



# DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

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## OUT OF SOCKET: The Life of Jacob - Session 1

### Promise: God Makes and Keeps His Promises

#### DAY 1

**Introduction:** Many people who open their Bibles to the Old Testament and read the stories of men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob expect to encounter stories of great courage, wisdom, and heroism. They expect these pillars of Judeo-Christian faith to be beacons of morality and spirituality. When they scour the pages of Scripture, most people expect to find role models for they and their children to admire.

Without fail, they are disappointed and shocked by what they see in the greatest Old Testament figures: outright lies, greed, cowardice, and sexual sin. More often than not, the great "heroes" of the Old Testament appear to be working *against* God and His promises. It really begs the question: ***What kind of God chooses to use the most messed up people to clean up the mess we're in?***

For the next seven weeks, we're going to explore the life story of Jacob, one really messed-up man who lived a really messed-up life. But time and again, in spite of Jacob's flaws, God stayed true to His promises. As we'll learn see in this study, through Jacob, God brought salvation to the world.

#### Questions:

Thumb through your Bible and make a list of the most flawed people in the Bible who God chose to redeem and use for His purposes. List their names and their sins, as much as you can remember them.

This appears to be a running theme throughout the Bible. Why do you think God chooses to work this way? Why not call and rely on more “qualified” candidates for leadership?

## DAY 2

### Read Genesis 12:1-4

- 1) Briefly describe the promises God made to Abram in these verses.
- 2) If you were Abram, which of these promises would you find most hard to believe?
- 3) How did Abram respond? How do you respond to learning about God’s promises for His people?

## DAY 3

### Read Genesis 15:1-6

- 1) God provided Abraham with some additional clarity around the details of His promises. Briefly described the additional prophecy in these verses.
- 2) If you were Abram, which of these promises would you find most hard to believe?
- 3) How did Abram respond this time? And what was the result for Abraham? See verse 6.

## DAY 4

## Read Genesis 26:23-25

- 1) Briefly describe the prophecy in these verses?
- 2) Compare this prophecy to Isaac, to the prophecy given to Abram?
- 3) Why do you think God provided this prophecy directly to Isaac?

## DAY 5

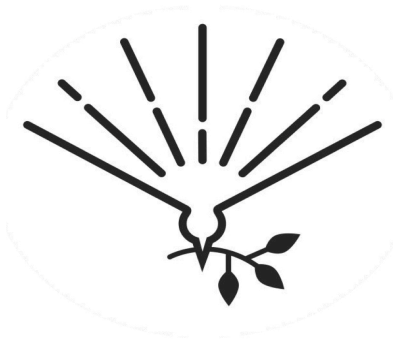
### Read Galatians 3:1-9

- 1) God made promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their descendants. How are these promises relevant to us today?
- 2) You may hear people compare the "Old testament God" with the "New testament God". How has the method of achieving right standing before God (salvation) stayed the same throughout the Old and the New testament?

How has the gift of salvation changed, if at all?

## DAY 6

How are God's promises impacting your day to day life?



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## OUT OF SOCKET: The Life of Jacob - Session 2

### Session 2: Waiting and Going

Genesis 25:19-34, 28:10-22

#### DAY 1

**Introduction:** “There are no atheists in foxholes,” or so they say. I’m not so sure about that (I’ve known some extraordinarily stubborn atheists), but the fact remains: people are more likely to call out to God during times of great adversity. It’s counter-intuitive, isn’t it? You’d think we’d be more expressive and intimate with God when everything is going our way, but those are actually the times that we tend to take God for granted.

The problem with always waiting for a crisis to cry out to God is that you never grow deeper in love. You’re just *using* Him. You convince yourself that you are the central figure in your story, and that God is your sidekick, whose only role is to play along by enhancing your life. When things go wrong, you call on the Best Supporting Actor in the sky to help get you back on track, but if you only pray when you’re in a proverbial foxhole, the cycle of sin-suffering-relief-repeat will never end.

