

Bless Me Too, My Father



By John Louis

*Bless Me Too,
My Father!*

Genesis 24-36

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Bless Me Too, My Father! Genesis 24-36 by John & Karen Louis
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This workbook is the result of seeing many people journey to far away places in order to get “the blessing”. As church leaders and counsellors, we are struck by the lengths people go physically, spiritually and emotionally in order to satisfy their thirst for “the blessing”. In our own lives, we have also seen this to be the case. Thank God we found “the blessing” in Him and in the church. Thank God we were able to receive His blessing in ways that the world would never have been able to provide. The story of Jacob and Esau, though it took place millennia ago, resonates with us today in the church because it is a story about us. It is a story about a family filled with individuals who, on the one hand, love each other, but on the other hand are tripped up by envy, rivalry, deception, trickery and favoritism. We are grateful for this poignant story from God’s word. Our insights deepened as we read the books, *The Blessing* by Gary Smalley and John Trent (1996) and *Jacob’s Blessing* by Kevin and Louise Perrotta (2003), and for those books we also express our gratitude.

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We would like to dedicate this book firstly to our children, Sonia and David, whose lives have taught us how important it is to bless them with love constantly. To see them grow in the Lord is a much-treasured blessing.

We also dedicate this workbook to all who were not able to find adequate blessings from their homes, but have turned to Jesus, and who have been enriched as a result. May God the Father, through Jesus and His body, the church, along with the indwelling Holy Spirit, continue to bless you as you bless others whom He has put in your life.

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DAY 1 – UNDERSTANDING THE BLESSING

Throughout Scriptures man has always sought after some kind of blessing from God. While God longs to bless each of us spiritually (Jeremiah 29:11-13), He often works through others to help us feel His blessing. Nowhere in the Bible is this more physically evident than in the book of Genesis, which chronicles, among other things, how the patriarchs blessed their children. In the Hebrew language, the word “to bless” means “to bow the knee”. This makes sense visually, since when someone was being blessed, they often knelt in respect. However, the personal blessings given in Genesis meant more than just a physical bending of the knee – they also carried the weight of bestowing a great honor, of recognition and value. In biblical times, receiving a blessing was arguably one of the most special points in a person’s life. In most cases, the blessing was mandated by God and was prophetic—in other words, when a patriarch uttered a blessing about his son, it would come true!

These special blessings encouraged the children who received them and made them feel valued and accepted. They also conveyed protection from God and assurance that their future would turn out well (in most cases). Since this was evidently a part of their culture, the children growing up in that region would have naturally looked forward to this deciding point of their lives with great anticipation, hoping to hear positive, heart-felt words from their parents. Conversely, missing out on getting the blessing would have certainly led to confusion and hurt, and possibly to anger, resentment, bitterness, avoidance and many other unhealthy attributes.

Take Esau as an example – upon realizing that he had been outwitted from inheriting the specific blessing of the firstborn, he wept aloud:

³⁴When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me—me

too, my father!" ³⁵But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." (Gen 27:34-35)

He pleaded and asked his father to bless him as well. Later Esau continued a highly emotionally charged dialogue with his father:

³⁸Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!" Then Esau wept aloud. (Gen 27: 38)

Esau was desperate to be blessed. He pleaded and begged with tears for his father to also bless him, but to no avail. The words from Esau, "Bless me too, my father" must have haunted Isaac for the rest of his life. Esau wanted the blessing, but his father could not deliver it. Esau had not lost something physical, or even theological, but rather, something very emotional and personal. And it was from his dad. This left a deep emotional wound on him. As a result, Esau held a grudge for many years after this incident. He left home, and the journey took him to far away places—spiritually, emotionally and physically. Jacob was not much different. He resorted to his cunning ways because he wanted the blessing due to his older brother, but after receiving it by trickery, he still felt empty. Both were seekers of the blessing, and in a real way, both did not receive the blessings they so desired in the measure that they wanted.

This is no less true today. We are all seekers of the blessing. We all wish to be affirmed by our parents. In the words of Esau, we are also crying out, "Bless me too, my father." When we do not feel that we have their blessing, we go to "another source" to try to meet that need and fill that void. For some of us, it is at work, for some, academics, for others, we want approval from our peers. Some of us spend our entire lives searching for a way to receive "the blessing" that we missed out on earlier.¹

Others resort to more destructive ways to fill the void created as a result of not having a blessing: addiction, workaholicism, obsession with sports, acquiring possessions, and the list is

endless. Usually the consequences of going to the wrong places for the blessing are worse than the lack of blessing itself! (Of course, sometimes we try to fill ourselves up with the world just because we are worldly, like the second son in the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, but that is for another devotional!)

In other words, adequately receiving “the blessing” from our parents has a direct effect on the way we turn out as adults. The sad fact is that only a minority of people grow up being blessed adequately. (Over many years of research, Drs. Virginia Satir and V.J. Felitti found that only 5-20% of the population receive a healthy amount of guidance, love and nurturing.²

How do you know if you have “the blessing”? In the last 50 years, experts in the field of human development and psychology have postulated that all human beings need to have certain basic emotional and physical needs met, called “core needs”. When these core needs are not met, there is an increased possibility of causing harm to self and to others. We believe that we feel “the blessing” to the extent that these basic emotional and physical needs have been met in our lives. Our teaching on parenting, called “Good-Enough Parenting,” is all about helping parents be able to maximize their children’s chances of being healthy, spiritual adults by helping them to meet their children’s core needs, i.e., to give their children “the blessing.”

DAY 2 – CORE NEEDS

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. (Col 3:21)

Drawing from the work of experts such as Young and Klosko, Whitfield, Winnicott, and others, we would like to put forward the following as core needs:

1. *Basic Safety*
2. *Guidance & Protection*
3. *Stable Base & Predictability*
4. *Reasonable Limits*
5. *Love, Nurturing & Attention*
6. *Empathy & Validation of Feelings*
7. *Acceptance & Praise*
8. *Spirituality*

“Basic Safety” and “Guidance & Protection” – See Proverbs 1:8; I Corinthians 13:7

As parents we are legally responsible for our children. We should protect them and provide a safe environment. We must also be there for our children with guidance and direction. Cloud and Townsend, authors of the well-known series of books *Boundaries*, write that as our children’s guardians, we should protect them from danger:

- Dangers within themselves
- Dangers in the outside world
- Inappropriate freedoms they are not ready to handle
- “Never appropriate” or “evil” actions
- The regressive tendency to avoid growing up.³

“Stable Base & Predictability” and “Reasonable Limits” – See Proverbs 3:12; Galatians 6:1-5

When children live in a home that is stable, and when reasonable limits are taught by, lived by and expected from the parents, the children will feel secure. Children need more from us than just food, clothing, shelter and basic safety—they need limits, they need consistency and they need good role models. If children know the rules, and if they are treated fairly on a consistent basis, the world begins to make sense to them, and they learn how to operate in the world.⁴ They will learn to be self-disciplined and respectful (eventually!) As parents, we set the tone of the home, and we should provide the stability and limits that our kids need.

“Love, Nurturing & Attention” – See Psalm 103:13; Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:4-5

Our greatest need is to feel loved and accepted. People who do not feel loved and accepted by their parents have a very hard time ever loving and accepting themselves, and as such, develop many lifetraps. Self-esteem, as it is commonly called, is crucial for our development as healthy adults. Some of our self-esteem is inborn, based on our temperament, but most of it is developed by the messages we get from others, especially our parents. As parents, it is crucial that we meet this core need.

