

JACOB'S STORY: FROM DECEIVER TO PATRIARCH Genesis 25-46



The purpose of this study is to show God's love, patience, and promise keeping. It demonstrates how God can make a mercurial character such as Jacob into a patriarch, a man who played a leading role in the story of God's chosen people. God not only changed his name but gave him the opportunity to change his ways. It is a story that gives each one of us hope. Not one of us, whatever we have done wrong in our past, is beyond the grace and forgiveness of God.

WEEK FOUR - FACING UP TO THE PAST

Read: Genesis 31:13 to end, 32:1-21

Jacob, having told his two wives of the dream where the angel of the Lord came and spoke to him about the streaked, speckled, and spotted males mating with the females of his flock and all Laban had done to him. Then he told them of God's instruction:

Genesis 31:13 "I am the God you met at Bethel, the place where you anointed the pillar of stone and made a vow to serve me. Now leave this country and return to the land you came from."

God always keeps his promises, but Jacob needed to be reminded of the vow, a solemn promise to do a specified thing, that he had made.

- Before we ever make a promise or vow to God, we must think very carefully about what we are doing. *Ecclesiastes 5:4-5: "So when you make a promise to God, don't delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools. Keep all the promises you make to him. It is better to say nothing than to promise something that you don't follow through on."*
- It was about twenty years since Jacob made that vow, but God reminds him of it and then instructs Jacob to return to his own land. What thoughts might he have had about that?
- His two wives were very pragmatic about the whole situation. *Read verses 15-16.* It then goes on to say that Jacob put his wives and children on camels and

drove all the livestock he had acquired in front of him and set out to return home.

When we read the account of their departure and Laban's pursuit of them, we have yet again an example of deceit regarding Rachel and the household gods ([verses 24-43](#)). Having agreed to a peace treaty, Jacob took a stone and set it up as a monument, then told his men to gather more stones and pile them up in a heap. According to [verses 47-48](#), they named it *Witness Pile* and agreed that the pile of stones would stand as a witness to remind them of the agreement.

- Why do you think they used stones as witness? Can you think of elsewhere in the Bible when this happened?
- I find [verse 50](#) very interesting when Laban says to Jacob: "*I won't know about it if you are harsh to my daughters or if you take other wives, but God will see it.*" Do we always consider that God will see and hear all we do?

It is hard to imagine how Jacob must have been feeling as he set off, knowing that a crucial meeting would have to take place. After twenty years he had no idea of Esau's feelings towards him.

- Have you ever had occasion to face up to things in your past? How difficult was this to do?

[Genesis 32:1-21](#)

This is a very different Jacob from the one who deceived his brother. His experiences with Laban must have brought home the deceit Jacob carried out against Esau.

- Do we allow our experiences of the past to shape our present?
- How did Jacob try and open a dialogue with Esau? Was this the right approach? What impression might this have given?
- Why was he so afraid when he heard what the messengers had to say?
- Of what does Jacob remind God in [verse 9-12](#)?
- Do we ever think of reminding God of his promises made in scripture? Why might this be a good thing to do?

Look at the following Bible verses that encourage us to remember what God has done for us:

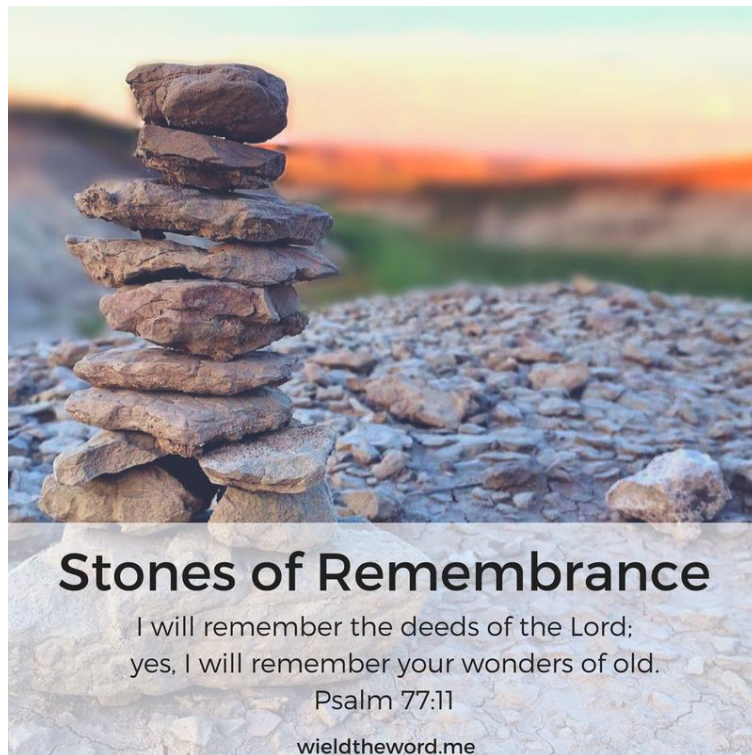
[Psalm 103:2](#), [Romans 5:8](#), [Ephesians 2:12-13](#), [Psalm 143:10](#), [John 14:26](#)

We need, figuratively, to set up our memorial stones: read [Joshua 4:1-7 and 21-24](#).

It is so encouraging to know that God not only forgives our past, but completely blots it out of his memory (Psalm 103).

- Do we find it easy to forgive others?
- What does the Lord's Prayer say about this?

Jacob knew for sure that God had forgiven him but had no such confidence that Esau had, or would, do the same.



Prayer

Father God, help us at all times to remember all that you have done for us and to always give you thanks. Amen