The stories of Jacob show us how that same cycle has been an issue for people since the very beginning. God wants to do more for His people than clean up our messes; He wants you to know Him, trust Him, love Him, and receive Him as the Lead Actor in your life’s story.

And that means learning to believe that God keeps His promises, and patiently trusting Him - especially when His timeline doesn’t match our own.

**Questions:** How would you describe someone who claims to be your friend, but who only calls you whenever they need something from you?

Have you ever treated God like that? What was your relationship with Him like during that time?

What’s a better alternative to treating God like your “Best Supporting Actor”? How does that alternative change the depth in your relationship with Him?

## **DAY 2**

### **Read Genesis 25:19-26**

- 1) Who were Jacob's parents?
- 2) According to these verses, what condition were they dealing with in their marriage?
- 3) How long did they have to wait before having children?
- 4) How did both Isaac and Rebekah deal with this adversity? (see verses 21 and 22)
- 5) How do you deal with adversity in your life? If your answer is different than Isaac and Rebekah's, why do you think that is the case?
- 6) Why do you think God made them wait for so long?

## **DAY 3**

### **Read Genesis 25:19-34**

- 1) Briefly describe the four prophecies in verse 23.
- 2) Verse 28 suggests Isaac and Rebekah played favorites with their children.  
Who was Isaac's favorite?  
Who was Rebekah's favorite?
- 3) What effect do you think this had on the brother's relationship with each other?

- 4) What was Esau focused on in verses 29-34?
  
- 5) What was Jacob focused on in these same verses?
  
- 6) Read Ephesians 1:13-14.  
What inheritance are we promised?

How do your daily interactions and priorities reflect such promise?

**DAY 4**

- 1) What do the following verses tell you about Jacob?

Genesis 25:27 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 28:1-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 29:18-20 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 32:9-10 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 11:21 \_\_\_\_\_

- 2) What do the following verses tell you about Esau?

Genesis 25:27 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 25:32 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 26:34 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 27:41 \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrews 12:16-17 \_\_\_\_\_

- 3) Why do you think God used Jacob instead of Esau to carry out His plan of redemption?

- 4) What, if anything, is holding you back from making yourself available to God to use you for His purposes?

## **DAY 5**

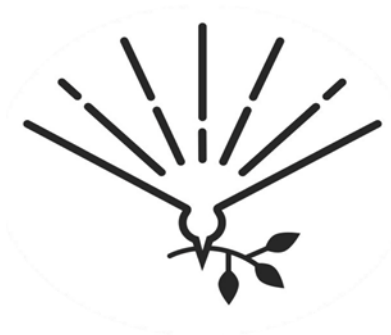
### **Read Genesis 28:10-22**

- 1) Jacob departed from Beersheba towards Haran and went to sleep using rocks for a pillow. Describe Jacob's dream in your own words.
- 2) List the promises God made to Jacob in these verses.
- 3) How did Jacob respond to God's promises in verses 18-22?
- 4) Read John 1:51, what does Jesus reveal about this dream?
- 5) How are you responding to Jesus' promises for His followers? See Acts 1:8

## **DAY 6**

- 1) What do you learn about God from these verses?





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## OUT OF SOCKET: The Life of Jacob - Session 3

### Oops: Trusting God When Things Go South - Genesis 29

#### DAY 1

**Introduction:** A woman anxiously applies the finishing touches to her makeup. The doorbell rings. She looks through the peephole; it's him. He seems nervous. He's holding flowers. It's their first date.

She opens the door, looking radiant, but there's another man in her house, standing right behind her. She looks at her date and says, "I invited him to come along as a back-up, just in case there's no spark between you and me. Is that cool?"

*Of course it's not cool. There are no back-up plans allowed on a first date!*

Sometimes I wonder if that's how we make God feel, you know? When we say we trust His promises, but we keep a few back-ups within reach, just in case. In the words of Dwight Schrute from *The Office*, "Look I'm all about loyalty...but if there were somewhere else that valued my loyalty more highly, I'm going wherever they value loyalty the most."

