

We've been studying the life of Jacob and his walk of faith for some weeks now.

After Jacob defrauded his brother Esau of his birthright, his father instructed him to go the ancestral home of his mother Rebekah where it was hoped he would find a wife.

Because he left home with no dowry, Jacob was compelled to work for seven years on behalf of his uncle Laban, the father of Rachel, whom he had fallen in love with.

Due to Laban's deceit, those seven years turned into fourteen.

When Jacob had completed his servitude, he asked Laban to send him on his way, with his wives and children.

But Laban didn't want Jacob to go and so he proposed a new arrangement: Jacob could set his wages if he agreed to continue to care for Laban's flocks.

Jacob asked that he be paid, not with money, but with any animals born who were abnormally colored.

Laban agreed to these terms.

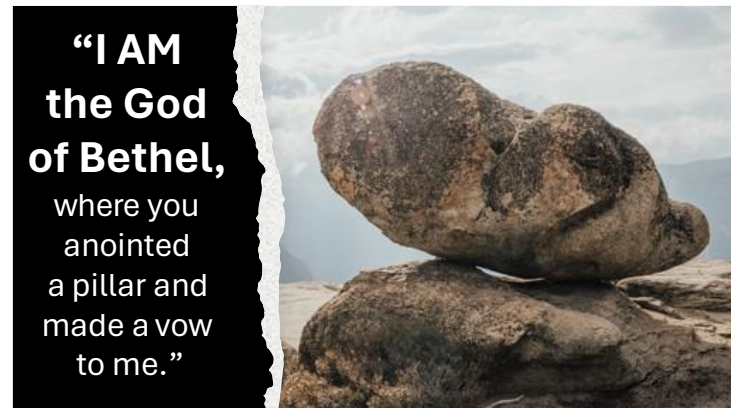
But over the next six years he amended Jacob's wages ten times.

However, every time Laban did so, God intervened in Jacob's favor.

At some point during those six years Jacob had a dream.

**Look at 31:10-13.**

What is of great significance is Who it was that spoke with Jacob in the dream and what He said to him.



In this dream the God of Bethel reminded Jacob of – the very great and precious promises that had been made to Jacob at Bethel... and... the vow which Jacob himself had made to the LORD there.

What was that vow?

Jacob made a vow saying,  
“If God will be with me and will watch over me  
on this journey I am taking  
and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear  
so that I return safely to my father’s household,  
then the LORD will be my God  
and this stone that I have set up as a pillar  
will be God’s house,  
and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth”.  
**Genesis 28:20-22**

God had kept his promises to Jacob.

And now required him to do the same.

The LORD commanded him, **“Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.”**

It seems that Jacob did not immediately obey the LORD.

### **Read Genesis 31:1.**

Who ensured that Jacob “heard” what Laban’s sons were saying about him? The LORD did.

I remind you that with the LORD...



### **Read Genesis 31:2.**

Who was it that caused Jacob to discern the attitude of Laban’s heart? The LORD did.

### **Read Genesis 31:3.**

For a second time God commanded Jacob to go home.  
Why hadn't Jacob obeyed the first time?  
We don't know.

But all of us are aware when God asks us to do something bigger than we think possible, or something that will cost us, or something that has the potential to fail... we hesitate.

The fact that God spoke to Jacob a second time is a testimony to God's patience... and persistence.

Whatever the reasons might have been for not immediately obeying God, with but five words, the LORD provided Jacob with the answer for every possible question that might have arisen in his mind:



This time Jacob acted.

**Read Genesis 31:4.**

Genesis 29-30 reveal that Laban treated his two daughters, Rachel and Leah as property.

He had used them for his own gain.

But here in Genesis 31:4 we read of Jacob acting differently than Laban. Jacob consulted Rachel and Leah in the decision to be made.

He laid out for them what God had made known to him; what he had discerned and what he had heard God say.

