



Life Groups in Central Telford Parish

Summer 2016 "Encounters"

Week beginning 24th April 2016

Genesis 32:24-31 –

Jacob and the God of hurt and healing

- **Welcome**

Have you ever broken a bone or had a serious injury? How long did it take to heal?

- **Worship**

If it helps you to worship, light a candle in the middle of your group and be quiet for a while. Read Revelation 21:1-6 - a picture of Heaven and the perfection and freedom it promises. It may be helpful for people to say how this makes them feel from the perspective of the life in this world. Speak out prayers and worship in response. Play or sing a worship song which speaks of God's healing such as "*Jesus Christ, I think upon your sacrifice*" or "*I See The King of Glory*" and ask Jesus to stand among you in all his healing power in your time together.

- **Word**

- ❖ List the different hurts we can carry through life eg failure, relationship breakdown, personal loss.
- ❖ Some may like to briefly tell of the ones they have known.
- ❖ How did they see God in this? As the cause? As one who "allowed it for a reason"?
- ❖ Are we always able to resolve these things? If so, how? If not, why not?
- ❖ Some may like to tell of experiences of God's healing power in their life.

Read Genesis 25:21-28

- In what ways do you see the contrasts between Esau and Isaac?
- How might Jacob feel about his name, which means in Hebrew "Heel", "Supplanter" or "Trickster"?
- What tensions exist in the family? There are a few!

In the stories that follow ...

- ✓ Jacob tricks Esau into giving him the inheritance from his father.
- ✓ Sarah helps Jacob to fool the ageing and blind Isaac into blessing him, thinking that he is Esau.
- ✓ Esau is unhappy (never!) and Jacob runs.
- ✓ Jacob goes to live with his Uncle Laban and falls in love with his younger daughter Rachael.
- ✓ Laban tells Jacob he can marry Rachael if he works seven years for him.
- ✓ Jacob does - but then Laban tricks him by giving Leah to him instead ...
- ✓ ... and making Jacob work seven more years before he can marry Rachael.

God tells Jacob to go back and face up to his past ... and Esau. Read Genesis 32:1-12

- What do you think was in Jacob's mind at this time?
- What was his "agenda" with his brother?
- What does his prayer tell us about how he had changed?

Read Genesis 32:24-32. We don't know who the "man" is but we can see him as God, as Jacob's past, Jacob's future and many other things.

- ❖ Are you afraid to argue with God? Is it ok to shout at him?
- ❖ How should we talk to God when we don't understand or disagree with what he is saying?
- ❖ What happens we wrestle with God? Have you ever done it?

It is vitally important in any relationship that we are honest – and that includes our relationship with God. The danger is that we submit too easily, too half-heartedly, before we are truly ready to give up our own agendas. God wants us to be real with him and that means being honest and passionate with him about what we really feel – and that may well mean wrestling with him.

Addressing our past takes time and will leave us with marks to remind us of it. Remember that the risen Jesus Christ still had the marks of the Cross – the marks of his suffering before the resurrection. We may well carry the scars of our past for life – but it is vital that we allow the wounds to heal. And God can (and will) use our past to prepare us for His future for us.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Paul tells us that the Cross deals with our past, fully, completely and utterly. The past has happened – and in Jesus, we are a new Creation for the future. We may still bear the marks, but we are new people, freed from the chains and burdens that caused them. Hope that causes at least one "Hallelujah" in the group

- **Walk**

Read Isaiah 53:4-5

- Do you have wounds from the past which need healing?
- Do you believe that God wants to bless you (remember Abraham) with healing?
- Are you willing to be honest with God – even getting angry about him?

- ❖ What holds us back from dealing with the past and being honest?
- ❖ What do we need to do to receive the healing?

Facing up to these issues may be very painful and one evening is never going to be sufficient. If there are issues which you can promise to pray through together in the weeks to come, write them down and commit to each other the time to do this. Equally, if there are issues which may need a longer time to address, talk to one of the Parish Staff about how we can find the places and people which will help.

Pray for any other specific issues people are facing in the Life Group. If you haven't done so, it is a great idea to start a prayer diary, recording the things you have prayed for and seeing how God answers your prayers!

- **Next Time ...**

Week beginning 8th May:

Exodus 33:7-23 – Moses and the glory of God