“Empathy & Validation of Feelings” – See Proverbs 18:13; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Our children need to feel that we understand them and appreciate how they feel, even if we do not agree with them. In so doing, we will meet the need of empathy and validation of feelings. Empathy is often characterized as the ability to "put oneself into another's shoes", or to in some way experience the outlook or emotions of another being within oneself, a sort of emotional resonance. Empathy might also be recognized as "reading" another person, and making them feel that you completely understand them (regardless of whether or not you agree with their actions and viewpoint.)

Validation of feelings is related to helpful listening. Parents accidentally invalidate their children's feelings by responding to children's emotions with common communication spoilers. To understand this better, picture yourself feeling emotional or upset. Imagine if you ran into an old friend and blurted out to him/her all the frustrations of your day. Imagine how you would feel if the friend replied by denying your feelings, or by giving you a nice philosophical response, or by immediately giving you advice, or by questioning your motives, or by taking sides against you, or by showing you pity!⁵

When we feel emotionally charged, we are usually not in the mood to hear all sorts of so-called "advice", or to be "challenged". Most of us prefer to have friends who listen without judging, are willing to be there while we sort ourselves out, are ready to give an opinion when we want to bounce something off them, and to give advice when we ask for it. (True friends also speak the truth in love at times, even when we don't want to hear it, but that is another subject!) In the same way, our children need us to listen to them without feeling condemned. We will still need to set boundaries and use discipline and consequences, but the medicine will go down easier if it is combined with understanding and empathy.

"Acceptance & Praise" – See Romans 15:7; Proverbs 25:11

Many children develop lifetraps when they don't feel unconditionally loved by their parents. Accepting our children with all of their strengths and weaknesses will help them to feel unconditionally loved. Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligence helps parents in all cultures to better understand their children's individual strengths and intelligences. According to Gardner, Logical/Mathematical Intelligence is indicative of logical, mathematical and scientific ability. Linguistic Intelligence is the ability to grasp and use language. Musical Intelligence is the ability to understand/comprehend and/or produce music. Spatial Intelligence is the ability to form a mental model of a spatial world and be able to maneuver and operate using that

model. Kinesthetic Intelligence is the ability to solve problems or fashion products using one's whole body or parts of the body. Naturalistic Intelligence is the ability to recognize, categorize and draw upon certain features of the environment. Interpersonal Intelligence is the ability to understand people: what motivates them, how they work, how to work cooperatively with them. Intrapersonal Intelligence is the ability to form an accurate assessment of how one is feeling, to know oneself, and to use that knowledge to operate effectively in life.⁶

"Spirituality" – See Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 1 Samuel 16:1-7

Children are born with a heart for God. However, if we are not careful, different events or conversations can corrupt our children's concept of God. Part of the way we meet the core need of Spirituality in our children is to help shape their worldview, their core beliefs, their belief system, their heart.

We want to influence:

- The way they view God
- The way they view themselves
- The way they view right and wrong
- The way they view others
- The way they view conflict in relationships, as well as forgiveness

This is not a finite list, but it is a good starting place.

Practical suggestions:

- Family Devotionals
- Family Dinners/Highs and Lows
- Meaningful talks during vacations
- Weekly dates
- Teach how to have Quiet Times
- Nature walks to talk about God and creation
- Daily listening to their feelings
- Explain "why" when possible
- Watch your conversation
- Be aware of media
- Encourage your children to spend time with other children from church to build up good solid friendships at a young age before secondary school

- Encourage your children to spend time with spiritual adults whom you trust.

We believe that for our children to receive “the blessing,” the above needs must be met in a balanced way; it is not helpful to give an overabundance of attention to one need while neglecting another. (Jesus is the God of Grace *and* Truth, right?) We believe that children were created by God in such a way that all of the above needs must be met adequately, else as they move into adulthood, they will seek other means ways to meet these needs. So, we repeat, getting the blessing means having a sufficient amount of all the above needs met.

What happens when these core needs are *not* met? When a child’s core needs are not met, combined with his/her temperament and environment, we develop unhealthy coping methods and “lifetraps”, also known as “schemas”. Dr. Jeffrey Young’s research into negative thinking patterns, called “Schema Therapy”, will shed more light on this interesting topic.⁷

DAY 3 – LIFETRAPS

The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out. (Proverbs 20:5)

Even after being Christians for years, we are sometimes at a loss as to why we behave the way we do. Learning about lifetraps helps us to understand the habitual and harmful thinking patterns that trigger negative cycles in our relationships. Choosing to grow in awareness about our lifetraps will free us to explore new ways of thinking and behaving, and help us to empathize with others.

We know this is easier said than done. Obviously, breaking negative behavioural patterns is something that we all should work towards. However, is it as simple as just “stopping the bad behaviour?” Doesn’t the negative behaviour raise its head over and over again in different situations? Just when we think we have conquered it in one area, it shows up somewhere else. Remember Paul’s teaching in Romans 7:15-20 when the apostle bemoaned man’s confusing behaviour:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

The solution: *Get to the root.* In other words, we must figure out how to get rid of the negative thoughts and beliefs that bring about the negative behaviour. If we focus only on the behaviour, we may just be treating the symptoms. Getting to the root will produce long-lasting change.

We all develop certain thinking patterns during our childhood. For example, the first born child in a family where the breadwinner is struggling to make ends meet might develop a greater sense of responsibility than the last born in a family of four with an upper middle class income. In the same way, a child who has been brought up in a neighbourhood which values athletic achievement might develop differently if he suddenly moves to a place which values academics.

Unfortunately, influences on a child are not always so benign. A child who is sexually molested by a relative might think that he cannot trust *any* authority figure. A child who is bullied at school might begin to think she is unlovable. A child who is berated by his parents might begin to think he is worthless or that she will never measure up. These negative thinking patterns, made up of negative emotions and memories, are called *lifetraps*, or “schemas”.⁸

A lifetraps is a complex combination of emotions, negative thinking and memories,⁹ which combine together to form core beliefs we have about ourselves, and the world around us. These beliefs are distorted. The stronger our lifetraps are, the more distorted our view is. We all develop lifetraps in childhood; how many and how harmful will increase to the extent that our core needs were not met, combined with our inborn temperaments. Perhaps we tried gaining attention or love from our caregivers. Perhaps our number one goal was to avoid punishment or being shamed. Perhaps we had an early sexual experience. Perhaps we were held to a very high standard. If we were abused, abandoned, shamed, or deprived of love by our parents, siblings, and/or peers, we certainly will have developed some corresponding lifetraps.

As children, we were not able to look at our parents (or others in authority) and think, “Oh, they had a rotten childhood, so I am sure they don’t really mean what they say.” We could not help but take their words (or lack of words) personally. We internalized their messages, so much so that those messages became part of our makeup. We formed views about ourselves and others, and we acted on

them. We heard a voice in our head, though there was little or no truth in it, that said:

- “If they really knew me, they would know that I am worthless.”
- “People cannot be trusted.”
- “Something bad is bound to happen.”
- “I just can’t get close to other people.”
- “Dad was right – I’ll never amount to anything.”
- “Showing emotions is weak.”
- “I should be punished.”
- “People I love will eventually leave me.”

This voice stayed with us. For many of us, this voice is now so strong that it has power over our behaviour and decision making process.

