



Viewfield Baptist Church

To enable people to become fully devoted
followers of Jesus Christ

Joseph Study Leaflet

Sunday 8th September

Sermon 18

“An Encounter with God”

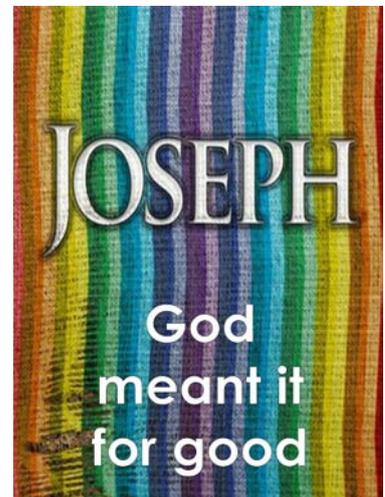
Genesis 46v1-30

This study guide will be used in our Small Groups, but can also be used by individuals.

You can download or listen to a recording of the sermon at this link:

<http://www.viewfield.org.uk/media/podcasts>

Leaflets about our small groups are available on the teabar. If you would like to join a small group, please speak to our Pastor, Rae, or to Pete Hutchison.



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Sermon 18 “An Encounter with God”

Bill Hybels, retired pastor of the famous Willow Creek Church and author of books such as “Too busy not to pray” tells a story about a particular experience of the treasured hymn Great is thy Faithfulness. He says, how as a boy he always found it old fashioned with a particularly ordinary tune. He often wondered why as he watched his parents singing that song they would begin to well up. And as he watched his Grandparents sing that song tears would be rolling down their cheeks. He said now that he has journeyed with God he gets it. The words now mean so much to him because he has experienced that Great faithfulness of God through the different ups and downs of life.

Lamentations 3v22-23: “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.”

Here in this story, Jacob is in the midst of a time of major transition. He is already 130 years old. However, he is convinced Joseph is still alive after hearing the report from his sons and seeing the carts sent by Pharaoh. He says I will go to Egypt and see him before I die. (*Gen 45v28*). Jacob certainly has had a chequered past. If we look at Jacob’s life, we soon recognize that the Bible does not cover up the weaknesses and frailty of its heroes. Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, after he wrestled with God, was not a particularly attractive person.

- **Jacob was at times deceitful**

Jacob’s original name means “deceiver”, and it was very appropriate since that had been his nature since he was a young man. He stole his twin brother Esau’s blessing, and, by cunning, he tricked him into selling his birthright **Gen 27**. He sought to deceive Laban when he left for Canaan **Gen 30**

- **He was in many ways a terrible parent.**

He turned a blind eye when Reuben had sex with his concubine (**Gen35v22**) and he did nothing when Dinah, his own daughter was raped. He showed favouritism to his son Joseph. However during those years he had learned many an important lesson about God, about himself, and about others, particularly his sons. By the grace of God, Jacob was changing and in fact we are told in **Hebrews 11v21** that just before Jacob died “*he worshipped as he leaned on top of his staff.*”

He was flawed. But God loved him. In fact it says in **Romans 9v13**: “*God loved Jacob.*” For Jacob, “*God’s compassions never failed. They were new every morning: Great is thy faithfulness.*” God was still working out his purposes through him despite his mistakes.

When he was faithless, God remained faithful. That is an encouragement to all of us. Throughout the Scriptures we read of imperfect people being used of God. So if you feel flawed. That’s okay. You are in good company.

God loves failures. Do you know why? It’s because He wants to take your life, turn it into a trophy of grace, and bring you to the place where you see his hand at work. Where you see his Great faithfulness. God uses imperfect people to fulfil his purposes. People like you and me.

Jacob was now facing a major transition in his latter years. He had lived with his family in Hebron for many years, but now the time had come for all of them to move. So let’s journey with them and see what we can learn.

1/ An Encounter with God Gen 46v1-2

So Jacob and his family left Hebron and travelled for about a week until they came to Beersheba. **READ v7**. It is here in Beersheba where he has an encounter with God. Beersheba is the Southernmost town in Canaan. It is about as far as you can go south in Canaan without leaving it. You may be able

to see the route on this map. Beersheba was a very special place to Jacob and his family for it was a place they had encountered God on many occasions.

We are told that Jacob stops here to worship God. We are told in *verse 1b: "He offered sacrifices to the God of his Father Isaac."*

This is significant. This shows the change in Jacob's heart. Old Jacob had learned some hard lessons about what happened when he did not talk with God and walk with God. Jacob's act of worship is firstly, an act of thanksgiving to God for his protection in the past. Secondly, he was seeking if this move was God's will. Remember they were planning to move away from the Promised land into Egypt. Jacob wanted to be sure God was in this. This was a big move for all the family. So, although they had loaded up and begun the journey, they stopped on the border before they crossed to seek God's face and to worship him. Jacob stopped and waited, willing to learn whether the move to Egypt would be accompanied by the presence and blessing of God. Was it God's will? Thirdly, he was declaring in this act of worship that he knew he was a sinner in need of pardon. Every time the Patriarchs offered sacrifices, they were acknowledging their offences before God. Here Jacob is recommitting his life to the Lord.