We know that's not how trust and loyalty work.

So how much do you trust the promises of God? Do you trust Him enough to stay the course, even when things seem uncertain? Or when doubt begins to surface, will you move on to your Plan B?

**Questions:** Can you remember a time when you had to wait a long time for God to come through? Did you trust Him? What happened?

## DAY 2

### Read Genesis 29:1-14

- 1) Who sent Jacob to Paddan Aram (or “the land of the eastern peoples”), and for what purpose? See 28:2.
- 2) Why do you think Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep aloud?
- 3) When was the last time you felt the assurance of God’s faithful presence? What effect did that assurance have on you?

## DAY 3

### Read Genesis 29:15-30

- 1) Why did Jacob prefer Rachel instead of her older sister, Leah? Given the context, why might Jacob’s request to marry Rachel have been disrespectful - or even destructive - for Leah (see verse 26)?
- 2) How does Jacob’s request seem to fit the pattern of behavior that we’ve seen previously in Jacob, his mother Rebekah (see Gen. 27:5-19), and his grandparents Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 16:1-4)?
- 3) Can you think of any deceitful or destructive patterns of behavior that have been passed down in your family tree? How have they impacted your life?

## DAY 4

### Read Genesis 29:31-35

- 1) Why did the Lord enable Leah to conceive? What does it mean to you that God sometimes pays special attention to the “unloved”?
- 2) Why did Leah name her first three sons Reuben (which sounds like Hebrew for “he has seen my misery”), Simeon (meaning *one who hears*), and Levi (meaning *attached*)? What was of primary concern to Leah during that time in her life?
- 3) What’s it called when we become so fixated on something (or someone) that we put it (or them) on the throne of our lives, where only God belongs? Can you think of a time you did that? What (or who) took the place of God in your life? What happened?
- 4) What changed in Leah’s heart when she delivered her fourth son? Why did she name him Judah (meaning *praise*)?

## DAY 5

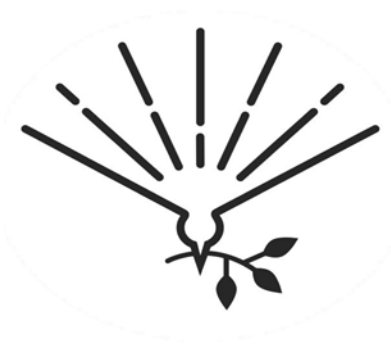
**How do you plan to trust God through times of uncertainty?**

**By God’s grace, you can break long-standing cycles of sin in your family history. What cycles and patterns do you want to hand over to Him?**

**Who are the Christian brothers and sisters you can lean on and talk to as you strive toward deeper trust in God? Name them here:**

DAY 6

*What did you learn about God in these verses?*



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## OUT OF SOCKET: The Life of Jacob - Session 4

### Struggle: Trusting God in Difficult Times - Genesis 32

#### DAY 1

##### Introduction:

Will Rogers said, "The best way out of a difficulty is through it." When trouble comes, we would prefer to get out as quickly as possible with little pain, right? Let's be honest. We hate pain. We want to avoid feeling vulnerable, incompetent or lacking control. When difficulties arise, we want out as fast as we can so we can avoid these feelings. Humans tend to look for the first door out, but God sees the best way through the difficulty.

We may feel completely and utterly adrift, but our hope is not lost. We can lean into God by turning to Him in prayer and trusting His timing and direction. When we turn to Him, He can grow our faith in ways we can't fathom. He won't just get us *out* of the difficulty; He will grow us *through* it. This week, we will see how Jacob chose to move beyond his fears and trust God.

##### Questions:

Was there a difficulty in your past when you chose to rely on something or someone instead of trusting God? What held you back from trusting God?

Has there been a situation in your life when you chose to put your trust in God? If so, what did it mean to you to trust God? Did the situation turn out the way you expected?

