

Introduction

- Story: how not to do it! (eg Ikea furniture...)
- Jacob example of how not to do it, in many ways!
- BUT: there are some helpful hints about how God directs and leads a person...

Hint 1: Advice

- Think of two people:
 - someone you admire; who you look up to... (or have done in the past!)
 - someone who has let you down, who you don't really trust...
- Whose advice would you take?
 - why? because they are trustworthy, reliable, concerned about your well-being...
- In other words, they give good advice!
- Good advice can often be one of the ways God guides and directs our lives, if we will listen!
 - just because it is something so normal doesn't mean it isn't from God!
 - he is God of all of life...
- Jacob listened to his mother's advice, and went when she told him to go to his uncle's home.

Hint 2: Circumstances

Story

- *A young man with a call to the mission field was earnestly seeking direction from God as to where his call was to be fulfilled, One morning, he asked God for a clear sign. Later he was walking along the street when he found a brazil nut on the pavement. Picking it up he burst into praise that God was so clearly calling him to serve in Brazil, even though that country had never been in his thinking. He rushed off to tell his minister the exciting news. On hearing the gushing missionary the minister gently asked him what he would have done if he had found a Mars Bar wrapper in the street...*
- Our circumstances will often provide big hints on God's leading!
 - had man been swithering between Brazil and one other place, maybe...
 - but he had not - it had no connection to his prayerful consideration, to his skills, gifts, possible practical implications...
- God, on the other hand, takes all those things into account!
 - sometimes to the extent that it hardly seems like God's guiding, but the only possible direction!
- Certainly a bit like that for Jacob:
 - staying put was not a good option, given his brothers feelings for him!
 - Esau was out for revenge - so he had to flee....

Hint 3: Scripture

Story:

- *Me considering coming into ministry... daily readings brought me to Ezekiel... various readings confirming God's hand on the process*
 - *"I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none. So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD." (Ezekiel 22:30-31)*
- God uses Scripture as he directs our lives - and we need to be alert to what he is saying!
 - one of reasons for reading Bible regularly ourselves, for making sure we are receiving regular teaching from Scripture in worship....

- This was a hint God used in directing Jacob too, as we saw last week:
 - God's words of promise and overall direction to Jacob's life, eg "I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying"

Hint 4: Unfolding plan

- Jacob didn't know the details of where God was taking him...
 - but he did know that his life had a place in God's unfolding plan.
 - and so he kept going (29:1), didn't give up....
- And because he kept going, God brought him to the next stage in the plan..
- This is another hint that God can use: Jacob trusted the direction that God had pointed him in, and moved on.
 - he didn't sit on his backside and say "I'm not sure...."!
- If God has pointed us in a particular direction, but we're not sure how its working out, where he's taking us, sometimes we just need to keep going and see where He takes us!

Hint 5: Heart!

- We all love a good love story!!
 - even the most action filled movies have to have a love interest!
- *Jacob / Rachel / Leah... passion and intrigue!!*
- Such passion inspires us, sets something alight within us.
 - whether it is the passion between man and woman, or some other passion, for a particular project, for particular people...
- God can use that passion, that inclination of the heart, as a hint in drawing us in the direction he'd have us go:
 - one of the reasons I'm still involved with SU is because I am passionate about working with children and young people;
 - letting them have fun, allowing them to explore what God is like, seeing faith budding and growing in their lives, seeing them respond to God's love expressed through the lives of Christian leaders;
 - youth worker in Edinburgh: "Jesus with skin on!" - that's what we all are, but in particular with youngsters, being Jesus with skin on for them!

Hint 6: Sins

- Have you ever heard it said that you sometimes learn more from your mistakes than your successes?
 - holiday club advertising in Motherwell - posters didn't work 1st year, so we put round leaflets the next summer - much better!
 - or here, with Christmas publicity...
 - **but admitting we got it wrong first time round can be painful**
- For Jacob, in the incident we read, Laban's sin, his "mistakes", led to Jacob marrying Leah, and giving birth to the first four of the patriarchs, the progenitors of the 12 tribes of Israel!
 - it was still deception, and sin, but God used it
- God can still guide and direct us, nudge the direction of our lives through bad stuff:
 - mistakes, external circumstances, persecution (eg early church spread)....
 - our call is to be alert and open to God's leading!

Conclusion

- Trust his guidance, not our fallible human wisdom!
- "It is easier to steer a moving ship than one that is still in port."
 - God guides us when we move in faith!
 - God has a plan for us, that is the best for us, that he wants us to live!