



Small Group Guide

The Angel of the Lord in Jacob's Story | Genesis 31

Before You Begin

Encourage group members to have their Bibles available. The primary passages covered in this sermon are Genesis 28:10-22, Genesis 31:1-13, Genesis 32:1-32, and Genesis 48:15-16. Open your time together in prayer, asking God to make His promises real and personal to each person in the room.

Brief Summary

This week's sermon followed Jacob through one of the most turbulent seasons of his life -- twenty years of labor, deception, and survival under his uncle Laban, followed by a terrifying call to return home and face his brother Esau. Throughout the story, the angel of the Lord appears

repeatedly, making and keeping promises, protecting Jacob from those who sought to harm him, and ultimately transforming Jacob's identity. The central thread running through the entire narrative is a single promise: "I will be with you."

Key Takeaways

- Christ is never absent from the journey He is asking you to take.
- Christ is never naive from the path you have been forced to walk -- He sees what no one else sees.
- Acknowledging God's faithfulness in protecting His promises yesterday gives us hope and security for the mysteries of tomorrow.
- Knowing the promises of God and banking on them is not passive -- it is an active, faith-filled practice.
- The steps of faith we take today have a compounding effect on those who come behind us.

Ice Breaker

Think of a time when you were asked to do something that genuinely frightened you -- whether big or small. What made it scary, and what ultimately helped you take the step?

Discussion Questions

Getting into the Story

1. Jacob's life was marked by deception from the very beginning -- grabbing Esau's heel at birth, stealing the birthright over a bowl of soup, and tricking his blind father. How does it shape your understanding of God's grace that He chose to work through someone with Jacob's track record? What does that say about how God might work through imperfect people today?
2. The angel of the Lord tells Jacob in Genesis 31 to return to the land of his fathers and promises, "I will be with you." Jacob was not being sent somewhere neutral -- he was being sent directly toward his greatest fear. Has God ever called you toward something or someone that represented your greatest fear? What was that experience like?
3. Laban changed Jacob's wages ten times and consistently tried to manipulate the outcome in his own favor, yet the flocks kept multiplying in Jacob's favor regardless. Read Genesis 31:7-9. What does this pattern reveal about the relationship between human scheming and God's sovereign purposes?

Going Deeper

4. The sermon described the promise "I will be with you" as Christ's first and last promise to His people -- appearing throughout the Old Testament and echoed in Matthew 28:20. Why do you think this particular promise appears so consistently in Scripture? What does its repetition tell us about what God knows we most need to hear?
5. The pastor described three specific journeys God might call a believer to take: a journey toward forgiveness, a journey toward confession, and a journey that wrecks all of your carefully laid plans. Which of those three resonates most with where you are right now? What makes that particular journey feel difficult?
6. Jacob's prayer in Genesis 32:9-12 follows a specific pattern: he recounts who God is, recalls what God has done, declares his own unworthiness, presents his request, and then anchors the request in a specific promise God has already made. Walk through that structure together as a group. What would it look like to pray that way in your own life this week?
7. The sermon used the illustration of a checkbook to describe how believers should relate to the promises of God -- endorsing the check by writing your name on it, presenting it to God in prayer, and expecting Him to honor it. Does that metaphor feel natural or uncomfortable to you? What makes it difficult to approach God's promises with that kind of expectancy?
8. At the end of his life, Jacob prays in Genesis 48:15-16 that the same God who shepherded him and the same angel who redeemed him would bless his grandsons. He essentially asks God to extend to the next generation what He had done for him. What would it mean for you personally to live in such a way that your faith becomes a domino that tips into the lives of those coming behind you?

Wrestling with the Text

9. The wrestling match in Genesis 32 is one of the strangest passages in the Old Testament. The man who wrestles with Jacob could have overpowered him at any moment -- He demonstrates that by simply touching Jacob's hip. Yet He wrestles with him through the night. What do you think God was doing in that long, exhausting night? What was Jacob learning that he could not have learned any other way?
10. After the wrestling match, Jacob walks away with a limp. He can no longer run. The sermon pointed out that Jacob had been a runner his entire life -- from Esau, from difficulty, from consequences. How does God sometimes use physical, relational, or circumstantial limitations to keep us from running away from the things He is calling us toward?

Practical Applications

This Week, Choose One:

- **Write your name on a promise.** Identify one specific promise from Scripture that applies to a situation you are currently facing. Write it down. Write your name beside it. Pray it back to God each day this week as an act of faith.
- **Take the step you have been avoiding.** Is there a journey of forgiveness, confession, or obedience that you have been postponing? Identify one concrete first step and take it before the group meets again.
- **Acknowledge what God has done.** Set aside time this week to write down specific ways God has been faithful to you -- in your own life and in the lives of those who came before you. Let that record of faithfulness become fuel for trusting Him with what is still unknown.
- **Pray Jacob's prayer.** Using the structure from Genesis 32:9-12 as a guide, write out a prayer for a situation in your life that feels frightening or uncertain. Bring it before God, anchoring your request in a promise He has already made.

Closing Reflection

The pastor closed with this question for the congregation, and it is worth sitting with as a group:

Where are you in your story right now? Are your feet stuck? Is there a journey of forgiveness that seems unreasonable? Is there a situation where you feel completely unseen? Is there a promise of God you are being tempted to believe He has forgotten?

Take a few minutes to share honestly with your group. Then close your time by praying for one another, specifically asking God to make the promise "I will be with you" feel real and personal for each person in the room.

Recommended Resource

The sermon mentioned "Faith's Checkbook" by Charles Spurgeon as a short devotional built around the practice of claiming and resting on the promises of God. It is widely available and inexpensive. Consider reading through it individually or as a group over the coming weeks.