The more we counsel people, the more we have come to realize the power of our childhood. Both of us have seen the immense correlation between early experiences and current unhealthy behaviour and thinking. For some of us, our lifetraps are so prevalent and strong that they become a roadblock to us becoming healthier adults. They also become a barrier in our relationships with others.

We do not believe that this means we should blame our parents for our problems as adults. For one thing, in some cases, the harm wasn’t caused by our parents anyway, but by others, such as teachers, siblings, neighbours, classmates, etc. However, in the situations where our parents did hurt us either by their actions or lack of action, for *most* parents, the harm that they caused was unintentional and it was largely based on ignorance.

When harm is done to children, the children are not at fault. They have little or no choice. However, in order to become healthy emotionally, adults must accept personal responsibility for themselves. Coming to terms with our lifetraps is a combination of acceptance and resolve. Acceptance helps us to understand ourselves and give ourselves (and others) grace. Resolve says, “Just because I have a certain makeup as a result of my childhood does not

mean that I am not able to break away from it.” We believe that people can change. We believe in breaking unhealthy cycles but we accept that no matter how much we change, our childhood will always be a part of us. Appreciating and understanding that will help us make progress in our growth.

People get so tangled up in their lifetraps that they end up sending messages that are completely counter-productive. Their lifetraps cause them to misinterpret what their friends, co-workers, spouse, etc., says, and then they end up in an argument, which either escalates into hurtful words or bitter isolation. Eventually needs are not met and the relationship drifts apart.

Why are lifetraps so strong? One possible answer is that we get drawn more to what is *familiar* rather than to what is *healthy*. Because we have had these lifetraps since childhood, they, in a strange way, make us feel at home and we become familiar with our lifetraps.¹⁰ There is some kind of predictability and comfort that gets generated when we are with the familiar old self. Of course, logically, changing into something healthier is better, but change is unfamiliar and frightening. The pull towards the familiar, though destructive, is more powerful than the pull towards the healthy. That is why we end up imitating what is unhealthy from our parents and the dysfunction gets passed down. (Gary Solomon, founder of Cinematherapy, says, “Dysfunction is the gift that keeps on giving.”)¹¹

Part of the dysfunction is the lifetraps. The other part of the dysfunction is the way we have learned to cope when these lifetraps get triggered. We have developed ways of coping with our lifetraps all through our childhood and brought those coping styles into our adult life. The good news is that, as adults, we are able to identify unhealthy behaviour. Once we grow in our awareness, we will be able to change. Before we take a look at each of the 18 lifetraps, we will turn our attention to our coping styles – the way we react when one of our lifetraps gets triggered.

DAY 4 – COPING STYLES

When our core needs are not met, we get hurt and we subconsciously develop a way to cope with the pain of the unmet need. These coping styles may lessen the pain to an extent, but they never truly meet the emotional need. There are three ways we cope with our lifetraps when our lifetraps are triggered. We become:¹²

Surrendered (Fright)

Avoidant (Flight)

Counterattacking (Fight)

Sometimes we accidentally imitate these coping styles from our parents. Others of us go in the opposite direction and develop a different coping style. Usually our temperaments push us toward a certain style. Eighty years ago, Walter Cannon first identified fight and flight as common responses to stress; combined with fright, these correlate to the three coping styles.¹³

Surrendered (Fright)

The surrendered coping style is based on **fright** of what we believe is the truth the lifetraps tell about us. We react from a negative and fearful place where the lifetraps are in control of what happens to us.

The message of this coping style is, “What my lifetraps are telling me about myself is true. I am powerless to change this painful truth about myself.”

People with the surrendered coping style believe in their own distorted view of themselves. They also believe in the distorted view that others have of them. They then act in ways to confirm this distorted view. If the husband says something rude, for example, that the wife is dumb or stupid, the wife agrees with him in her heart – she really believes that she is dumb and stupid. People with this coping style have a low opinion of themselves. They tend to blame themselves, comply and give in when something goes wrong

in a relationship. The voice in their heads says, "It is my fault." Surrendered types tend to:

- Feel inferior to others
- Think others are better
- Accept all criticism
- Expect people to be critical
- Look for events to confirm that "it is their fault"
- Put the needs of others before their own.

Examples of surrendered behaviour:

- Giving in to others during arguments
- Apologizing first in every conflict
- Compliantly keeping rules
- Being drawn to others who are more confident.

Avoidant (Flight)

The avoidant coping style is based in a **flight** from what we believe is the truth the lifetraps holds about us. We react by avoiding situations and interactions that cause us to think or feel what the lifetraps says about us.

The message of this coping style is, "It is too painful and uncomfortable to hear or feel the message of my lifetraps. I must keep myself separate and distracted so I am not aware of this painful truth about myself."

When their needs are not met or when their lifetraps get triggered, people with this coping style will move away from the disappointment and pain. They sometimes feel powerless. They bypass situations that could be painful and trigger their lifetraps. They delay thinking about the situation. They circumvent conflict and intimacy by distracting themselves. Avoiders are prone to addiction, and often try to forget the pain by drinking excessively, taking drugs, being involved in promiscuous sex, overeating, or other self-destructive behaviour. Some will not go to such extremes, choosing instead to immerse themselves in work or in a hobby. They usually do not want to talk about their issues and will come up with excuses. The voice in their head is "I don't like

conflict, pain, or intimacy.” They usually are not able to remember much from the past. They draw a blank when the past is questioned or explored because they move towards avoiding the pain of the past. It hurts too much to remember.

Avoidant types tend to:

- Be out of touch with their own feelings
- Dampen their feelings with substances (food, alcohol, drugs) or activities (gambling, sex, workaholism)
- Act like they don’t have a problem
- Avoid intimate relationships
- Walk around numb
- Avoid confronting problems.

Avoidant types often spend an inordinate amount of time engaged in the following activities:

- Talking on the phone
- Reading newspapers and magazines
- Surfing the net
- Repairing things in the house
- Checking email, news, stocks, etc. on the computer
- Monitoring their favourite sport or team
- Running or playing a team sport
- Watching television
- Drinking alcohol
- Perfecting the garden.

People with the avoidant coping style often struggle with being deceitful, and are sometimes uncomfortable with eye contact.

Counterattacking (Fight)

The counterattacking coping style is based in the desire or need to **fight** what we believe is the underlying truth the lifetrap holds about us. We react by acting and behaving in a way designed to create the opposite effect of the lifetrap.

The message of this coping style is, “I must fight as hard as I can to think and act as though what my lifetrap says about me is not true.”

When their lifetraps get triggered, people with this coping style will feel attacked, and they will attack back in order to prove that the negative feeling or lifetraps they have about themselves is not true. So, they will lash out in anger and attack the source that is giving out the negative vibe. If they feel abused, they will abuse others. If they feel put down, they will want to put the other person down.

Often their reaction is not in proportion to the situation. They tend to overreact, be rude and insensitive, and become demanding. Counterattackers tend to:

- View disagreements as a threat, so they go out of their way to prove that others are wrong
- View feedback as a criticism, so they go out of their way to prove that the opposite is true
- Appear strong, but are actually fragile
- Not care who gets hurt in the process of proving themselves to be right
- Isolate themselves and not be intimate
- Prioritize protecting their image over intimacy
- Put their own needs first over the needs of others.

