



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Genesis (Part 2)

Lesson 5: Genesis 33:1-34:31

I hope you ladies are all caught up and ready for another week in Genesis! Please don't forget to spend a few quiet moments in prayer to prepare for the reading and study of God's word. We left Jacob and his family last week on their long journey from Paddan-Aram back to his home country. Chapter 32 left us on a cliff hanger with Esau headed their way with 400 men in tow. Let's find out how this brotherly reunion plays out.

Read Genesis Chapter 33

Esau is in Jacob's eyesight! It has been twenty years since he deceived Isaac to steal Esau's blessing and fled to Laban's house. Twenty years of wondering if his brother still hated him. Twenty years of uncertainty about his return and what it would bring. Twenty years of guilt. The answer to those questions is now in sight. His first reaction is fear as he sees 400 men approaching with his brother, who upon last sight wanted to kill him. Jacob proceeds to divide his family in what seems to be order of importance to him. He then goes on ahead of all of them, bowing down seven times before he reaches his brother. This was a tremendous sign of respect towards Esau. He was proclaiming inferiority to his older brother and later in verse 5 calls himself Esau's servant. The gifts he sent ahead of their arrival would attempt to herald good will among them and perhaps even humble Esau if his first inclination was not peaceful. Jacob had done everything he could think of to make amends and

have peace with his brother. His humility and remorse shine through his actions. I imagine his years of experience, including being deceived multiple times by Laban, has made him much more sympathetic to Esau and created more guilt concerning his past treatment of him.

Some speculate that Esau could have been preparing for a hostile encounter by enlisting 400 men to accompany him. He may have, but his response when he reaches Jacob seems genuine and eagerly affectionate. Maybe his entourage was a safety measure for himself or maybe he was simply offering assistance and protection to his estranged brother. At any rate, Jacob's fears must dissipate when Esau runs to him with open arms. He has had just as much time as Jacob to rehash the past in his mind. Twenty years to be without the bond of his twin brother. Twenty years of waiting to extend his forgiveness. Twenty years to believe he might have done the unthinkable to his own flesh and blood for mere earthly blessings.

Their reunion is very moving. You can practically feel the tension release and the joy of reconciliation. Oh, how wonderful forgiveness is! I cannot help but think of the correlation between Jacob's humility and forgiveness and our humility and forgiveness with God. Humility is so underrated, yet so valuable and essential. I truly believe if I could master humility, my relationships would be the best they could possibly be. Even a superficial study of humility



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in the Scriptures will reveal how much worth God puts on it. Ladies, I urge you to pray fervently that we would walk humbly with our God.

Jacob introduces Esau to his family and then they wrangle over whether or not Esau will keep the gifts that Jacob presented to him. Esau is obviously doing well on his own. In verse 9 he states that he has “plenty”. The Hebrew word he uses is rab, meaning “much, many, or great”. Interestingly, when Jacob says in verse 11 that he has “plenty”, he does not use the same Hebrew word. Instead he uses kol, which means “all, the whole, or everything”. It may not have mattered to Esau that he used this other word, but it lets us know that Jacob truly was blessed even more than Esau. An important lesson is that even if God is blessing someone else greater, He is still blessing us “plenty”. Esau acknowledges that and is content. We should be too.

After some more discussion, it is agreed upon that it would be best for Esau to head home and let Jacob continue his journey at an acceptable pace for his family and livestock. As Esau goes home to Seir, Jacob stops and builds a house and booths for his livestock. The place he ends up in is therefore named Succoth, which means “booths”. At some point he then crosses the Jordan and ends up camped before the city of Shechem and buys a piece of land. We are introduced at this point to the leader of Shechem, Hamor, and his son who is also named Shechem. It is here that Jacob builds an altar that he names El-Elohe-Israel, which means “God, the God of Israel” or “the mighty God of Israel”. Remember his name has been changed to Israel. He is fulfilling the vow he made to God when he first left his home so many years ago in Bethel. God

has protected him, provided for him, and brought him safely back home. Now Jacob declares Jehovah is his God.

