

CHAPTER 2

DEVOTIONS FOR DISCIPLINING YOUR TEAM

DEVOTION No 1 - MEETING WITH GOD

Genesis 35:1-15

V1 - Then God said to Jacob, "Arise and 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."

Bethel - it was the place where Jacob received a previous promise of God's abiding presence and blessing. Gen. 28 - "Descendants like the dust of the earth".

In Genesis 28:16 & 17 after Jacob had met with God and God had spoken to him, he said, **"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." He said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven!"**

Bethel, meaning the *"House of God"*, received its name because it was where God dwelled.

Notice in this 1st verse God made the approach to Jacob and said "Arise! Go up." The Holy Spirit is wooing and drawing each one of us to take action to meet with Him. This requires obedience to the Spirit's promptings on our behalf.

V1 - "Go up and dwell there; and make an altar" - God was calling Jacob to **go up** ie. to **move to higher ground**. To make an altar indicates coming before God with a sacrifice of worship.

God wanted Jacob to dwell at Bethel. The place where God had met with Jacob earlier was to be a place of refuge for Jacob, a place where God wanted to meet with him again. *Each one of us needs a time and place set aside especially to meet God. We need to settle there - to be consistent with keep a daily appointment with the Lord.*

V2 - Jacob said to his household and all who were with him - **"Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves and change your garments."**

Jacob took the initiative to call his household to holiness. To put away the family idols stolen from Laban and the possible idols brought by Simeon and Levi as a result of the spoils from destruction of the men of Shechem.

He led by example in calling his household to come to meet God and to a place of repentance.

"Purify yourselves and change your garments" - Jacob knew that to meet with God his household had to come to a place of repentance and holiness.

"Change of Garments" signified a *repentant change of heart*, as does Water Baptist for us now - a death to the old life.

V4 - "So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears (charms) and Jacob buried them under the oak tree at Shechem." The foreign gods that Rachel had were the family gods and according to Haran custom whoever possessed these gods were entitled to the family inheritance.

We must die to anything that we put our hope and trust in and let God be our source. Burial under the tree represents a ***death to those things that tend to take God's place in our lives***. Completely hidden from us so there is no more yearning for them.

V3 - "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."

By God saying to Jacob to go to Bethel it had reminded him of God's goodness to him.

This would have brought a heart of thanksgiving in him.

God by His Spirit often needs to draw us into His presence where He reminds us of His goodness and faithfulness to us.

V9-12 - God again confirmed His promises to him. ***It is in God's presence that we begin to hear Him speak to us.***

Many people wonder why they don't hear God speak to them. They never stop to think that it is most probably because they don't give God the chance to speak - because they may be perhaps too caught up with other things.

V14-15 - "So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where God talked with him, a pillar of stone"

Remembrance is the way we re-enter the presence of God at any moment throughout the day.

The stone pillar - called a ***zikkaron*** - ***was an object or religious celebration intended to help a believer identify with God's active presence in history.***

Whenever Jacob saw the stone pillar, he was carried back in memory to the fellowship with God he experienced at that place.

The Bethel you and I create each day by a lifestyle of worship and reading God's Word serves as an anchor for our day. Apply the words God spoke to Jacob: ***"Go up to Bethel: and settle there"***

Points For Discussion:

1) Are there idols in your life? Is there anything in our hearts and minds that competes with God for the worship due to Him. If so, cleanse your hearts before God - ***repent from things you know are displeasing to Him.***

2) Do you meet with Him daily? Make sure you select a time and place where you can ***daily build your relationship with God.***