Examples of counterattacking behaviour:

- Constantly bringing up their unhappiness about others' annoying traits while acting as if they themselves are perfect
- Not waiting for a suitable time to talk; wanting it done there and then
- Throwing tantrums and abusing others with name-calling
- Making unhealthy comparison with others during quarrels
- Criticizing and having no qualms about getting involved in long drawn out fights
- Becoming an over-achiever and unusually driven in work or projects.

The good news is that while we may have missed out on having our core needs met or the blessing from our homes, God, through the church, is able to make up the difference.

As members of the body, we are able to provide the blessing for one another, hopefully starting in our nuclear families. Receiving the blessing through God and through the church will end the search for a blessing from the world. God understands that many of us are from “less than desirable” homes – homes that did not provide the blessing – and He has every intention to meet those needs. When we are blessed, we, in turn, will be able to minister to others more effectively. In other words, when we are blessed, we are able to bless others.

It is important to note some differences between the blessing of the Old Testament times and ours today. Firstly, the blessings given by the patriarchs were prophetic, signs of things to come, mandated by God, in a way. Perhaps this was the way that God spoke to them – through their earthly fathers. Today, while we acknowledge that blessings from our parents are very important, they are not “biblical prophecies”. Secondly, while all children were entitled to some form of the blessing, in Old Testament times, the oldest one had a special place among all the siblings. This is supported in Deut 21:15-17, which says that the oldest son’s blessing could not be passed on to his younger siblings. That was presumably done to establish some hierarchy and order in the family, so that the eldest could look after the rest of the family. Peer pressure from the religious community would have helped to ensure that this was carried out. Today, however, most families do not operate that way, and if the eldest child gets the bulk of the property, there is no guarantee he/she will care for his siblings. In addition, we know that showing favoritism to a child is often the cause of dysfunction in families.

“BLESS ME TOO, MY FATHER!”

JOURNAL

(Genesis 24-33, 35-36)

In the pages to follow, we will immerse ourselves in the stories of Isaac, Esau and Jacob, along with their wives and sons, which are described in Genesis 24-36. We will walk through them, reflect on them, ask questions, and see how the lack of blessing played a part in the lives of this early patriarch's family. We will examine their captivating stories. We will see their ups and downs, their sufferings and blessing, their interactions with one another, and learn from their good and bad examples. More than anything else, we will be encouraged to see how real these people were. Though chosen to be patriarch's of God's people, they struggled with real life issues of envy, greed, deception, acceptance, love, fear, and worry, to name a few.

Let us think of this Quiet Time journey as if we were going through a museum: the more time we spend reflecting and asking questions, talking to the tour guide, and enjoying what we are seeing, the more fascinating the experience will be. (Conversely, if we treat this as an assigned field trip that we are only attending because it is “mandatory”, the results yielded will not be nearly as positive or meaningful.) Let us walk through God's museum, with a spirit of openness and togetherness. We surely will be enriched with life lessons that will spur us on to put more trust in our Loving and Almighty God, whose hand is always at work behind the scenes, as we grow closer to Him and experience the blessing. Esau's words, “Bless me too, my father” returned void. However, our heavenly Father knows how to bless us when our souls cry out the same desperate message, and it is to Him that we turn for this blessing.

DAY 5 – PROBLEMS SWEEPED UNDER THE CARPET

Gen 24:1-4, 10-11; 25:1-6, 19-34; 26:34-27:17

Questions for Reflection

1. How long did Isaac and Rebekah wait before they had children? (see Gen 25: 20, 26)
2. What were the strengths and weakness of both Jacob and Esau?
3. Do you struggle in lack of self-control and/or being deceitful, even in small ways at work, or with your small group or with your spouse?
4. How did rivalry between them manifest itself? What could have been done to avoid this?
5. What blessing or core needs was each of them deprived of growing up?
6. What possible lifetraps developed in each of them? (Refer to the list of 18 lifetraps in the Appendix.)
7. What were their predominant coping styles?
8. Was there respect for one another? Would that have made a big difference in that family?
9. Was there a time when you fell out of favor with either one or both of your parents? How did you deal with it growing up? How do you respond to them now as an adult? What lifetraps are associated with your behavior at this point in life that are causing harm in your relationships with other people?

Insights

1. Favoritism Will Deprive Us of the Blessing

Right from the start there were problems between Isaac and Rebekah. There was favoritism - Isaac gravitated towards Esau and Rebekah towards Jacob. Obviously, this did not help the two brothers to get along. There was envy from the beginning on Jacob's part because he was born only minutes apart from his twin brother, but he had to settle for less as the younger sibling as far as the blessing was concerned. This must have bothered him growing up. Several core needs were not met and the environment was ripe for several lifetraps to develop such as defectiveness, entitlement and mistrust and abuse. It made him very suspicious of his father. Esau on the other hand was naïve. Did this unfairness get dealt with? Did Jacob receive any blessing from Isaac? Did Esau receive anything from Rebekah?

As a result of favoritism, each of the sons developed their own rationale, their own "world view". Rebekah was a shrewd woman. If she had shared a decent relationship with Esau, she probably could have influenced him to not marry the Hittite women. She could have balanced out Isaac's influence, who was left alone to influence Esau. Instead, Isaac was the only parent really influencing Esau, and Isaac had a blind spot with his favorite son! Since Isaac was a bit of an unperceptive sort, he wasn't able to see trouble coming before it was too late. So, even though Isaac was godly, he wasn't able to pass his godliness down to his son. Perhaps this lack of perception got passed down to Esau as well, since he only learned that his mom wasn't happy with the Hittite women AFTER he married them. No matter what the exact details, it is obvious that favoritism was not helpful to their family! He have a problem with self control, hence the lifetraps of insufficient self-control and entitlement flared up in him.

Favoritism also blocks effective communication at the heart level. It prevents people from being vulnerable with each other about their feelings when they feel they are disliked or

that they have fallen out of favor. For this patriarch's family, much was lost in the early years. They lost out on what might have been fantastic times together. They could have had so many great memories together as a family. Each of the sons could have turned out much more all- rounded if they had tapped into the strengths of both of their parents. Favoritism breeds jealousy and results in tiffs with our siblings, which in turn create scars and gets carried into our adulthood.

2. Short Term Pleasure, Long Term Price

Notice that on account of food, Esau lost his birthright (Gen 25:29-34). Also, on account of food, Isaac was tricked (Gen 27:19-23). Like father like son. They both had the same inclination. Their lifetraps got in the way of each other's needs being met.

For Esau, he never learned self-control. He struggled with it growing up. He essentially got what he wanted and did what he wanted. Hebrews 12:16-17 says:

See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

Esau was singled out as being godless, and possibly immoral. Perhaps the charge of "immorality" refers to his marriage to two women early on as an adult, in Gen 28:34. In any case, he was definitely godless, and he did not imitate his father, Isaac, who was loyal to Rebekah, nor his grandfather Abraham, who was devoted to Sarah until she died. His lack of self-control surfaced up not just in his appetite for food, but also in his sexual desires. His lack of self-control came at a great price. It cost him the blessing, and he had to settle for less. He listened to his lifetraps of insufficient self-control and entitlement and it cost him a great price.

DAY 6 – IF YOU SAVE YOURSELF, YOU WILL LOSE

Genesis 27:18-45

Questions for Reflection

1. What were each other's real motives? In answering this, reflect on, for example, why Rebekah wanted Jacob to get the blessing, why Jacob went with her plan, why Esau wept bitterly, why Isaac wanted to give the blessing to Esau alone?

