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Insights

The Way to a New Life
SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2011

Key

ingredients that will
redefine your life

PART
3



THIS IS WHAT WE'RE ALL REALLY
LIVING FOR...*the knowledge that God has
commanded His blessing on us.*



Key ingredients that will redefine your life

BY DR. DENNIS BURKE

What principles can we find by looking at the lives of the patriarchs of faith, that can help us redefine our own lives in a way that pleases God? That's what we've been discussing these past few months as we've looked at the lives of Abraham and Isaac. God was building this small obscure clan into a people, establishing something that would last for all generations even up to this present hour. This month we'll look at the sons of Isaac—Esau and Jacob—and discover what separated them from each other as their lives progressed and what we can learn from these two men's different outcomes.

Jacob and Esau were the fraternal-twin sons born to Isaac. Although the two infants were born almost simultaneously, Esau came forth from the womb first and was therefore considered to be the eldest who would receive the birthright of the family, and a twofold inheritance as the firstborn son of his father Isaac.

As the two sons grew toward manhood, their mother

Rebekah observed that Esau seemed to have his own selfish agenda and lacked the character to eventually assume the leadership role over the household. It was Jacob who had a heart to pursue the things of God. So Rebekah enlisted Jacob's help and began to look for a way to get the birthright transferred to her younger son, where she knew it belonged.

Have you ever tapped into the mind of God and received a word from Him—only to make the mistake of trying to figure out how to make that word come to pass on your own? That’s what happened with Rebekah and Jacob. They went to work conceiving a plan using tactics to deceive and manipulate both Esau and Isaac in order to wrest away from Jacob’s brother the birthright and the firstborn blessing of the father.

The first part of the plan took place one day as Esau returned from hunting—something he loved to do (*see* Genesis 25:29-34). Esau had been gone a long time and was ravenous by the time he returned. Meanwhile, Jacob had prepared a delicious lentil stew. When Esau begged for a bowl of stew, Jacob demanded that he sell his birthright in return. Esau agreed, focused only on his physical hunger of that moment—and the Bible says that in doing so, Esau “despised” his birthright (v. 34).

What kind of son gives up his birthright for a pot of stew? The kind of son who would fail at leading his household in the things of God. Esau’s response to Jacob’s request—“...Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?” (v. 32)—confirmed what Rebekah already believed: Esau was *not* the man to carry on the vision of God’s plan for this family.

Later when Isaac was old and blind, he sensed that he was nearing death and summoned Esau to him (*see* Genesis chapter 27). The elderly father instructed his firstborn son to go hunting and to cook him a savory dish with the game he killed. Isaac’s intent was to command the blessing of the firstborn over Esau after his eldest son brought him this special meal.

This was the moment Rebekah and Jacob had been waiting for. Rebekah devised a plan in which Jacob would pose as Esau before his blind father and receive the firstborn blessing in his brother’s place. She instructed Jacob to kill two goats from their herds and bring them to her. After making a delicious meal just the way Isaac loved, Rebekah wrapped strips of goat hair around Jacob’s smooth arms to imitate the hairy arms of his elder brother. Jacob and Rebekah were doing their best to think of everything, it seemed. They knew that Jacob’s voice wouldn’t sound like Esau’s and that Isaac might want to feel Jacob’s arms to verify which son he was talking to.

When Jacob brought in the meal and spoke to his father, Isaac did have his suspicions. He asked Jacob to come near so he could feel his arms and smell him. The goat hair did the trick; Isaac believed the ruse. The plot concocted by mother and son was working.

After Isaac gave Jacob the blessing of the firstborn, Jacob left the room as quickly as he could, peeled off the goat hair and got ready to run for his life. Both he and his mother knew the severity of what he had done in

stealing the blessing. They knew that Esau was going to be furious when he found out and would come after Jacob for revenge.

Rebekah and Jacob wanted the right things, but they went about it the wrong way. Genesis chapters 28-31 record the trouble that Jacob’s manipulation and deception brought to his life. For years, he would spend his life running in fear from Esau. Although Jacob had the blessing of the family, he was not living like a blessed man.