### **Read Genesis 31:5-13.**

This conversation with his two wives reveals to the reader how Jacob had grown in his understanding of who the LORD is and his faithfulness that had been expressed to him.

#### Verse 5

“The God of my father has been with me”

#### Verse 7

“God has not allowed Laban to harm me”

#### Verse 9

“God has taken away your father’s livestock and has given them to me”

Once he had laid out the facts, Rachel and Leah responded to Jacob.

### **Read Genesis 31:14-16.**

By treating his daughters as property and by repeatedly attempting to defraud Jacob, Laban had poisoned his relationship with his two daughters.

His greed had not taken him to a place of life.

As dysfunctional as Jacob’s family had been with its rivalries and jealousies, on the day described here in Genesis 31, Jacob’s two wives were united - “Do whatever God has told you.”

In other words... “We are with you.” .... “We will go where you go.” ... “We trust the God whom you trust.”

With the support of his wives, Jacob acted quickly,

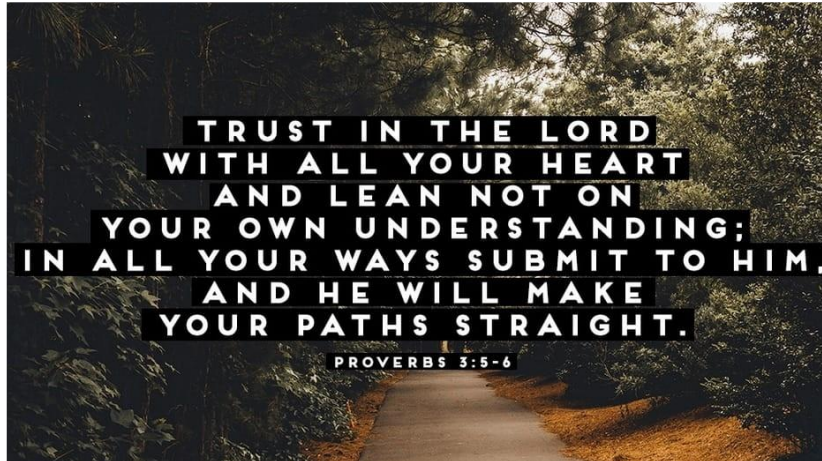
### **Read Genesis 31:17-18.**

There is, however, an important footnote in our passage.

**Read Genesis 31:19-21.**

The fact that the Scripture tells the reader that Jacob obeyed God yet did so by deceiving Laban... impresses upon us that... how one obeys God... matters to God.

Look at Proverbs 3.



A person can choose to depend upon their own understanding... to do what feels right to them... what logically makes sense to them.

But those who would follow God lean on him... with all their heart.

To lean on God is to trust Him... to trust his counsel... and to do what God says in the way God says.

Do you realize why this matters?

The LORD calls his people to be like Him... to be holy as he is holy.

Because the LORD is holy...

... He does not lie.

... He does not act deceptively.

... He is not fickle.

... There is no shadow in him, no hint of crookedness at all.

Jacob testified to his wives that God had been with him... and that God had protected him from Laban's schemes to harm him... and that God had provided for Jacob.



Could not the LORD have protected Jacob from any potential negative reaction on the part of Laban to the news that he intended to return to Canaan in obedience to God's command?

