

# Small Groups

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

Encountering God  
Pastor Mike Hayes  
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**Main Idea** – We desperately need an encounter with God.

**Key Verse: Genesis 28: 13 – 19**

And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you." Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.

**Thoughts from a Beatles' concert: looking at a split screen:** (troubling lessons from the concert and the comparison with church audiences)

Concert Attendees	Church Audiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Standing for the full concert</li><li>• Entered in, excited, screaming, clapping and engaged</li><li>• Familiarity of the encounter with the Beatles drew the crowd in; experience drew them in.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of energy, excitement, the emotion for Jesus does not come to the level of a Beatles concert.</li><li>• Some stand, some sit, some clap (most do not); few sing (many say nothing)</li><li>• Many don't enter in during worship, though we accepted Jesus, we don't remember the encounter with God.</li><li>• We acknowledge in an obligatory way</li></ul>

**What we can learn from Jacob's life and encounter with God**

**A. Jacob's background, from where he came:**

- Grandson of Abraham, but made many mistakes.
- Jacob had a basic dishonest DNA. He had many flaws and twists in his character.
- His name means supplanter. He cheated his brother Esau out of his birthright. He was an over-exaggerated salesman.
- He found himself in a most difficult place; a place where things did not work as he wanted.
- Jacob found himself with a rock for a pillow.

## **B. Jacob's encounter with God:**

- Jacob found himself in a troubled sleep, then the heavens opened and Jacob encountered God.

*Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. (Gen 28:12)*

- We need to shift our paradigm about the ministry of angels. Angels are ministering spirits assigned to our lives. They ascend to heaven with our asks and needs and descend from heaven with our answers.

*Hebrews 1: 14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who will inherit salvation?*

- During this encounter, God showed Jacob how the spirit world works. Even when we think we are alone; when we have a rock for a pillow, we are never alone.

## **C. What God revealed to Jacob:**

- He reminded Jacob of who he was, his lineage. In Genesis 28:13 God basically said, “You, Jacob, are the grandson of the father of faith: Abraham. I am not finished with you yet.”
- “All that I have promised you, to the west and the east, to the north and the south will be yours.” (Gen 28:14)
- “I will bless the nations through you; in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Gen 28:14)

### **Three things an encounter with God will do:**

1. It will reveal the depth of your past; from where you came, how you arrived at this moment (who was praying, fasting and prophesying over you, etc.) We must remember that the steps of a righteous man/woman are ordered by God.
2. It will solidify your present.
3. It will assure you about your future.

### **The differences between Jacob's first and second visit to Bethel:**

- The miracle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> visit is God changed not only Jacob's name from Jacob (cheater) to Israel (princely power).
- God reminded Jacob that He planned from the beginning to complete the work He started in him. We see this in God's reference of “I am the God of Abraham and Isaac” (v.13).
- As with Jacob, God is calling you back to the place you first met Him, to do a deep change.

- Clearly, Jacob was ready to change, to go from Jacob to Israel, and from Luz to Bethel.

<b>Bethel – 1<sup>st</sup> visit</b>	<b>Bethel – 2<sup>nd</sup> visit</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jacob left Bethel, but was not changed</li> <li>• Jacob laid out to God, if you will do... then, I will...; he was trying to cut a deal</li> <li>• Jacob built a life that was mess; (Genesis 33, 34)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jacob returned to Bethel, wanting to change</li> <li>• Jacob says to God, “you have to change me”</li> <li>• Before his return, Jacob tells his family to get rid of the idols. His desire was for God to truly change him and his family.</li> </ul>

### **Reflective Questions for Encountering God**

1. Have you ever been in a difficult place? Have you been in a place like Jacob? Are you in that place now, in need of revival?
2. In your Jacob moment, did you ask God “how did I get here?” How did you respond to God’s answer?
3. Does the comparison between a Beatles’ concert and a typical church service resonate in any way with you?
4. Are you, like Jacob on his second visit to Bethel, desperate for an encounter with God? What are you willing to do to have this encounter?