

**Icebreaker:**

Have you ever run away? What was that like for you?

**Read this week's scripture and discuss:**

1. Jacob was alone as he traveled to Haran. He left home in fear of his brother. Have you felt alone, especially in a distant place after moving or traveling? Have you ever felt isolated from God?
2. In this famous story Jacob hears from God. Is there a time when, or a place where, you more easily hear from God?
3. Can you think of a time when you've seen God in an ordinary place? If yes, please describe it.
4. Upon awaking in verses 16-17, why was Jacob afraid? Have you ever been afraid before God?
5. Jacob's reply to God in verse 20 (translated to English) starts with the word "If." Is Jacob bargaining with God or is Jacob showing more of a growing trust in God?
6. Jacob seems to be making a deal with God. Have you ever tried to make a deal with God?
7. Jacob said he was going to give back to God because of what God had given to him (verse 22). Do you find it difficult to see that everything you have has been given to you by God? In what ways do you respond to God giving to you?

**Prayer:**

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family.

## prayer requests

- > Prayers of healing for Bud Axley, Noamie Byrum, Ken Miller, and Alan Quick.
- > Prayers of comfort for the Laffoon family in the death of Randy's twin brother and for Bill and Susan Nuss in the death of Susan's mom.
- > Prayers for the Girl's Awakening taking place at ZPC this weekend.

**Info for your group:**

> Home Group Leader Meeting | Sunday, February 25 | Noon

**Leader's notes:**

This is a famous passage. We see Jacob's Ladder or a "stairway to heaven" where angels descend and ascend in a dream. We see God confirm the promise he made to Abraham and to Jacob, his grandson. We see God speak. We see Jacob begin to accept his role, even as he is alone, away from his family. In times when we are alone, we can turn to God and hear from God. We can hear that God is with us, God cares for us, and that God has a plan for our future too. This is good news not only for Jacob but also for us.

**[Question 1]** Jacob was very alone. His mother Rebekah had told him to leave, fearing for his life. He had the birthright and the blessing, but now he was alone. This is when God appears in his dream, using words of comfort and promise to Jacob. Even faithful Christians are alone and feel isolated from God sometimes. Often, God meets us in our loneliness and struggle. Share some of these times in your group.

**[Question 2]** Some scholars describe places where God is close by as "thin places." These are places where it seems the distance from heaven to earth or from God to us is very thin. Some examples might be in beautiful places of creation, your favorite morning or evening quiet prayer location in your home, at a Great Banquet or other spiritual retreat, or with a spiritual director.

**[Question 3]** God can meet us, and does meet his people, in very ordinary places. Some examples might be in an interaction with a server at a restaurant, in a home group, with a close family member or close friend, at worship in church, or driving in your car either praying (with eyes open please!) or listening to worship music.

**[Question 4]** Jacob felt he had heard directly from God. He felt this place was the "house of God...gate of heaven." He felt awe at being in God's presence. We too might feel awe or fear at being in God's presence. We might also feel afraid when we know we have done something wrong and a holy God is watching. God's holiness can convict us and help us to turn back to God.

**[Question 5]** Our replies to others can start with "If" as well. This often means conditions: If you do this, I will do that. Perhaps Jacob is being conditional with God – bargaining. We also see that Jacob has truly heard from God and is now more committed to following God and God's plan. He names the place Bethel (House of God) and sets up a pillar to commemorate the site.

**[Question 6]** Jacob does seem to be making a deal with God: God will be with Jacob and take care of him and Jacob will give a tenth (a tithe) of all he has to God. Giving a tithe to God is a solid Old Testament principle. It seems Jacob's faith is growing. Do you remember making a deal with God? Was it done with good intentions or for some other reason?

**[Question 7]** While it's true that every good gift is from God above (James 1:17), it's difficult to see at times because of our own hard work or a desire for more. We feel we deserve what we have. We might remind ourselves that God has first loved us, therefore we love God (and give to God) and love others (1 John 4:10-11). We can respond with giving to church, giving to other missions or agencies, and giving through our time, talents and treasures.