

Icebreaker:

Jacob and his family moved around quite a bit. How many times in your life have you moved?

Read the scripture and discuss:

1. What stands out about the midwife's phrase in verse 17: "Do not be afraid; for now you will have another son."?
2. Why do you think Israel changes his infant son's name from Ben-oni to Benjamin? How did Jacob/Israel know the power of a name?
3. In verse 22, why the mention of Reuben's sleeping with Bilhah? What does Israel's response suggest? Look up Geneses 49:3-4.
4. Esau and Jacob are together again to bury their father. What is the significance of this? How have you seen the death of a parent impact a family?
5. Bible commentator Walter Brueggemann says of this passage, "Dying always happens in the midst of new life. Living always happens in the midst of death." Is there a time when someone's death taught you something about new life?
6. As you consider the journey of Jacob (Genesis 25:19 – 36:29), what thoughts and feelings emerge most strongly? What have you learned?

Prayer:

As your group closes in prayer, please remember the following requests from our church family.

- > Celebrate with Brie, Austin, and Dean Davis in the birth of Liam.
- > Prayers of healing for Daniel Qua and Bob Steinmetz.
- > Prayers of comfort for the Young family in the death of Angela's father and for Lawton Fosgate in the death of his wife.

Requests from ZPC's March Prayer Calendar:

- > Pray for the ministry of Noah's Ark Preschool and Childcare and for IHN/Family Promise and their ministry to homeless children and their families.

Our sincere thanks goes to you for leading your home group for this 10 week series. We are truly grateful for your servant leadership. Jerry, Sally, and Scott often talk about how Jacob's story relates to our stories. God's Word is living and active and can penetrate our souls even today (Hebrews 4:12). We hope the Jacob study helped to challenge you and draw you closer as a group. We will now take a 2 week break around Easter and spring break and start again the week of April 8 with a 7 week study of the book of James.

[Question 1] Rachel has hard labor and eventually dies after giving birth. The midwife saw Rachel was dying, and she may be saying this to give Rachel comfort. Ancestry was very important to ancient people in the Middle East. There was honor for Rachel in giving up her life to bring new life.

[Question 2] Ben-oni means "son of my trouble." Benjamin means "son of my right hand" Israel did not want his son to be known for his mother's death. Jacob went from "heel grabber" to "one who wrestles with God," a more noble name. "Son of my right hand" can mean favorite son. Later in Joseph's story, Israel's protection of Benjamin almost costs the lives of all his other sons. It may not be so great to have a favorite son!

[Question 3] Reuben is not only sleeping with his father's concubine but is also laying claim to head of the family by doing so. Reuben was the firstborn son. Israel hears of it, and apparently does nothing, but does not forget. In Genesis 49, Israel blesses him but says he will "no longer excel" or be first. Benjamin will be the favorite and Joseph will save the entire family from starvation in Egypt.

[Question 4] The death of their father brings the 2 brothers together. We see more reconciliation. Jacob had left Esau before after they had reconciled. But now they come together again for closure. The death of a parent can bring families together or in some cases be the reason for families to fight or drift apart. Do you have a story about a parent's death?

[Question 5] Rachel's death brought about a new son, Benjamin. Isaac's death brought together the separated brothers and then allowed them to continue to forge their own futures. Someone's death may have pushed you to experience new life – what is your story?

[Question 6] We have seen this man go from Jacob (heel grabber) to Israel (one who struggles with God). Jacob's life involved intrigue, deception, playing favorites by his parents and with his wives. It involved running from trouble and hearing from God. God blessed Jacob mightily. What does it mean to you? Does Jacob's story make you feel something about your own story?