

Jacob's Dream

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Genesis 28:15, NIV

I find myself in times of reflection about past adventures as travel seems like a memory in the rear-view mirror. In 2018, I had the privilege of visiting Aibileen Christian University in Abilene, Texas, for a conference. After driving about three hours from the Dallas airport, I was invited to turn in by my GPS. I was really taken by the stateliness of the university. I had never heard of ACU before the conference because it is outside of my usual circles in my role as a Christian educator. ACU practises evangelical Christianity in the tradition of Churches of Christ.

The property holds a large football stadium (#gowildcats) and a huge and stately main building with large, stained-glass windows for the chapel, along with many campus buildings such as dormitories, a library, and an athletic centre. I went to security and got my dorm key, and once my suitcases were secured in my room, I took a walk around campus. There were so many beautiful buildings and spaces. When the conference

opened, we were given directions to key places around campus that we would want to visit on our breaks.

The most spectacular highlight, for me, was the statue and quiet space called Jacob's Dream. The 40-foot statue is the work of the humble artist and craftsman Jack Maxwell, who is a program chair at the university. With a generous financial gift to the university and the skill and dream of a

sculptor, a five-year journey began to make the statue become a reality.

Jacob's Dream was inspired by Genesis 28, which tells of the dream Jacob had one night while lying in a field with a stone for his pillow. This was Jacob's first physical meeting with God; God appeared to Jacob in a **vivid** way and gave him patriarchal promises. We are so familiar with this dream in the Old Testament and can picture a ladder stretching all the way to heaven with angels ascending and descending between humanity and the heavenly. God gave Jacob a promise that his descendants would be many, and his will would be blessed. We know God kept his promise because Jacob's twelve sons and grandsons were the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel. Jacob's life had a series of setbacks; things didn't always work out the way he anticipated or planned, but this dream speaks of God's blessing over his life. He woke up from the dream with promises in his heart, as written in verses 16 and 17: "When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.' He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven'" (NIV).

The sculptor of Jacob's Dream designed a small garden of rocks, water, green space, and inscriptions. It has become a popular location for weddings and baptisms, and it's also a tranquil place to meditate and pray. With the words "I am the gate" inscribed on one part of the monument, the rocks are organized so that if you look from a certain vantage point you see the formation of a cross, referencing that the Old Testament points to the future—the lineage of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We can see the lives of our youth in the story of Jacob. As their lives stretch out before them, they need God's direction, blessing, and saving grace. Life's circumstances do not always follow what a young person desires (especially in this season), but God's steady promises guide the way. We see the truth of Philippians 1:6: "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (NIV). The Jacob's Dream statue is a good reminder to pray that our youth would have their own encounter with God and that they would let him lead the way.

To see drone footage of the Jacob's Dream statue, visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqTJEb9K_-0 or for the history of how the statue was made, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAL0g3IXC9w>.



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