Isaac_____

Rebekah_____

Esau_____

Jacob_____

What was Jacob's personal relationship with God at this point like? (Note how he related to God in Gen 27:20). Was he connected to Him in a personal way?

2. What lifetramp was blocking him from being connected to God?
3. What was Esau's blessings like compared to Jacob's? (Compare Gen 27:27-29 and Gen 27:39-40). Did you receive a different "blessing" as compared to your other siblings? How did that make you feel growing up?
4. If you didn't feel blessed by your parents, where did you go to get "the blessing" before you became a Christian?
5. Are you still going to these places/people now as a Christian? Have they been able to bless you adequately?
6. How much of the outcome in Jacob and Esau's lives was God's doing, and how much of this was man's? If

God was involved, could any of them be excused for their sinful ways of being controlled by their lifetraps?

Insights

1. Sibling Rivalry That Was Passed On

Esau descendants were known as Edomites (see map). They were at odds with the Israelites (Jacob's descendents) throughout history, although their forefathers were siblings. This was why, in Deut 23:7, Moses instructed them:

⁷Do not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother

However, for generations this was never taken to heart. During the time of the monarchy, for example, King David conquered them, seen in 2 Sam 8:12-14. Psalm 60:1-12, was written by David, describing this victory. Then later in 2 Kings 14:7, Amaziah, king of Judah, also went to war with them. Eventually the Edomites took revenge and were free. When the Babylonians captured them in 587B.C., the Edomites did not take pity but rather used Israel's misfortune to gain the upper hand. An entire Old Testament book, Obadiah, was about the denunciation of the Edomites for their acts against Israel, seen in Oba 12:

*¹²You should not look down on your brother
in the day of his misfortune,
nor rejoice over the people of Judah
in the day of their destruction,
nor boast so much
in the day of their trouble.*

*¹³You should not march through the gates of my people
in the day of their disaster,
nor look down on them in their calamity
in the day of their disaster,
nor seize their wealth
in the day of their disaster.*

A family like Isaac's that had a lot going for it initially was torn apart by each of the family members being controlled by their lifetraps that made them put their own interests above everyone else. Esau went out in rebellion and married Hittite women, who were a source of grief to both Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 26:35). In Gen 28:8, Esau only later realized that this displeased his parents. It showed very little transfer of values about a very fundamental matter took place between father and son. However, they went hunting, a frequent activity that both Isaac and Esau both shared. Rebekah favored Jacob – perhaps she wanted him to succeed because she could identify with his temperament and recognized that Jacob had inherited her attributes. Perhaps she thought that if Isaac died, and if Jacob inherited the blessing, then it would be easier for her well-being to depend on Jacob than on Esau. Jacob, in turn, was plagued with envy – being the younger son, he was deprived of the special rights set aside for the first born. In the end, core needs were not met in both of them to a large extent and when they became adults the parents reap what they had sown.

2. God's Foreknowledge Does Not Excuse Our Responsibilities

In Rom 9:10-12, God says:

¹⁰Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. ¹¹Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹²not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Here Paul argues that before Esau or Jacob were born, God already purposed for Jacob to inherit the blessing. Does that mean that we are able to excuse Jacob's deceptive actions or Rebekah's, and put it down to God's providence? If this were the case, then all of our sinful actions could also be justified

this way. However, the key to these two seemingly contradictory philosophies lie in that fact that God's foreknowledge of an event does not excuse us from our responsibility. God knows all things, but it does not mean we have no freedom. No doubt it is mystery – God is not bound by time, and he knows what will happen, but we are still responsible for our own actions. In just the same way, we may know very well what our children's decisions may be in a certain situation, but it does not exclude their freedom of choice. We are responsible to weaken our lifetraps and where we go to have our needs met at this time of our lives. We are responsible for our own lives and actions.

DAY 7 – GOD CANNOT BE MOCKED

Genesis 27:46-29:14

Questions for Reflection

1. Compare the advice given to Jacob from Rebekah (Gen 27:43-45) compared to that given by Isaac (Gen 28:1-2). What does this reveal about Isaac's weaknesses and Rebekah's motives? What lifetraps did they themselves possibly have?
2. Rebekah thought that her plan would last for only a "while" (Gen 27:44). Did it turn out that way?
3. Do you take events into your own hands, knowing that your temporary plans are outside the will of God? (Marrying or dating non-Christians, not resolving attitudes biblically, resorting to your own "wisdom").
4. When Jacob eventually saw Laban and told him all the "things" (Gen 29:13), what did he actually disclose? Do you think he mentioned how he and his mother plotted and schemed? What does this show about Jacob?
5. While Jacob was guilty of lying and deceit, he ran into an encounter with God in Bethel, Gen 28:10-22. In looking at the way God dealt with him, what does this reveal about God?
6. Does this remind you of the way God found you? How is it similar?

Insights

1. We Put Up a Front to Hide Our Vulnerability

Isaac seemed completely blinded by Rebekah's schemes. To heighten the urgency to have Jacob leave, she talked about the "legitimate" grief of the Hittite women to whom Esau was married to (Gen 26:35, 27:46). She put up a front and brought up another issue but it was used as a front to hide

her inner feelings of fear. Does Rebekah's relationship with Isaac seem intimate?

Do we sometimes dramatize "legitimate" issues only to use it as a front for something else that we are too ashamed to be vulnerable about? For Rebekah, she acted in haste to have her son leave in order to protect him from Esau, who wanted to kill him (Gen 27:41). She plotted the whole scenario. Perhaps she did all this out of fear since Isaac seemed to be close to death.

Rather than being vulnerable, they put on a mask and their relationships got superficial. Underneath, lifetraps such as mistrust, feelings of defectiveness, entitlement and emotional deprivation grew and flourished and hurt everybody.

2. God Cannot Be Mocked

Given her fears, Rebekah devised a plan to outwit her unperceptive husband, and to an extent, she got away with it. However, Galatians 6:7 reads:

⁷Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

In the long run, they all ran into problems and reaped what they had sowed. Here are some gripping consequences of their deceit and selfishness:

- a. Rebekah thought she would be separated from Jacob for only a while. Little did she know that that would be her last good-bye. For the next twenty years, Jacob was held captive by Laban in exchange for marrying his daughter Rachel. Jacob would have surely missed his mother terribly, but guilt must have also pricked his conscience as he pondered numerous times about what had really gone on. Our sins of selfishness will eventually come back and bite us. God cannot be mocked.
- b. Rebekah's calculations went awry. Isaac who seemed weak and near death, (Gen 27:1-2), ended up living for another twenty years! He was able to see Jacob in his dying days, Gen 35:27-29. Rebekah however, died

earlier on! Her death was not even mentioned in the bible. She died lonely, not close to her husband and having lost both her sons. God cannot be mocked.