There are many analogies we could derive from this account of Jacob’s life. All of us have experienced similar times in our walk with God when we’ve desired the right things but pursued them the wrong way. In the end, trying to make a word from God come to pass in our own strength *never* generates His blessing or His sense of peace in our lives.

Jacob ran from the consequences of his deception for many years. Finally, a day came when everything was about to change—when Jacob would make a shift because he knew Esau was about to catch up with him (*see* Genesis chapter 32). Jacob had been avoiding Esau for many years. But at the point when it looked like he couldn’t do it any longer, he called out to God—and verse 24 tells us what happened when he did: “Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.”

This wasn’t just any man. This was *the* Man—a manifestation of God Himself—and He had come to deal with Jacob. God’s plan was at stake, and something needed to happen right then inside His man, Jacob.

Notice what happened as Jacob wrestled with God: “Now when He [God] saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, ‘Let Me go, for the day breaks.’ But he said, ‘I will not let You go unless You bless me!’”

Jacob finally came to understand a crucial truth: The blessing of his natural father was really only a type and



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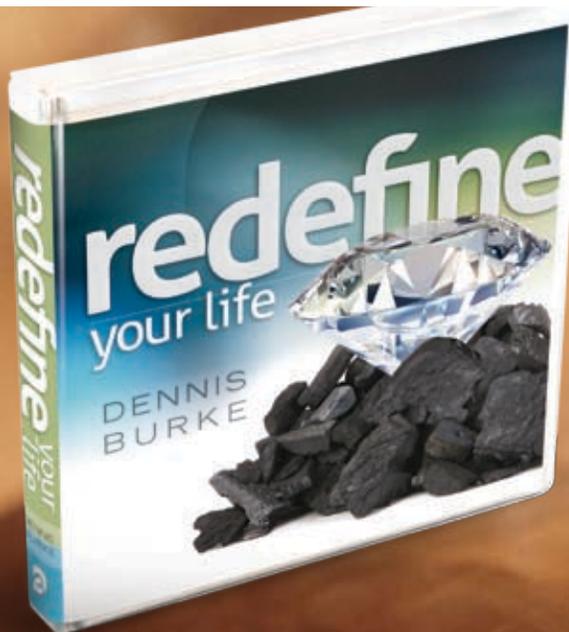
Simply put, our hearts long to receive the blessing of our Heavenly Father. That's what we're all really living for."

shadow of what he truly craved and had to have—the blessing of Almighty God.

Today many people live their lives without ever really experiencing the blessing of their natural parents. They never hear the words they long to hear, such as, "You did such a good job"; "I'm so proud of you"; or "What a great son [or daughter] you've been!" Often as a result, these people feel paralyzed in life because they never had a sense of affirmation.

But what people actually crave in their hearts is God's affirmation. Once they lock into this truth, they can live free from their parents' failure to bless them with their words. That freedom comes from understanding what truly redefines their lives: *the knowledge that God has commanded His blessing on them.*

That's what we're all really living for. Simply put, our hearts long to receive the blessing of our Heavenly Father.



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As Jacob wrestled with God, he finally understood that foundational truth. At that moment, he locked on and declared to the Lord, "I am *not* letting go until You bless me!"

Notice what the Lord said in response in verse 27: "... What is your name?" Remember, God doesn't ask questions to gain information. He knew exactly with whom He was dealing. He also knew that the name Jacob means "deceiver" or "supplanter" and that His man had been living out the life that had been defined by his own name up to that very moment.

This makes the Lord's words in verse 28 very significant: "... Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." On that day, Jacob was redefined by God himself. The Lord was saying to Jacob, "You are no longer going to live by a need to deceive, manipulate, or pull any of the tricks you've used in the past to pursue your goals—even if they were right goals. You finally have come to understand how life in Me really works. You have taken hold and locked on, refusing to let go of Me until you received My blessing. In *that* pursuit, you have prevailed."

At that moment, Israel was born and God had a nation in the earth. Although that nation still numbered only one man, it would be through this one man that a nation of people would come and prevail. God was faithfully working out His plan and bringing it into the earth.

Let's review for a moment the key ingredients we've discovered so far that redefine our faith.

