



The Blessing

God's heart for you

Pastor Mike Harding

The Blessing

by
Mike Harding

Copyright © 2013
All rights reserved.

Scripture taken from the *New King James Version*.
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.
Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Pastor Mike Harding
Love Gospel Church
P.O. Box 4482
Apache Junction, AZ 85178
480.510.7089
mikecrisharding@aol.com

www.lovegospelchurch.com

For videos and audios of Pastor Mike's teachings,
go to www.lovegospelchurch.com
or www.xpmedia.com/channel/pmike

GENESIS: INTRODUCING THE BLESSING

From the very beginning, God designed us for His blessing. He intended us to live in His blessing. But one of the effects of living in this broken world is that many people live from tragedy to tragedy. They are constantly in a state of worry and fear, starting each day wondering what is going to happen. What else is going to go wrong? What other tragedy is going to hit me? But the Bible teaches us to live from glory to glory, and from faith to faith.

I want to build up your faith and bring you into a full understanding of God's blessing. As you read, I pray that you will receive a revelation of God's heart, a revelation of God's goodness, and that it will elevate your faith so that you will wake up every day anticipating His blessing.

God blesses creation

The whole book of Genesis is a study in the blessing. It's a theme that goes throughout the whole book. The first place the word is used is in Genesis 1:22, after God created the birds and the fish: *And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."*

In the very beginning, God spoke the blessing over the birds and specifically said, *"Be fruitful and multiply."* How does God bless? He speaks! From that moment on, what did the birds do? They were fruitful, and they multiplied. Why? Because when God spoke it, He put it into their nature.

Scientists call it instinct, but if you ask a scientist what instinct means, they don't know. Why do the birds fly south at one time and north at another time? It's instinct. What does that mean? They don't know. The birds just do it. You and I know that it happens because God spoke. He spoke it into their nature. He spoke it into their DNA.

The power of God's spoken blessing

As a young Christian, I didn't understand the power of the blessing. I thought of the blessing as what you did when someone sneezed. I'd say, "God bless you," and then we would all move on. I didn't really expect anything to happen; it was just a nicety. I didn't know that it had any power. I didn't know that it was real.

In Spanish, the word for "blessing" is "bendecir," which literally means "to speak well" or "to speak good words." When you bless somebody, you speak good words. How does God bless? He speaks good words. When God speaks something, His word carries power. When God speaks a blessing, everything runs according to that spoken word until God says otherwise.

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10-11

When God speaks, things happen! In John 6:63, Jesus said, *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."* He was saying that when He spoke, He

wasn't just forming sounds and communicating ideas. The very words that He spoke would release spirit and life.

When God blessed the birds and the fish - when He spoke - something was released. Something was activated.

Scientists are still trying to figure out what holds matter together. What keeps everything from just breaking apart? It's God's word. God just spoke. It actually says in Hebrews 1:3 that He upholds *everything* by the word of His power. The whole world holds together by His word; all physical matter literally holds because He told it to!

God blesses mankind

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Genesis 1:26-28

What is the very first thing that God did after He created Adam and Eve? It's in verse 28: *"Then God blessed them."* This is a revelation of God's heart: He is a God of blessing. He didn't make them and say, "Okay, let's see how you guys perform, and then I'll decide whether to bless you or not." He blessed them right away!

Usually we think of the blessing of God as a reward, but what had Adam and Eve done at this point? Absolutely nothing! So, why did God bless them? *We learn from this that God's blessing isn't a reward; it's an equipping!*

What this also means is that you and I were designed for blessing. We need the blessing of God. We are designed to operate in the blessing of God. If we don't have the blessing of God, we are a shadow, an orphan, operating in our own power, in our strength. That's a very lonely and difficult place to be. We are created to need, and flourish in, the blessing of God.

We were created for the blessing of God. We need the blessing. I used to think that asking for the blessing was a selfish thing. I would say, "Oh, I'm not going to ask You for anything, Lord. Or maybe I'll just ask for a little bit, just a little bit, just a little bit..." God finally showed me that that was dumb. We were created for His blessing!

God blesses the Sabbath

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. Genesis 2:1-3

Generally speaking, throughout the rest of the Bible when you see God blessing, it's always people. He blesses people. There are only two instances that I've seen where He blesses something other than people. He blessed the birds and the fish and the animals in the beginning, and then He blessed a day. All the rest of the time He blesses people, but here He blessed a day.

This has led to all kinds of interpretations about when and how we should observe the Sabbath. If we're just talking about following religious rules, then most people are doing it wrong. We should all go back to strictly keeping the Sabbath on the seventh day, which is Saturday. But that's really *not* the point God is making here.

