

Getting A Grip On Your Relationships Genesis 26:34-28:9

Jim Stephens

Getting a Grip – The Series

Scripture studies for the series: Genesis 16-32

Key Verses: *My purpose is to give life in all its fullness. John 10: 10b, LB*

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4, NIV

Jacob said, "I'm not letting you go 'til you bless me." The man said, "What is your name?" He answered, Jacob (one who grasps)." He answered, ... "Your name is no longer Jacob. From now on it's Israel (God-Wrestler); you've wrestled with God and you've come through." Genesis 32:26-28, MSG

Getting a Grip on Your Relationships – The Message

Thought: Happiness and harmony slip-slide away when we get sloppy with the truth and loose with our commitments. If we value position and possessions more than people, we're likely to lose all we've strived to gain and end up alone as well.

Text: Genesis 26:34-28:9

Intended Outcome: Learn to value relationships more than position and possession. Get a Grip on and invest in relationships.

You can't hold on to healthy relationships without intentionally taking a grip on them. If you don't hold on they will slip away. You've got to invest in relationships. Invest time. Invest money. Invest yourself. Jacob wasn't good at this. He learned later, but was really bad with relationships in the first part of his story.

Last week, Pastor Ken talked to us about Getting a Grip on Your Priorities.

Three top priorities. Get a Grip on:

- **Relationships** – helping others become who God intended them to be.
- **Work** – Doing what God intended you to do.
- **Future** – Discovering and possessing your true identity.

The big story of Jake the Gripper is covered in Genesis 16 - 32

Jake the Gripper is the main character in our series. Jake has a lot to learn. We're going to follow the story of his education in what really matters in life. Jacob had some really out of whack priorities.

At the beginning of our story, Jacob's top priorities apparently were Position and Possessions. Jacob, also known as Jake the Gripper used his vise-like grip to grab his brother's heel, his brother's birthright, and ultimately his brother's blessing.

Jacob sacrificed relationships for position and possessions. (Birthright and blessing)

(This story is found in Genesis 25:29-34)

Jacob tricked Esau out of the Firstborn's Birthright (Esau stops in for a bite at Jake's Fine Dining: Good afternoon, sir – our special today is a hearty stew – lentils with lamb – very nice if I do say so. All right, bring me the lentil stew. Does that come with bread? Certainly sir. That's included in the price – it's just your birthright – the privilege of carrying on the family name and of course you'll lose the firstborn's right to twice the inheritance of any other sons. That will go to me. All right. That's fine thanks. Yes sir. I'll have that up for you in just a minute!) and cheated him out of his Father's Blessing.

We're going to see later in this story that Jake the Gripper lost everything he ever got by grabbing and cheating. He kept everything he got by God's blessing and hard work.

But meanwhile, back to the present. Later we'll go back to the future!

Let's look at some key insights about relationships (the good the bad and the ugly) from the first part of our Jake the Gripper story.

22 The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. 23 The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." (Genesis 25:22-23 NIV)

Rebekah had twins. The first one came out all covered with hair. They named him "Hairy" (Esau). The second son came out gripping his brother's heel. They named him "Gripper" (Jacob – Jake the Gripper). With the naming thing, these people were very much like the first white settlers in Central Oregon. Early Oregonians decided to make a little town at a Bend in the Deschutes River. They thought and thought and then named it "Bend!" Amazing! Then someone discovered a huge hole in the ground about a mile across and 50 miles southeast of Bend. (Slide of Hole in The Ground) Named it "Hole In The Ground!"

Then another early pioneer found a crack in the ground ([Slide of Crack In The Ground](#)) about a mile long near Fort Rock ([Slide of Fort Rock](#)). Name? You guessed it! Can you see a pattern developing here? But I think the best would be a really big 500-year-old Ponderosa Pine on the Deschutes River ([Slide of Big Tree](#)) down at La Pine State Park. They named it... Wait for it... "Big Tree!" They really had it going on, didn't they? But I digress...