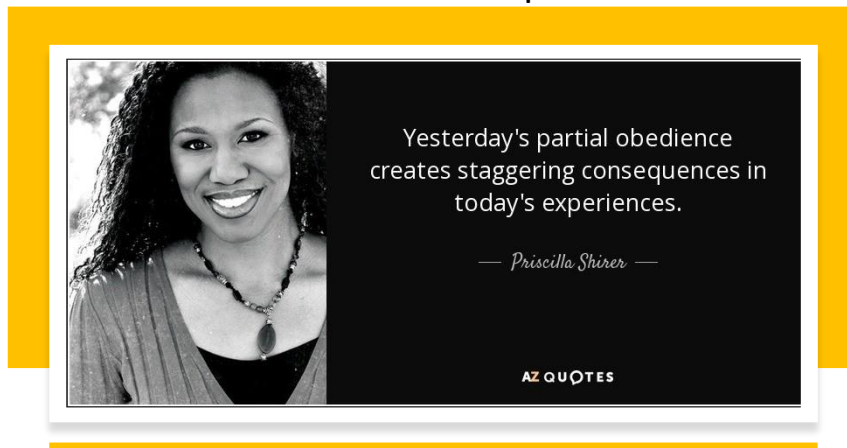
We know the answer – it is a resounding “Yes!”

So why then did Jacob resort to deception?

In asking this question, we come face to face with our own hearts.

Are not we too prone to trust God... to a point?

Priscilla Shirer said this about partial obedience:



In the case of Jacob those staggering consequences almost destroyed his family as we shall see next week.

Genesis 31 teaches us that the God we walk with is committed to teaching his people to trust him and so obey him... in everything. The obedience God teaches us... includes trusting Him with the consequences of our obedience.

Jacob didn't know what Laban would do... if he obeyed God. But the God who told Jacob to go, was more than capable to handle Laban's response.

It is the same for you and me.

Genesis 31 teaches us that obedience is actually a lifestyle we pursue as we “keep in step with the Spirit.”

Just as the mercies of God are new every morning...so is the obedience of God’s people.

It is inseparable from our relationship with him.

We learn obedience by keeping in step with the Spirit... by trusting the Spirit’s wisdom as to where he takes us... by trusting his timing when he takes us... by trusting his provision of grace... for what he asks us to say or do.

We see in Genesis 31 the evidence... that God trains his people ...as a father trains his children.

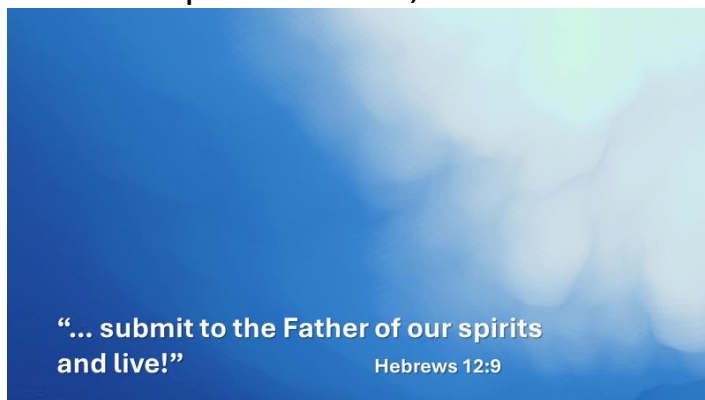
Hebrew 12 confirms... the LORD’s training is not punitive but is for the good of his own.

What is the good that God our Father desires for us?

That we may share in his holiness.

How incredible is that?!

This truth persuades us, as Hebrews 12:9 says to...



The LORD is the great “I AM.”

He is “the Ancient of Days.”

He is the “LORD Almighty,” the God of heaven’s armies.

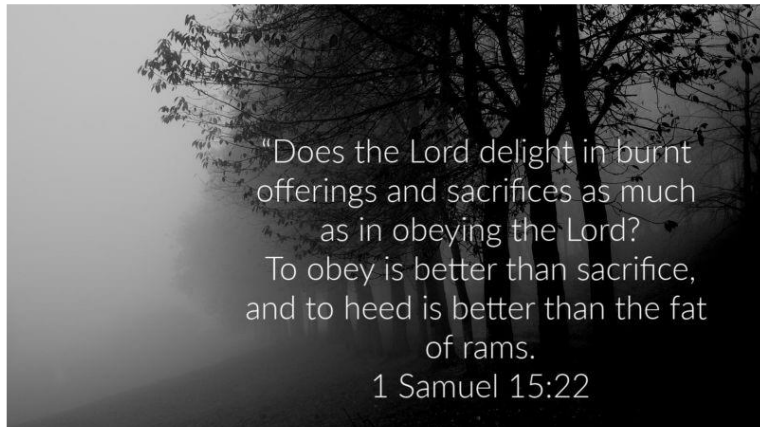
And because of Jesus ... He is “our Father.”



