

LESSON ONE: HANG A FACE ON IT

Tex Sample has been described as a man with a baseball in one hand and a copy of the philosopher Wiggstein in the other. He was born in the South, academically trained in the Northeast, and has grown to maturity in the Midwest. He is a Pastor who is as at home with a group of tough urban Job Corps participants as he is with a group of white suburban Sunday School class or with a group of distressed heartland farmers. To say he is down to earth, is an understatement. He has described people in the South as finding it difficult to understand a concept or a personality until they are able to hang a face on it. Hanging a face on something makes it tangible. Hanging a face on someone makes him or her identifiable and approachable.

PRAY: Dear Lord Jesus, help us to seek Your face always and in all ways. Send us Your Holy Spirit through our involvement in this study. Empower and equip us to be people who are driven by Your love. Help us to be people who let their light shine before others so they can see the good that we do and give glory to You and Your Father. In Your Name we pray. Amen.

INTRODUCTION: The popular Gospel group, *The Florida Boys*, has a hit whose title is, “If You’re Happy, Notify Your Face.” It goes like this, “If you’re happy, notify your face, Take that frown off and put a smile in its place; If you love Jesus, well, show it to the human race, If you’re happy, notify your face. I go to many meetings, see Christians everywhere, We sing and talk of Jesus and how it will be up there; We talk of all the burdens confronting the human race, And say our Jesus is the answer with a frown all over our face. We claim we’ve got the answer to everything that’s wrong, Then sit in church impatiently when services take too long; Then we go out into the world with faces sad and mean, No wonder folks won’t listen that Jesus is supreme.”
—Words and Music by Gary S. Paxton, Beasley & Baker Publications.

BIBLE BASE: Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 33:1-17. Ask the other participants to follow along in their own Bibles.

DISCUSS: (The following questions are for discussion. The answers are to help the leader guide the discussion. Participants may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

1. Why did Jacob arrange his family in the order in which he did?

Jacob approached Esau first. He was afraid of Esau, because Esau had threatened to kill him after their father was dead. He arranged his family so that the youngest or frailest would be the last to encounter Esau. Joseph would have been around six years old at the time, and Benjamin was not yet born.

2. Do you think Jacob was surprised at the way Esau greeted him?

Probably so, because Jacob bowed down to Esau. Then he advanced a few paces and bowed down again, repeating the process a total of seven times. Jacob treated him as he would have treated a king.

3. Why did Esau run to meet Jacob?

Esau ran, because all the bitterness that he had toward Jacob had disappeared over the twenty years that Jacob was gone. By running, Esau showed he had humbled himself. It was undignified for an adult wearing robes to run. This showed that he bore no ill will.

4. Why did Esau ask Jacob who all the people were who accompanied him?

When Jacob left the land of Canaan, he left alone. During the time he was gone there was no communication with his family. Esau truly didn’t know who the people were who accompanied Jacob. That’s why Jacob introduced them all to Esau.

5. How did Jacob hang a different face on Esau?

He said, "...I have seen your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favorably (verse 10)." The greeting Jacob received was not expected. The face he had hung on Esau from their earlier relationship no longer applied, so he had to hang a different face on him. Esau's face now reflected the mercy of God.

6. How did Jacob demonstrate his absolute trust in God?

He insisted that Esau keep the very generous gift he had sent earlier. In verse eleven Jacob noted that he had plenty, i.e. everything. He knew that all he was and all he had was a gift from God.

7. What further proof did Jacob give of his trust in God?

Esau had come with a guard of four hundred men. He offered to escort Jacob for the rest of the journey, but Jacob refused. He didn't even want Esau to leave any of the guard behind to accompany him. He had no need for the protection of a guard. He placed himself in God's care.

8. Do you think that Esau hung a different face on Jacob?

Probably so, because Esau no longer had the animosity toward his brother that he had earlier. Remember, Esau had sworn to kill Jacob. When Esau hung a different face on Jacob is harder to determine. It may have been when he realized Jacob was returning, or it may have been longer ago. Nevertheless, he did view Jacob differently.

CHALLENGE: Ask participants if they have ever had to re-hang a face on someone for whom they felt some animosity. Then ask them to try to hang a different face on someone that they might currently misunderstand.

CLOSING THOUGHTS: Sometimes the face of Jesus appears in the strangest, most non-traditional places one could imagine. It may even be shocking. "Are you ready to rip the face off this place?" screams the lead singer of Pillar. A hyped-up crowd of teens—6000 strong — goes nuts. The aggressive rap-rock band launches into a pummeling kickoff number, the surly singer pounding the stage with his steel-toed boot, sweating right through his baggy Army fatigues and black bandanna. He gestures like a member of some vicious street gang as he screams and roars into the mike, his arms swinging low as if on the way to the requisite crotch grab. This crude move, as integral to rap-rock as the blown kiss is to a lounge act, is usually accompanied by a testosterone-explosion of expletives. The singer's hand slaps down hard on his thigh—and stays there. Gripping his pants leg with conviction, he screams, "Jesus Christ!" Pause. "Is He in your heart?"

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—Lorraine Ali, "The glorious rise of Christian pop," *Newsweek*, July 16, 2001, 40.

CLOSING PRAYER: Father in heaven, we thank You for Your love. You displayed that love to us in the face of Jesus who sustains us. Help us to display that love so others can see it in our faces. Help us also to hang the best face possible on those we encounter as well as those we have known for years. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.