

GENESIS 34

NOBODY'S RIGHT IF EVERYBODY'S WRONG

I don't know how many of y'all are familiar with the old rock group Crosby, Stills and Nash, but they had a hit that included the line "Nobody's right if everybody's wrong." That song was talking about the Vietnam War and the protests that came about because of the war.

I don't know how many of y'all can relate, but I have been in or seen situations where no one was right. It just seemed like things went from bad to worse. Once the snowball started rolling downhill, there was no stopping it. Can you relate?

We don't live in a vacuum. One situation or circumstance is related to, or tied into something or someone else. Our daily lives consist of one decision after another. Sometimes we have to make decisions about things that are thrust upon us due to a decision made by someone else. That someone could be anyone. It could God, another individual or even the Devil, as in the case of Job. No matter where the situation comes from, we have to deal with it. We can make a wise decision that will hopefully stop a long line of bad decisions or we can operate in fear, panic or ignorance and just tag our decision onto an ever increasing list of other bad decisions. If you need an example of this, just look at the last 50 years of economic decisions by our leaders in Washington.

As individuals we can take responsibility for our actions, make the hard decisions, or just keep kicking the can down the road.

Today, in Genesis 34 we see one bad decision after another. One man's insecurity and lack of obedience to God leads to a seemingly harmless

decision that puts his family in a dangerous place. Things then escalate to a fever pitch, a young woman gets raped and then people are dead.

Let's look at Genesis 34 and hopefully learn what not to do.

Gen 34:1 Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.

Gen 34:2 And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.

Gen 34:3 His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman.

Gen 34:4 So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife."

Gen 34:5 And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter. Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came.

Once again, nothing happens in a vacuum. The back-story behind all this is that Jacob and his family returned to the land of Canaan after 20 years in the land of his in-laws. Last week we saw that upon meeting his brother Esau, Jacob gave him lavish gifts of livestock, while pledging his love and obedience to his brother. Esau asked Jacob to return home with him. Jacob told him that he wouldn't be able to travel as quickly as Esau since he had young children and many newborn livestock. Jacob told Esau to go on ahead and he would catch up. Jacob waited until Esau got out of sight and then went in another direction.

Jacob journeyed back to the North and built a house and some stables in a place he called Succoth. He then traveled until he came to a small city named Shechem where he pitched his tent until he was able to buy some land.

"What is wrong with that?" you may ask. Well, for starters he lied to his brother about following him. I could give him a pass on that one,

because he still didn't trust his brother and he had to consider the safety of his family. However, he still wasn't where God wanted him. After building a house and stables he moved outside a Canaanite city. This shows his mindset. He was like Lot in this sense. Though he was promised some land in Canaan, he had to be next to a city that held all kinds of danger for his family. Look at the text again and you can see just what kind of place it was.

There was a reason God didn't want His people consorting with the Canaanites. They were pagan to the core. Their religion was sensual, full of fertility rites. Young, unmarried women were fair game in a city like that. There was no moral code that forbade men from taking young women. It was part of their faith!

Jacob erred first of all by moving there and then compounded the problem by letting his daughter go into town unsupervised! Dinah was like most teenagers, she wanted to go out and meet some friends. She may have even gone over some light objections from her parents. If so, I'm sure she thought they, her parents were out of touch and only wanted to ruin her life. She probably thought she could protect herself. Once again, there is nothing new under the Sun.

- The marshmallow experiment: psychologists placed a single marshmallow on a table in front of a child and then said they had to leave the room for a minute. The child was promised two marshmallows if the first one was still on the table when the therapist returned.

Researchers at Stanford did this test in the 1960's, and a dozen years later they found the kids who grabbed the single marshmallow tended to be more troubled as adolescents. The one-marshmallow kids also scored an average of 210 points less on SAT tests. Learning to delay gratification is important!

Dinah was a one - marshmallow kid for wanting to go into town to hang out where it wasn't safe. That doesn't excuse what happened to her though.

Shechem was also a one - marshmallow kid.

We see in verse 3 that Shechem was strongly attracted to Dinah and spoke kindly to her. That begs the question, why would he rape her if he was so nice and really had feelings for her?

The feelings he had for her obviously wasn't love, it was lust! He talked sweet so that he could get close to her. When he got her into a compromising situation he then took advantage of her. This goes on today. Yes ladies, teen-agers, some guys will say whatever they have to in order to get what they want from women they don't really love. And yes, some women still fall for it, for fear of being alone or some other reason.

We could say that Jacob was a one - marshmallow kid also. As adults we can be just as bad when it comes to wanting things. In fact it can be worse. The toys become even more expensive and the number of people affected tends to be larger. Jacob was making decisions without prayer. We shouldn't make the same error.

The next bad reaction was that Jacob didn't seem to be angry enough about the rape of his daughter. Instead of taking the lead or taking control of the situation, he waited until his boys got home and then, almost by default he let them take charge.

Gen 34:5 And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter. Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came.

Gen 34:6 Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him.

Gen 34:7 And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard *it*; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done.

Gen 34:8 But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife.

Gen 34:9 And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves.

Gen 34:10 So you shall dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it."

Gen 34:11 Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give.

Gen 34:12 Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife."

Jacob held his peace until the boys came home out of the fields. Jacob is not only the father of Dinah and the boys, but he is also the leader of the family. The security and how this while debacle is handled falls on his shoulders. Jacob doesn't take action. Instead his inaction translates to the wrong action by his sons. Jacob has abdicated his responsibility by his inaction. He is, in a sense, an absentee father.

