

Sunday 3 March 2024

Life Group Leaders' Notes

Series: God Of Abraham, Isaac And Jacob

Title: Unblock Your Blessings

Key Text: Genesis 26:18

Times of purification and prayer amongst the people of God are how every Christian movement of revival and restoration has begun. This is also an essential process if we seriously want to see great change in our lives, our families and in our nations, and indeed if we are focussed on seeing a Great Harvest of people turning to Christ.

As we have already discovered in our current series on the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God wants to bless every generation.

He greatly blessed Abraham, with a long-promised son, with great wealth and promises of limitless descendants. He also blessed Isaac in so many ways and He would later greatly bless Jacob and his descendants. But to keep the blessing flowing, there were obstacles to overcome, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all discovered.

Genesis 26:18 talks of how Isaac unblocked his blessings, saying: *'Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them.'*

Isaac was in big trouble. In a time of famine, he had gone to the land of the Philistines and God has blessed him greatly - so much so that locals became envious, and he had to move on. He did so - to Gerar, approximately 11 miles southeast of Gaza.

But he and his family had a very urgent need - not of land but of water. Wells that you could access water from were essential to their survival and prosperity. This is something our brothers and sisters in Burkina Faso also know which is why we have supported different projects over the years to sink wells in the world's third poorest country.

A well represents life, blocking up a well represents death. Now just as access to natural water is of the highest importance, so too the spiritual water of the Holy Spirit is vital to the health and growth of the Christian church.

As Christians we constantly need the streams of living water (the Holy Spirit, the life giver) that Jesus promised (John 7:38). Without the anointing of the Holy Spirit, we will remain thirsty and fruitless. As individuals and churches, we need to always remove anything that would block us from finding water from God.

This passage is very relevant to where we are today in the Christian church in the U.K and other nations as well as to many of us are personally. We see some key points:

1. Generations that have gone before us have dug life giving wells (Hebrews 12:1-3)
2. Enemies have blocked up the wells of a previous generation (Matthew 13:24-43)
3. Each generation needs to unblock old wells (Jeremiah 29:13; Hebrews 11:6; Isaiah 12:3)

Apply

1. Generations that have gone before us have dug life giving wells. Father Abraham had dug wells. Isaac had no need to re-invent the wheel, to dig fresh wells. Excellent wells had already been dug. In one sense much of the hard work had been done. Others had been this way before him. His father had learnt how to sink wells. Today we need to realise much ground has already been won. Battles for biblical truth, for political freedom of worship, for recognition of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. A century ago Pentecostal Christians were ridiculed for their emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Now today Spirit filled Christians and churches are at the forefront of global Christianity. For sure many great men and women of God gone before us:

- John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, William Wilberforce, William and Catherine Booth, Corrie Ten Boom, Billy Graham...The list is endless:

- Gladys Alyward, the pioneer missionary to China, Smith Wigglesworth, the Bradford plumber, Teddy Hodgson, who was martyred in Congo and our own pioneer founder, W.T.H. 'Billy' Richards.

They have shown the way forward by faith, vision and action. In one sense they knew how to sink wells, they knew what worked, they knew how to tap into the blessing of God. We are part of a long line of heroes of faith and their lives and ministries should be a source of instruction and inspiration (Hebrews 12:1-3). In the UK and elsewhere, there are many families, churches, communities and institutions that continue to this day because of previous godly generations, including generations of believers in this church. You too personally may have a rich spiritual history where you can point to many times where you have experienced the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. The wells of God have been sunk deep in your life. But the question is: what is the state of the wells today?

