

Bible Devotions: Lock Stock & Barrel
Devotional Reading for Outdoorsmen - (Old Testament)

Genesis 31:25

Camp Gilead

...Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead.

There came a time in Jacob's life when he finally wore out the welcome given to him by Laban, his uncle and father-in-law. It was time to leave. His departure, however, was more a matter of stealthily and deceitfully sneaking away. This was in keeping with his character, of course. Running in a direction due south, Jacob found himself somewhere in the land of Gilead east of the Jordan River.

Upon hearing the news of Jacob's flight, Laban immediately set out in hot pursuit. We get a sense of everyone's urgency when we read in Genesis 31:22-23, "*And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven day's journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead.*"

As Jacob and his caravan darted in and out of the hill country for ten days, Laban and his entourage likely used trade routes and scouts to find the runaways, pressing Jacob hard. Eventually, Jacob was headed off at the pass.

Surrounded by refreshing brooks, forests, and pastures, two camps were pitched. Laban, having previously been warned by God in a dream to be careful of how he treated Jacob, fumed over the way Jacob stole away his daughters *like captives taken with the sword* (Genesis 31:26). Laban intended to harm Jacob but God restrained him (Genesis 31:29). After some debate, the confrontation ended peacefully with a covenant made between the two men (Genesis 31:52).

There were other places mentioned in Genesis where people camped. These were usually chosen for purposes of trading, pasturing livestock, worshiping, and security. For example, in Genesis 26:17, Isaac camped in the Valley of Gerar near the Mediterranean Sea, southwest of Jacob's future Camp Gilead. After Camp Gilead and a peaceful encounter with his estranged brother Esau, Jacob pitched his tents near the city of Shechem, across the Jordan River due west of the land of Gilead (Genesis 33:18).

Go to any popular camping area in the summer and you'll likely see people competing for the best campsites. I don't think they chase each other but in all likelihood people race from their busy lives to be the first one in line for the biggest, flattest, shadiest, grassiest, site closest to the shower house. And, generally speaking, they make peace (or at least friendly conversation) with the group camping next to them. Jacob's and Laban's adventures are not all that far removed from what we do every camping season. Camp Gilead is still experienced in camp life, even today.

During some of my adventures, I've camped out in lean-to's, truck beds, old hog sties (without the hogs of course), campers, cabins, my parents' extra bedroom, and motel rooms. Come to think of it, I've even used tents! Every method and location served my purpose, either for convenience or because of an emergency.

As believers, our spiritual camping experience means that we need to be out there camping for Christ. In a way, we should be chasing people down with the gospel and sharing our Savior's message of hope. This means that we must pitch our tents where we'll do the most good for Jesus.

These tents are the very bodies of believers placed on the line for Christ. Camping in the trade routes of suburbia. Shining in the dark pasturelands of crowded byways. Guarding the village gates and city limits from worldviews gone astray. Bodies and bodies of Christians in the hill country of the remotest frontier and in the wilderness of the innermost asphalt jungle. Christians camping everywhere. Camping against the camps of hopelessness, despair, and oppression. Making peace. Catching people as they fall from the end of their rope and then tying them to the scarlet thread of salvation. Passionately telling them that Jesus is Lord.

This ought to sound familiar to the faithful followers of Jesus because this is our Camp Gilead.

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Bible Devotions: Hook Line & Sinker (study guide)

Genesis 31:25
Camp Gilead

HOOK

1. What is your favorite way to camp (roughing it, tent, camper, cabin, etc.)?

2. Describe your most wildest and most modern camping experiences.

3. In your view, what are the three most important camping accessories? Explain each one.

LINE

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In what area of life do you find yourself hiding your testimony the most? Why? What will you do about it?

Where are you afraid to go for Jesus? Why? Who are you afraid of most when talking about spiritual matters? Why? What do you do for Jesus every day? How will you improve each one?

SINKER

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts on this devotional. Reflect on your own experiences.

Key words: camp fear my body, my tent
