

# jacob

finding your way back home

Agape Life Church

1-26-2014



*Then God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.” And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.”*

Genesis 35:1-4

## I. Bethel: A Place of Early Encounters with God

Bethel is mentioned in over sixty verses in the Bible, representing over thirty distinct stories and prophecies, all of them in the Old Testament. Bethel, in Hebrew means “House of God.”

- Near Bethel, Abraham built one of the first altars mentioned in the Bible, and there he “invoked the name of the Lord.” **(Genesis 12:8)**
- After Abraham had fled to Egypt to escape a famine in the Holy Land, he returned to the same place near Bethel, and once again invoked the name of the Lord. **(Genesis 13:1-4)**
- When Jacob was fleeing from the wrath of his brother Esau, he stopped for the night at Bethel. That is where he first encountered God, in a dream in which he saw a stairway to heaven, with angels of God ascending and descending on it, and the Lord standing above it. **(Genesis 28:10-22)**
- After Jacob’s return to the Holy Land, Bethel was the second place where he and his family settled. There he set up an altar to God, and God spoke to him. **(Genesis 35:1-15)**

Bethel served the ancient Hebrews as an early point of communication with God, and of entry into the Holy Land.

**Core Point:** Jacob finds himself in a place where he is seeking after God and His purpose and protection. God reveals Himself to Jacob at a place called Bethel. We each need to discover the place where God is found.



## II. The Story of Jacob

His father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham both had life-altering encounters with God, but nothing has happened to Jacob up to this point. He had grown up to be a shepherd and he lived a quiet existence. Jacob had not had much need for God. We never read about any conversations about God or with him. We never read about him worshiping, nor any encounters with God in all of his life **up until he meets God at Bethel.** But Jacob is desperately in need of God now. He has swindled his brother out of his birthright and inheritance, and the conflict between him and his brother has escalated to the place where he is in fear of losing his life. **He needs to go home to God, but he doesn’t seem to know the way.**

### Jacob wrestles with God. Genesis 32:22-31

How is it that God cannot overpower a mere man? Because there is a limit God has set upon himself. **If you are fighting God, he will not overpower you. He will not crush you and take away your will. He will not force you to come to him and find your way home. This must be your decision alone. You have to decide what is really important to you.**

Bethel was the place where Jacob really entered into his vision of divine purpose, and, as we have seen, this involved a tremendous transformation of his whole life. He entered into the spiritual realm of the house of God, receiving the promise that he should no longer be Jacob, but that his name should be called Israel.

## III. The Four Pillars of Jacob

**A. The Pillar of Revelation.** (Genesis 28:10-18)

**B. The Pillar of Separation.** (Genesis 31:45-32:2)

**C. The Pillar of Transformation.** (Genesis 35:1-3; 9-15)

**D. The Pillar of Resurrection.** (Genesis 35:15-21)

## IV. Finding Your Way Back Home

**God is interested in you.** He is looking for you. He is looking for a way he can come into your life and lead you home. He made you with his own hands. He longs for you, and **He is looking for a way for the two of you to meet.** There is so much he wants to do for you, if you will only let him.

**Any day could contain a most unusual visit from God. There extends a stairway from the heart of God to your heart right now.**

**Core Statement:** I am ready for a deeper encounter with God. I will live with an expectation to find my place where I will experience a visit with God. I seek to meet with Him and allow Him to change my life!

