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Faith for the Future

Jacob

*Hebrews 11:20-22;
Genesis 48:1-22*

It's never easy to see a person we love come to the end of life. Sometimes that person is taken suddenly, and we live with regrets about things we should have said. At other times the person knows death is coming and therefore has the opportunity to express their love and comfort to those left behind. Those "final words" have the potential to inspire and guide an entire generation.

GROUP DISCUSSION. Talk about someone who has left a legacy in your life. Does their influence move you to greater achievement in life, or is it a source of woundedness? What would you say to that person today?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. What spiritual legacy are you leaving? How can you communicate your blessing to your children, family or friends?

The legacy of faith that started with Abraham powerfully guided and influenced the generations after him—starting with his son Isaac and then flowing down to Isaac’s son Jacob. They too learned to trust God even when it seemed that God’s promises had failed. Now, as Jacob draws near to death, he demonstrates the faith of his ancestors by passing on the blessing of God’s promises to his sons and grandsons, particularly the two sons of his son Joseph. *Read Hebrews 11:20-22 and Genesis 48:1-22.*

1. According to Hebrews 11, how did each of Abraham’s descendants—Isaac, Jacob and Joseph—demonstrate faith in God’s promises to give them a land to dwell in and to make them a great people?

2. What promise from God about the future do you hold to most passionately?

How does that confidence in the future affect the way you live today?

3. Jacob was the most deceitful and scheming of Abraham’s descendants and yet, at the end of his life, he demonstrated remarkable trust in God’s ability to keep his promises. What factors might have brought Jacob from the place of a schemer to

the place of such confidence in God’s plan (see Genesis 48:3-11, 15-16)?

4. Why is it significant that Jacob claimed Ephraim and Manasseh as his own sons (Genesis 48:5-6)?

5. What did Jacob do toward Joseph’s sons that was unexpected—and why was Joseph upset about it (Genesis 48:13-14, 17-19)?

6. What was God demonstrating by having Jacob switch hands for the blessing?

What does this event say to you about how God may choose to bring blessing into your life as you seek to follow him?

7. Jacob blessed Joseph’s sons in the name of God (Genesis 48:15-16, 20). How would it make you feel to have a parent or a

spiritually mature friend make such an evaluation and prophecy about you and your future?

8. How did Jacob's words to Joseph express Jacob's faith in the future (Genesis 48:21-22)?

9. Out of Jacob's entire life of 147 years, the writer of Hebrews singles out this act of blessing Joseph's sons as the outstanding example of Jacob's faith. If Hebrews 11 were still being written, what act of confidence in God would stand out as the demonstration of your faith?

10. The writer of Hebrews also sees Jacob's blessing on Joseph's sons as an act of worship (11:21). How is confidence in God's promises for the future an act of worship?

11. As an act of worship and faith, what spiritual strengths would you like to pass on to your children or to others upon whom you have some influence?

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight into the future spiritual development of those you influence and love. Seek to give them wise direction.

Now or Later

As Jacob blesses Joseph and his sons, he recalls how God has been his shepherd and his guardian angel (Genesis 48:15-16). Think of ways that God has been a shepherd to you to guide you and provide for you, or how God has been an angel to protect you from harm. Speak your own words of thanks or praise to God for his involvement and intervention in your life. Share one of your God-encounter experiences with a friend this week.