

Read: Genesis 28:10-17

Taking Up the Cross Means Denying Yourself

Genesis 28:13-15

The Lord said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac... All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go... I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"I can do it myself!" The little boy declares to his mom as he tries to put his shirt on himself. But the more he tries, the more tangled his arms and head become. Finally he cries out, "Help!!" Mom comes to his rescue, helping her little boy get his head and arms back where they need to go.

Do you ever think "I can do it myself" when it comes to following Jesus? A man named Jacob had a lot of trouble with that. God promised that the Savior would come from his family. But Jacob's father wanted to give that promise to his twin brother Esau. Jacob tried to get that promise for himself. He deceived his father to get the promise. Unfortunately, Jacob's attempt to "do it himself" made his brother so angry, Jacob fled for his life.

Jacob got himself into a tangled mess. What was he going to do? He needed help, even though it may seem he did not deserve help. Yet the Lord still loved him. One night while Jacob was running away, he slept under the stars with a rock as his pillow. God gave him the most amazing dream. Jacob saw angels going up and down a stairway to heaven. At the top, the Lord made promise after promise to Jacob. Even though Jacob did not deserve it, the Lord would still send the Savior through Jacob's family. The Lord would still watch over him and never leave him.

Sometimes you might think you can follow Jesus yourself. Yet how often don't we find ourselves tangled up in temptation, hurting with guilt, or lost and confused? In moments like that, we need help, even though we do not deserve it. Jesus comes to our rescue. He untangles us from temptation, heals our hurt, and helps us follow him once again on the journey to heaven. Why? He loves us. Remember that Savior is with you. He watches over you. He forgives you, and he will bless you.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Why did Jacob run away from home?
- Describe something amazing from Jacob's dream.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why did the Lord make promises to Jacob even though he did not deserve them?
- List ways that Jesus "did it all for me" when I could not save myself.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Recount a time when you were so mad, you wanted to run away from home.
- How can you use the story of God's love for a runaway Jacob to encourage someone whose life seems all tangled up at the moment?

Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, so often I get myself tangled in temptation because I don't think I need your help. Forgive me and help me with your mercy and love. Amen.

Hymn: CW 429:1,2 – What God Ordains Is Always Good

What God ordains is always good; His will is just and holy.
As he directs my life for me, I follow meek and lowly.
My God indeed In ev'ry need
Knows well how he will shield me; To him, then, I will yield me.

What God ordains is always good; He never will deceive me.
He leads me in his righteous way And never will he leave me.
I take content What he has sent;
His hand that sends me sadness Will turn my tears to gladness.