



# Love Community Baptist Church

## Wednesday Night Virtual Bible Study

Dr. Michael O. Oyedokun II, Senior Pastor/Founder  
pastor@lovecommunitybc.org  
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## God Never Gives Up on You – Max Lucado

### CHAPTER 4

### “No Quid Pro Quo”

### Genesis 28:20-22

God did not speak. And even then I knew why. The arrangement was a figment of my imagination. It bore only one signature. And it revealed a misunderstanding I had about God. Jacob suffered from the same misconception.

Jacob's theophany left him with an epiphany: “God has been in this place.” Terror and adoration were rightly mixed. He turned his pillow into a pillar, anointed it with oil, and called the barren stretch of land “the house of God.”

We expect that this encounter would leave him a changed man, aware of his shortcomings. That was certainly the case for other people in Scripture who had a bare-faced rendezvous with the Almighty.

God spoke to Isaiah in a vision similar to Jacob's. The moment prompted Isaiah to cry out, “Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips” (Isa. 6:5).

When Peter witnessed Christ performing a miracle on the Sea of Galilee, he realized the divinity of Jesus. He fell at Jesus' feet and declared: “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” (Luke 5:8).

The curtain of heaven was pulled back enough for John to witness twenty-four elders and four living creatures worshipping God. The apostle was so overcome he turned to the angel and “fell at his feet to worship him. But [the angel] said to me, ‘. . . do not do that! . . . Worship God!’” (Rev. 19:10).

Isaiah was undone. Peter was overwhelmed. John worshipped. We expect something similar from Jacob.

Do you see the language of mediation? “If you will . . . then I will . . .” If you, God, will . . . be with me, watch over me, feed me, clothe me, return me to my father's household, then I, Jacob, will . . . declare you as my God, build you a house of worship, give you one-tenth of all you give me.

Jacob haggled. Rather than receive the blessing and be grateful, the bargain hunter hammered out the key points of a contract. He spoke to God the way he would speak to a camel trader. He suggested a contract. A transaction. An agreement. Others did something similar. Abraham begged God to withhold his wrath on Sodom if there were ten righteous people (Gen. 18:32). Hannah pledged to consecrate her child if God would give her one (1 Sam. 1:11). No, Jacob wasn't the first to negotiate with God. Yet he went further than Abraham and Hannah. His belief in God was contingent upon God's protection of him. Feed me, oversee me, then I will declare you as my God.

Dare we hinge our belief on God's response to our prayers? A working term for this might be **transactional theology**.

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*Transactional theology presupposes that we meet God on equal terms.*

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He's got what I want. I have what he wants. So we reach an agreement. "If you heal my father, I'll move to Rio." "If you help me in this interview, I'll be kind to my husband." "If you get me out of prison, I'll be a preacher." "If you do this, I'll do that." Really? On what basis do we negotiate with God? A. W. Tozer wrote, "Left to ourselves we tend immediately to reduce God to manageable terms. We want to get Him where we can use Him, or at least know where He is when we need Him. We want a God we can in some measure control."<sup>1</sup> Anytime we suggest that we control spiritual dividends from God, that God is a genie who awaits our rub on the lamp, that God is an ATM who dispenses goodness if we enter the correct PIN, that God is a sky fairy who is under obligation to do what we want because we have thrashed out a deal with him, we border on heresy. We've exchanged a transcendent God to whom we're accountable for a dependent God who's accountable to us. The result of a transactional faith?

Let it be stated clearly and understood deeply: there is no quid pro quo with God. He is not a flea market peddler. There is no tit for tat, this for that, our part for God's part. Scripture counters transactional theology with this message: God likes us, but he is not like us. Jesus taught us to pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matt. 6:9). The root word for hallowed is *hagios* from which we derive the words holy and holiness. It carries with it the meaning of "unique, different, separated."

Again, God likes you. But he is not like you.

Gravity does not pull him.

Pain does not plague him.

The economy does not faze him.

The weather does not disturb him.

Elections do not define him.

Diseases do not infect him.

Death cannot claim him.

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*God is NOT contained...He contains!*

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God, to an infinitely greater degree, is "higher" than we are. Our planet is but an ant farm to him. The depths of the earth are nothing but wrinkles in God's hand. The highest mountain is smaller than his smallest toe. "He is not interchangeable with any creature in heaven or on earth, or with the likeness of

any product of human imagination. He is sovereign, and His name is holy above every other name, and not to be named with any other in the same breath.”

Here's the reality: most people who are angry with God are angry with Him for being God. They're not angry because He has failed to deliver what HE promised. They're angry because He has failed to deliver what they have craved, expected, or demanded. When awe of self replaces awe of God, God ceases to be your Lord and is reduced to being your indentured servant.

God does not exist for us. We exist for God! God does not exist to make a big deal out of us. We exist to make a big deal out of God. Jacob thought his allegiance was so valuable that God would meet his terms in order to receive it.

When we fall to this mentality...God responds with Grace.

Prayer is not asking God to do what you want: it is trusting God to what is best.

He is not turned away by our requests. But he will not be reduced to a God of quid pro quo. He is too large. We are too small.

Lucado, Max. *God Never Gives Up on You: What Jacob's Story Teaches Us About Grace, Mercy, and God's Relentless Love* (p. 47). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.