## DAY 2

Read Genesis 32:1-8

- 1) Recall the family dynamics as Jacob left his family, Gen 27:41-43. After some time, and as Jacob continued on his way he was expecting to come into contact with his brother Esau. What was Jacob's plan to deal with this situation, see verses 3-5?
- 2) What was Jacob feeling about the situation, see verse 7, and about his plan?
- 3) If you were Jacob, would you have reacted differently? Why and how?

## DAY 3

Read Genesis 32:9-12

- 1) To whom did Jacob turn to in his time of trouble?
- 2) Jacob's prayer covered several different topics. Describe how he covered the following:  
God's provision: \_\_\_\_\_  
Humility: \_\_\_\_\_  
Confession: \_\_\_\_\_  
God's faithfulness: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Compare your prayers from today / yesterday to Jacob's prayer above.
- 4) After Jacob's prayer, what did Jacob do immediately after? See verse 13

- 5) What was Jacob's plan in verses 13-23 and what were some of the key differences to his prior plan?
- 6) How do you see Jacob's demeanor change after his prayer?

#### DAY 4

Read Genesis 32:24-32

- 1) Why was it that Jacob wouldn't stop wrestling with this "man"? see verse 26.
- 2) What happened in verses 27-28?
- 3) List the twelve sons of Jacob, also known as the "twelve tribes of Israel". See 35:23-26
- 4) Jacob was eagerly pursuing the promises of God's blessing for his life. Sometimes he went about it the wrong way, including the birthright and his father's blessing. But this showed he valued God's promises. How are you pursuing God's promises for your life? With endurance and purpose? With apathy and deferral? See Ephesians 2:10 and Hebrews 12:1-2
- 5) What needs to change in your life to pursue God with all your heart?

#### DAY 5

Read John 20:24-29

- 1) This part of John is often referred to the "Doubting Thomas" section. This looks more like "unbelieving" than "doubting". Describe the difference between unbelieving and doubting.

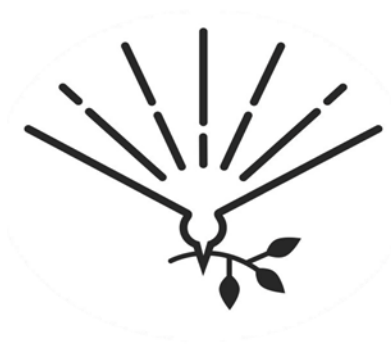
2) What was Thomas' reaction when he was confronted with the Truth, Jesus?

3) What was Jesus's response to Thomas?

## DAY 6

What struggles do you have that are keeping you from a closer relationship with Jesus? More importantly, what is your plan to address those struggles?





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## OUT OF SOCKET: The Life of Jacob - Session 5

### Mercy - Genesis 33

#### DAY 1

##### Introduction:

Nelson Mandela was imprisoned in South Africa for 27 years. He would later become the president, bringing reconciliation to his people. What allowed him to give his oppressors what they did not deserve? Mercy.

The Christian author and speaker, Joyce Meyer described mercy as, “the stuff you give to people that don’t deserve it.” Throughout the Bible, we see a God that continually shows mercy to His people. The ultimate act of mercy occurred on the cross. Instead of the just result of our sin, which is death, He mercifully sent His son to take our sin onto Himself. We are told in Luke 6:36, “Be merciful just as your Father is merciful”. He also requires us to show mercy to others.

As humans, we seem to intuitively understand the concept of justice. Even small children sense what is fair and unfair! While we are called to seek justice, we are also called to love mercy. The prophet Micah tells Jerusalem in Micah 6:8 to “act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” He desires that our interactions with others reflect the abundant mercy he has shown us. This week, we will gain a greater understanding of mercy through the interactions of Jacob and Esau.

##### Questions:

What qualities make a person merciful? Think of examples from people in your life.

Right now, is there anyone in your life that you could show mercy? Why could they use mercy, and how could you show it?

## DAY 2

Read Genesis 33:1-3

- 1) Who did Jacob see coming towards him?
- 2) How did he react to this? And how did his reaction differ from his plan in verse 32:17-20?
- 3) In verse 32:30, Jacob recognizes God and the mercy He was given. How does a right understanding of who God is, and the mercy He shows you, give you strength to face the adversity in your life?

