

## Genesis 33 - Answers



1. :1 What is the first thing Jacob sees as he looks off into the distance?

His brother, Esau, and 400 men with him.

2. :2-3 How does Jacob feel as he sees Esau coming and as he gets ready to meet him?

This is the moment Jacob has been fearing since he started out on the journey ordered by God.

Jacob is afraid and also determined to somehow keep going and survive. He has sent gifts and presents on ahead to Esau. He has planned and schemed. He has wrestled with God alone at night.

And now he organizes his family into, well, the best way to say this is just to say it: he puts his favorite wife and son at the back, the most out of harm's way, and he puts his least favorite concubines and their children at the front.

He is pretty sure he and his family are staring into the face of annihilation. He has decided to trust the One, True God, Whom he now knows as he never did before....but he is still afraid.

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3. Have you ever felt this same way?

Here's the question: Does having faith in God mean you are not afraid? My experience says: no. Sometimes the fear just won't go away even when I am living and walking by faith. Now, the Bible does say "perfect love casts out fear", but, again, my experience reminds me that often it takes time for God's perfect love to cast out my fear. And while I am waiting for that to happen, I still feel fear.

Here's a verse that helps me during those times: *"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."* Isaiah 40:31

Why does this help me? During those times when I know I am trusting God and yet still feel fear I have this promise, above: Don't worry about what you feel. Just wait on God. Keep running. Keep walking. You'll make it. Your feelings aren't what counts. It's God Who counts. You can trust Him no matter how you feel.

I wonder if Jacob felt this way at this, the moment he has feared for over 20 years.

4. :2-3 How does Jacob line up his family? What does that tell you?

Like I said, he puts his favorite wife and son in the safest position. I think that tells me Jacob is human. He has favorites. It happens. Was it right...or wrong? I don't know. Someone had to be at the front, and someone had to be at the back.

5. :4 What surprising thing happens? How in the world could this have come to pass?

Esau comes running not to kill him, but to hug him!!!! They both cry. Wow. What a moment. How did this happen? God. The One, True God, Whom Esau doesn't even believe in, made it happen. God is preparing the way for Jacob to live once again in the land He had promised to Jacob's grandfather so many years ago. God is God. He can and will do anything in order to work out His plan for the world.

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6. :5-7 Is the family of Jacob treating Uncle Esau with respect? Do you think they are afraid, too?

I'm very sure they were afraid right along with Jacob. You can't all live together in one, big traveling family and not know what is driving your leader. They all must have known Jacob was mortally afraid, and they all must have felt that fear, too. Now they are bowing before and showing respect to Jacob's long-lost brother. So how are they feeling as they greet him? Relieved? Distrustful? Still afraid?

7. :8-11 What is Esau objecting to? Why does he eventually accept the presents from Jacob? Who gets the credit for Jacob's prosperity?

Esau asks why Jacob sent ahead all that great wealth of animals, and Jacob says he just wanted to show Esau how much he loved and respected him. Esau says, no - I have plenty of animals and wealth of my own. But Jacob insists that he keep the gifts because Jacob is just so grateful that he has the blessing of God in his life, and the forgiveness of his brother whom he cheated so long ago. Esau accepts.

8. As far as we know, is Esau a believer in the One, True God? Do you think this show of God's hand in Jacob's life, and this testimony from Jacob that it is God Who blessed him, will begin to change Esau's heart toward God?

We don't ever see in scripture any proof that Esau came to believe in the One, True God. So I assume that he never did turn his heart to God. Even with all the proofs of God's working in Jacob's life, and even with this great reconciliation of the brothers, engineered by God, still Esau probably didn't repent and become a follower of God. Why not? Because it is a hard, hard thing to admit you need a Savior. Yes, even in Jacob and Esau's time people needed to first admit they were sinners and needed God to save them from their sin. Even in those times people didn't want to do things God's way. Even in those times people could see all the miracles of God and still choose not to trust Him.

9. :12 It's time to move on, now, toward home. What does Esau suggest?

Esau wants he and his 400 men and Jacob and his family, to all travel together to Seir (or Edom), where Esau lived.

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10. :13-15 Why does Jacob want to go separately from Esau? Does he still not trust Esau...or is there something else Jacob has in mind?

Jacob declines the offer of traveling with Esau and his men, citing the impossibility of the big family group going as fast as Esau and his men would want to go. So Esau offers to leave a few of his men with Jacob - probably for safety. But again Jacob declines and suggests they each leave and travel at their own pace - Jacob and his group will arrive much later. Esau agrees.

As we read on in this passage, we see that Jacob ends up not going to Seir at all. He travels west, not south toward Edom. Is that what he had in mind all along? We don't know. I suppose any number of circumstances might have turned Jacob away from the path Esau was taking. But I do wonder if Jacob all along had wanted to make peace with Esau, and then take his family back to the land of his birth instead of to Esau's land.

11. :16 Where does Esau go? What is the name of his home? Does he think Jacob will be following him there?

Esau goes south to Sier (Edom).

12. :17-20 Where does Jacob go? Is he going to the same place Esau is going? Why not?

Jacob goes west and stops first at Succoth, then keeps traveling on to Schechem. He's on his way to the place he had first met God (ch 28). But when he gets to Schechem he makes it more of a permanent stop than he should have....and trouble is coming to his family because of it. Next chapter

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