

**FINDING GOD
IN THE MESSINESS
OF LIFE**

~January 21-27, 2007~
“The Smile of God”
Genesis 33:1-10



Life Groups

Welcome to UPC's series of Bible studies entitled "Finding God in the Messiness of Life." This week, we are taking a break from our study of Esther to reflect upon the message from Scott Puckett, pastor of our daughter church Christ Kingdom Church. Use this discussion guide to reflect upon the Sunday sermon and apply its content to your life. If you miss a sermon, you can always listen to it online at www.upc-orlando.com.

LISTEN

Record your insights and observations from this week's sermon:

SHARE

- a) In this week's sermon, Scott Puckett spoke about facing our fears. What specific fears do you have that sometimes keep you from stepping out in faith and obedience?

- b) When did you last experience "the smile of God"? Describe the experience.

REFLECT

In Genesis 33:1-10, Jacob faces his brother Esau for the first time in twenty years. The last time they were together (Genesis 27), Jacob had deceived their father Isaac and stole Esau's birthright. It made Esau so angry he was ready to kill Jacob (Genesis 27:41). Jacob escaped to Haran, where he settled down, married Leah and Rachel, and had children. Now he's returning to his homeland to meet an uncertain fate.

- a) To get a little background on this week's Scripture reading, read Genesis 32:7-21. What had Jacob already done in an effort to make peace with Esau?

- b) What is Jacob doing now in Genesis 33 to restore the relationship with his brother?

- c) What is Jacob risking by going back home?

d) Describe Jacob's thoughts and feelings in verses 1-3 as he approaches Esau.

e) How do you explain Esau's welcoming Jacob back with joy rather than vengeance? What do you suppose happened to change Esau's heart?

f) How had twenty years in Haran apparently changed Jacob also?

APPLY

a) What did Jacob have to do in order to see "the face of God" in Esau's smile (vs. 10)? That is, what specific steps did Jacob have to take to find joy in his walk with God again?

b) Summarize the lessons you draw from this Scripture lesson for facing your own fears.

c) Is there an “Esau” in your life? Is there someone with whom you have a broken relationship? If so, you are not responsible for that person’s reactions to you, but you are responsible to take steps toward reconciliation with him or her. If you have not taken these steps already, how can you begin the process?

d) Read and personalize the excerpt in the box below.

“Risk is woven into the fabric of our finite lives. We cannot avoid risk even if we want to. Ignorance and uncertainty about tomorrow is our native air. All of our plans for tomorrow’s activities can be shattered by a thousand unknowns whether we stay at home under the covers or ride the freeways. The tragic hypocrisy is that the enchantment of security lets us take risks every day for ourselves but paralyzes us from taking risks for others on the Calvary road of love . . . Life is risk, and risk is right. To run from it is to waste your life. (John Piper, *Don’t Waste Your Life*, pp. 79, 81)