

## LIFE GROUP APPLICATION QUESTIONS

## *Advent Series*

These questions are for the **November 27, 2022**, sermon, "The Bethlehem Story, Part 1." Please read the sermon passage (Genesis 35) together out loud.

### Passage Outline

#### TO MOVE FORWARD WISELY ON LIFE'S JOURNEY, NOTE

1. The spiritual renewal we need to seek. (1-8)
  - a. Jacob's life has been difficult for 30 years. He has many regrets.
    - i. Sometimes you must go back before you can move ahead.
    - ii. He is willing to humble and make things right before the Lord.
  - b. Some things need to be retained, and some things must be released. (2)
    - i. RELEASE: put away your idols. Serve the LORD alone. No compromise.
    - ii. PURIFY: commit to walk in God's ways. Be holy.
    - iii. CHANGE your clothes: let the outward faithfully reflect the internal.
  - c. Note how Jacob, the "schemer," has become the spiritual leader.
  - d. Tearing down and letting go precedes a beautiful rebuild.
2. The gracious changes we need to commemorate. (9-15)
  - a. God appears to Jacob again.
    - i. It's difficult to hope when the affliction continues with no end in sight.
    - ii. Even when Jacob does not bless God, God still blesses Jacob.
  - b. God changes Jacob's name to Israel and reiterates promises of land and legacy.
3. The challenging extremes we need to anticipate. (16-21)
  - a. At Bethlehem, Rachel gives birth to a beloved son, Benjamin.
  - b. At Bethlehem, Rachel dies and is buried.

### Life Group Discussion Questions

1. Based on #1, above: Jacob was characterized as a schemer, a trickster, but now he reaches a point where he gives up compromises, habits, and attitudes that he held on to for 30 years. Are there compromises, habits or attitudes which do not honor God which have become a part of your personality? In what way is God calling you to release a compromise, or purify yourself, or let the outward reflect the inward?
2. Based on #1, above: How has God used a "tearing down" in your life in order to produce a rebuild?
3. Based on #2, above: Discuss this: "God blesses us, even when we do not bless God."
4. Based on #3, above: As Jacob and Rachel journey, they come to Bethlehem, where Rachel brings forth a son, Benjamin, and where Rachel dies. As we move forward on life's journey, each of us will experience these polar extremes. How has God proven himself to you in giving and taking?