

December 13/14, 2003

Study Questions

Fear or Faith: A Study in the Life of Isaac & Jacob

A Family Disaster

Genesis 34:1-31

Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. How do we respond when we are deeply wounded by others? In what ways is God's presence evident in our lives by how we respond when others hurt us?
2. When we are hurt by others, what would be a response of faith and what would be a response showing a lack of faith?
3. What effect does our lack of faith have on our children, family members, friends, etc.? What does our fear produce in them? What are the circumstances of life that are most likely going to reveal our lack of faith?

Bible Study

1. Read Genesis 34:1-31.
2. In Genesis 33:20 Jacob erected an altar and called it "El-Elohe-Israel" meaning "God-the God who prevails." The first words in Genesis 35:1 are "Then God said to Jacob..." Yet, in chapter 34 there is not one mention of God. Why? What is the writer trying to teach us as readers?
3. Jacob was called to go to Bethel. Out of fear of Esau he goes to Shechem instead. Is ultimate safety a matter of geography or obedience? Jacob disobeyed God and went to Shechem because he believed it was in his best interest. Is there ever a time when disobedience works in our favor?
4. Notice all the times the writer refers to "Jacob's daughter" or "Jacob's sons" in the narrative. What is the writer trying to teach us about Jacob's leadership in the home?

How did his fear affect his children?

5. The writer is careful to tell the reader that Jacob's sons answered Hamor with deceit. This is the same word used to describe Jacob's behavior with his father and Laban's behavior in giving Jacob Leah instead of Rachel. What is the writer wanting us to realize at that point of the narrative as it relates to faith?
6. How should Jacob and his sons have responded to Dinah's rape?

What would be the proper response of faith? Can God be trusted in these situations?

7. While it is obvious Simeon and Levi felt justified in their actions, were they?

When we get hurt do we find ourselves justifying actions or attitudes that are clearly wrong? Do we ever reconstruct our theology to fit our morality in those moments? In other words, do we figure out a way biblically to justify our attitudes and actions, just as Simeon and Levi did?

8. Read Genesis 49:5-7. This is Jacob's deathbed confession. While Simeon and Levi may have felt justified in their actions, what did it cost them?

Application

1. Are you dealing with any hurts in your life that are a result of someone else's action? How are you responding to the situation? Are you responding according to faith? In what ways?
2. Are there any behaviors or attitudes in your life right now that you know aren't right but you have justified them because of your hurt? What do you need to do?
3. How can we prevent repeating this "Shechem" experience? Name three things.