
We Can Do This The Easy Way or The Hard Way

The Story Genesis 28

Sermon Notes

1. We get to choose whether God's blessings will be filled with joy or mixed with sorrow.
2. When you try to rush God, things slow down.
3. The longer you delay surrender, the longer you will wait for God's blessing.
4. You have the ability to make the easy more difficult or the difficult easier.

Life may not be perfect, but it will go better when you trust, surrender, worship, and obey God!

My Story

1. Looking back over your notes, what did you find most helpful, challenging, or interesting in this week's teaching? Was there anything you've never heard before or something that made you think differently?
2. Do you have any family situations or relationships with which others in the family struggle? What is your part in this? How have you navigated it? How has it impacted your life? If it's been negative, are there steps you can take to help it move in a new direction?
3. Do you see how Esau continuing to try to please his parents, but not in a way that would honor God, lead to more and more trouble? If you were advising Esau, what would you suggest?
4. Have you ever negotiated with God like we see Jacob doing here? If He blesses your family, business, marriage, etc., then you'll go to church, serve, worship, and give.

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5. Jacob responds to the call of God in a very human way by negotiating. Others in scripture have responded differently, surrendering instead of negotiating. Read Luke 1:26-38 and Samuel 3:1-18. What can we glean from these examples?
6. Have you ever tried to help God move things along? If so, what happened? Are you tempted to do that now?
7. In your own situation, have you tried to please someone and found that in doing so, you aren't pleasing God?

Digging Deeper

Read through these guiding scriptures and answer the corresponding questions.

Read Genesis 28:12-15.

Thinking of Jacob's dream and what God tells him, what does this tell you about God? Where do you see God's reminder of His faithfulness? What do you think of Jacob's comment in verse 16 that God was in that place and he was unaware? Have you ever had this kind of experience? Do you believe that God is present everywhere (omnipresent) and can speak to you anytime?

Read Acts 7:23-30.

Chris shared part of Moses' story. What stands out about this to you? Ultimately, Moses had to decide who he would trust. Similar to Jacob, who would Moses allow to have control in his life?

Read Proverbs 3:5-7a.

Chris encouraged us to memorize Proverbs 3:5-7a. Have you ever memorized scripture? If so, what helped you? How can you work on this?

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Take these verses apart. Stop after each phrase below and note how you can begin to (or continue to) do what God is telling us to do here, or, what the point God is making, means to you:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart

and lean not on your own understanding;

in all your ways submit to him,

and he will make your paths straight.

Do not be wise in your own eyes;

Read Job.

Chris referenced Job's story. If you take some time to read the book, you'll see that Job encounters tragedy, and in the midst of tremendous loss, Job chooses to obey God. Job has made this decision about how to live, about who would be in control of his life, before this situation, and, he stuck to it in the situation, before he ever knew if things would get better. What can you learn from this? If you encounter tragedy in the coming days, have you already decided how to respond?

Bringing It Home

1. Do you think you can truly worship God if you don't give God control of your life?
2. How do you discern God's will, and what happens if you get it wrong?
3. In verse 20, Chris said to underline the word "If," and in Verse 21, to underline the word "Then."

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4. What is Jacob saying to God? What was your initial response when you heard this? Do you ever do this in your own life; maybe you've heard from God, but you second guess or try to bargain with God. How has this impacted your life? If this is a new thought, how can you seek to hear from God?
5. Will you decide ahead of time to obey God, to give God control? What would hold you back; what would make you want to go your own way? If you've done this and lived the results, share how this has gone for you.
6. How can you apply Proverbs 3:5-7a to your life and circumstances today? How are trust in God and humility connected?
7. When considering Proverbs 3:5-7a, do you see how obedience comes first? When we practice obedience to God, He offers us the best way. So often, we sacrifice the best God has for us on the altar of something we think is good. Have you done this? When? With what? What was the outcome? If you could go back and ask God for wisdom, what do you think He would have guided you to do?
8. Chris said faith in God brings peace. In a world where peace can be hard to come by, have you considered this? Do you believe this? That God, your Creator, can offer you peace? What is holding you back from pursuing Him for this relationship?
9. We have seen this idea of giving God 10% of our income twice already in the book of Genesis (chapter 14 and chapter 28). We also see it in many other scriptures, 2 Chronicles 31:4-5, Deuteronomy 12:4-5, Nehemiah 10:35-37, and Leviticus 27:30-34, to name a few. How do you feel about tithing? Have you considered how it reveals trust and surrender to God?
10. Do you feel like your path has been difficult or easy? What parts have been more difficult? Are there any parts you know have been easier than others? When difficulties arise, do you find it hard to trust God? Do you tend to lean on God or your own understanding and abilities?