Men, we are charged with taking charge of our families. We are responsible for their leading. We are not only responsible for putting bread on the table and protection from physical dangers, but we are also responsible for their spiritual protection and making sure they are fed spiritually. This is not something that can be handed off to their mother. At the very least, we have to oversee and participate in their spiritual upbringing. Teaching our children the ways and Word of God starts at home, not in the church. Jacob's children are learning to make bad decisions from watching their father. Therefore, being dysfunctional comes naturally to them. While Jacob never responds to anyone violently as his boys do here, they haven't learned how to base their decisions on the Word of God. And this all came about because the family was in the wrong place at the wrong time. When God sends us to a particular place at a particular time, we need to heed His command. The alternative can prove disastrous.

Hamor, Shechem's father then adds insult to injury by approaching Jacob with a deal. You may notice that they didn't even apologize for the rape! Once again, this was nothing out of the ordinary for that culture. Now can you understand why God sets up boundaries for us? Parents we tell our children all the time that we are denying them things for their own good then we act like one - marshmallow kids and go after what our Heavenly Father has said was off limits for *us*. How can we expect our kids to do any better and how can Jacob expect his kids to do any better? Now Hamor is trying to get Jacob and his family to violate their convictions by asking them to intermarry. The next step on the slippery slope comes into play as Jacob's boys come up with a plan to get revenge.

Gen 34:13 But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister.

Gen 34:14 And they said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that *would be* a reproach to us.

Gen 34:15 But on this *condition* we will consent to you: If you will become as we *are*, if every male of you is circumcised,

Gen 34:16 then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.

Gen 34:17 But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone."

Gen 34:18 And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son.

Gen 34:19 So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. He *was* more honorable than all the household of his father.

First of all, notice that it is the boys that are tending to the problem. Jacob is absent, if not in body then surely in his inaction.

So Jacob's boys tell Hamor that if all the men of the city agree to circumcision, they will forgive the act and will inter-marry, essentially merging the two cultures as one.

This is tragic! First of all, they were taking something sacred, circumcision, which was a sign of their covenant with God and using it as a weapon. This shows us first of all that ***outward signs don't always accurately portray the condition of the heart.*** Secondly, it shows us how ***we can take things that are sacred and misuse them for our own fleshly desires.***

Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Folks, we all have a bad heart. You don't need a cardiologist to tell you that. God already has.

And then after all that, they are supposed to be a separate people, as are we. ***They are being asked to join the world in order to acquire women, money and a false sense of peace.*** Is that any different than today? NO! People leave their faith somewhere in order to acquire wealth, fame, women and money. ***There is nothing new under the Sun.***

Now watch the plan as it unfolds. The slope just keeps getting steeper and more slippery.

Gen 34:20 And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying,

Gen 34:21 These men *are* peaceable with us; therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, *it is* large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters.

Gen 34:22 Only herein will the men consent unto us for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they *are* circumcised.

Gen 34:23 *Shall* not their cattle and their substance and every beast of theirs *be* ours? only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us.

Gen 34:24 And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of his city; and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city.

So Hamor convinced the men of the city to get circumcised. Their motivation is the same as that of Jacob's boys in that women, money and supposed peace are on the table. However, revenge is also on the mind of Jacob's boys. Look at what happens next.

Gen 34:25 And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males.

Gen 34:26 *And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out.*

Gen 34:27 *The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister.*

Gen 34:28 *They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field,*

Gen 34:29 *And all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house.*

Simeon and Levi waited until the third day when all the men were sore from the circumcision and couldn't fight, and went into town and killed them all. No matter how Dinah was violated that was wrong.

Can you see how not going where God has directed you to go can lead to a tragic life and a tragic end? A move to the wrong place for the wrong reasons has led to a rape and multiple murders. Women are now

homeless widows, children are now fatherless and Jacob's boys now have blood on their hands! But look at Jacob's reaction!

Gen 34:30 *And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.*

Gen 34:31 *And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?*

He still hasn't said one word about Dinah! He is upset about his standing in the community and how it affects him. He is worried about the surrounding communities killing him. Though Jacob has been with and heard from God, he is still something of a narcissist. It is his reputation and safety that concern him. Meanwhile his daughter's reputation and safety have fallen by the wayside. A father's lack of involvement and inability to act has thrown an entire generation under the bus. That is a shame.

His sons then retort with the question of the honor of their sister.

I can't imagine what it would be like to have a daughter go through such a horrendous thing. But it never should have happened in the first place.

Mr. Miyagi said the best way to avoid being hit is not to be there when the punch is thrown.

- We shouldn't put ourselves in such situations. Jacob put his family in harm's way by not going where God sent him. Dinah was probably just being a teenager, but that is still problematic. She isn't to be blamed for what happened to her, but I can't believe that she wasn't warned at all about the city. Teenagers, the lure of pop

- culture and peer pressure can't be over-stated. Don't go there!
God doesn't want you there.

- Many of us are living with baggage we brought upon ourselves because of decisions we made outside of the will of God. Don't compound the problem by making another bad decision. Stop the cycle by repenting, asking God's forgiveness and then consulting His will for your life.
- *Avoid the slippery slope by never getting close to the edge.*
- *Two wrongs never make a right.*
- *Nobody's right if everybody's wrong.*
- *God is always right.*