

Group Discussion Guide

1) What most impacted you from Sunday's message and why?

2) Split up the following reading between several people, but take your time here—this is important “heart work.”

Genesis 29 reveals the tendency in all of us to seek *ultimate* happiness and fulfillment in something other than the Lord. Jacob looks for it in Rachel as his wife. Leah looks for it in children. These are what might be called “traditional” or “conservative” idols—the idols of marriage and family.

C.S. Lewis gets to the heart of this in the following quote from his chapter on Hope in *Mere Christianity*:

“Most people, if they had really learned to look into their own hearts, would know that they do want, and want acutely, something that cannot be had in this world. There are all sorts of things in this world that offer to give it to you, but they never quite keep their promise. The longings which arise in us when we first fall in love, or first think of some foreign country, or first take up some subject that excites us—are longings which no marriage, no travel, no learning, can really satisfy. I am not speaking of what would ordinarily be called unsuccessful marriages, or holidays, or professional careers. I am speaking of the best possible ones.”

Lewis is saying—*your spouse may be great, the scenery may be breathtaking, the job may be exactly what you'd hoped it would be...and yet...the satisfaction you thought they'd bring you simply isn't there.*

1. The “fool’s response” is to blame the things themselves and always be wanting something more or different. *“If my spouse was more like this or that...,” “if I had a different spouse...,” “If the vacation had only been longer or in a better place...,” “If our house had more of this or that...,” “If I only made X amount...”*

2. The “sensible response” is to chalk it up to young naivety and learn not to expect too much in this world. *“Of course you feel all that excitement when you're young...,” “I've learned not to expect too much...”* The “sensible person” tries to repress that part of them that yearns for more.

3. The “Christian response” is to acknowledge that there’s something more than this world, that we are created by God for more. We thank God for common grace and the deep desires that remind us something more and greater is awaits us. We thank him for earthly blessings—including friends, spouses, family, travel, work, etc.—while not asking of them more than they can give. We look to Christ, *again and again*, to satisfy the deepest parts of our soul.

- What strikes you about Jacob & Leah in Genesis 29, or any of Lewis’s observations above?
- What tempts you the most to look for ultimate satisfaction in it rather than Christ? Where is YOUR biggest struggle in this area? Where have you experienced victory in Christ?

3) When Jacob reunites with Esau, we see a man with very different character than he had as a young adult. He’d spent some time in “character school”—he’d suffered and he’d experienced pain and loss.

Read and discuss the following passages: Romans 5:3-5 (cf. James 1:2-4); 1 Peter 1:6-7

- Do you believe we have a sufficient theology of suffering? Why or why not?