

In **GENESIS 35** we see Jacob facing a crisis of mammoth proportions after his sons had carried out a revenge attack on Hamor and his sons as one of them, Shechem, had raped Jacob's daughter Dinah.

It would appear that Jacob had drifted from his commitment made in Genesis 28 and his wrestling prayer and blessings in Genesis 32. Once again He finds himself in a tough spot. However, we can learn some important truths from god's gracious dealings with Jacob. **ONLY PEOPLE WHO ARE CLEAN CAN MEET WITH GOD.**

God brought Jacob back to Bethel where he had met with God 30 years prior and made a vow with God. Bethel means "house of god" and Jacob needed to get back to God, along with his family. Why? Sometimes we need to come back to first base and discover and trace back to where we lost our spiritual moorings. However, this is not something we are often willing to do without a little persuasion. As sad as it may seem, it may take a crisis to awaken us to our desperate need of revival. But isn't it better to have a crisis and respond to it in a right manner, rather than miss the blessing God has for us.

It is vitally important to fulfil the vows we have made to God, because delayed obedience is really disobedience. We need to see also that delayed obedience can be very costly as Jacob discovered with his daughter Dinah. Frequently we have no idea that there is a subtle but pernicious drift away from divine things in our lives and in the life of our families, until it is almost too late. Then events shock us to our spiritual senses and we are forced to take drastic, speedy spiritual measures to correct the drift.

The opening verses in Genesis 35 indicate that although Jacob had paid a high cost for hesitating to honour his commitment to God, God dealt graciously with him in bringing him to a place of humbleness and brokenness. However, before that could happen Jacob needed to deal with the root cause of his problems.

In verse two the source of spiritual drift and decay can be traced to foreign gods in their midst, and lack of resolve to deal with them. These foreign gods can have small beginnings, and it is often the fact that such gods or idols appear so small, that we don't perceive the need or urgency to deal with them before they loom large on the horizon of our lives.

Often we think it is easier to let some things *just be* .... that the problem will just go away .... or we rationalise that by not dealing with the problem will mean less pain or less conflict or struggle.

These little sins, as we imagine them to be, can become like little foxes that burrow away in our lives, until their appetite knows no limit and devour us. Recently, I saw a young man on a current affair program testifying of how he started on drugs. He just wanted to have

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## PRAISE the Lord for:

- ★ **The amazing response from people to give generously towards our Impact Africa project fund**
- ★ **An amazing trip to South Africa where the Lord protected and guided the team every step of the way**
- ★ **The opportunity to go into the highways and byways to share the love of Jesus in South Africa**
- ★ **Our partner organisations - Multi Ministries and World Hope Prison Ministries who put together our itineraries and got us where we needed to go**

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## PRAYER needed for:

- ★ **The latest edition of Challenge as it is distributed around Australia. Pray that as people read the paper their hearts will be open to the gospel**
- ★ **Carl and Bob Walker as they travel in southern WA for promotion work**
- ★ **Upcoming trip to South Africa for Carl as he works with World Hope Prison Ministries as they continue to promote and develop their ministry throughout Africa**
- ★ **The people who made a commitment of their lives to Jesus while the team was in South Africa. Many came to Jesus from within prison, squatter camps, street ministry and childrens' ministry. Pray they find a good church and grow in their faith**
- ★ **Pray for the health of the Challenge team, especially during the winter months**

some fun, a little recreation. He had started on marijuana, but it didn't give him the kick he wanted. So he started to inject heroin and so it went from there until he was addicted. To see this young man facing the camera and watch his eyes fill up with tears as he described that his life had turned into a nightmare with no way out.

Another example: unbeknown to his wife, a man had a foreign god that had taken a grip on his life. It started, most likely, with an occasional glimpse. He might have rationalised that he could handle it: he was in Christian ministry and was strong enough to control and contain his sin. Bit by bit, however, his desire for internet pornography grew and grew until it devoured him and his marriage.

Friends we must see that God can have nothing in our lives that takes first place along with the Lord.

Israel again and again fell into the sin of syncretism i.e. worshipping the Lord whilst worshiping an idol. We cannot allow our jobs, hobbies or recreation, our goals, our organisations, our marriages, family, church or denomination, usurp the number one position of our Heavenly Father.

If this happens, what is the solution – get rid of them. Genesis 35:2 says this, *Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments.*

The solution to our sin is to make a choice to put off the old filthy garments and put on the new clean garments of righteousness and forgiveness. God desires personal holiness because He can only work through clean vessels.

Interestingly, the word holiness in the Bible can be equated to wholeness. Friends, revival is all about making us and the church whole. Once we are clean we can worship the Lord in Spirit and truth. Then we become fit vessels for the Master's use.

CARL CARMODY, EDITOR OF CHALLENGE

## MY RESPONSE

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