

Case Study: Jacob – God, You Said TO Me

Description

6 And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to your brother Esau;
7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who
8 Thinking, If Esau comes to the one group and smites it, then the other group
9 Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord
10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercy and loving-kindness and all t
11 Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau;
12 And You said, I will surely do you good and make your descendants as the sa

Genesis 32:6-12 AMPC

There's alot to be said about Jacob, who was later renamed Israel (later in this same chapter) after his personal encounter with Jesus. We know Jacob the deceiver, Jacob the trickster, and Jacob the polygamist, which I believe causes us to miss Jacob the honest/transparent. You may be asking me when was Jacob ever honest or transparent, and I'll be glad to walk you through the verses above to help you see how Jacob can be an example for us on how to come before God honestly and transparently.

To understand Jacob's honesty and transparency, we must first understand the scene before us. Jacob has just been saved by God from his father-in-law Laban's wrath by. After escaping that scene, he is now confronted by a historical wrong and fear, his brother Esau. Jacob is returning home after essentially being exiled 20 years ago because he deceived/tricked his father Isaac, and Esau. Jacob's last remembrance of Esau was his vow to kill him after their death of their father, who is actually near death during this time. Jacob is traveling with his family, and is told by some of his messengers that Esau is heading their way.....with 400 soldiers (v6 above). Can you imagine what would be going through your mind after hearing this news, in addition to the memory of your last interaction with your brother? Lets go through the verses to see how Jacob provides a healthy model for us:

- Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed (v6)- Jacob didn't ignore his initial feelings to the messenger's news. Originally I had typed "negative news," but I removed negative because the news was not negative, it was a fact/truth that Esau was heading their way with 400 soldiers, however what caused it to elicit fear in Jacob was the context/memory of their last encounter. Many of us are robbed and burdened with memories of past negative experiences that can cause us to react improperly to a current situation. There is no condemnation for Jacob or you for what is initially felt in those moments, but I challenge you to do what Jacob did a few verses later.
- Jacob said, "O God, Lord who said to me..." (v9)- Jacob first felt fear and distress, then he acted to formulate a plan, BUT ultimately he returned to the God who gave him the original instructions. Jacob didn't go in the proper order because we ALL would hope that we FIRST go to God in prayer for direction, but when you don't get it right the first time, make sure that you go to God next. In Genesis chapter 28, God visits Jacob in a dream and promises him that he would bless Jacob to be fruitful and multiply, and in addition to that, God would bring Jacob back to his father's home safely. It was this promise that Jacob is reminding God of at a time when it looks

like that may not happen. It's important to note that Jacob is not doing these things on his own accord, but rather he is doing these things at the direction of God. Yes we can remind God of his words in scripture, but for us individually, God is only responsible for that which he has planned/promised for us according to his will.

- I am not worthy.....(v10) – Jacob lists some of God's goodness that he has experienced, that he is aware that he is not worthy of. Honesty. Jacob is aware that his life prior to his encounter with God, and even his life afterwards is not worthy of God's goodness. In spite of this, God is more faithful than we can ever be. God doesn't do what he do because of what we've done, or even because of who we are, but rather because of who he is. God had been faithful to Jacob over those 20 years, even when he didn't deserve, and here Jacob is, fully aware of what God has blessed him with, and done for him without being worthy of it. God is able to do so much with a honest heart, one that realizes a good God has done so much for us even though we don't deserve it.
- Deliver me, for I fear him (v11)- Transparency. Another term that could have been used here is vulnerability. Jacob's memory of Esau was real, Jacob's recent encounter with Laban in Genesis 31 was real, and negative experiences have a way of creating memories that have the ability to cripple us. Jacob's request to God was for deliverance from the vengeance and grasp of Esau, but if you read a little further you'll see Jacob's desire was to protect his family. Unlike earlier in his life, Jacob realized that he was unable to scheme his way out of this predicament. God, who had proven himself capable and reliable throughout Jacob's life was able and willing to intercede on Jacob's behalf, not only because it was part of God's plan, but also because Jacob's heart was in the proper posture. Jacob's experiences taught him that God is faithful, and that when you are in his will then God take's ownership for the outcome. Even greater than Jacob's request to God, was his transparency with God about how he felt in the moment. He was aware of God's awesome power, but at the same time he was aware of his feelings. God didn't judge Jacob for his feelings, but he was able to meet him where he was.

Reflection Time

Have you ever felt the need to remind God of what he has promised you in the past? How often are you honest with God about your spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical health? You may need to place yourself in Jacob's position in this part of the passage and imagine that God is visiting you in your moment of need or weakness, and I'd like you to tell him where you're at and what you need.

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Author

guytonjj

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