



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC Jacob – Only by Grace

SPEAKER DSP Edric Sng

THEME Life Lessons from Character Studies

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MESSAGE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In this second segment of the five-part series on bible characters, DSP Edric Sng summarises the life of Jacob and tells us through the story of Jacob, why we need God's grace and mercy.

THE LIFE OF JACOB

Why do we study Jacob? The study of Jacob is exceptional because there is nothing redemptive about Jacob except for his redemptive God. So when we study Jacob, we understand it not as a study of man, but as a study of a man who would be nothing and who would have no hope except for his God of grace and mercy.

1) **Jacob was a flawed man, unlike our usual "hero of faith"**

- At war with Esau even from the womb (Gen 25:18-26)
- Took Esau's birthright (Gen 25:27-34) and blessing (Gen 27) through scheming and deceit
- Cause of Leah's misery (Gen 29)
- Gained Laban's wealth by outfoxing him (Gen 30:31)

2) **Yet God blessed Jacob because God is faithful**

- **God's blessings have nothing to do with Jacob's (or our) faithfulness and everything to do with God's faithfulness** (Gen 25:23, Gen 28:12-15). God blessed Jacob because He is the Lord, and because these blessings have flowed down from His promises to Jacob's grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac.
- **Our God is not a transactional God - God's faithfulness is extended to us on the basis of His Character, *not* ours.**
- Jacob acknowledges that he is unworthy and does not deserve all of God's kindness and faithfulness (Gen 32:9-10)
- Similarly, Israel was blessed by God not because of God's righteousness (used as an instrument for God's purposes by which other wicked nations would be punished) and God's promise to God of Israel's forefathers (to confirm the Word of God that all of these promises made upon the nation Israel, that through them, all nations will be saved) (Deut 9:4-5)

3) The breaking and remaking of Jacob

- When Jacob's past finally caught up with him and he could no longer run and scheme, he was broken and he prayed to God in "great fear and distress". Jacob realised he had only one hope: the promises of God.
- **Jacob wrestled with God and he emerged with God's blessing as a changed man.** He was broken (his hip was wrenched as he wrestled) (Gen 32:24-26), he was renamed Israel (Gen 32:28) and he had a new understanding of God as a God of grace and mercy (Gen 32:30-31).
- Jacob had a new relationship with God – before being broken, his was a transactional relationship where he saw God as a means to an end (Gen 28:18-22) and after being broken, he revered God in gratitude (Gen 35:6-7)

4) What saved Jacob?

- When Jacob was old and going to die, he was a changed man and he was able to worship God.
- He tried to live life by his own methods through scheming, cunning, cheating, chasing, striving, labour but all failed.
- **Jacob discovered that his only hope of surviving and thriving was coming face to face with God and experiencing His grace and mercy.**

5) When we think about Jacob, what comes to mind?

- We are just like Jacob, none of us is "deserving" or "worthy" of a relationship with God. But though we are unworthy, **we are reconciled with God – not by good works of our own, but only by God's grace and mercy.**
 - Grace is the unmerited favour of God - we don't merit or deserve it, yet God pours out His love, favour and blessings on us.
 - Mercy is the unwarranted forgiveness of God - we merit or deserve punishment for our wrongdoing, but God paid the price through His Son Jesus.
 - **We need the grace and mercy of God in our lives** because there is nothing we can do to save ourselves
 - Let us approach God with the sacrifice of the broken spirit and the contrite heart (Ps 51:17, Is 57:15)

CONCLUSION

Jacob was a flawed man who had few redeeming qualities and yet God loved him and blessed him and kept his promises to Jacob and his family because our God is a faithful God who is full of mercy and grace. Despite how we view God and His Word, his promises remain and prevail. No matter where we are now in our lives, there is always hope in God's unfailing love and faithfulness. If we will turn to God in repentance and come back to God with a broken spirit and contrite heart, God will forgive us and He will renew us. We live by the grace of God and may we seek Him and pray that we decrease and God increase in our lives.

QUESTIONS

1. Unlike the other characters in this series, it seems like Jacob is not someone to emulate. As DSP Edric mentioned, “there is nothing redemptive about Jacob, except for his redemptive God”. Are there any aspects of Jacob’s story you find relatable? Why or why not? How did you experience God’s grace and mercy in that situation?

2. God blessing Jacob has everything to do with God’s faithfulness and nothing to do with Jacob’s faithfulness. How can you relate to this and how does it encourage you in your walk with God?

3. Is there an area of your life that you have been wrestling with God and need God’s grace and mercy? Pray and surrender this area to God.