing we see Jacob doing is he recommits his life to God.

The first thing we are called to do is we observe, and as we take lessons from this, is we are to recommit day by day, morning by morning. We are to recommit our lives to the Lord.

[6 : 25] The second point is we are to repent of idolatry. Because that's the second lesson that Jacob learns and leads his family in.

That's verses two to four. So Jacob said to his household, he's now committed, he's wanting to go God's way. So Jacob said to his household and to all who are with him, put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments.

Now, again, if you were to rewind and look at all that God, the one true God, had done for this family, it's an absolute travesty that they would still have a bag full of idols that they're carrying around and putting some faith in.

But that's what was going on. So Jacob takes a lead for the first time really in his family life as a spiritual head. And he says, put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments.

Then let us arise and go to Bethel so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.

[7 : 40] So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had and the rings that were in their ears. Jacob hid them. He buried them, literally, under the terebinth tree that was near Shechem.

We just look in on Jacob's house. You know, sometimes you get these programs where you get to go through the keyhole. You get to look into somebody's house.

We're given a view here into Jacob's household and he has a home full of idols. His family and likely he himself had, they had a supply of their own little gods.

Of course, weren't gods at all. And Jacob knows that they can be committed to the one true God while holding on to these little idols.

So he leads his family to repent, to leave the idols behind as they follow the Lord to Bethel. And just as we take a moment to apply this, can I ask you the question that I have had to ask myself?

[9 : 01] What idols do you struggle with? It was Calvin that said that the human heart is a, is an idol making factory.

we're experts at the manufacture of idols. So what idols are you struggling with?

Maybe just take a moment in the quiet of your own heart to name the idol that seems to plague you.

It might be a person, a relationship that we keep putting above the Lord. Might be a material thing that just fills our thoughts and pulls our affections in its direction.

Might be a leisure interest, hobby that just takes over. Could be a career that's just become everything to us. name that thing, you know, whatever it is that always seems to get in the way of our walk with God.

[10:26] Name it. You know, confess it. Tell the Lord about it. and ask for strength that this year would be the year that we resolve to repent of making people or pursuits or material things our idols.

So ask for strength and wisdom so that this year would be the year where we are enabled to put these things in the right place so that we are able to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these other things that are added into our lives that we would be in the right place where we can enjoy them and yet give God the glory.

Repent of idols. That's point number two. Recommit your life to God. That's lesson number one. Repent of idolatry is Jacob's second lesson. Third lesson is relax.

You have to learn to relax knowing that God is with them and we can trace this promise right the way back through Jacob's life. I think it's all the way back to Genesis chapter 28.

God promises that he will be with Jacob wherever he goes that he will be with him. And in verse 5 to verse 8 we see the evidence of that in Jacob's life.

[12:24] Jacob just to recap he recommits his life to God he repents of idolatry and he determines to trust and obey God to go God's way to go in the direction of Bethel.

That's his resolve that's his plan which was in accordance with God's will. But the problem as he thinks the implications of this through the problem was this was a dangerous journey.

And the surrounding cities would have seen Jacob as a threat so they would have been poised to attack and that would have caused Jacob to be reasonably fearful.

But as Jacob steps out in God's will he discovers that all the enemies that he feared they didn't attack.

As they journeyed verse 5 a terror from God fell upon the cities that were around them so that they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

[13:40] So Jacob learned the lesson that when he was going God's way he could relax even though there would be trouble and even though there were real risks and even though he would encounter danger at points along the road he could relax because God had promised he would be with him.

And if we are God's people we can relax too. even though the world seems to be in such a mess even though conflict seems to be coming incrementally closer to our shores storms we can relax because we have the promise that the God who is overall he's with us.

and that doesn't mean that we may not have to face all kinds of conflict and turmoil and difficulty but we can even in the midst of these storms relax if we know the God who is reigning over all because he's promised he will be with his people.

We sometimes sing the hymn that goes like this though the nations rage and kingdoms rise and fall there is still one king reigning over all so I will not fear for this truth remains that my God is the ancient of days.

Remember that when you're watching BBC News 24. Remember that when things crash into our world that cause all kinds of anxiety.

[15:43] If we are God's people we have the promise that even if we go through the waters and the rivers and the fire thinking about Isaiah 43 he's promised he will be with us. if he's with us we can be at peace even in these storms.

Lesson one we can make your life to God. Lesson two repent of idolatry. Lesson three relax God is with you. Lesson four you may not get to six remember your name.

Now for those who were here this morning if we rewind back to Genesis 32 we may recall that Jacob had already been given a new name.

Genesis 32 and at verse 28 God says to Jacob your name shall no longer be called Jacob but Israel. Eve's in the commentator says his name Israel was a sign of God's blessing.

But any of you go from that point there in Genesis 28 and fast sorry if you go from that point in Genesis 32 and fast forward scan through chapter 32 33 34 to this point in chapter 35 the name Israel seems to have been forgotten.

[17:14] He's given this name but the name isn't used. Jacob is still called Jacob and the reason he's still called Jacob is because he hadn't been living a life that was consistent with his new name.

But now as Jacob recommits his life to God as he seeks to be obedient to God says to Jacob remember your name not your old name Jacob meaning sinner cheater liar but remember your new name Israel which means a God mastered man and live a life that's consistent with your new name that's what God is saying to him as he reminds!

him of his name verse 9 God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan and blessed him and God said your name is Jacob no longer shall your name be called Jacob but Israel shall be your name so he called his name Israel and then God reminds Jacob or Israel again of the blessings promised to him as he seeks to live for God's!

glory That's verses 11 through to verse 11 and the promise in verse 11 a nation and a company of nations shall come from you and kings shall come from your own body the land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you and I will give the land to your offspring after you and so on remember your name says God to Jacob now Israel and we are to remember our names if we are trusting in the Lord what is our name well our name is Christian which simply means Christ's one and it's a great privilege that Jesus would give us his name that we could call ourselves

Christians it's also a great responsibility because we are his witnesses! in this world we are as Paul said ambassadors for Christ so it's good for us to remember at the early part of a new year it's good for us to remember day by day that when we go into the shop to work or to buy something or whether we go to the football park to play a game or head into the classroom to do the next lesson whether we go into the office or the hospital ward whether we send a message on snapchat or instagram or whatever it is that we use whatever we are doing whatever we are going we carry the name of

[20:47] Jesus into these places and in a small community like Tarbert or Carloway people will know and they'll look and they'll say as we slide in on a tackle on the football pitch hopefully it's fair as we exercise patience in the line of a shop as we seek to work to the best of our ability whatever it is God has placed us people will look and they'll say that's a Christian equally when they get a message that's sharp where they see an outburst of bad temper they'll look and they'll say there's a Christian so let's try with God's help to live lives that bring honour and glory not dishonour and shame to the name of

Jesus remember your name is lesson number four and I think that's probably a good place to end this evening let's pray to do to