

Introduction

- Grew up with a car; can't remember a time when we didn't have one in the family; lift to school every day of life; knew all the principles of operation, how everything worked and fitted together....
 - but very little of that seemed to help the first time I sat behind the wheel!
 - managed to put the car on the pavement!
- **Head knowledge isn't the same as really knowing something!**
- That is **especially true in relationships**:
 - knowing things about a person, their name and what they do, doesn't mean we know them!
 - a personal encounter, and probably more than one, is needed for that!
- Its the same with God:
 - **he is not merely a doctrine, but a living Lord with whom we are to have a loving relationship**;
 - he is not simply something we inherit from our parents, which is probably as far as Jacob had gotten with God up to this point!
- His love and his presence are to be experienced - they are not just abstract ideas.
 - this may happen in church, as we worship;
 - at home in our personal devotions;
 - or (as with Jacob), unexpectedly as we go about our normal business (even sleeping!)
- Jacob gives us an example of how to respond to an experience of God's love:

Respond with Wonder

- Imagine: got to the top of a hill, rounded a corner on a car trip on holiday, stepped off the place in a new country... wonderful, beautiful view, new vista....
- **Wow!**
- Stopped in our tracks...
- This is the right response to God's self-revelation!
 - Jacob discovered that God was with him even though he hadn't up until that point realised it;
 - and his reaction was **"Wow!" (v.17)**
- Its reminiscent of the disciples on the road to Emmaus suddenly realising that the one they were with was Jesus himself!
- When did we last react **"Wow"** to an encounter with God?
 - God reveals himself when he wills, not when we will, but we should be able to look back and see times when God has revealed himself to us in ways that have amazed us

Respond with Worship

- Back to that wonderful view: once we are over our initial surprise and **"Wow!"** of a new sight, we start to pick out the details, fully appreciate that which is before us...
 - this was one of the things I loved about Edinburgh when I lived there - it had hills all round - I enjoyed going up the Salisbury Crags overlooking the city; appreciating the details... **so that's where that is near...**
 - perhaps the same here in Dundee when the towers first went up? (was true in Motherwell...)
- When we get over our initial surprise with the fact that God has revealed himself to us, **the result should be worship!**
 - **worth-ship** - declaring, chewing over, exploring his worth!
 - giving thanks for all that we grow to appreciate in the relationship!

- Is that how we come to worship, with high expectations of revelling in who God is, of exploring what he has done for us?
 - or do we just come because we have always come, because it is the done thing?
- Lets not allow our encounters with God to evaporate into nothing.

Respond with Will

- Imaginary situation:
 - go up Craggs/a tower; realise two places you frequent are close together; see from above how you could get between them...
 - next time you are going from one of those places to the other, **do we still go the same way???!?**
- **New perspectives should change us, and the way we act.**
- The ultimate purpose of God's revelation is to change us.
- Jacob made serious commitments in response to God's grace
 - and this was, for him, the beginning of a long and faithful life serving God.
- We need to guard against the danger of leaving our encounters with God unchanged.
 - of coming out of church (or wherever we have encountered God) the same way we came in.
 - of having spiritual "highs", especially at special events - **CLAN, Keswick, camp...** that make little or no difference to how we live at school, at work, at home, in our own fellowship

Conclusion

Story:

- *In 1884 the Great Chief of the Blackfoot Confederacy of Indian Nations in Southern Alberta entered negotiations with the Canadian Pacific Railway to allow the railway to run through his land. In exchange for his permission, **Crowfoot received a lifetime rail pass**, which he placed in a leather wallet and wore constantly around his neck. **However, there is no record of him ever making a journey on the railway.** (Quoted in G Twelftree, "Get the point across")*
- When God shows up, we need to **stop, contemplate, worship** and finally **commit ourselves to live differently**.
 - if we aren't changed by the encounter with God, then we are no different from Crowfoot!