- Abraham's life gives us the knowledge that it is by faith in God's Word that we are counted righteous in His sight.
- We understand from Isaac's life that we must be sowers of seed—those who will plant in the face of any challenge, knowing that God will cause our seed to produce a hundredfold harvest in our lives.
- Jacob's life shows us that we have to lock on to God's desire to command blessing over our lives in the way we think and the way we pursue His will. We have to say, with Jacob, "*I'm not letting go, Lord, until I experience Your blessing on my life!*"

That's the firm determination that must come alive in us as we allow God to work in our hearts and redefine our lives. We are believers. We are seed-sowers. And we are locked onto a life of obtaining the full, covenant blessing of God!

Unless otherwise indicated, all scriptures come from the New Living Translation of the Bible.

BY VIKKI BURKE

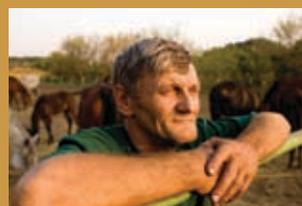
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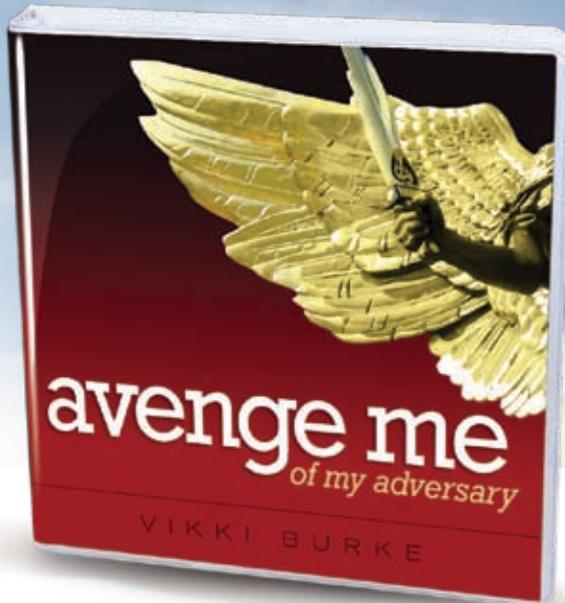
In fact, as Christians, our ability to follow the Holy Spirit's direction should come naturally because He lives inside us. Think about this: He never failed to lead the children of Israel along their journey, so why *wouldn't* He lead His blood-bought children every step of the way? Can't we trust the One who guides

the stars to move us on the right path?

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promises not only to guide us on the *best* path to take for our lives but also to advise us along the way—and that's where the Holy Spirit shines! Some people think the Holy Spirit speaks only to ministers so they can then tell the rest of God's people what to do. But the New Testament makes it clear that He speaks to *all* believers—and that even ministers have to learn how to hear His voice for themselves!

In the Early Church when the practical needs of a group of widows were being neglected, the apostles chose seven disciples to meet this need. Stephen was one of those seven chosen, along with Philip. Later after Philip traveled to Samaria and spent time preaching the Gospel there, an angel said to him, "...Go south down the desert road that runs from Jerusalem to Gaza" (Acts 8:26). That's not much information to have before leaving town! Although Philip didn't know exactly where he was going or why, he didn't demand all the details before obeying—he simply headed south!

It wasn't long before Philip saw a chariot in the distance, and the Holy Spirit instructed him to go to it. Without questioning what he heard, Philip ran up alongside the chariot. On board was a eunuch who held a position of great authority under the queen of Ethiopia. When Philip heard the eunuch reading from the book of Isaiah, he asked the eunuch a simple question: "Do you know what you're reading?" Philip's simple act of obedience led to a very powerful and influential man's baptism and salvation.

You probably remember a time when the Holy Spirit spoke something to your heart that, at first, didn't seem to make sense—but then after you obeyed His voice, all the pieces of

the puzzle fell perfectly into place. I had an experience like this when our daughter Jessica was about three years old and Dennis and I were traveling a great deal in the ministry. I was beginning to wonder what we should do for Jessica's education when it was time for her to start school. Two of my friends also had husbands who traveled. One left her children with family members, and the other stayed home with her children, but I didn't like either of those options.

One day while running errands, I heard a voice say, "Turn left into that driveway." I quickly turned left, even though I didn't realize it was the Holy Spirit speaking at the time. Once I was in the parking lot, I didn't know what else to do besides park and go into the building. I asked the receptionist what kind of business it was, and she said it was a Christian academy. Since putting Jessica in a school meant I could no longer travel, I turned around to leave.