I wonder how often in our lives are we running ahead of God. Do we take the time to seek his face and discern his will when faced with times of potential change? Whether a geographical move or a career change or a domestic change, single to married or whatever type of change it might be. When we are faced with a choice, whether big or small, do we truly seek God's will.

We are told Jacob stopped before crossing into Egypt to seek God's face and discern his will. We are told that he encounters God: **Gen 46v2: "And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night."** He seeks God and he meets God.

God still speaks today. We don't worship a dead hero or a stone statue but the living God. ALIVE. Speaks, communicates, acts. He speaks in many ways but primarily through his Word and by his Spirit.

2/ An Assurance from God Gen 46v2b-5

Why might Jacob have been unsure about going to Egypt? Didn't his son Joseph instruct him to come? Wasn't it the wisest thing to do in the light of the continued famine in the land? Jacob clung onto Canaan because God had promised that land to him and his descendants. Perhaps he reflected upon his grandfather Abraham who had gone down to Egypt, without consulting God, and it had been bad news. (*Gen 12v10*) Or maybe he pondered how his Father, Isaac, started towards Egypt, before the Lord stopped him. (*Gen 26v1-2*)

However we are told that the Lord came to Jacob at night and brought assurance that they were headed in the right direction. The Lord assured him that it was safe for him and his family to step forward and relocate to Egypt.

The Lord begins by calling his name twice **v2: "Jacob, Jacob."**

This reminds us of other occasions when the Lord called out to people. God interrupted Abraham when he was at the point of sacrificing his Son, **"Abraham, Abraham."** (*Gen 22v11*) God called Samuel as a boy to be a prophet, he woke him at night saying, **"Samuel, Samuel"**. (*1 Samuel 3v10*) Centuries later, when God stopped Paul, before he was converted, on the road to Damascus, he used his Hebrew name, **"Saul, Saul."** (*Acts 9v4*)

It's amazing to know that God knows our names and our personal needs.

Jacob responds in obedience: **"Here I am Lord."** **v2b.** He is willing to listen and be led. He was willing to let the Lord take control.

Carrie Underwood the famous American country star sings a song called Jesus take the wheel... Are we willing to let Jesus take the wheel of our lives? Are we willing to give him complete control? Often in our lives we grab the wheel and Jesus is pushed to the back seat.

Then God introduces himself to Jacob as the Sovereign Lord of space, time and history. The one who rules over all. **Gen46v3:** *"I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there."*

God here is assuring Jacob that he is in control and that he is working out his plans and purposes for his people.

As God speaks to Jacob he brings words of assurance to someone who is worried and anxious about whether he is heading in the right direction.

- God assures him of his peace: *"Don't be afraid to go down to Egypt" v3*
- God assures him of his plans and purposes: "I am working out my plans." **V4:** *"for I will make you into a great nation. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again." And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes."*
- God assures him of his presence: *"I will be with you." V4*

God was assuring Jacob that he would be with him in Egypt and that he would bless him. Jacob had nothing to fear because the Lord would keep his promises he had made to him at Bethel. **READ GENESIS 28v15**

One great aspect of the faithfulness of God is that is always keeps his promises. A dictionary definition of faithfulness includes: true to one's word, promises. Reliable, constant, to be trusted.

Through faith in Jesus Christ we are in a relationship with the living God. It is awesome to consider that when we are faced with choices or change our loving heavenly Father gives us assurance. He assures us of his peace, that he is working out his purposes and of his presence with us.

He always keeps his promises. Corrie Ten Boom once said: *"Let God's promises shine on your problems."*

We are told in **v5** that Jacob is obedient to the will of God. After encountering God and being assured by God he steps forward in faith knowing that his God is faithful.

Lamentations 3v22-23: *"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness."*

Bible study questions

Icebreaker: "Describe an occasion when God faithfulness was evident in your life"

1. In what ways is Jacob in a time of transition at this point in the story?
2. Jacob certainly made mistakes in his life? Name some of them.
3. Despite Jacob's faithlessness, God remained faithful. What does this say about the nature of God?
4. What was significant about Jacob's encounter with God at Beersheba? Describe an occasion when you had a powerful encounter with God.
5. God spoke into Jacob's life? In what ways does God speak to us today?
6. Why might Jacob be unsure about going to Egypt?
7. God speaks word of assurance to Jacob. What does he say?
8. Corrie Ten Boom once said: "Let God's promises shine on your problems." How could you apply this to your situation today?

Application: "Spend some time praising and thanking God for his faithfulness."