

THE FRUIT OF JACOB'S SINS

Lesson Aim: Do not let sin have dominion over you, because the fruit of sin is bitter.

Suggestion: Have the students read the Scriptures and answer the questions in the student lesson and insert the following questions where they fit the lesson for class discussion.

Jacob received the fruit of his sinful life; it was fruit of fear, torment and grief. The fruit was not limited to the sins before he surrendered to God, but also to the sins after he trusted God. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Gal 6:7).

Why was it a sin for Jacob to live at Shechem? 28:20-22; 33:18-20

Jacob arrived in Canaan and stopped to live at Shechem, a place of worldliness, instead of going to Bethel, a place of godliness. Bethel was the place where God appeared to him on his way to Haran and encouraged him with several promises (28:13-15). Jacob was so impressed that he called the place Bethel, "the house of God," and made a vow that God would be his God, if He kept His promises to protect, provide and bring him back to Canaan. God had kept His promises and now Jacob needed to return to Bethel to keep his vow and call upon God for further guidance. But he did not go to Bethel, even though it was only 18 miles south of Shechem. Instead he lived in peace with Hamor and his people for ten years, but never went to Bethel so he might live in peace with God. It is interesting that God's name is not found in Genesis 34 when Jacob lived in Shechem, but it is found eleven times in Genesis 35:1-15 when God told him to go to Bethel to meet with Him. Jacob needed to draw near to God before he could live near the Canaanites without sin (Jam 4:8). Shechem was good for Jacob's cattle and flocks, but it was not good for Jacob's soul and his family. He needed to remember Lot and his decision to live near Sodom without drawing near to God. We must draw close to God and not love the world or the things in the world (1 Jn 2:15-17) before we can live in the world without sin.

What bitter fruit did Jacob receive at Shechem when he failed to meet God at Bethel? 34:1-31

1. Shechem, the son of Hamor, sexually defiled Dinah. Jacob opened the door to this tragedy when he purchased land from Hamor without seeking God's will and made friends with the Shechemites. When Dinah was 15 years old, he let her make friends with the daughters of the Shechemites without any supervision. Shechem saw her, desired her and introduced her to the sinful culture of the Canaanites.
2. His sons deceived Hamor and Shechem. Jacob had been a master deceiver and now his sons followed his example and used deceit on those that allowed their sister to be defiled. They said that they could intermarry with the Shechemites and Shechem could take Dinah, if the men of the city would be circumcised as they were. Otherwise, they would take Dinah and leave. This arrangement must have troubled Jacob. How could his family be one people with the cursed Canaanites?
3. Simeon and Levi murdered the men of Shechem. When the men of Shechem were weak from their circumcision, Simeon and Levi murdered them and took their wives and children as captives and their possessions as spoils. Jacob was greatly alarmed, thinking that other Canaanite cities would destroy him and his family. God told Jacob to go to Bethel. Immediately he got rid of all the idols and cultic earrings in his household and the fear of the Lord came on the Canaanite cities so they did not attack him. God met with Jacob again at Bethel and confirmed His covenant with him (35:1-12).

Flee from sin and draw near to God. The blessings of God are sweet, but the fruit of sin is bitter.

How did God test Jacob's love for him? 37:3-35

God tested Abraham's love for Him by telling him to sacrifice his son. Abraham immediately obeyed God and was about to sacrifice Isaac when God stopped him. He passed the test. Jacob had been slow to meet God at Bethel, so God tested his love for Him. Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons and gave him a coat of many colors. Did he love Joseph more than God? On the other hand, Joseph's brothers hated him and one occasion they almost killed him, but God intervened and they sold him as a slave to some traders on their way to Egypt. To cover their sin, they dipped his coat in goat's blood to make it appear he was killed by a wild beast. Jacob's response showed he loved Joseph more than God. He failed the test (Mt 10:37). God will test our love for Him, too. How will we respond to His test?