



IDENTITY Week 2 - Bless Me

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Identity

- "the fact of being who or what a person or thing is. A close similarity or affinity"

This week we continue in our series on Identity and are looking at the reality of the backstory (aka: baggage) that we often carry from our past or family of origin, through the lens of this biblical story.

Gen 32:27 NIV ²⁶ "Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak. "But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

If we have a passion for the word of God, as we read scripture, we can find ourselves within the stories because it is the story of us - humanity fallen, sinful, independent. And ultimately, it is the story of Jesus, of love, sacrifice, and redemption for those who call on His name.

When we read about Jacob, we love the fact that Jacob has an encounter with the Lord, but I don't think we fully appreciate it. We need to understand his backstory. When we hear one another's backstory, it gives us more context to understand.

We all start somewhere:

- All of us come from somewhere, backgrounds, families etc. People all handle the things that have happened to them differently. One person may not be affected by the thing that has more affected you.
- We are impacted, shaped, influenced by where we grow up (region), the nation, the region, and the home we grow up in

These dynamics are both external (i.e. they happen to us) and internal (i.e. they happen within us), and our response to them will determine our life.

I want us to look at Jacob not only because he has an encounter with the Lord (which is what God desires for all of us), but he has a backstory that complicates his life.

Our past is part of us. It comes with us wherever we go. What we must decide is: will we allow it to define us, and to be honest enough to determine if it already has?

- Is it hard for you to be honest about parts of your past that may be defining you?

Denial is not a strategy

A look at Jacob's backstory:

Jacob learns things from his home life

- We all take childhood with us. We learn, we experience, we watch, we formulate and interpret. To deny that is to deny truth. But we don't have to be fatalistic in about our past
- Just because certain things happened in our past does not mean we are destined for those same things to continue in our future. We have choice.

1. Jacob has understanding of God based on family history

Spiritually: Jacob's grandfather is Abraham. God made a covenant with Abraham and it was one of faith. God said "I will make you a great nation" and Abraham believed. When God instructs Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Isaac was surely thinking "where is the Lamb?". You can imagine how this encounter would have impacted Isaac and his faith. He experienced not only his father's faith and obedience, but he also experienced God as the One who rescued him. These experiences would have shaped the family's generational faith.

2. Jacob's family has dysfunction

Family of origin: All of our families have some form of dysfunction

- He learns deception
- His is named Jacob which can mean conniver or trickster
- Generational of family pattern

Genesis 20: 2 NIV ² "and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister." Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her."

Genesis 26:6-7 NIV ⁶ "So Isaac stayed in Gerar. ⁷ His wife Rebekah was very beautiful, and the men of that place asked Isaac about her. Isaac said, "She is my sister," because he was afraid to tell them she was his wife. He thought they might kill him so they could have her."

You can see this pattern of fear and lying repeated in the next generation.

- Do you recognize repeated patterns of behavior within your own family/generations?

There was also favoritism happening. Isaac loves Esau, Rebekah loved Jacob Genesis 25:28 NIV ²⁸ "Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob."

Jacob is a deceiver: Jacob manipulated Esau to get his birthright. The birthright was right to be the headship of the family if the father died. Esau was hungry, Jacob had made food and instead of just sharing the food with his brother, he used his brother's hunger and lack of willpower against him.

The second instance of Jacob's trickery was in his father's old age. Isaac is getting older and preparing to die. He calls for Esau, the older son, to go kill game and

prepare a meal so he could bless him. Rebekah hears this and decides to fool her husband by having Jacob present food to him.

One problem: Esau was very hairy and Jacob was not, so his mother concocts a plan to make him appear to be hairy like his brother. When he goes to his father, the voice is Jacob's but the hands are Esau.

Genesis 27:24 NIV ²⁴ He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I am."

Another lie. And not only that, but he has now stolen something that is not rightfully his. He tricks his father into bestowing on him the elder son's blessing, receiving double of what he was supposed to receive.

- We hear people say the ends justify the means, but Jacob has now crossed a threshold. If you are willing to trick your family for your own gain, there isn't much else you won't do.

Genesis 27: 36-38 NIV Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob?^[a] For he has cheated me these two times. (Jacob knows this as well)

He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." Then he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?

³⁸ Esau said to his father, "Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

³⁹ Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: "Behold, away from^[b] the fatness of the earth shall your dwelling be, and away from^[c] the dew of heaven on high.^o By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you grow restless you shall break his yoke from your neck."