## DAY 3

Read Genesis 33:4-11

- 1) In verses 27:41-45, Esau is out for revenge, bearing a grudge and seeking to repay. Jacob had plenty of logical reason to fear a reunion with his brother. How do you think Jacob felt when he saw Esau and 400 men with him?
- 2) Then in chapter 33, how did Esau greet Jacob?
- 3) How would you describe Esau's overall attitude in these verses, see verse 33:9.
- 4) This shows the power of forgiveness and its effect on the lives of others. Where is God calling you to extend forgiveness, mercy on someone in your family?

## DAY 4

Read Genesis 33:12-20

- 1) How did Esau and Jacob handle the next conflict in these verses?

2) How might have such a conflict been handled if Esau hadn't forgiven Jacob?

3) When conflict arises in your life, describe how you handle the situation

a. when you are "in Christ"?

b. when you are acting on your own?

## DAY 5

Read John 21:15-19

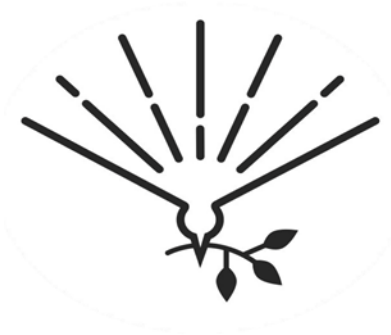
1) In John 18:25-27, Peter denied Jesus to the authorities. Then in John 21, Jesus shows mercy to Peter, offering forgiveness and telling him that he is loved. How did Peter respond to Jesus' mercy? See also, Acts 2.

2) How have you acted like Peter and denied Jesus in your life? To your friends? To your family?

3) How are you responding to the mercy Jesus has given you?

## DAY 6

What do you learn about God in the verses from this week?



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## OUT OF SOCKET: The Life of Jacob - Session 6

### Kept - Genesis 37

#### DAY 1

##### Introduction:

Sometimes we call it coincidence. Other times we call it fate. If it is really happy, we even call it serendipity. These words have been used to describe moments in our lives where we understand that something or someone greater than us is in control. Maybe these moments aren't so random, but windows into the reality we don't often see. We are kept.

Philip Yancey said, "A God wise enough to create me and the world I live in is wise enough to watch out for me." We are watched and kept by God. Psalm 121 gives a vivid example of what this means. "The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life" (Verse 5-7).

This week, we will see how Joseph trusted God with his dream. We will also see how God kept Joseph's life. Coincidence? I think not.

##### Questions:

Have you experienced a moment in life that could be defined as fate, coincidence or serendipity? What happened and what qualities make it memorable?

Isaiah 26:3 says, "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." What do you think the relationship is between being kept and trusting God?

## DAY 2

Read Genesis 37:1-4

- 1) How old was Joseph in these verses?
- 2) What did Joseph report to Jacob about his brothers? What role does this imply that Joseph had relative to his brothers?
- 3) How did Jacob treat Joseph compared to his other sons?
- 4) What impact did this have on the brother' relationship with each other?
- 5) When someone is treating you unfairly compared to others, whether at home, at work, at school...how are you responding? Can you give an example?

## DAY 3

Read Genesis 37:5-17

- 1) Describe Joseph's dreams.
- 2) Who did Joseph tell about his first dream? His second dream?
- 3) How did the they react to Jacob's telling of the dreams?
- 4) Why do you think he told them?

- 5) When you have something that goes really well for you, how do you react? Do you rush to tell others? If so, why and what are your motives?
  
- 6) Then in the next few verses Jacob sent Joseph again to check on his brothers even in the face of the recent conflict between the siblings. How did Joseph respond to his father's task? What does this tell you about Joseph?

#### DAY 4

Read Genesis 37:18-28

- 1) When the brothers saw Joseph coming, what was their original plan for Joseph?
  
