

Explore the Bible: Home

December 19, 2018

- *Explore the Bible lesson for Dec. 30 focuses on Genesis 31:2-16.*

There are times when believers are disobedient to God's will. We think we have adequate time to respond to his command. Nevertheless, the truth of the matter is when God speaks, we must obey. Obeying God means to allow him to guide us through his word, by the Holy Spirit and by various other means he chooses. Obeying God also means to trust in his promises.

We may not understand all he is saying or asking, we just have to believe in his word when he speaks. This may be the time God leads us around danger. Or perhaps, he may lead us to a tremendous blessing. "As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, 'Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.' He replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it'" (Luke 11:28).

Obedience Required (Genesis 31:2-3)

Jacob became wealthy with cattle, wives, other animals, children and material possessions in Padan-aram. The blessings did not come because of Jacob's efforts or because he was Laban's son-in-law, but rather because God chose to bless him in the land. Although life was prosperous for Jacob, he could not remain there.

In order to lead Jacob to conclude that things were not the same, God caused a series of events to happen beginning with Laban's sons spreading stories about Jacob stealing their father's wealth. Because of this, Laban became jealous and indifferent toward Jacob (Genesis 31:1-2). Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you" (Genesis 31:3).

What a blessing it is when we come to realize that God knows what is best for us. After struggling and toiling through life's challenges, the voice of God is such a rewarding relief to our souls. He promises to lead us to greener pastures and promises to be with us. Let us be thankful to him because he always keeps his promises.

Were there times when you did not obey the voice of God? What were the consequences of your decision? What steps did you take to ensure obedience toward God?

Obedience Declared (Genesis 31:4-13)

Jacob is going home. But there was one problem—secretly getting away from Laban. This certainly would not be a daunting task for Jacob because he had one more trick up his sleeve. This is the same Jacob who tricked Isaac and Esau.

Putting the plan in motion, Jacob gathered his wives together to share the message he received from God as well as to argue his case against Laban, proving him to be indifferent and unfair (Genesis 31:4-9). Somehow Jacob had forgotten about the many times he deceived others. However, Jacob knew it was God who prospered him and his family, and it was God who directed him to return home. Jacob had no other choice but to obey the voice of God.

God is full of grace and mercy toward his children. He looks beyond our faults and sin and intervenes when we need him the most. God spoke to Jeremiah during a critical moment, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11). God's plan is in full motion to return Jacob to the promised land and to bless his family. In addition, God has a plan in motion for the believer who honors and obey him.

Obedience Affirmed (Genesis 31:14-16)

Rachel and Leah were well aware of the tricks used by their father. For 20 years, Rachel, Leah and Jacob were caught up in a web of tricks by Laban. The sisters, at one time, were in constant conflict. Although, Leah bore Jacob six sons and one daughter, she longed for Jacob to love her as much as he loved Rachel, who was barren. Eventually, Rachel's womb was opened, but the bickering and jealousy continued until both came together to support Jacob's decision to follow God and return to his homeland.

God is faithful to keep his promises. Believers must continue to mature in their faith, knowing that the same God who blessed them in the past will blessed them today and in the future. "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

Families may enter into periods of bickering and become indifferent toward each other. In what ways can we begin to help reconcile family members?

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