2. Enemies have blocked up the wells of a previous generation. Since Abraham died, enemies with hostile intent, moved in to block what had been conquered. This is the similar scenario that Jesus described in the parable of the weeds (Matthew 13:24-43). Today we can see much evidence of the work of the enemies of God, and of the arch enemy Satan, in countless lives and maybe also in our own lives and families. In Britain, we can see that after many great revivals, Christianity has been under sustained attack for a long time and today faces many challenges to our national Christian identity. Forces hostile to Christianity include:

- Aggressive secular humanists who deny the reality of any absolute truths or standards and who legislate morality as seems best to them
- Evolutionists who ridicule the possibility of any creator
- Growing numbers of Paganists who literally worship the devil
- Radical Islamists who are anti-democracy, anti-Jewish and who are intent on making Britain submit to Islam
- Militant transgender activists who violently oppose the concept of biological genders and traditional morality

Just as in the parable that Jesus told, much of this has happened while the church has been spiritually asleep, divided and often pre-occupied with its own concerns. It is time to wake up

and see the big spiritual picture but also for to take immediate actions to first face up to what is causing what any blockage in any areas of our lives. It may be one thing or many things:

- Hidden and unconfessed sin
- Bitterness of spirit
- Pride
- Judgmentalism
- Criticism of leaders and fellow believers: Don't be like the generation who always criticised Moses and failed to get into the promised land. Or like those who wouldn't recognise Jesus even as a prophet as they had known him for many years which blocked him from working miracles in his home town
- Withholding of tithes and offerings
- Unbelief and cynicism
- Love of money and this world more than God
- Neglect of your spiritual life and family life
- Overbusyness

All these things and others also can, and maybe have, brought great blockage in your life. And they need to be removed by a decision to get real and repent in order to once more access the life-giving water of God's grace and anointing.

3. Each generation needs to unblock old wells. Our political and cultural elite have turned their backs on this country's spiritual heritage - the old wells. Many church leaders, including evangelical leaders, have also turned away from many of the emphases of our spiritual forefathers. But we can be among those who re-open the wells of blessing in our generation. Now of course every generation needs to communicate in a way that can cause the gospel to be understood by each generation. But what we need at root is a return to true spiritual roots. Back to what is tested and proven and sure. This means that we must:

- ***Unblock the Wells of Christ centred Christianity:*** Christianity is primarily about Christ. We need to put Jesus at the centre of our lives and share boldly the good news of his saving love through his death and resurrection.

- ***Unblock the wells of holy living:*** It's the pure in heart who will see God. Holiness is how close I can get to God, not how much can I get away with. Holiness means running from sexual immorality and unclean thoughts and words and relationships. Holiness means treating people right in life and business and caring for the poor.
- ***Unblock the wells of sacrificial service:*** Christ has made the ultimate sacrifice, but we too are called to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow him. The great stories of the advance of the gospel and Christian mission are stories of individuals who have sacrificed time, money, sleep, careers, health and sometimes life itself.
- ***Unblock the wells of Prayer:*** Prayer is essential to spiritual life and vitality. It is time once again to seek the Lord (Jeremiah 29:13).
- ***Unblock the wells of Bible study:*** The Bible is a book of life. There is power, protection and prosperity when we are focussed on the Word of God. We should constantly read the Word of God, meditate on it, study it and ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate it.
- ***Unblock the wells of forgiveness:*** It's time to let go of grudges and arguments and to be reconciled like the Prodigal was with His father and Joseph was with his brothers.
- ***Unblock the wells of honour for leadership authority:*** Break with an old culture of dishonour and disrespect.
- ***Unblock the wells of generous giving:*** Bring all the tithes into the storehouse and give your best offerings.
- ***Unblock the wells of faith in God:*** Unbelief, doubt and negative speech and thought patterns must go for the blessing to flow. Start to believe God's word and step out. Faith is not faith until it is an act (Hebrews 11:6).
- ***Unblock the wells of praise and worship:*** It's time for you to sing again.
- ***Unblock the wells of evangelism and Salvation:*** Go out to the multitudes and share the good news of Jesus at every opportunity.
- ***Unblock the wells of dependence on the anointing of the Holy Spirit***

That's quite a lot of unblocking to do. But it is totally worth doing. For when you do, 'with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation' (Isaiah 12:3). Isaac discovered the blessings of re-opening old wells and he learnt also how to sink new wells as this chapter also reveals.

He was blessed in his life and generation. By following his example, you also will know great life and blessing for yourselves and for your generations.