Did you know that God had a plan for Jacob's life even before he was born? God had a plan and told part of that plan to Rebekah, the mother of twin brothers Esau and Jacob.

The Lord said to her, "the older will serve the younger." (From Genesis 25:23)

Here's something to think about: Rebekah believed what God said, but she couldn't keep her hands off the process. As soon as an opportunity seemed to present itself, she compromised both her and Jacob's integrity to try to help God out. What do you think often happens when Moms (or Dads) try to do God's work for him? Or try to force what they think is God's will on their kids?

Now, here's another piece to this puzzle, another clue to why things developed as they did:

27 The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. 28 Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. (Genesis 25:27-28 NIV)

Isaac's home was a home with some built-in conflict. Isaac loved Esau (**because he had a taste for wild game – perhaps just a little shallowness here?**) – Rebekah loved Jacob.

Isaac's father Abraham had established a pattern of preferential treatment of one son over the other – Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac, one of the sons that carried that same favoritism, lack of unity, and conflict into his family. It went from mocking (Ishmael) to murder (Esau).

Parental favoritism leads to sibling rivalry and rebellion. Look at the escalation here. Abraham's son Ishmael mocked his brother Isaac. Isaac's son Esau began to plot the murder of his brother Jacob.

Here's how that happened..

1 When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." "Here I am," he answered. 2 Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. (Genesis 27:1-2 NIV)

3 Now then, get your weapons—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. 4 Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.” (Genesis 27:3-4 NIV)

..So that I may give you my blessing before I die. (Genesis 27:4)

The most important inheritance is the blessing you give while you’re alive, not the money you leave after you die.

- Talk to your kids. Blessings are spoken. Blessings are words that have the power to create, build, add. Curses are words that have power to hurt, destroy, and take away.

Pastor Ken’s vision message a couple of weeks ago – The power of words – there’s a miracle in your mouth. When it comes to words spoken in family, words have the power to bless or the power to curse – the power to create or the power to destroy.

A Father’s Blessing for Stephanie and Melissa – Jim presents this idea..

- Bless your kids.
- Listen to your kids.
- Spend time with your kids.

5 Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, 6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, 7 'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die.' 8 Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: 9 Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. 10 Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.” (Genesis 27:5-10 NIV)

Did you get this, *"so he may give you his blessing."* Isaac wanted to bless Esau and Rebekah wanted the blessing to land on Jacob.

You can pursue the right goal in the wrong way and ruin relationships.

God wanted to bless Jacob. God had spoken blessing about Jacob before he was even born (see Genesis 25:23) Rebekah knew God wanted to bless Jacob and took matters into her own hands. You don’t need to do God’s work for him. He can handle it.

Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing.” (Genesis 27:19 NIV)

"I am Esau, your firstborn"

In this particular scheme, it seemed that the way to get the blessing was to pretend to be someone else. I don't want to make too much of this, but don't try to be like your brother or sister.. Jacob – grasping for position and possessions wound up imitating someone else. (explore this thought)

You are an original; not an imitation. Don't live by imitation or intimidation. You are the only 'you' God created, so don't try to be someone else.

Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" "The Lord your God gave me success," he replied. (Genesis 27:20 NIV)

"The Lord God gave me success"

- Saying "God made it happen," or "God helped me" doesn't make it true.
- God must have wanted me to have this car (I can't afford the payments on) because he provided a pen to sign the contract!"
- God obviously wants me to buy this 52" flat panel LCD TV because – "Look, I've got one credit card that isn't maxed out!"
- Don't blame God for things you schemed on your own!

27 So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. 28 May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness— an abundance of grain and new wine. 29 May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed." (Genesis 27:27-29 NIV)

Isaac spoke words of blessing that became a powerful, prophetic, creative force. These are very like the words God himself spoke to Abraham (*I will bless you and you will be a blessing*), words Abraham must have spoken to Isaac before he died. Words of blessing or words of cursing spoken by one in authority have incredible power to create or destroy.

One day, many years later in Egypt, Jacob would speak powerful God-words to his grandsons, Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh.

