

Not Alone
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Genesis 28:10-22

What are some situations or experiences that can make a person feel all alone? What are some situations that can make us toss and turn at night?

In this text, Jacob, the future patriarch of Israel was feeling alone and restless.

After deceiving his father and cheating his brother, Jacob was running for his life. He was in foreign territory and all alone. A restless night and a strange dream became a divine encounter that would change the course of his life and that of human history. Jacob was literally sleeping on a hard pillow, but soon he would trade that hard pillow for a Heavenly promise and a Heavenly purpose. At the heart of God's promises: Jacob was not really alone and never would be.

Big Idea: Like Jacob we may be sleeping on a hard pillow of mistakes we've made or tragedy and disappointment we didn't cause. Thanks to the grace of our Sovereign LORD and His desire for a relationship with each of us, like Jacob we can trade that hard pillow for a Heavenly promise and purpose.

Let's join the story reading Genesis 28:10–15 (NLT)

¹⁰ Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. ¹¹ At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head against and lay down to sleep. ¹² As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway.

¹³ At the top of the stairway stood the Lord, and he said, "I am the Lord, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your

descendants. ¹⁵ What's more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you."

- In the days before God had inspired the writing of scripture, he often spoke to His people through dreams. God still speaks to us in various ways but we should always confirm everything through scripture.
- Let's start with this reality: Jacob wasn't looking for an encounter with the God of the universe. Even though he knew about the promises made to his grandfather Abraham, and father Isaac (Israel), we don't find Jacob on his knees seeking God's will for his life. The LORD came to him!
- Jacob dreams of a ladder to Heaven. The word can also mean "stairway."
- One of the first African American "slave" spirituals was "Jacob's Ladder." In the song the ladder represented overcoming oppression to make our way to Heaven.
- **In this text who was actually on the stairway? What might this activity on the stairway between Heaven and earth indicate?**
- Though Jacob was feeling all alone, this vision dramatically showed him he was NOT ALONE. The dream gave him a peek behind the curtain of how God was (and is) always working to bless and protect his people.
- Throughout scripture God used angels to as His "agents" to people.
- One commentator put it this way, *"The fact that the angels were ascending and descending (the reverse would be the expected order) symbolizes the promise that the ministering angels would carry Jacob's needs to God, returning with the help that was required."*
- Truth for us: God is always working to bless and protect his people.
- One of my favorite Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir songs reminds us:
*"Though we cannot see
And we can't quite understand*

*Remember God is still in control
He has promised to see you thru somehow
And He's working even now*

*God is working; He's still working God is working even now Though we often don't know just how God is working; He's still working God is working even now.*ⁱⁱ

- At the top of the stairway was the LORD himself. The name LORD in all caps indicates Yahweh, God's "covenant name." The great "I AM," the only "self-existent or self-sufficient Being,"ⁱⁱⁱ desired to have a relationship with Jacob and through Jacob, with all mankind.
- The LORD was inviting Jacob to trade his hard pillow for a Heavenly promise and purpose. He makes that offer to us too through His Son.
- The LORD identifies Himself as the God of Jacob's father and grandfather and begins to reiterate the promises made to Abraham and Isaac.
 - God would give Jacob and his descendants that land.
 - Jacob's descendants would grow to be too large to count.
 - All the families of the earth (both Jew and Gentile) will be blessed through Jacob and his descendants (pointing to Jesus as Messiah.)
- But there's MORE! Now the LORD made some personal promises:
 - Verse 15: *"I am with you, and will protect you wherever you go."*
 - *"I will bring you back to this land."*
 - *"I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I promised."* [Not an indication that God would abandon Jacob one day, but that the fulfillment would "outlive" Jacob's earthly life.]
- Some of those promises were specific Jacob and God's purpose for him.
- God has made a similar promise to you and me today: Hebrews 13:5b–6 (NLT) ^{5b} *For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."* ⁶ So we can say with confidence, "The

Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?"

- The LORD was inviting Jacob to trade that hard pillow for a Heavenly promise and purpose. How did Jacob respond?
¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it!" ¹⁷ But he was also afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!"

- Have you ever had that moment when you could clearly feel that "Surely the Lord is in this place" and you hadn't been aware of it?
- You know it intellectually and believe what scripture teaches about God's omnipresence and power, but sometimes He allows you to FEEL it.
- God revealed his plan and purpose for Jacob connecting important dots:
 - His angels are coming and going to protect and assist flawed human beings like us in carrying out His will.
 - He has promised His own presence and is working even when we get too distracted by life to remember that.
 - And sometimes He pulls back the curtain and allows us to look backward at our life and say like Jacob, *"Surely the Lord is in this place and I was not aware!"*
- The text says Jacob was afraid. That could mean reverent worship or just plain terrified. Jacob would worship, but likely his first reaction was fear.
- When you and I think about how God is constantly working on our behalf behind the scenes we should be "awestruck" at the thought!
- Jacob realized that he had just experienced the very "gateway" to Heaven.
- You and I have also been shown the very gateway to Heaven and His name is Jesus.

John 1:51 (NLT) Jesus said,

⁵¹ Then he said, “I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth.”

John 14:6 (NLT) Jesus also said,

⁶ Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

- This whole experience wasn't only to get Jacob's attention and confirm God's plan and purpose for where he fit in the story of redemption; it's a picture for us of how the Lord came to earth (through Jesus) seeking a personal relationship with mankind.
- Jacob did not want to forget, so he turned his “pillow” into a pillar:

¹⁸ The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. ¹⁹ He named that place Bethel (which means “house of God”), although it was previously called Luz.

²⁰ Then Jacob made this vow: “If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, ²¹ and if I return safely to my father's home, then the Lord will certainly be my God. ²² And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshiping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me.”

- Jacob set up a stone of remembrance where he would one day return to worship. You and I need those stones of remembrance to remind us of how God reached down from Heaven and chose US for relationship.
- Jacob also worshipped and made a vow in response to God.
- Does the phrase, “*If God will be with me, etc.*” mean that Jacob was bargaining with God? It's possible given his spiritual immaturity, but most scholars believe the meaning is “since” God has done this.
- Jacob's declaration should be ours: “...*the Lord will certainly be my God.*”

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Like Jacob we may be sleeping on a hard pillow of mistakes we've made or tragedy and disappointment we didn't cause. We may be feeling alone.
- Thanks to the grace of our Sovereign LORD and His desire for a relationship with each of us, like Jacob we can trade that hard pillow for a Heavenly promise and purpose.
- His grace can cover our flaws and comfort us in our trials.
- If Jesus is my Savior and Lord I can trust that there is constant "angelic" activity between Heaven and earth to help me fulfill God's will for my life.
- Though I may be too distracted to see it, God is always working in my life.
- Though I may feel alone, God has promised to be with me ALWAYS.
- No matter what my circumstances are I can say with enthusiasm, "*Surely God is in this place!*"

ⁱ Francisco, C. T. (1972). [Genesis](#). In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The*

ⁱⁱ <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Brooklyn-Tabernacle-Choir/God-is-Working>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/YHWH-tetragrammaton.html>