Some of Jacob’s sons could have been as old as 12 or 13 when they made this journey. Do you think any of them noticed the order Jacob put them in to meet his brother and, if so, how do you think that affected them?

Have you ever been separated from a loved one for many years? What was it like to lay eyes on them once again?

Describe a time someone forgave you and you experienced that joy of reconciliation?

Can you think of an example of someone in the Scriptures who humbled themselves and God had mercy on them because of it?

How could more humility in your life help your relationship with your spouse, your children, your parents, your friends, and/or your coworkers?



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Read Micah 6:6-8 and tell what you learn about humility.

Read Genesis Chapter 34

We are not told how much time elapses between chapters 33 and 34, but Jacob's children have grown up to some extent. Dinah is older than Joseph, but probably not by much. She must surely still be rather young at this time when we consider Joseph will only be 17 when he is sold into slavery sometime after this event. She is estimated to be anywhere from 12 to 17 years old. I certainly hope she is on the later end of that range, but she is still quite young. The text says that she "went out to visit the daughters of the land". Some believe that she has been out participating in things that she should not have been a part of with people she should not have been with. The truth is we cannot ascertain that information from the text, but either way, what happens to her is wrong. There is some debate about whether or not she was completely uncompliant to Shechem's advances as there is a different Hebrew word that specifically means rape. That term is not used in this passage, but the term "by force" seems to cast significant doubt that she consented to the act.

Shechem is the prince of the land. He is a Hivite, who are descendants of Ham through his son Canaan. His name means "back or shoulder" which may have reference to the fact that it's the part of the body where loads are borne. Leaders certainly bear burdens, but this leader decides to cause a burden. He apparently does have a deep, genuine affection for Dinah. He speaks "tenderly

to her" and wants desperately to marry her. She may very well not be his first wife, but he seems willing to have her for any price they demand.

As you know, this story is not only about Leah's daughter, but two of her sons, Simeon and Levi, as well. In verse 7 we are told that the men are "grieved" and "very angry". How could they not feel this way? It also mentions that it was a "disgraceful thing in Israel" which is the first time the term "in Israel" is used. They are becoming the nation God promised they would be. Hamor requests that they become one people. He is actually extending full rights of citizenship to Jacob's family in verses 9 and 10. Simeon and Levi see it as an opportunity to take revenge by deceiving them into thinking they would allow such a union. Hamor and Shechem find the proposition of circumcision for their people a reasonable request. Circumcision was not only practiced by the Israelites but was also utilized by others for sanitation purposes.

The men in town agree to the terms and undergo their circumcisions, only to be betrayed three days later by Simeon and Levi. The text does not indicate that they had help, but it is highly probable that they would have enlisted help in such a huge attack. They retrieve Dinah and kill Hamor and Shechem, but they don't stop there. They kill all the men. They take all their livestock. They take all their money. They take their women and children. Sometimes our anger over an injustice brings out more injustice from us.

Obviously, Simeon and Levi have gone too far in their actions and Jacob is upset for good reason. Although this text only speaks of Jacob's displeasure concerning how his sons have caused



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him trouble and danger with his neighbors, Jacob reveals more about his thoughts when he is delving out blessings to all his sons at the end of his life (Gen. 49:5-7). However, Simeon and Levi do not appear to show any remorse. Instead they seem to try and justify it by asking if their sister should be treated like a harlot. I think their words just serve as a reminder to us that taking our own revenge does not bring peace.

Do you think it was unwise or unimportant that Dinah “went out to visit with the daughters of the land”? Why or why not?

Considering the time and culture, why do you think Shechem forced himself upon Dinah if he loved her?

Do you think all the men in Shechem deserved punishment? Why or why not?

Can you think of any examples in the Scripture when innocent people were punished for the sins of others? What does that tell you about your sin?

Describe a time someone else’s sin affected you negatively.

Describe a time your sin affected someone else negatively.

It has been a pleasure to be with you through this study so far and I pray you have been blessed abundantly for your time in God’s word. Until next time, keep reading, keep praying, and keep living faithfully and righteously every day! God bless!