- c. Jacob didn't see his brother or his dad for a period of about twenty years. Instead of being with family, he was stuck with Laban. God cannot be mocked.
- d. Instead of seeing the blessing fulfilled in his life, Jacob actually began to struggle, working like a servant for Laban. This seemed different from the blessing that had been bestowed upon him by Isaac. The good life never really came (until much later on in Egypt). Jacob paid the price for his own sins. God cannot be mocked.
- e. Esau's lack of self-control (lifetrap of insufficient self-control) is seen in him giving up his birthright for a single meal. He thought he could rely on his blessing (lifetrap of entitlement), but lost that too. He then married two Hittite woman, who became a source of grief to his parents (Gen 26:35). His lack of self-control in marrying someone that was approved by his parents made his mother despise him even more. This made her gravitate to Jacob even more, and added to her desperation to make a plan work for her favorite son, even it meant outwitting her husband and Esau. However, taking matters into your own hands will come back to haunt you in the end. God cannot be mocked.
- f. Rebekah thought that Esau would forget about his grudge (Gen 27:45) at some point. However, it wasn't until twenty years later that they got reconciled. During that time Jacob carried fear and guilt with him. God cannot be mocked.
- g. Jacob, the cunning con-man, was himself conned by Laban. Just as he had tricked his father in a tent, he himself was tricked in a tent, into marrying Leah instead of Rachel. God cannot be mocked.

3. An Extraordinary Awareness in an Ordinary Encounter

Jacob met God in one ordinary day of his travels. However, that encounter changed his life. He was able to “see” God. Gen 28:16,

¹⁶When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it."

From a third person’s point of view, that scene was simply a man sleeping with a stone pillow in the middle of a deserted area on an ordinary night. However, from Jacob’s point of view, it was an extraordinary day! (The picture of the angels ascending and descending was also mentioned by Jesus in John 1:51 when he spoke to Nathanael.)

Are you able to see God in your everyday life, in ordinary events? Are you aware of him? Think about the exact place you were met, baptized, studied with. Was God working behind the scenes that day? Has He stopped working? Do you take opportunity to get connected with Him regularly? Are you mistrusting of God now because of past events in your childhood or as a young Christian? What lifetrail is keeping you from having a pure heart?

DAY 8 - GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

Genesis 29:15-30:24

Questions for Reflection

1. For Jacob working for seven years seemed like only a few days to him (Gen 29:20). When you do something you love, does it not seem like only a few days? What did you do that seemed like only a few days? (Your dating life, studies, childhood days, hobby)
2. Does the work to bless others (helping others to know God) seem like a burden to you after a few years as a Christian? Could this reflect your level of love for God and His people?
3. The battle *in* the womb when Rebekah was pregnant with Jacob and Esau now turned into the battle *of* the womb (25:22-26, 30:1, 8). Leah has six sons and a daughter. Rachel was envious and allowed that to get the better of her. She became competitive. Then Rachel asked Jacob sleep with one of her maids in order to have children through her servant, Gen 30:4-8. Look at the Hebrew meaning for the names Dan and Naphtali (*he has vindicated* and *my struggle*) – don't they have a competitive edge? Reflect on the lifetrap of defectiveness in Rachel's life at this point.
4. How does Leah react to this? (Gen 30:9-13). Then what measures did Rachel resort to? What properties did mandrakes have? What lifetrap gave raise to this kind of behavior?
5. What do you put your faith in? Medals, promotions, degrees, salary, status?
6. Then God opened Rachel's womb, and "re-opened" Leah's. Was that due to the "medication" or because of

His power? (Gen 30:20-21). God works in mysterious ways.

7. The twelve sons of Jacob became the twelve tribes of Israel (Benjamin was born later and was the twelfth, Gen 35:16-18). So did the nation of Israel come from a dysfunctional family or a functional one?
8. The physical family that you are from, was it functional or a dysfunctional one? If God is able to work mysteriously through the family of Isaac and Jacob, will he be able to work mysteriously through you? What does this say about God and how he selects His people?

Insights

1. Dysfunction is a Gift That Keeps on Giving

Like it was with the two brothers, so it was with the two wives of Jacob, the sisters, Leah and Rachel. Jacob surely had a sense of déjà vu watching his wives both compete with one another. Lifetraps were passed on. He saw his own cunning and tricky nature come back to him like a boomerang. It hit him back in his face, hard. He watched Rachel and Leah fight regularly. We see them being competitive, which roots in the lifetraps of defectiveness, approval seeking and failure. The names of their children even sent a not-too-subtle message to the other. There was constant tension. Jacob was sandwiched between the two of them. However, dysfunction is the gift that keeps on giving. Jacob continued to play favorites like his parents, by loving Rachel much more than Leah. Leah went through her whole life trying to get love from Jacob. Her motive of giving birth to six sons and one daughter was to get the attention of the husband, but to no avail. Rachel did not want to feel defective; in her desperation to not feel defective, she was driven, as seen in Gen 30:1, to utter these words:

¹When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!"

Rather than letting life take its natural course and trusting in God, life became a fierce competition of the wombs till the end. Rachel probably experienced little enjoyment, as much of her life was consumed with proving that she was not defective as a wife by being barren. Jacob's wealth was increasing by leaps and bounds, but on the family front it was a different story. Wealth was not able to bring the peace and acceptance that he surely wanted. If each of them had only been vulnerable, they would have identified each other's wants, which would have then enabled them to make amends. Having a father like Laban, who was selfish to the core, had not helped either. Both Leah and Rachel never got the blessing they desperately needed as daughters. So there was rivalry – first, related to who married Jacob, second, related to having children. This was reflective of Laban's own character, seen in his relationship with Jacob. Dysfunction is the gift that keeps on giving. Lifetraps gets passed on unless there is intervention.

2. God is Working Behind the Scenes

Still, through a family rife with deceit, competitiveness, envy, and greed, God worked through them. Jesus came through the tribe of Judah, born to Leah (Gen 29:35), a wife that Jacob did not even love. Judah was also not the firstborn. He was fourth (Gen 29:35), after Reuben, Simeon and Levi.

Isn't this typical of how God works. Sometimes he meanders and accomplishes his will through the most unlikely people and circumstances. If left to us, we would have predicted that the Messiah would spring up from the firstborn or from Joseph, the one who stood out from the rest. God is the real worker behind the scenes. He can help you overcome your lifetraps.

The nation of Israel eventually came from this dysfunctional family of Jacob and his sons. Can good come out of a

dysfunctional family? Absolutely, because God is the miracle worker behind the scenes, and He works in mysterious ways.

Do you feel defective not being the favored son or daughter? Have you been labeled the “black sheep of the family?” Have you been disgraced and humiliated for not bringing worldly glory to your family? Does the opinion of others control you? Well, here’s some good news - you are now a likely candidate to be used by God. Do you take encouragement from God’s way of working? It is so unlike man’s!

DAY 9 – GOD DISCIPLINES THOSE WHOM HE LOVES

Gen 31:1-7, 38-55; 32:1-21

Questions for Reflection

1. Later on in life, Jacob spoke about God differently, seen in Gen 31:5, 32:9-12. Compare this with his earlier statement in Gen 27:20, some twenty years earlier. How are they different?
2. What happened to Jacob's life that changed his relationship with God? Was it because of the good life that came with the blessing or the discipline from a God who loved him? (Gen 31:38-42).
3. How do you see hardship in your life? Do you see His love or His curse through all this?
4. Given his deceitful streak, how did Jacob work being under Laban for twenty years? Did he carry on being deceitful? Was there any change at the core of his character?
5. In Gen 31:26-30, 48-53, Laban described himself as a reasonable person and a victim of a misunderstanding between him and Jacob. What does this show about his perception of himself? How does a person become like that? What lifetrapped controlled this behavior in him?
6. How did Laban decide to sort the tension between Jacob and himself? (Gen 31:43-55). What does this show about his character?

