



April 21-22, 2012
Genesis 33-35
“Burying the Past”
Pastor Gary Hamrick

God instructed Jacob to return to Israel and settle in Bethel, but he ended up settling in Shechem (about 25 miles short of Bethel). Not only did he fail to do what God told him to do, he lived in Shechem for about eight to ten years! ¹ Jacob’s disobedience put his family in harm’s way because he chose to live in a place he wasn’t supposed to live. During their time in Shechem, Jacob’s daughter, Dinah, was raped, and his sons, Simeon and Levi, retaliated by slaughtering all of the men in the town of Shechem. They also looted the town and took all of the livestock, women and children as plunder.

God visited Jacob yet again, and he reiterated what he had told him in [Genesis 31](#). ² It was at Bethel that Jacob met the Lord and was “saved.” However, before he moved to Bethel, Jacob sensed he needed to do a little house cleaning. There were a number of things wrong in his household, so he called a family meeting to straighten things out. He knew that they couldn’t go on in their relationship with the Lord if they weren’t serious about doing something about their old ways of living.

Jesus commented on this subject in [Mark 2:22](#), when he said, “No one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins.” Jesus was saying that it’s not possible to put a new relationship with the Lord into an old way of life, because they are incompatible.

Unfortunately, people today think a relationship with the Lord means that they can keep on living the way they’ve been living, but the bonus now is that they have a ticket to heaven. Paul addressed this in [Ephesians 4:22-24](#), when he said, “You

¹ See the end of [Genesis 33](#) and all of Genesis 34.

² [Genesis 35:1-7](#) (About 10 years before this incident)

were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

In [Genesis 35:2-3](#), we read that Jacob stopped to take inventory of his life and the lives of the family members. He took a huge step forward in the area of spiritual leadership when he had a “hardball” talk with his family. It’s as though Jacob realized that his family was only going to be as spiritual as he was going to be. He realized he needed to take the lead, set an example, and define the boundaries by getting rid of their foreign gods, purifying themselves and putting on new clothes!

Get Rid Of Your Gods

1. Rachel was responsible for bringing the foreign gods into their household.³
2. She wanted to hold on to her old way of living, so she decided to bring “stuff” from her past into her future, rather than make a clean break.
3. Rachel did what many people want to do today; they try to move forward with God while brining their old life with them, including worshipping just like they’ve always worshipped, embracing old habits and old thoughts/ways of thinking, visiting the old, familiar places, and hanging out with their old friends.
4. [Isaiah 42:8](#) - *“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.”*

Purify Yourselves And Change Your Clothes

5. Jacob called for his family to experience an internal and external change.
6. [2 Corinthians 7:1](#) - *“Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”*
7. This new way of living even included outward personal appearance.
8. Everything about our lives is subject to review by the Lord, including our wardrobe, who our friends are, who we date or marry, where we work, how we manage our money, how we raise our kids, how we treat our spouse, etc.

³ Genesis 31

9. **Romans 12:1** - *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.”*
10. **Genesis 35:4** - *“So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings⁴ in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.”*
11. Jacob took responsibility and, it’s important to note, *he* buried the things he had allowed in his home.
12. **Nehemiah 4:14** - *“... Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Genesis 35:1-7** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences concerning the time and place where they came to know the Lord.
4. Read and discuss **2 Corinthians 7:1**.
 - a. How did the Lord help you address the things that needed to be “fixed” in your life after you came to faith?
 - b. What did you “bury” once and for all? (**Genesis 35:4**)
 - c. What was your experience when it came to taking inventory in your life?
5. Would you say others were able to see an external change because of the internal work the Lord did in your life?
 - a. How have you been growing and changing since you met the Lord?
6. If you are a parent have you had a “hardball” talk with your family about putting the Lord first in your family?
 - a. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s example of what a father might say to his family: “For too long I’ve not been the spiritual leader of our home, and in that way I have sinned against God and you. I am not a perfect man, and I will still make plenty of mistakes, but I’m getting my life right with the

⁴ The earrings referred to in this verse would have been amulets or charms to pagan gods.

Lord and I'm going to take responsibility and lead our family in the same direction."

- b. What was there much resistance?
- c. What was the outcome, short-term and long-term?
- d. Do you have an unwritten standard that worshipping the Lord at church on Sunday is non-negotiable?⁵
 - i. What about family prayer and Bible reading?
 - ii. How are you encouraging your spouse and/or your child/children to develop their relationship with the Lord?

7. Read and discuss [Romans 12:1](#).

8. What things or habits have you carried over from the past or allowed to creep into your life that you know displeases the Lord?

9. How long has it been since you stopped to take a closer look at your life and your relationship with the Lord?

10. It's never too late to take back lost ground and reclaim your home for the Lord, so what is it that's holding you back from total surrender?

11. What do you need to bury from your past?

12. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: make a conscious and intentional decision to take "inventory" of their life for the purpose of finding out what the Lord wants them to get rid of and bury once and for all; offer themselves to the Lord in complete surrender.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).

⁵ Some people may have a work or family schedule that eliminates the possibility of attending Sunday services, so they've made attending a Saturday evening service at Cornerstone their regular time of cooperate worship.