On my way out the door, an advertisement caught my attention. It was a poster for a home-school seminar that was to be held on a weekend that I just happened to be in town!

Little did I know when I turned into that driveway that the Holy Spirit had my answer in a Christian academy, after all. If I'd known that I was pulling into the driveway of a Christian academy, it's likely I would have talked myself out of going into that building. Remember, Christian school wasn't an option for me because it meant either leaving Jessica with others or staying home with her. Had I not obeyed the voice of the Holy Spirit, it's possible I wouldn't have had the subject of home schooling presented in such a godly and responsible manner when I later attended that seminar. And as a result of what I learned there, we were able to travel as a family in ministry over the years without our daughter's schooling ever being interrupted.

Acts chapter 9 records the events that occurred after



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upcoming meetings

September 10

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4701 Gosford Rd | Bakersfield, CA 93313
661-664-1000

September 10-11

Kern Christian Center | 4701 Gosford Rd
Bakersfield, CA 93313 | 661-664-1000

September 14-15

Firebaugh Faith Fellowship | 355 Highway 33
Firebaugh, CA 93622 | 559-659-2571

September 16-18

Praise Center Church
503 N Floral St
Visalia, CA 93291
559-733-2744

September 25-26

New Covenant Ministries
110 Thorne Ave
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
B3B 1Z2 | Canada

October 7-8

Gateway Centre Church | Vikki (Ladies Meeting)
16620 Ash Way | Lynwood, WA 98037 | 425-361-7248

October 9

Gateway Centre Church | 16620 Ash Way
Lynwood, WA 98037 | 425-361-7248

October 16

West Coast Life Church | 38388 Sky Canyon Dr
Murrieta, CA 92563 | 951-696-2229

October 23-25

Capital City Church | 1123 Old Montreal Rd
Ottawa, ON K4A 3N6 | Canada

October 27-28

Christian Victory Church | 520 Brealey Dr
Peterborough, ON K9K 2R7 | Canada

October 29-30

Word of Faith Fellowship
264 Lombardy Rd Hwy #15 South
Smiths Falls, ON K7A 4T6 | Canada

dennis & vikki burke



the Holy Spirit spoke to a man named Ananias—someone the Bible calls a *disciple*, not a minister. At this point in the Early Church, Saul of Tarsus had been viciously persecuting believers. The Church had heard the rumor about his “road to Damascus” experience, but no one believed it. They thought this story was merely a trick to expose believers so Saul could arrest them. Even the apostles were terrified. So the Holy Spirit instructed Ananias to go to a certain house and pray for Saul (*see Acts 9:10-19*). Having heard the rumors about Saul himself, Ananias asked the Lord about it, but the Lord assured him that Saul had indeed become a messenger of the Gospel. So this disciple went to the house where Saul was staying and prayed for him.

As Ananias prayed for Saul, scales fell from Saul’s eyes and instantly he could see again. When Ananias—a *believer*, not a minister—prayed, blind eyes were opened! Never underestimate the power of a faith-filled believer! This believer played a crucial role in shaping Saul’s life and future ministry. Saul would later become Paul, an apostle of God who received 2/3 of the revelation in the New Testament. And because of Ananias’ obedience, he will share in the reward the Lord gives this great apostle.

We never know what God has planned for the people we talk to. They could be a Saul of Tarsus or a eunuch from Ethiopia. The important issue is to be willing to obey whenever the Holy Spirit speaks, even if it doesn’t make sense to our natural minds.

Most people hesitate out of fear of making a mistake. Brother Kenneth Copeland tells about a time when *he* hesitated to say what the Holy Spirit instructed him to say. When he told the Lord that he didn’t want to make a mistake, the Lord answered, “Knowing you, you will.”

What an encouragement! God doesn’t expect us to be perfect — just obedient! We can’t allow timidity to stop us from obeying Him. If we will remain teachable and willing to obey, the Lord will gently correct us whenever we do make a mistake.

