

October 11/12, 2003

## Study Questions

*Fear or Faith (Part 1): A Study in the Life of Isaac & Jacob*

### The Younger Gets the Older

Genesis 29:1-30

#### Opening Discussion

1. Immediately after you trusted Christ as Savior, did your circumstances get better or worse?

In what ways can you now see how God was working in both the good and bad circumstances?

2. Why does God sometimes allow difficult circumstances and difficult people in our lives?

Is the ultimate aim for our Christian walk happiness or growth?

3. Can you ever really know God's forgiveness until you've forgiven someone who has deeply wounded you?

Can you ever really appreciate God's grace until you've extended grace to someone at great personal cost?

Can you really appreciate how your misbehavior and attitudes hurt others until you've been hurt in a similar way?

#### Bible Study

1. Quickly review the story of Abraham's servant finding a bride for Isaac in Genesis 24. Compare that story to Jacob's search for a bride in Genesis 29:1-14. What are the similarities and what are the differences?

The writer seems to be inviting us to make a comparison by the similarities. Why? What does he want us to learn?

2. Although Jacob believed God's promises at Bethel, he seemed to be acting on his own in Genesis 29. In what way does his behavior resemble Isaac's from Genesis 26?

Why is it so hard to practice the presence of God in practical daily living?

Are we, like Jacob, guilty of living at times as if the Spirit of Jesus does not dwell in us?

Do we sometimes live as if God's presence is not with us as He promised it would be?

Why is that?

3. In what ways does Laban's behavior in 29:15-30 resemble Jacob's in the previous story? Compare this with Galatians 6:7-10. Notice how the writer uses the issue of the "first born" to draw us back to Jacob's earlier deception of Isaac and Esau. Jacob, the deceiver is now the deceived.

Jacob is now, in a sense, looking at himself in the mirror as he is confronted with the behavior of Laban. What could he say?

Have you ever had the same experience of realizing your own bad behavior only after you've been treated as you've treated others?

4. It is obvious from the comments in 29:30 that Jacob's troubles are only beginning. He will pay dearly for his past deceptions and failure to trust God. Rebekah believed Jacob would return in a few days (27:44). He would not return for 20 years, and as far as we know he would never see her alive again. While Rebekah and Jacob's intentions might have been good, their lack of faith and deception proved to be very costly. How might the story have been different had they both simply waited on God to fulfill His clear promise and guide their lives?

5. Have there been occasions where you grew weary of waiting on God and sought to take matters into your own hands?

What was the result? What did you learn?

In that case did God let you down or was He faithful? Why?

## **Application**

1. Is there a specific area of your life right now where you need to wait on God and seek His guidance rather than charge ahead with your own plan?

What will be necessary for you to practice the presence of God in this specific area?

2. Is it possible the circumstances or people in your life that are making your life difficult are actually allowed by God to bring about growth in your life?

Should your prayer be for deliverance or a teachable heart?

3. Is it possible that what you are seeing in someone else that is upsetting to you is actually a mirror reflecting an area in your life that needs to change? Can you identify specifically what that area is?

4. Pray that God would open your eyes to see what you need to see and to learn what you need to learn from the circumstances and people in your life.