But here and now, Jacob's act of deception stirred resentment and hatred in the heart of his brother Esau and nearly gave his father Isaac a heart attack!

Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. (Genesis 27:41 NIV)

Ever find yourself resenting blessings others have that you don't have?

42 When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Your brother Esau is consoling himself with the thought of killing you. 43 Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran. 44 Stay with him for a while until your brother's fury subsides. 45 When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I'll send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?" (Genesis 27:42-45 NIV)

Look at a really important lesson from these verses: After all the tricking, lying, and cheating, Jacob had to flee for his life – leaving the only home he had ever known having lost everything except the words his father had spoken about him. He got out with his life. Think about how it is for us. When we leave we leave it all.

When we gain something by deception, we lose something more valuable.

Jacob didn't care about his relationships: He was willing to trick and cheat his brother, he was willing to break his father's heart, he was willing to let his mother take the curse of his deceitful actions. He not only lost all he had gained, he lost the relationships that gave him identity and a place in that culture.

He gave them exactly what they asked for— but along with it they got an empty heart. (Psalm 106:15 The Message)

And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul. (Psalm 106:15 KJV)

Rebekah lost the son she loved so much. I don't believe she ever saw Jacob again. It would be 20 years before he ever came back home.

Jacob's Progress With Getting a Grip on Relationships:

Remember how it was earlier in the story?

- Jacob sacrificed relationships for position and possessions. (Birthright and blessing)

Jacob's wrong values on position and possessions led to treachery and cheating – compromised integrity.

Even more than the compromising of his integrity, Jacob ended up broke and alone.

"The most terrible poverty is loneliness and the feeling of being unloved." Mother Teresa

I want you to consider whether you are sacrificing relationships for position and possessions:

In your family. Your spouse, your kids. Are you so busy making money, doing ministry, that your marriage is slipping through your fingers? Are you so busy building the business, advancing your career that your kids are growing up without you? Without you reading them to sleep? Without you at their soccer games? Without you spending Saturdays doing Dad – doing Mom – doing family stuff with them? What are you willing to do about it? **Are you willing to be less successful with possessions and position to be successful as a parent – as a spouse?**

- **Jacob encountered God as his provider and protector. (Saw God's greatness and embraced God's covenant plan for his life.)**

Jacob lost all that he tricked and cheated to get. God gave Jacob all he wanted him to have – all he promised he would received.

- **Jacob sacrificed time and service to build relationships. (Seven years for Leah and seven years for Rachel)**

The story of the next 20 years of Jacob's life is really different. He served to build relationships.

What can I do to build relationships? How can I serve in practical ways to invest in relationships? How can I keep relationships from slipping through my fingers and out of my grip?

- Pinging.
 - Birthdays.
 - Stop and talk briefly.
 - Touch, hand on shoulder, hug.
- **Jacob encountered God as his master. (Yielded to God's superior strength)**
 - **Jacob sacrificed position and possessions to restore a broken relationship. (Bowed before his brother Esau and gave him valuable gifts.)**

Jacob changed. You can change. You can break the pattern.

Response:

Do you see yourself in the story? That's what makes the story valuable – that you see yourself in the story and you can avoid making the same mistakes. You can spot the danger and change attitudes and actions, words and behavior.

Jacob was a man chosen by God – chosen for blessing. Before the blessing could be fulfilled, Jake the gripper had to change.

Are you sacrificing relationships for position or possessions? Jake the Gripper was until he met God and learned that God wanted to be his provider and protector. Maybe that's the encounter you need today. Are you ready?

Later Jacob had a further encounter with God in which he learned that God is boss. Maybe that's the encounter you need today. Are you ready to stop fighting God and hold on to him for dear life? Are you ready for the hand of the Master to touch you?

Prayer for broken relationships – name some specific things that have broken these relationships. Ask each person to scan their heart and see if a broken relationship comes up. Pray. With heads still bowed, what are you going to do – what step?

Lead into altar call – most important relationship to get right is your relationship with God.

It's not just about me and here and now, it's about God and everybody and eternity.