There are two keys to interpreting everything in the Bible. God showed me this one time through a vision. He showed me a picture of a large key ring, but the large key ring only had two keys on it. I understood that the Holy Spirit was speaking to me about how to interpret and understand the Bible. The first key is the identity of Jesus. Who is Jesus? He is God incarnate, God made man. He is Savior and Lord. Always ask the first question: Who is Jesus, and how is He revealed in this Bible passage? The second key to interpreting the Bible is through the finished work of Christ. That means the cross, the shed blood, the price paid, the sacrificial death for us, the "it is finished", the resurrection, and calling on the name of Jesus to be saved. The finished work of Christ is the second key. Always ask the second question: How does this Bible passage reveal the finished work of Christ?

So the Bible says that God blessed the seventh day. Let's use one of those keys. What does the seventh day really represent? It speaks of the finished work of Christ. The seventh day is when God finished His work and He rested. The seventh day speaks that God did the work, and now we rest in it. The Sabbath day was a symbol of something to come. (Colossians 2:16-17)

The seventh day really represents the finished work of Christ. The seventh day shows that Jesus did the work of salvation, and we enter in and rest in it. It was never about a day. It was a prophetic symbol. Why did God bless the seventh day? It's because all of the blessing is in the finished work of Christ! (Ephesians 1:3)

The curse as a consequence

In Genesis 3:17, we see that Adam and Eve messed up, and after they had sinned, quite a few bad things happened very quickly. There was separation. There was death. There was fear. There was shame. God came to the garden, and Adam was hiding. He called Adam out of hiding and said: *Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.* Genesis 3:17

The curse came into the world! The curse was a little bit different for Adam and for Eve. It acted as kind of a twisting or a corruption of the role and blessing that each of them had received. Adam's curse affected his work and the land. Eve's curse affected her relationship with Adam and her childbearing. I originally thought of the curse as a punishment, but then God really showed me that He is not a punishing God. It's not His nature to punish. Don't misunderstand - God satisfied His own demand for justice by taking our punishment upon Himself in Christ. There is judgment, and there is justice. But God doesn't really want to punish us. He wants to redeem us, and He wants to bless us. So, what is the curse? It's a consequence. There is a difference between a punishment and a consequence. And if you discipline children, you understand that.

Consequences are very real and can be very unpleasant, but they are the natural results of our actions and our choices. They are the result of our decisions. If you don't water your garden, you will have dead flowers. The dead flowers are not God's judgment on you. The dead flowers are a natural consequence of neglecting to water the garden. When God gave free will, He created a system where there are consequences for our decisions and our actions. When God announces this curse in Genesis chapter three, it's not exactly a punishment. *It's that*

Adam and Eve got out of alignment with God! In alignment with God is where the blessing is. Once they got out of alignment with God (through sin), they fell out of the blessing zone and into the curse zone. It was a consequence.

Reintroducing the blessing

So the curse was introduced, but God has a heart of redemption. He wasn't going to leave it that way. Adam and Eve did multiply and began to fill the earth, but because of this disease of sin, the earth and the people of the earth were very wicked. God decided to send a flood to wipe the slate clean and start over. In Genesis chapter six, God saved one man, Noah, and his family. Noah had a heart for God; he wanted to keep his heart aligned with God. What's the very first thing that God did after that?

God *blessed* Noah and his sons, and He said, *"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."* (Genesis 9:1) God was trying to restore the blessing that He had put on Adam and Eve. As time went on, men began to multiply and fill the earth again. But the disease of sin, which was still active in Noah and his family, continued to spread, multiply, and corrupt. And the earth became wicked again.

Prayer

Father God, I recognize that I was created and designed for Your blessing. I need your blessing. It's not a reward, but it's my equipping for life. I recognize that Your heart is a heart of blessing. I don't want to be out of alignment with You, God. I turn away from sin and align myself with You. I believe in Jesus as my Savior. God, bring me into alignment with Your heart and Your will. Bless me, Father!

THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM

God calls Abraham

The curse of sin continued in the world, and God continued to seek ways to bring us back to His original blessing. As we move on to Genesis 12:1, we read that God found a man named Abram, later called Abraham: *Now the Lord had said to Abram, "Get out of your country from your family and from your father's house to a land that I will show you."*

God called Abram to leave behind the identity he knew, the security and the life he knew, to leave it all behind and to follow Him by faith. God said, "Follow me to a land I'm going to show you," and that land, of course, is the Promised Land where Israel is now. Part of the blessing of Abraham was that he would receive this land and he and his descendants would be established there.

God's promise to Abraham

Continuing on, God said: *I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*

This is covenant talk. In covenant, your friends are my friends, and your enemies are my enemies. If somebody attacks you, I will fight them. If somebody is your friend, they're my friend. That's covenant. And God said to Abraham, "We're covenant partners now, and anybody that curses you - I'm against them. Anybody that blesses you - I'm for them." The covenant language here says that we have the right to ask God in covenant to fight against our enemies. We have that right. (But isn't it interesting that Jesus said if you really want to be like your Heavenly Father, you should bless those who curse you? Matthew 5:44-45)

Returning to the last part of verse 3: "...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." God promised Abraham that through his descendants, many generations later, would come the Messiah, the Savior.