Insights

1. Its All About Me

Even though Laban learned that he was blessed because of God's working through Jacob, in Gen 30:27, he did not change, nor did he turn to God himself. He was so attached to his idol (Gen 31:31-32). He was overcome with greed. He pursued a "peaceful" relationship with Jacob only to maintain the blessing that would flow into his territory because of Jacob. Even with all this, Laban still tried to cut corners in his dealings with Jacob. All Laban cared about was himself. Three examples of his "It's all about me" attitude: tricking Jacob into working seven years without pay just to marry one of his daughters, tricking Jacob a second time into working another seven years without pay in order to let him marry the daughter of his choice, and finally being completely conniving in order to get Jacob to stay on another six years, 20 years in all. He had little empathy for Jacob. The lifetrapp of entitlement is seen clearly in him. (Perhaps God was working things out so that Jacob got a taste of his own medicine. After all, what better way for Jacob to see the down side of his own character than by seeing first hand what it felt like to be under the rule of a deceitful person with no empathy like Laban.) Bottom line, Laban cared little about other people. His own interests were first and foremost in his mind. Worst of all, he did not even see his own selfishness. People who demonstrate this trait often lose their close relationships eventually because others get tired of being in a one-way relationship with them.

Are you a one-way person with others around you? Do you give as well as receive? Are you so business minded like Laban that God has little appeal for you? Is everything always about you? Is the lifetrapp of entitlement controlling how you are treating others? Ask those in your small group how they perceive you. Ask your spouse and those close to you outside the small group for feedback.

2. Do Not Get Bitter, Get Better

In Gen 31:38-42, Jacob talked about the manner in which God intervened in his life. This stood in contrast with how he had spoken about God some twenty years earlier. Through trickery he got the blessing from Isaac. Jacob may have expected an easy life to follow after stealing the blessing from his brother, but since God is the controller of all blessing, it turned out quite differently from what he had expected. He never saw his mother after the hasty escape from his brother Esau. His life became difficult under Laban. However, through all this, Jacob did not get bitter. Instead, he got better in his relationship with God. God became very personal and real to him. God was intricately involved in his affairs. Be very candid about your lifetrail. Get vulnerable. It is the first step to getting healed.

3. Shallow Reconciliation and Little Empathy Are First Cousins

When Laban saw that God began to bless Jacob and that he was benefiting from that, he was careful to not abort his relationship with Jacob. Being a cunning man and entitled himself, he negotiated a treaty with Jacob. He was so shallow. His approach was simply to “let bygones be bygones”. That was his idea of reconciliation, seen in Gen 31:26-30, 48-53. He was shallow in his relationship with Jacob, but was a shrewd businessman, caring for himself primarily with little empathy for others. People who are not able to be empathetic to others often have a shallow approach to reconciliation with others. Are you known for being shallow with others? Your inability to empathize with others might have something to do with this. These two traits go hand in hand like first cousins.

DAY 10 – MAKE PEACE WITH THE PAST

Genesis 32:22-33:20

Questions for Reflection

1. Why did Jacob insist on a blessing when he met the man of God in Gen 32:26? Why did he want a blessing when he had already obtained it through Isaac some twenty years before?
2. In Gen 33:4, Esau ran to Jacob and wept aloud. How does this compare with his earlier attitude when he found out that Jacob had cheated him of his blessing?
3. What are the essentials for a proper reconciliation, which can be seen in both Esau and Jacob? What lifetraps were dealt with by both of them respectively?
4. How does this reconciliation compare to that between Laban and Jacob?
5. What had happened during the twenty years that Jacob was away which had changed Esau? What do you think that Esau went through to get the blessing that he lost? Is time always the best cure? What happened to weaken their respective lifetraps?
6. Let's look at two statements that Jacob made about seeing God's face, one in 32:30, and another in Gen 33:10. What is the relationship between the two?
7. With whom do YOU need to be reconciled? What is holding you back? Is there anyone helping you? What lifetraps are preventing that from happening?

Insights

1. Wrestle with God, Not Resort to Short Cuts

It is hard to know why Jacob insisted on a blessing from a man of God in Gen 32:22-30. Perhaps all this while he knew that his earlier blessing was obtained through deception and fraud, but that this time he wanted a sincere blessing from God himself, without double-dealing, but through wrestling. The positive of Jacob's character was that he was the kind of man who pursued wholeheartedly what he wanted. This time, what he wanted was godly, and he did not resort to sinful means, or short cuts. Instead, he fought for what he wanted by wrestling with God, the way Jesus wrestled in Gethsemane. In the end, he was blessed, but it came with a limp, perhaps symbolizing that his blessing in life was to come with some trials.

Dealing with painful experiences of childhood, admitting to the needs that were not met takes courage. We have to wrestle with God through this. However, the benefits are great. We will win in the end. God wants us to be victorious but he wants us to fight.

2. Gain Self Awareness and Get Reconciled

Through God's providence, Jacob heard that Esau was coming. The former trickster was prepared to receive Esau's wrath, but instead he was welcomed into his older brother's arms. After twenty years of separation, they finally got united. Those twenty years had done them both a lot of good. They had both gone their separate ways, and graduated from the school of "hard knocks". They both gained some self-awareness. They saw their shortcomings. Jacob made restitution, and Esau accepted it. Esau himself had done well, Gen 33:9. His demeanor with Jacob showed his willingness to forgive. Upon Esau's invitation to live with him at Seir, Jacob did not decline it outwardly, but quietly changed his mind and went to Succoth. Perhaps he knew that living with Esau would not be the best for his family, given Esau's connection with the Hittites through marriage. Still, there was

a deep and wonderful reconciliation at the end. Through all this, the lifetramp of punitiveness did not rise, which was encouraging. This single lifetramp can prevent us from giving grace to people who have hurt us in the past.

God will always work something out for us to come face to face with our past in order to deal with it and to then move on in life more secure, settled and sobered, and more humble. Ironically, Jacob passed his problems down through his twelve sons, showing favoritism with some of them, and causing the cycle to be repeated.

Dysfunction is the gift that keeps on giving...

As a church we need to let others know that God is able to bless them. When their needs are met through His blessing, they will be able to break their unhealthy cycles, and not repeat them. It is through the blessing that we will have the power to break unhealthy lifetraps and bless others.

APPENDIX

DISCONNECTION & REJECTION DOMAIN

1. The Abandonment Lifetrap

The core message of the abandonment lifetrap is, "I cannot count on anyone for **consistent** support, caring, and connection. I will be rejected; people I love and need will die; and people I love and need cannot be relied upon to be there when I need them."

2. The Mistrust Lifetrap

The core message of the mistrust lifetrap is, "I cannot expect others to treat me in a fair, considerate or just manner. I should expect to be hurt (emotionally or even physically), lied to, taken advantage of, and manipulated. Others always have their own agenda."

3. The Emotional Deprivation Lifetrap

The core message of the emotional deprivation lifetrap is, "I cannot expect others to be supportive of me and care about what I need." Emotional deprivation is about insufficient **empathy, nurturing**, and/or not receiving **guidance and direction**.

4. The Defectiveness Lifetrap

The core message of the defectiveness lifetrap is, "I am not good enough. I am inherently flawed. Anyone who truly knows me could not love me."

5. The Social Isolation Lifetrap

The core message of the social isolation lifetrap is, "I am different from other people and do not fit in." The feelings of isolation and being alone stem from feeling apart from any group or community, and too different to belong.