- 2) How and why did the plan change in verses 21-22?
  
- 3) How did the plan change again in verses 25-28?
  
- 4) Why do you think Judah offered up this plan when he saw the caravan?

#### DAY 5

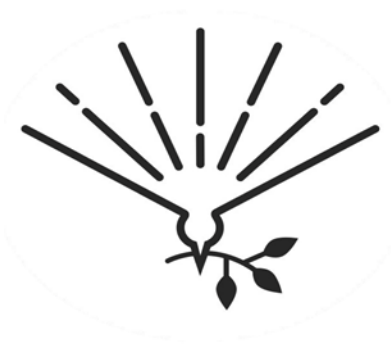
Read Genesis 37:29-36

- 1) It looks like Reuben had a plan to rescue Joseph. Why did his plan not work?
  
- 2) The plans that Jacob had for his son, Joseph, and the plans that the brothers had for Joseph were a mess. Their plans were often changing and left unfulfilled. Their plans caused family pain, agony and hardship. Through this mess, where did Joseph end up and must he have felt at that time?
  
- 3) Compare Reuben's plan to rescue his brother, to God's plan to rescue us. See Colossians 1:13-14 and

any other verses you find helpful.

## DAY 6

What do you learn about God in the verses from this week?



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## OUT OF SOCKET: The Life of Jacob - Session 7

Completed - Genesis 50

### DAY 1

#### Introduction:

The sun sets. The couple kisses. The cheesy music begins. The camera pans out. The credits roll. Regardless of what the movie is about, there is something satisfying about the end resolution in the final scene. We pay money to experience an artificial sense of completion. It is satisfying, even if only momentarily.

What about the story of our lives? The twists and turns of the plot can be confusing, and the conclusion unknown. God sits in the director's chair, with a knowledge that far exceeds our own, and a love that is incomprehensibly greater than our understanding. The sense of completion He brings is not momentary but eternal. Paul tells the church in Philippi, "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). He has not only begun a work in us, but it is a good work! He is completing our stories and weaving it into the greatest story of them all.

#### Questions:

Do you see God's direction in your story? If so, where do you see it?

Reread Philippians 1:6. How does the knowledge that God will complete the good work in you encourage you today?



## DAY 2

Read Genesis 45:24-46:34

- 1) Generally describe how it came to be that Israel (Jacob) came and settled in Egypt?
- 2) Describe Israel's demeanor, attitude, commitment when he left his home? See verses 46:1-7
- 3) How many were numbered in the house of Jacob when they arrived in Egypt?
- 4) How did Israel and Joseph greet each other?

## DAY 3

Read Genesis 48

- 1) Who were Joseph's sons that were born in Egypt before Israel arrived.
- 2) Where was Rachel buried?
- 3) Describe the scene where Israel blesses Joseph's sons? Why did this upset Joseph?
- 4) What blessing did Israel give to Joseph's sons?

## DAY 4

Read Genesis 49:28-33 and Genesis 50

- 1) Where was Israel buried and why is this important?

- 2) In chapter 49, Israel provides prophecy regarding his sons, then passed away. What was Joseph's reaction to his father's death in verses 1-3?
  
- 3) How did Joseph's brothers react to Jacob's death?
  
- 4) We saw how family interactions and weaknesses can be passed down from one generation to the next. In verse, 18 the brothers show an act of humility. Compare this to Jacob's response to visiting Esau.
  
- 5) How can you be more intentional about passing along good things to your loved ones?

## DAY 5

Now that you have studied the life of Jacob

- a. How would you describe Jacob's strengths?
  
- b. How would you describe Jacob's weaknesses?
  
- c. Review the previous lessons, where is the one place where you can actively apply what you learned in this study?
  
- d. How is God calling you to forgive, act humbly in your own family?
  
- e. How would your life be different if you lived in faith, trusting in His promises like Jacob did?

## DAY 6

- 1) How many came out of Egypt when God rescued His people Israel? See Exodus 12:37
- 2) What do you learn about God and His sovereignty through this study?