

# 08

GENESIS 35:1-15

## DIRECTION & IDENTITY

### THIS WEEK'S **focus**

Everyone loves a good nickname. Whether we acquired it on a soccer field, in band practice, or from a good friend, there's just something about a unique nickname that makes us feel special. It's especially great if it speaks to who we are as people or to something unique about us. In today's teaching, God's presence will enable Jacob to live out the new identity He gave him in Genesis 32. Though Jacob's sons would commit a major act of violence and idols were present in their lives, the Lord would not abandon His promise to be with His people and bless them. We can rest in knowing that the same God who gave us a new identity is the same God will give us the strength to walk in it.



### CENTRAL **truth**

God's presence helps us to live out the identity He gives us.



EXPLORE

# scripture

GENESIS 35:1-15

## GENESIS 35:1-4

**1** God said to Jacob, “Get up! Go to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.” **2** So Jacob said to his family and all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods that are among you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes.

**3** We must get up and go to Bethel. I will build an altar there to the God who answered me in my day of distress. He has been with me everywhere I have gone.” **4** Then they gave Jacob all their foreign gods and their earrings, and Jacob hid them under the oak near Shechem.

## GENESIS 35:5-8

**5** When they set out, a terror from God came over the cities around them, and they did not pursue Jacob’s sons. **6** So Jacob and all who were with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan. **7** Jacob built an altar there and called the place El-bethel because

it was there that God had revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother. **8** Deborah, the one who had nursed and raised Rebekah, died and was buried under the oak south of Bethel. So Jacob named it Allon-bacuth.

## GENESIS 35:9-15

**9** God appeared to Jacob again after he returned from Paddan-aram, and he blessed him. **10** God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; you will no longer be named Jacob, but your name will be Israel.” So he named him Israel. **11** God also said to him, “I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation, indeed an assembly of nations, will come from you, and kings will descend from you. **12** I will give

to you the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac. And I will give the land to your future descendants.” **13** Then God withdrew from him at the place where he had spoken to him. **14** Jacob set up a marker at the place where he had spoken to him — a stone marker. He poured a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. **15** Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

# 08

GENESIS 35:1-15  
CONVERSATION

# questions

▶ READ GENESIS 35:1-4.

**.01** What kinds of things tend to take our attention away from God? How can we turn our focus back to Him?

---

---

---

**.02** How does God's work in our lives encourage us to leave the sins of our past behind?

---

---

---

**.03** When has the Lord given you direction or insight during a tough time? What was it?

---

---

---



## THEOLOGY

Jacob and his family were commanded by God to give up their idols before leaving for Bethel. An idol was a material or physical image representing a reality or being considered divine.<sup>1</sup> While the idea of worshipping a crafted image may sound odd, we can see idolatry woven into the fabric of our lives and world. Another way to think of idolatry is this: giving our greatest attention, devotion, or highest praise to anything or anyone that is not the Lord Jesus. Idolatry is misplaced trust and worship. Whether it's sports, getting into the right college or trade-school program, or even our relationships, even good things can become idols if we are not careful. But in His kindness, God has given us Jesus as the remedy to our tendency toward idolatry. In Him, we find the help necessary to place our worship where it was always intended and to be the people God has called us to be.

<sup>1</sup> Bruce C. Cresson, "Idol," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), Logos Bible Software edition, 804-05.

▶ READ GENESIS 35:5-8.

**.04** How does obeying God bring protection and security?

---

---

---

**.05** Why can we rest in knowing that God will provide for His people?

---

---

---

▶ READ GENESIS 35:9-15.

**.06** How can God's promises help us understand His character?

---

---

---

**.07** How should our God-given identities transform the way we live?

---

---

---

**.08** What aspects of God's covenant with Jacob most stand out to you?

---

---

---



## HISTORY

Only Jerusalem is mentioned more than the city of Bethel in the Bible. Bethel was an important religious and cultural site. It was an attractive area that was also very fertile, and it was a well-traveled center that would later sit as a border city between the two divided kingdoms of the Israelites. Abraham built an altar there (see Gen. 12:8), as did his grandson, Jacob. The city is mentioned in events throughout the Old Testament but was eventually destroyed. However, holding much importance to the people of Israel, many would return to this place later (see Ezra 2:28; Neh. 7:32; 11:31).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Daniel C. Fredericks, "Bethel," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), Logos Bible Software edition, 190-91.

# 08

GENESIS 35:1-15

NOW

# what?



## CENTRAL truth

God's presence helps us to live out the identity He gives us.

