

# Explore the Bible: Not Alone

November 19, 2018

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Dec. 9 focuses on Genesis 27:41-28:22.*

Jacob's quick decision to flee to Haran was made because of the danger he faced in his current situation. Jacob's brother, Esau, vowed to kill him after their father's death because of the stolen birthright. Therefore, Jacob had no choice but to flee for his life (Genesis 27:41, 42).

The experience of leaving his mother and father and not knowing whether he would see them again had to be devastating and painful. Although done in a deceitful gesture, Rebekah once again came up with a remarkable scheme for Jacob's escape. She convinced Isaac to direct Jacob to travel to Haran and take a wife from his Uncle Laban's household. However, God was working out his covenant plan for generations to come.

## Purpose Revealed (Genesis 28:10-15)

Jacob's decision to rest at a certain point became a place of hope as God confirmed his covenant promise to him in a dream (Genesis 28:12-15). God used dreams to communicate to his covenant people. For example, Abram had a dream about the dark time in which his descendants would live in Egypt as slaves (Genesis 15: 12-21).

Throughout the Bible, there are numerous accounts of God revealing himself to his people through dreams, "For God does speak—now one way, now another—though no one perceives it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they slumber in their beds" (Job 33:14-15).

God may choose to communicate through dreams today. However, the most common way God speaks is through his word. Henry Blackaby, author of *Experiencing God*, reminds us: "The Bible is God-centered. Never forget that every time you open the Scriptures, you're face-to-face with the Author." God's word serves as the test for all truth.

Jacob's encounter with God was symbolic of how God encounters his people through Jesus Christ. Be assured that God will fulfill his promises. God promised Rebekah he would make Jacob stronger than his brother and that Esau would serve him. Jacob's dream was a reminder of the promises of God.

*Think about at least two dreams that you believe God inspired. Were the dreams promises of God? Were they warnings from God?*

## Presence Realized (Genesis 28:16-19)

One can only imagine how awestruck Jacob must have been when he woke from his dream. Surely, the presence of the Lord was in this place, and Jacob did not know it (Genesis 28:16). When the unexpected happens, mainly from Almighty God, then the response is to worship him. Obviously, Jacob prepared a place of worship by placing a stone to mark his encounter with God. Preparing for worship, he poured olive oil on the stone to consecrate it and named the place Bethel, meaning "house of God." Jacob left his father's house to inherit a house from God. In this place, Jacob knew his life would be changed forever.

God's grace flows from generation to generation. Believers can be assured that God will keep his promises and continue to supply grace in our lives to accomplish his will. He invites his people to a place of worship. Believers have the privilege to come into God' presence today because of the saving grace of his Son, Jesus.

*What is your response to God when he unexpectedly comes? Has there been a time when God revealed himself to you and you did not recognize him?*

## **Commitment Made (Genesis 28:20-22)**

How grateful Jacob must have been to encounter the presence of God. He responded to God's visit by promising that the Lord shall be his God, the stone will be God's house, and a tenth of his possessions will be given back to God (Genesis 28:20-22). This three-fold vow Jacob made was not just for himself, but for his future household as well. John Phillips in *Exploring Genesis* writes: "Zacchaeus was not saved because he gave; he gave because he was saved. The same was true of Jacob. Jacob would never forget God's place, and he would never forget God's portion" (Luke 19:1-10). After his encounter with God, Jacob's faith and hope was renewed.

## **Reflection**

God may speak in ways that are hard to understand. When God speaks, we must make adjustments in order to follow him. Our lives will change for the better when we obey his voice. Let us vow to make the Lord our God. Let us vow to place markers when we encounter God's presence. Finally, let us vow to give to the work of God's kingdom accordingly.

*As a result of the lesson regarding Jacob's worship experience, what decisions can we make to commit or recommit to God?*

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