- There is no one to blame but Jacob. Some of us carry the anger and hatred of Esau. Some of us were the cause.
- We can spend our whole life wanting to prove something or get revenge. Or, running from something to get away.

Chapter 28 Jacob is blessed by his father and sent away to a family member named Laban.

- Dream from the Lord verses 13-18 "...Surely the Lord is in this place."
- You don't see this huge change from Jacob. You see his awareness change. Like, "this is what Dad was talking about."

Jacob finds his Uncle Laban:

- He meets his future wives (yes, two wives)
- Loves Rachel - Laban's requirement is that he work for 7 years to marry her and "it seemed only a few days because of his love for her"
- On the wedding night however, he is given Leah. He is outraged but must now work another 7 years for Rachel to be his wife.
- Much drama ensues, including rivalry ("mama drama")

Jacob finds himself reaping what he has sown, and now we see the extent of family dysfunction: Abraham, Isaac, Laban, Jacob - this is humanity!

Jacob continues to work for his uncle Laban.

- Laban cheats him out of money and changes his pay ten times
- Laban has found good labor and his livestock have prospered under the hand of Jacob

Jacob is done. He comes up with a plan and God blesses him. He takes the “worst” of the animal flocks, but they prosper and he becomes wealthy.

- Laban gets mad
- Jacob again finds himself on the run again
- For some of you, this is your pattern. When things get difficult, people begin seeing some of your issues. People begin calling out some of your stuff, you run, you hide, you blame, you lash out...
- We run because it seems easier to start over than to deal with things

Overview of Jacob’s Story Arc:

- Jacob has a family history with God
- His family is dysfunctional
- He is named Jacob meaning Deceiver, Conniver or Trickster
- Instructed to deceive his father by his mother
- Deceives his brother twice (stealing the birthright and blessing)
- Sent away from his family
- God speaks to him through a dream
- Deceived by his uncle to marry the wrong woman
- Manipulated by his uncle and pay changed 10 times
- Becomes wealthy through God’s wisdom
- Leaves uncle and calls for a meeting with brother but is fearful
- Jacob divides his family for safety purposes, prays and is alone

Jacob finds himself where all of us will find ourselves eventually - the past is coming back to meet him. God is too good to allow the past to own us or to keep us enslaved. And it crazy how we can lie to ourselves.

- *Who or what have you allowed to define you?*

The effects are greater than us. Whatever has defined us, outside of God’s grace through Jesus Christ, is passed on to family, friends, and the world around us.

- *What is your story, and what is your narrative about your story? If you make a decision to answer these two questions, you will begin to discover the definition you have for yourself, and you will begin to see a pattern in your behaviors.*

There is only one who can define you perfectly: Jesus. Through His sacrifice He earned the right to define us.

We are a product of our past. We are a product of our decisions and choices. But the overriding arc of our story is what God has done through Jesus. He doesn’t start us over but meets us where we are. In light of all that has happened and all we have done, He tells us who He is to us and who we are to Him.

There is only one who can define you perfectly: Jesus. Through His sacrifice He ***earned the right*** to define us.

The BLESSING

After 20 years of running, striving, deceiving, and being deceived, his past is coming for him. He splits up his family for safety reasons, and then he prays.

Genesis 32: 24-28 NIV ²⁴ So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. ²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." ²⁷ The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered.

AMP Classic Edition ²⁷ [The Man] asked him, What is your name? And [in shock of realization, whispering] he said, Jacob [supplanter, schemer, trickster, swindler]! ²⁸ Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel,^[1] because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

We need God to bless us. Because he is the only one who can define us.

- 'Your name will no longer be'
- 'You will no longer be'

Last week, we saw how Jesus was perfect in every way. He is the only one who can meet you where you are and tell you who you are.

God touched Jacob's hip because he wanted Jacob to remember for the rest of his life that he is different. The human tendency is to return to a baseline, and forget what God has spoken. Here, God created a physical change to mark a spiritual reality. The limp/the boot in Jacob's life reminded him: "I was saved. My value has been redetermined. I am new. I am free. I have been chosen. He is for me. My past is part of me, but it no longer defines me."

Many of us have accepted Christ but live like you are still the same.

- Will you allow Jesus to define you?

- And will you commit yourself to discover what that means?

You may be one of two types of people today:

1. Someone who is running, hiding, blaming, leaving when you the real you comes out. It's time to stop running.
2. For some, it's time to release your past and allow God to redefine you

- What is God saying to you about your identity through this message today?