Many years ago when I was first learning to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, I made a costly mistake during one of our meetings—but instead of allowing it to stop me, I decided to learn from it. After Dennis preached his message, he began praying for people and speaking to each of them by the unction of the Holy Spirit. I silently asked the Lord to allow me to hear the same thing Dennis was hearing the Holy Spirit say. Then I closed my eyes, and a moment before Dennis spoke to the next person, I heard the same words in my spirit that Dennis said. It happened over and over again that evening.

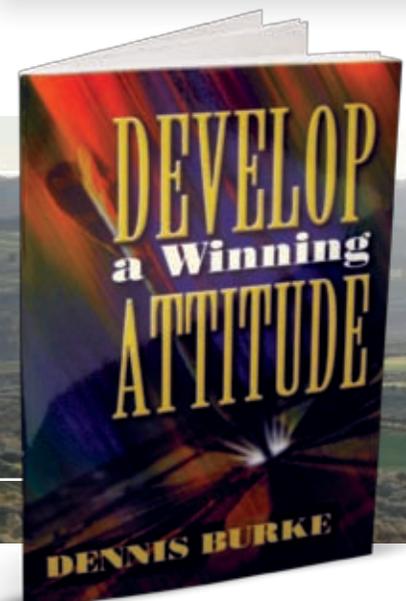
But then I heard these words: “The man who is standing in front of you is named Chavez.” That startled me for two reasons. First, this man was an usher and

..... continued on back

Attitudes, not circumstances make the difference for those who overcome the toughest situations. God made us to be winners — unfortunately, too many have been conditioned to lose. We can be winners if we choose to nurture an attitude that releases the power of God instead of one that keeps us confined to fear and failure. Your willingness to line your thinking up with what God has said will set the course for success or failure. If you refuse to quit, you cannot lose. The good news is anyone who is willing to change can develop a winning attitude!

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wasn't being prayed for; second, my maiden name is Chavez. Instead of keeping my eyes closed and continuing to hear what the Holy Spirit was saying, I let my mind wander and began to think about how I might be related to this man. After the service, I spoke to him, but we never concluded whether or not we were related. I completely missed the point. The Holy Spirit was trying to teach me how to hear His voice, but I began to reason about *what* I had heard.

From that day on, I began to practice hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit on small, insignificant things in my personal life so that if I made a mistake, no one's future was jeopardized. "Can we practice hearing from the Lord?" you might ask. Yes, we can. In fact, there are several verses that instruct us to practice a variety of things. For example, Hebrews 5:14 (NAS) says, "Solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." With practice we can actually train both our spiritual and physical senses to know what is good instead of trying to figure it out on our own.

Then Paul wrote in Philippians 4:9: "Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you." Not only can we practice what we hear from the Holy Spirit, but we can also practice what we see other successful Christian men and women do.

Ask the Holy Spirit every day to lead you, speak to you, guide you, and show you what decisions to make. When you hear His voice, it may not sound very spiritual at first—in fact, it may sound very ordinary. But God wants to be involved in every aspect of your life: spiritual, physical, and social. The direction God gave Philip didn't seem terribly spiritual: Take the road south, walk alongside a carriage, and ask, "Whatcha readin'?" It also didn't make sense to me when the Holy Spirit told me to turn left into a particular driveway. And it certainly wasn't logical for a believer to go pray for a man who was persecuting believers!

When you practice hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit, He will direct you along the *best* path for your life. And you can expect Him to lead you in life's everyday details. As you learn to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance, He will orchestrate divine appointments you can't possibly arrange. He will put you in the right place at the right time—every time!

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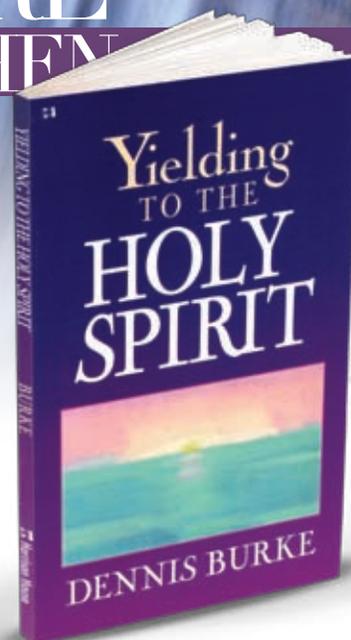
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