

Sunday 10 March 2024

## Life Group Leaders' Notes

Series: God Of Abraham, Isaac And Jacob

Title: How To Pray Breakthrough Prayers

Key Text: Genesis 32:24-28

In our series on Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we see how God had a great plan for every generation. He made promises of limitless multiplication and of the land of Israel to the Jewish people. But each generation had to learn how to take hold of their blessing. The third generation, Jacob, also had to press through to receive his blessing.

God warns against praying with vain repetition, saying the words but they're not from the heart (Jeremiah 29:13). Jacob was a man who got God's attention with a breakthrough prayer and in doing so got his life, family and future back on track (Genesis 32:24-28).

This is a message of hope for you and for your family. You might be 'on the run' from God, ducking and diving, putting on a brave face to cover your desperation or wondering if there's a future for you. Well God has not forgotten you. God loves you, He still has a plan for your life, and He wants to introduce you to the new life He has for you, just like He did for Jacob. Jacob didn't assume God's blessing on his life was automatic. To receive his blessing, we see some key points from Jacob's life:

1. Jacob had to be brought to a place of desperation (Genesis 25:22-23; Genesis 27:1-28; Genesis 29:1-30:26; Genesis 31:1-32:1; Genesis 32:7-8; Ephesians 2:8)
2. Jacob had to cry out in his desperation (Psalm 34:17; Genesis 32:24; Psalm 145:19)
3. Jacob had to push through (Genesis 32:25-28)
4. Jacob was changed forever (Genesis 32:27-32)

## Apply

**1. Jacob had to be brought to a place of desperation.** Jacob had a past that had caught up with him. He had been a deceiver and he had been deceived. After a long time of barrenness,

his mother Rebekah became pregnant with twins (Genesis 25:22-23). Being born first meant that Esau was entitled to the birthright - the inheritance, wealth and blessings from his father. The name Jacob means deceiver/supplanted/heel grabber (be careful how you name your children!) - and Jacob went on to live up to this name (Genesis 25:24). To get ahead of his older brother, Jacob tricked Esau into selling him his birthright (Genesis 25:29-33). Then, when his father Isaac was at his life's end, he wanted to bless his firstborn son, but Jacob and his mother plotted to steal the blessing from Esau. Jacob successfully conned his father into giving him Esau's blessing, which enraged Esau (Genesis 27). Jacob had become a deceiver and got what he wanted. But sure enough, when he was forced to leave the family home, he began to reap what he had sown. Whilst working for his uncle Laban, Jacob was deceived into marrying the wrong woman after a 7 year wait, and then had to work another 7 years to get the wife he had been promised (Genesis 29). Additionally, his uncle Laban changed his wages 10 times (Genesis 31). It was at this time he decided to return to his father's household and face up to his past that was catching up with him. So Jacob sent a message to his brother along with some gifts to pacify him. The message came back to him that Esau was on his way to meet him with 400 men, and Jacob was terrified. Desperation brings us to a place where we acknowledge our deep need for the Lord. For Jacob that was after his brother had vowed to kill him, forcing him to run for his life. Trouble drives us to our knees (Genesis 32:7-8). Jacob prepared for the worst and tried to put things right by sending gifts ahead of himself. Spiritual death comes when we think we have everything under control. When you are brought to a place of desperation, you realise your breakthrough isn't going to come from your own efforts. You realise that something bigger than you is needed. God is not looking for our performance, He's looking for our surrender, our admission that we're undone without Him. Jacob had to come to a new humility. God is not out to humiliate us, but to bring us to reality so that He can give us a brand new life (Ephesians 2:8). What matters in your crisis is who you turn to. If that person is Jesus, your life will start from the moment you invite Him in and totally surrender to Him. Turn to Jesus in your desperation today.

**2. Jacob had to cry out in his desperation.** Alone in the wilderness, after he had sent all his family ahead of him, Jacob had the ultimate restless night. There is nothing that will develop your prayer life like being under pressure. We have to get to the place where we cry out to God (Psalm 34:17). That night the Lord visited Jacob and the Bible says that Jacob wrestled

with him until daybreak. Jacob, in his weakness and fear, finally faced God (Genesis 32:24). Some things must be settled between just you and God. Deep things about you that only He knows, when you settle who you really are with God and where you're going in your life. Don't settle for second hand faith when you can get your own. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub> God is inviting you to take Him at His word and prove His promises for your own life. It starts when you cry out (Psalm 145:19).

**3. Jacob had to push through** (Genesis 32:25-28). Jacob remembered the promise God gave him about his life and family to keep him safe if he returned to his father's household. Jacob refused to let anything stand in the way of its fulfilment in his life. He remembered what his grandfather Abraham stood for, and how Isaac prayed for his wife so she could bear children. So all though the long night till daybreak, Jacob insisted "I will not let you go unless you bless me". What mattered, was not that he was fighting with God, it's that he was turning to God. He was learning how to get past his pride, his self-sufficiency, scheming instead of trusting. He learned to pray through to a place of intimacy with God, a place of reality before God, a place of peace and assurance that God had this all under His control. God never wants us to go through fears, battles, stress on our own: He wants to meet us right in the middle of them. It is through Him that we receive freedom, endurance, faith, courage, miracles.

**4. Jacob was changed forever** (Genesis 32:27-32). From this time forward, whenever Jacob acted according to his new nature with confidence and strength, he is called Israel. The thing that Jacob feared most didn't ever happen. Instead of fighting him, Esau then came and embraced him and Jacob was saved. But he continued to walk with a limp from his fight to remind him all his life that it is better to trust in God than to rely on yourself. Maybe you've been fighting and struggling for your blessings, you may have received a calling from the Lord or a great promise that is not yet fulfilled. Like Jacob, you might have taken some short cuts, compromised yourself, maybe putting on a show of religion, keeping a brave smiley face on but deep down knowing you're living well below what God has for you. God is looking for your surrender, not your performance. Breakthrough is when God breaks through because you let Him into every area in whatever way He wants and you agree with it. When you encounter God everything changes. Now is the time for you to have a change of nature – where you're no longer in the driving seat, where you surrender all to Jesus.