As we learn to obey him in all things... and to submit to him, leaving the outcomes of our obedience in his hands... we will experience not only his Spirit directing our lives, but also his Spirit mediating to us... the life of heaven... that cannot be extinguished by death.

How devastating is disobedience?

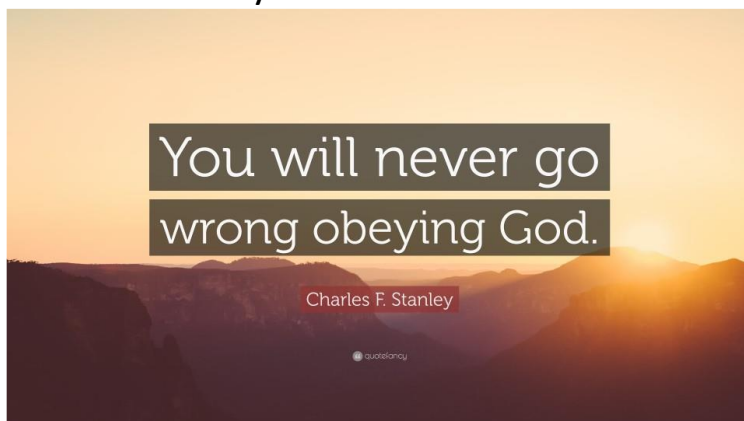
Listen to what the prophet Samuel said to King Saul...



King Saul grievously disobeyed God when he did what seemed reasonable to him.

Through the prophet Samuel he was reminded that what delights God is the obedience of his people.

Charles Stanley said ...



Negatively stated... there is no outcome, no situation when disobeying God is better than obeying him.

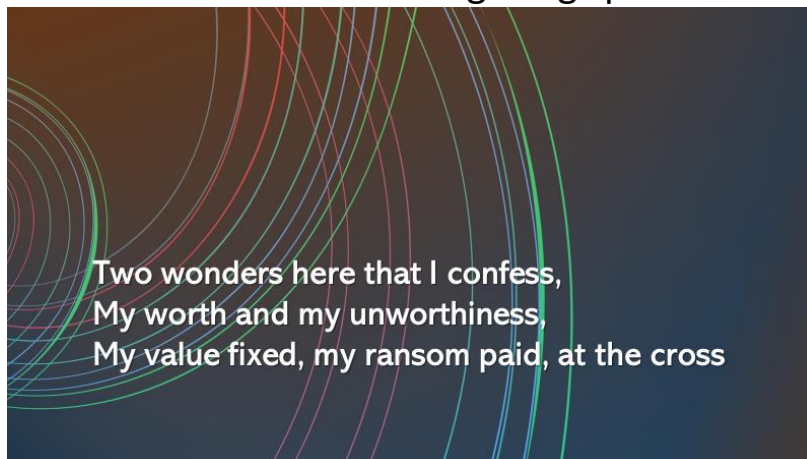
It is true... obeying God may be difficult... or costly.  
But it always results in life and peace.

I'm going to invite Donna Billsborough to come and share a word of testimony as to what God has done on her behalf as she listened to the LORD and did as he asked her.

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**“In church we don’t  
only rehearse our  
confession by  
speaking creeds and  
hearing biblical truths  
preached; we *sing*  
these confessions and  
biblical truths. And as  
we sing, God’s truth  
roots down deeper in  
our souls.”**

The last verse of our closing song speaks of the glory of the cross....



This is why we rejoice in our Redeemer and are satisfied in Him alone.