

## Jacob's Well



**Lesson Title:** Loss and Grief—Children



**Key Concept:** In a broken world, loss and grief are inevitable. As parents, one of the greatest pains in life is when our children walk away from God.



**Scriptures:**

The king was overcome with emotion. He went up to the room over the gateway and burst into tears. And as he went, he cried, “O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son.”  
(2 Samuel 18:33 *New Living Translation*)

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t let me.”  
(Luke 13:34 *New Living Translation*)

**Context Scriptures:** Genesis 3; 1 Kings 21:25–26; 2 Kings 22:2; Proverbs 15:5; 1 Timothy 3:2



**Lesson Thoughts:**

It has been said that there is no grief like that of losing a child. As faithful parents, our commitment to God and a lifestyle of holiness often results in us losing our children when they choose a more worldly and destructive path. They walk away from God. They walk away from us. The loss and grief leave us bewildered, wondering, “What did I do wrong?”

Eli, Samuel, and King David are just some of the parents we see in the Bible who suffered the loss of children. Eli’s sons didn’t turn out to be what he had hoped for—“Now the sons of Eli were scoundrels who had no respect for the Lord” (1 Samuel 2:12). Eli’s failure to discipline them certainly impacted their choices. But, oddly enough, when Hannah placed Samuel under Eli’s care at the Temple, Samuel chose to serve God faithfully as priest and judge until the day he died.

*Jacob's Well*

Unfortunately, of Samuel's children it was said, "they were not like their father, for they were greedy for money. They accepted bribes and perverted justice" (1 Samuel 3). Samuel also anointed David king of Israel. David proved to be "a man after God's own heart," but his child too chose not to serve God. His own son, Absalom, organized a coup against him and sought to kill him. David, a mighty man of valor, ran from Absalom and ordered his men not to harm him (2 Samuel 18:5). In the end, the handsome, brash, arrogant Absalom was killed, and the cry of his father encapsulates the pain and grief parents feel when a child is lost. "The king was overcome with emotion. He went up to the room over the gateway and burst into tears. And as he went, he cried, 'O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! O Absalom, my son, my son'" (2 Samuel 18:33).

As imperfect parents striving to please God, when our children reject him, the grief and pain can be overwhelming. Even our perfect father, whose love and care for us is faultless, experiences the pain of losing his children: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let me" (Luke 13:34). A child's poor choice doesn't always mean parental failure. Godly parents have ungodly children and ungodly parents have godly children. Our role is to teach our children the ways of God, but ultimately the choice belongs to them.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Are there any examples in the Bible of someone who embraced God despite their parents' unfaithfulness? If so, who?
- 2) Does this lesson mean that godly parenting doesn't matter or that ungodly parents don't need to take responsibility for their actions? Why or why not?
- 3) As parents and supporters, what should we learn from this lesson that will help us cope with and process the grief that comes when children go astray?
- 4) Think about your upbringing. What are things that pushed you toward or pulled you away from God?
- 5) What is the formula for ensuring that our children will choose God?

**Next Lesson:** Grief and Loss: Setting Ourselves up for Grief

*Jacob's Well*

**Notes and Reflections**

- 1) Hebrews 12:1–13 speaks of how we should feel about God disciplining us. Verse 10 offers a little understanding and compassion towards parents: “For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how.”

If you tried “your best” to raise your children in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), which included disciplining them when they were rebellious—yet they have chosen not to serve God—trust God for the outcome. He is the one and only Savior.

If you blew it and fell epically short of raising your children according to God’s will, repent and begin to do so if your children are still under your care. If they are grown and have moved on, repent and apologize to them for your failures in judgment. Trust God for the outcome and allow yourself to accept God’s forgiveness. He is the one and only Savior. There is now no condemnation to those who belong to Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

- 2) Make a list of Scriptures that can encourage you when the pain of a wayward child engulfs you and fear and condemnation flood in.

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- 3) 1 Timothy 3:4–5 *Amplified Bible* says of a church leader: “<sup>4</sup>He must manage his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity [keeping them respectful and well-behaved] <sup>5</sup>(for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)”

How do we reconcile this verse with examples, both of godly leaders in the Bible whose children made bad choices, and of godly leaders now whose children make bad choices?

*Jacob's Well*

**Small Group Lesson**

Quarter 1, Lesson 3

February 2025

*Jacob's Well*

**Notes and Reflections, cont.**