

Sunday 24 March 2024

Life Group Leaders' Notes

Series: God Of Abraham, Isaac And Jacob

Title: God Will Release Great Blessings When You Let Go

Key Text: Genesis 45:25-28

One of the most difficult and significant decisions that you will ever need to make in your life is the decision to fully surrender control of your life to God. For when you stop struggling to be in control of every detail of your life, your family and future, you will discover that God's plans are far better than any of your plans and that His ways are higher than your ways.

Many times in the Bible we see that great breakthroughs and blessings come when people decide to stop fighting on their own and let God take charge of every challenge and every crisis (e.g. Esther 4:16; Luke 22:42).

As we conclude our series on Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we see it was only when Jacob finally gave up what was most precious to him that he unlocked great and wonderful blessings for himself and for all his family. As we have already learned in our series on God of each generation, Jacob was a man who liked to be in control. And if he wasn't in control, he would do whatever he could to be the boss of his own destiny, even if that meant deceiving his brother, his father-in-law and his ageing father.

Important as it is for us to decide to take responsibility for our lives, ultimately we are not the masters of our fate. However much you may consider yourself a self-made man or woman, there are experiences and events that are beyond your control.

Jacob experienced one such moment when his brother who had vowed to kill him for deceiving him, was heading his way with 400 men. This was why Jacob had his night of prayer and wrestling with God. But despite the blessing he received in that encounter, and the powerful promises that God had given him in a dream, there was still one area of his life that he wanted to keep control of. And it is to this part of Jacob's life that we now turn to learn some important lessons about letting go to let God have full control of your life.

1. Jacob found it so hard to let go (Genesis 42:33-38; Genesis 29:20)
2. Jacob finally decided to let go (Genesis 43:14)
3. Jacob was stunned by God's blessings when he let go (Genesis 39-45; Genesis 45:25-28; Romans 8:28)

Apply

1. Jacob found it so hard to let go. Jacob's family had been saved from starving when 10 of his 12 sons went to Egypt to buy grain. They had personally met with the powerful ruler who controlled all the food supplies, but he questioned them about their family and accused them of spying. When they returned to Jacob, they told their father how harsh he had been with them (Genesis 42:33-36). Jacob's reaction to this news was immediately negative. No matter what this powerful figure in Egypt was saying, this was a total no go area for Jacob. Jacob was blaming his sons for Simeon being kept as a hostage in Egypt and for the loss of his favourite son Joseph who they had led him to believe had been killed by a wild animal. And now they wanted him to let go of his second favourite son, Joseph's younger brother Benjamin. In all Jacob had 12 sons through four different mothers, but it was the two who were born to him and his wife Rachel that were closest to his heart (Genesis 29:20). Joseph and Benjamin were results of Jacob's love for Rachel but tragically she died giving birth to Benjamin and Jacob was devastated. Benjamin was the last surviving link to his lovely Rachel and an enduring comfort after losing Joseph. He had loved and lost Rachel. He had loved and lost Joseph. He did not intend to lose his last surviving great love, Benjamin (Genesis 42:38). Jacob struggled so much to let go. And maybe you do too. So, what or who do you find it is so hard to let go of? Is it a child, a parent, a loved one you have lost? Is it the pain of grief? Is it anger at the way you have been treated? Is it a grudge, a resentment, an argument? Is it an image and reputation? Is it money, comfort, a hobby, a sport, a friendship? What are you holding on to deep in your heart? You must not hold on if you want to be opened to all the new things that God has for you.

2. Jacob finally decided to let go. Jacob resisted for as long as he could, even though a long time passed, and Simeon was still in an Egyptian prison. By now a return to Egypt was now urgently needed for more grain. That meant Benjamin had to go on the trip with them as the Egyptian ruler had insisted. It was Judah, the fourth born son, who tried to persuade his aged Dad to make the decision that he so feared. This was the same Judah to who had convinced his brothers to sell Joseph as a slave rather than kill him. Although his dad knew nothing about this, Jacob finally accepted the promise of Judah to take personal responsibility for Benjamin. Here at last is Jacob's moment of surrender where he finally threw himself on to God's mercy and he gave in to let events take their course (Genesis 43:14). And that's what you need to do also. There comes a time when you must let go of your pain, your fear and defensiveness. The point of your breakthrough is the moment you fully put yourself in the hands of the Lord. This is the time when you must stop struggling and let God be God in your life. You need to decide to surrender everything to the Lord: your sins, your sorrows, your fears, pain, hopes dreams, and your control. This is how you will find peace and open the door to God's purposes for you.

3. Jacob was stunned by God's blessings when he let go. The 11 brothers went back to Egypt for food and to face the wrath of the ruler who had kept their brother in prison, but they made the most incredible discovery in the most dramatic circumstances (Genesis 39-45). For the powerful ruler of Egypt who controlled the food supply for millions, the man they so feared, was in fact their brother Joseph who they had sold into Egypt years before. When he revealed himself to them the first question he asked was 'is dad still alive?'. At first, they were shocked and feared for their lives, but they found that Joseph had forgiven them. They spent a lot of time crying over each other and finally Joseph asked them to go back to his dad and tell him that the son who he thought had died long ago was still very much alive. Meanwhile Jacob who had been waiting and hoping for the return of his sons, especially Benjamin, was about to have the greatest shock of his life (Genesis 45:25-28) No wonder the Bible says that 'Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them.' How could this possibly be true? How could there still be hope after so much pain? How could circumstances that had been so negative turn out so positive? How could God turn around such a mess? Yet after more than 22 years of not knowing what had happened to each other, father and son were reunited (Genesis 46:29). As soon as Joseph appeared before Jacob, he threw his arms around his father and

wept for a long time. Years after Jacob thought everything was finished, he discovered that God was still at work when everything seemed lost; he hadn't known it but all through his pain and grief God was always still faithfully continuing with His plans. God was at work in ways that He could never have imagined; not only was Joseph alive, but he was the ruler of all Egypt. Only God could have orchestrated such a turn of events. God brought great healing to hurting hearts, both his and Joseph's. God brought great reconciliation in his family and prospered them greatly. God worked to save multitudes from starvation and prepared Jacob to bless future generations. Jacob blessed Pharaoh, his own sons and blessed his grandsons. God fulfilled everything He had promised. When Jacob died, after 17 years in Egypt it was not only Joseph who wept over him, but all the high officials of Egypt accompanied him and his brothers to bury Jacob in a field bought by his grandfather Abraham back in the land of Canaan that God had repeatedly promised to him and his descendants. And so the faithfulness of God, throughout all the twists and turns of Jacob's life, continued through each generation, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to Joseph and beyond and it continues to this moment.

Today you need to know that the God of Jacob can be your God too. You may have thought your purpose in life is over or that you can never recover from your pain. But God is not finished with you. God has had His hand on you through every season of life. God has much better things in store for you than you can imagine. Today put your full trust in the Lord, leave your fear, give up your control, get rid of your arguments, and let God work out his perfect purposes for you and in you and through you. For just as Jacob saw God's good plans unfold in his life, so we who are followers of Jesus will too (Romans 8:28). And that's why we can do no better than to fully surrender our lives to God and always trust Him.