**.09** How are we able to receive a new identity from God?

---

---

---

---

**.10** What are some ways you can share about what God has done in your life with those around you?

---

---

---

---

**.11** What is the role of God's grace in our fight against sin?

---

---

---

---

**.12** Has God revealed Himself in a unique or powerful way to you? If so, share your experience.

---

---

---

---

# DAILY devotions

## MEMORIZE GENESIS 35:11

### 7 ARROWS FOR BIBLE READING



What does this passage say?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage tell us about humans?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?



What does this passage demand of me?

day 1

# GENESIS 35:1-4

## DWELL

When Jacob told his family to purify themselves to come into the presence of God, it wasn't just a suggestion. It was an explicit instruction to get rid of all the foreign gods, ill-gotten gain, and anything else that stood in the way of their having an honest, loving relationship with God. This is a good challenge for all believers today, as well—including you. There are a lot of different things that can get in the way of a devoted relationship to Jesus. Your job is to identify these things and surrender them to Jesus.



How would you describe what spiritual renewal looks like?



What is the main thing that you give attention to other than Jesus? How can you turn this thing over to Him?

## MEMORIZE

Write Genesis 35:11 on an index card or sticky note and attach it to your bathroom mirror. Say the verse aloud each day, emphasizing a few different words each time.

## PRAY

Ask God to reveal any idols or anything else that is getting in the way of your devotion to Him.

day 2

# GENESIS 35:5-8

## DWELL

God had a plan for Jacob and the nation He was going to build through Jacob's descendants. Even though Jacob's sons had done something terrible in Genesis 34, God was faithful to keep His promise to be with Jacob and go before him. The way God demonstrated His presence with Jacob was by surrounding his family with His presence. God's presence was so powerful that it produced a terror for those who looked on. Your obedience to God in your life is also a way to experience His protection in your own life.

← How do these verses compare to what God told Jacob in Genesis 28:13-15?

↪ Why did Jacob build an altar to God? How can you mark your commitment to God?

## MEMORIZE

Save Genesis 35:11 as a wallpaper or screensaver on your phone or computer. Read it aloud each time you see it.

## PRAY

Talk to God about any times or places where you're finding it difficult to walk in obedience to His Word. Ask Him for His help.

day 3

# GENESIS 35:9-15

## DWELL

God made some big promises to Jacob. From a human perspective, Jacob might have had a hard time believing many of the things God had said would come true. But Jacob had learned to trust in God because he had experienced God's blessings in some big ways. He knew he could trust in God's promises. The same can be true for you! God's Word is full of His promises for your life. Will you trust Him to do what only He can do?

↑ What does the name God Almighty (*EI Shaddai*) mean to you?

→ How can you respond to God's activity in your life?

## MEMORIZE

Say the book, chapter, and verse number for Genesis 35:11 out loud several times. Then read aloud just the first few words of the verse. Do this a few times a day and see if you can memorize more each time.

## PRAY

Pray that God will enlarge your trust in Him and His promises. Ask God to guide you to one promise you can focus on this week.

day 4

# 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-19

## DWELL

↓ What has God done for you? Why is this a big deal?

---

---

← How do these verses describe what it means to be reconciled to God?

---

---

God has done something for you that you could never have done on your own: He has restored your relationship to Him by forgiving your sin through Jesus. As a new creation, you've been given a new heart and been filled with God's Spirit (see Ezek. 36:26-27). The imagery Paul used is similar to that of a caterpillar turning into a beautiful butterfly—it's a brand new creation. That's what Christ has done for you! How incredible is that?

## MEMORIZE

Write out Genesis 35:11 on a piece of paper. Circle three to five key words in the verse and consider their importance. Focus on those words and see how much of the verse you can speak from memory.

## PRAY

Thank God for restoring your relationship with Him. Thank Him that He doesn't hold your past sin against you.

day 5

# 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20-21

## DWELL

↑ Why would God want you to be His ambassador? What does this mean?

---

---

↔ How can you share this message of reconciliation with someone who needs to hear it this week?

---

---

When Christ forgives you of your sin, you are reconciled with God. Your friendship with Him is restored. Once that relationship has been restored and your new identity established, God expects you to do something. As a reconciled believer, you're now an ambassador for Jesus. That means your task is to represent Jesus to others—especially others who still need to be reconciled to Jesus. And your message is simple enough: "Be reconciled to God." That just means to help others become friends with God—just as He desires.

## MEMORIZE

Read Genesis 35:11 several times. Then start by trying to memorize the first two or three words. Once you have those words memorized, add a few more words at a time until you can say the whole verse.

## PRAY

Pray for God to reveal someone you can share this message with and that He would give you the boldness to represent Him well.