IMPAIRED AUTONOMY & PERFORMANCE DOMAIN

6. The Dependence Lifetrap

The core message of the dependence lifetrap is, "I cannot take care of myself. I need to rely on those around me in order to survive. I cannot solve problems or make decisions on my own."

7. The Vulnerability Lifetrap

The core message of the vulnerability lifetrap is, "Catastrophe is just around the corner. Bad things are about to happen and I am powerless to do anything about it."

8. The Enmeshment Lifetrap

The core message of the enmeshment lifetrap is, "I cannot survive on my own without constant contact and closeness with my parent or partner. I need to know what they think in order to be sure of what I think." This is about an underdeveloped sense of self as a separate person.

9. The Failure Lifetrap

The core message of the failure lifetrap is, "I am fundamentally incompetent and have failed, am failing, and will fail again in the future. I am less talented and successful than other people." The focus of this lifetrap is on achievement and **external** status symbols of success, rather than on the **internal** feeling of shame and inferiority that is present in the case of the defectiveness lifetrap.

IMPAIRED LIMITS DOMAIN

10. The Entitlement Lifetrap

The core message of the entitlement lifetrap is, "I am special and better than other people. Rules should not apply to me. I should always come first." This lifetrap is rooted in a desire to for power and control.

11. The Insufficient Self-Control Lifetrap

The core message of the insufficient self-control lifetrap is, “I should not be uncomfortable.” This lifetrap leads people to express their emotion negatively, avoid difficult tasks, and give in to temptation. This lifetrap interferes with healthy adult behaviour of reciprocity in relationship and setting and achieving goals.

OTHER-DIRECTEDNESS DOMAIN

12. The Subjugation Lifetrap

The core message of the subjugation lifetrap is, “I must submit to the needs and desires of others before my own or I will be rejected by the anger or abandonment of people who are important to me.” The internal slogan is “I’m number two.” Subjugation is about **needs** – not showing preferences, desires, decisions and opinions, or **emotions** – not showing feelings, particularly anger.

13. The Self Sacrifice Lifetrap

The core message of the self-sacrifice lifetrap is, “I must meet the needs of others before my own. I do not want to feel selfish or cause any pain to others.” This pattern of thinking and behaving appears very kind but creates problems in the long run as it results in imbalanced relationships, and problems with unmet needs.

14. The Approval-Seeking Lifetrap

The core message of the approval-seeking lifetrap is, “I must seek the approval of others above all else. If other people do not approve of me, something is very wrong.” This pattern of thinking is about defining who we are through the eyes of others rather than paying attention to our own needs and desires.

OVERVIGILANCE & INHIBITION DOMAIN

15. The Negativity Lifetrap

The core message of the negativity lifetrap is, “I am destined to make a serious mistake that will result in big problems. Things will inevitably go wrong. Bad things will happen to me.” The negative aspects of life are emphasized at the expense of those things which are positive and happy.

16. Emotional Inhibition Lifetrap

The core message of the emotional inhibition lifetrap is, “I should not express myself or show my emotions. I should always be in control.”

17. The Unrelenting Standards Lifetrap

The core message of the unrelenting standards lifetrap is, “I must work very, very hard to meet very high standards or I will be criticized. I do not have time to relax or have too much fun. I must always be efficient.” The driving words for this lifetrap are “**I should ...**”

18. The Punitiveness Lifetrap

The core message of the punitiveness lifetrap is, “Mistakes have consequences – I should be punished for making mistakes and so should everyone else. It is not okay to make a mistake. We should constantly strive for and demand perfection.”

END NOTES

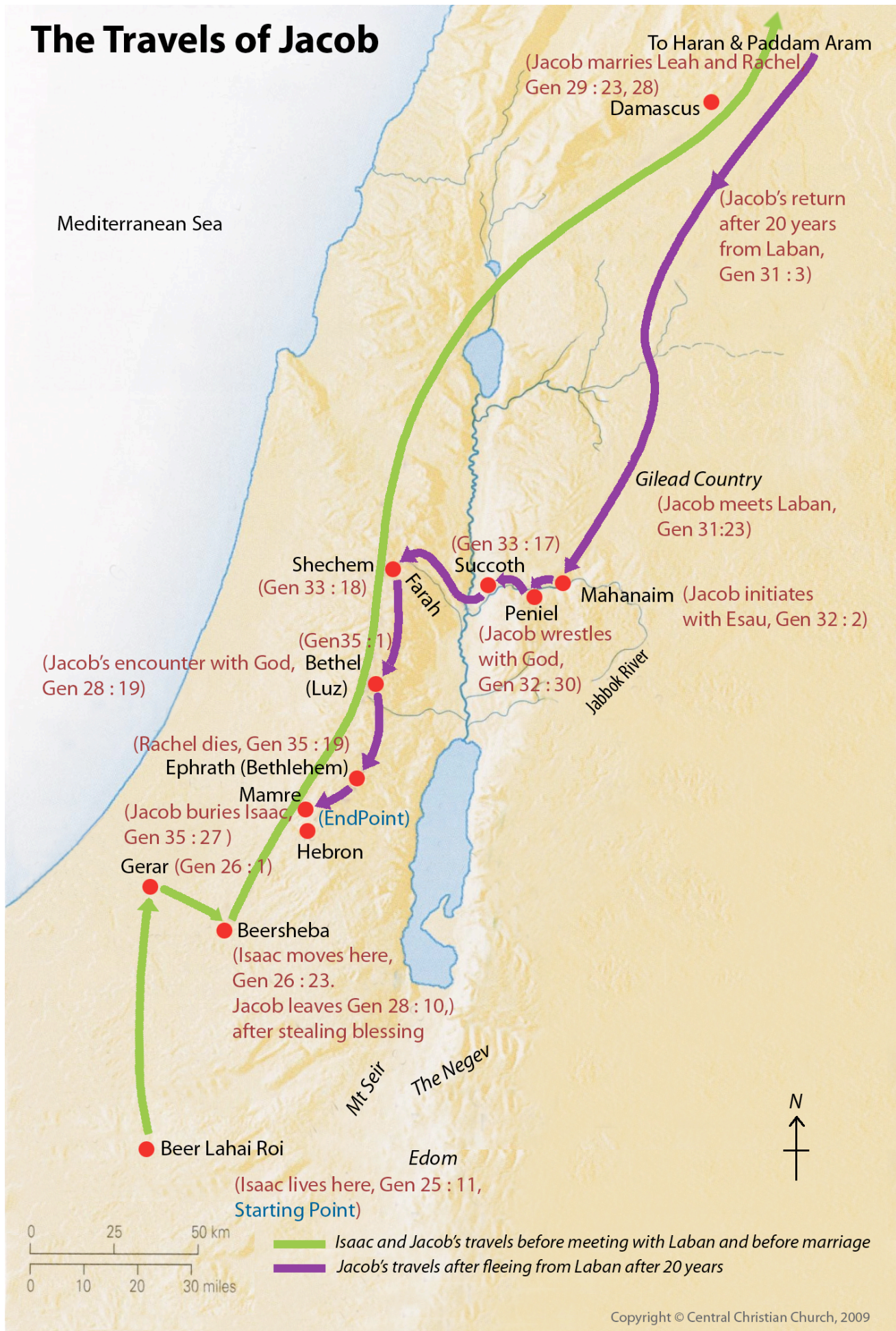
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MAP 1: THE TRAVELS OF JACOB





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