

Sermon Study Guide



#4: The Teacher Called Experience

HOME: Finding Redemption in the Messiness of Life

March 1, 2020 | Dr. Stephen G. Tan

In this series we look at the life of Jacob to help us identify the sin issues that causes messiness in life and dysfunction in the family, and how we can find redemption in these messes.

Reflect

One of the greatest teachers in life is experience. The Lord allows you to go through a variety of experiences to teach you great lessons. Many of those experiences may be the most difficult you'll encounter, but they will serve you well if you allow yourself to learn from them instead of complaining. Share an experience that has taught you a valuable lesson in life.

Read and Discuss

Scripture

Genesis 29:1-30

Discussion Questions

As we read the passage, we see that Jacob went through five experiences from which we draw out spiritual lessons:

1. **Experience #1: Meeting people with a different outlook in life (v. 1-8).** After about two weeks of traveling, Jacob finally arrived in the land of his relatives from his mother's side. What was the first thing that Jacob saw, observed and wondered about in this new place? Share how you act in response to people who don't think the way you do? What lessons do being surrounded by non-Christians who have different beliefs and values as you do teach you? Will you conform to their worldly values or can you stand your ground when you are with them?
2. **Experience #2: A warm welcome and hospitality extended (v. 9-14).** After a tense journey, Jacob was overjoyed that he finally met his relatives. How did his Uncle Laban receive him? When would you consider a visitor to be overstaying (even if that person were a relative)? Share if you have experienced being genuinely welcomed with love and grace. Have you extended the same love and grace to others as Romans 12:13 tells you to do? How is warm welcome and hospitality being extended in your church?
3. **Experience #3: Being in-love (v. 15-20).** Because of Jacob's extended stay in Laban's household, Laban asked him how he could pay him for the work he had been doing for him. What was Jacob's response? Describe how much Jacob was in-love with Rachel. Why is being in-love a wonderful thing that can motivate you to do what you normally don't want to do? On the other hand, being in-love can also distort or blind you from reality. How can a person guard his/her heart so that even when in-love, he/she will avoid making bad decisions and big mistakes?
4. **Experience #4: Being deceived and taken advantage of (v. 21-26).** Jacob wanted to marry Rachel after fulfilling his seven-year agreement with Laban. What took place after their talk? How did Jacob feel about the deception? Do you think he remembered how he deceived his own father? Have you ever taken advantage of someone and had the same thing done to you? What does it teach you about the importance of not doing to others what you would not want others do to you?
5. **Experience #5: Going through adversity and accepting it (v. 27-30).** When Jacob confronted Laban with his deception, Laban offered the terms that Jacob can also have Rachel as wife after a week, in return for agreeing to serve Laban for another seven years. Jacob didn't fight back but simply accepted the fact that he was taken advantage of. Discuss how you can handle adversity or the problems of life without feeling bitter. What does the Bible teach about why God

allows you to go through adversities (James 1:2-3,12)?

Respond

In Walk: Like with you and me, Jacob had both good and tough experiences in his life. But the best example we have is Jesus Christ, who experienced tough things but did not sin. Jesus dealt with people who had such a different outlook in life that they rejected Him. He was taken advantage of by people who were inside and outside of His circle. He accepted the adversity of having to die for other people. He was so in-love with mankind that he would extend hospitality and welcome sinners like you and me. And because He was willing to go through everything the Father had Him go through, you have eternal life. Can you see the greater purpose of your life experiences? What do you think God is teaching you through the adversities and difficult situations you are experiencing right now?

In Prayer: Heavenly Father, in your sovereignty You allow me to go through difficulties in life for a purpose, and I thank you for being with me as I go through them. Help me Lord to learn the lessons that adversities bring. May you help me to have an open heart to accept and see the greater purpose of my experiences, whether they are good or bad. Help me to learn patience in dealing with people whose outlook in life is different from mine. Help me to be hospitable and gracious to others who need them. May I emulate the Lord Jesus who have experienced all kinds of adversities and accepted them to do Your will. In Jesus' name. Amen.