

#DeathToSelfie ~ Part 7

When God shows up in the middle of nowhere

¹ Then God said to Jacob, "Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau."

² So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes."

³ Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone."

⁴ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.

⁵ Then they set out, and the terror of God fell on the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.

⁶ Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan.

⁷ There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother. **Genesis 35:1-7 (NIV)**

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. ¹¹ When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.

¹² He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

¹⁸ Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

Genesis 28:10-19 (NIV)

1. Bethel is a place of _____

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." **Genesis 28:16**

2. Bethel is a place of _____

"Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone." **Genesis 35:3**

3. Bethel is a place of _____

²⁰ Then 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 ²¹ so that I return safely to my father's household, then the LORD will be my God ²² 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 (NIV)**

¹⁴ Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it.

¹⁵ Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel. **Genesis 35:14-15 (NIV)**

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. **Genesis 12:1 (NIV)**

Questions for Discussion

Choose one of the main topics you wish to discuss with your group and use the following discussion guide to facilitate your discussion. Don't feel the need to ask every question; simply focus on the ones your group is the most engaged with.

#DEATHTOSELFIE

Describe a time you were in transition or trouble.

IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

Read Genesis 28:10-22. Have you ever felt like Jacob in verses 16 and 17? When was the last time you felt like God showed up in the middle of nowhere and amazed you? Share a few stories with your group.

GO BACK TO BETHEL

God worked for Jacob both when he was in transition and when he was in trouble. What did this look like in Jacob's life? How has God shown up in your seasons of transition or trouble?

How do these moments act as benchmarks in your faith? How do they encourage you in future times of struggle, discontent, or complacency? How can you use these moments to encourage others?

What does it mean to "Go back to Bethel?" What "Bethel" can you go back to right now to help you through your current season of life?

We said that we setup Bethel wherever we go. What can you do to bring Bethel to your workplace, school, or into your home? How might this change how you view each of these places?

REMEMBRANCE, REVELATION, AND RESPONSE

Remembrance: Jacob renamed Luz as "Bethel," meaning "The house of God." He did so to remember that place not as somewhere he didn't want to be (the middle of nowhere), but as the place where He encountered God. What circumstance in your life needs to be renamed from Luz to Bethel? How can you encourage yourself to embrace a new perspective on a situation that seems less-than-favorable?

Revelation: We said that when God shows up in the middle of nowhere, He opens our eyes and reveals to us that He is "Now here." Have you ever been in a desperate situation, only to realize that God had been there with you the entire time? What was it that opened your eyes to realize that? What are you praying to God for right now? What are you asking Him to reveal to you?

Respond: In Genesis 35, Jacob built an altar to God and made sacrifices in the place where God revealed Himself to him. Read Romans 12:1. If Jesus has already made the sacrifice for our sins, how does God call us to respond to the way He constantly and faithfully shows up in our lives?