

The Story of 3's

Scripture: Genesis 35

Three Commands to Follow and Three Encounters with God

God orders Jacob to go back and settle in Bethel, where he is also to create an altar for the Lord. Despite all of Jacob's shortcomings—he has a history of deceiving people, as well as making his own decisions—here we see God once again extending His hand out to him. Anybody else would have given up on Jacob by now, God demonstrates His grace by speaking to Jacob. Before they depart, Jacob gives his family three commands. Genesis 35:2 says, ***So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments.”*** The three commands, in turn, correspond to what is expected of us as Christians.

Jacob first orders his family to rid themselves of any idols that they are still holding onto. Because of his previous spiritual encounter with God, Jacob has the moral and spiritual ascendancy now to give this command to his family. Similarly, God tells us in Deuteronomy 5:7-8, ***You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.*** As a God who is jealous *for* us—He wants to protect us—He desires for us to rid ourselves of the things that are hindering our relationship with Him. Anything that comes between us and Him are idols that should be removed from our lives.

The next part of Jacob's command is for his household to purify themselves or set themselves apart. When we come to faith in Christ, not only are our sins forgiven, but we become holy in God's sight. This is a positional holiness, wherein we are considered set apart because of the presence of Jesus in our lives. However, 1 Peter 1:15-16 tells us, ***Like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*** Christians are also supposed to reflect Christ in holiness every day of their lives in *every* aspect of their behavior. It's not enough to rely on our positional holiness in Christ.

Lastly, to change clothes is symbolic of an external change: the inward change that comes from Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit being in our lives must also be reflected on the outside. Ephesians 4:22-24 says, ***You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*** When we come to faith in Christ we have to permanently “put off” our old selves and “put on” the new selves for permanence. This isn't like changing our garments, where we switch clothes according to the occasion.





Jacob has another encounter with God, where the Lord blessed him. Genesis 35:10-11 says, ***God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; you shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” Thus He called him Israel. God also said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you.*** This is a promise God had once given to Abraham and Isaac, and it is now passed onto Jacob. However, it is important to note that he did not get this promise until he had an encounter with God.

Three Funerals.

Throughout the events that took place in Genesis 35 no less than three people die. First, Rebekah's nurse, Deborah. Then, Rachel, who dies after giving birth to her last son, Benjamin. Lastly, Isaac passes away. For the deaths to happen at a time when Jacob was simply obeying the Lord, it would have been so easy for him to forgo obedience; after all, it seems as though it only brings about tragedy. However, Jacob clung onto God instead. The chapter ends on a hopeful note, as the Bible says that Isaac is buried in the presence of his two sons. Despite the mess that the family was involved in, Jacob and Esau had the privilege of burying their father as a family. Following the Lord does not mean an escape from pain. We are all going to die, but we should take a cue from David, who, in Psalm 27:4, says, ***One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.***

APPLICATION:

Patently listen as God reveals where you can apply the passage's lesson in your life. Write down specific action points to what He has revealed to you.

	<p>Personal: Are there any commands of God that you still struggle to obey? What is holding you back from completely obeying God? Are there any "idols" in your life that you continue to carry with you? What are the reasons you find it difficult to let go of these idols?</p>
	<p>Family: Commands and Blessings. When we obey God's commands, we are able to experience/encounter His presence and faithfulness in our life. As a family, talk about the commands that you have obeyed and how God has blessed you because of your obedience. This is a good opportunity to instill in your children the desire to obey God's Word without question.</p>
	<p>Discipleship: Discuss with your discipleship group idols that you continue to carry and the reasons why you are unable to let go.</p>
	<p>Church/ Ministry: In the light of all that is happening in the world today, how am I actively and intentionally sharing the gospel to those who are around me?</p>

PRAYERS:

Lift all the things that you learned back to God. Share your thoughts to Him. If He is impressing a sin in your life, confess it to Him. He is always ready to forgive.