God told Abraham that this promise was going to come through his descendants. He's talking about Christ: "*all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*" Notice that He doesn't even say they "shall be saved". He says they "shall be blessed"! What's the first thing God did with Adam and Eve? He blessed them. What did He do with Noah? He blessed him. What did God do with Abraham? He blessed him. What does He want to do with all of us in Christ? He wants to restore the blessing!

The blessing of Abraham for us

Genesis 12:2 says, "*I will make you a great nation.*" What's significant about that? Of course, Abraham was getting older and had no children. His wife Sarah was barren and could not have children, so it was going to be a miracle. God said, "I'll make you the father of a multitude." What does that mean to us? I'm not interested in having hundreds of kids. What this means to me is spiritual.

Do you want to win a lot a people to Jesus, to influence and teach and bless and disciple lots of people? I do. That's the blessing of Abraham for me and for you. You can be a person of influence. He says, "*I will bless you and make your name great.*" You'll be a person who influences other people. You'll be a person who blesses other people, who touches a lot of people's lives, and your name will be held in honor. At the end of your life, a lot of people will be able to say, "That person touched all of our lives in a really good way." That's part of the blessing of Abraham.

Then God says, "*I will bless you and make you a blessing.*" What does that mean? God wants you to be a blessing. Everywhere you go, He wants you to bless people, touch people, influence people, and be a blessing. But you can't give what you don't have, and you don't have what you haven't received.

Originally, I thought it would be selfish of me to ask for blessing. I'd just ask for a little bit. "Don't trouble yourself with me, Lord. There are other people who need you more than I do." That might be how you pray. But part of our calling as Christians is to receive God's blessing so that we can turn around and be a blessing to others. This, then, is how you should pray: "God bless me, bless me, bless me, oh, bless me a lot!"

How are you going to be a blessing to others if you don't have any blessing yourself? God wanted Abraham to be - and He wants you to be - a channel of blessing from Heaven to Earth. He blesses you, and you bless others. He uses you as a person of influence, a leader, a person of faith and somebody who touches and influences people all around you to bring His kingdom into earth. That's what God is looking for. He's looking for people to say, "Bless me, and make me a blessing."

Remember what Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 10:8: *"Freely you have received, freely give."* Freely you receive from Heaven by God's grace, and freely you give to others. Everything in the kingdom is by grace. The resources of Heaven are given by what Jesus did. They're given through grace and received by faith. It's by grace.

What does that mean in practical terms? If you get your heart and soul full of this truth, if you let it become part of you, you will wake up every day with an expectation of blessing. You will come to the place where you expect God's goodness, where it's natural for you to expect His blessing. Another word for "expectation" is "faith." And where does faith come from? It comes from a revelation of God's heart.

Christ redeemed us from the curse

We know that Abraham is a model of how much God wants to bless us. We know this because Galatians 3:13-14 talks about the blessing of Abraham: *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "cursed it is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

It says, *"...that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles."* Who are the Gentiles? In the old covenant, there were two kinds of people: Jews and everybody else (Gentiles). If you are not a Jew you are a Gentile, and God wants you to have the blessing of Abraham. What Jesus did on the cross was so that the blessing of Abraham might come to all of us, both Jews and Gentiles. God wanted to include us all together. The Bible calls it "one new man," the Jew and the Gentile together in Christ. (Ephesians 2:15)

Look again at verse 13: *"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us."* It doesn't say that He *took* the curse or *paid for* the curse. It says He *became* the curse. He *became* the curse for us. On the cross, Jesus literally absorbed into Himself the entire curse that was released from the time of Adam and Eve on - all the consequences of sin, sickness, poverty, tragedy, fear, and death. He became the curse and died as the curse. Jesus dealt with sin the same way. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* He didn't just pay for sin. He became sin.

Until very recently, I thought this verse spoke to me, telling me that Jesus released me from the curse of the law. Then the Holy Spirit pointed out to me that I was never under the curse of the law. I never was. I am a Gentile. How about you? The law was the covenant that came when God gave the law to Moses. Who was that covenant with? It was with the Jews, the nation of Israel. There were Gentile converts to Judaism, certainly, but the old covenant was with Israel. From the time Moses gave the law, Israel said, "We will follow the law." They committed themselves. They vowed. They pledged. They promised. "We will follow the law." (Exodus 19:8. 24:3, 24:7) And there were curses built into it. (Deuteronomy 27:26) If you didn't follow the law, there were curses. If you did follow the law, there were blessings. Israel said, "We will!" They vowed. They pledged. They came into covenant with those terms and conditions and said, "We will fulfill the law, and if we don't, there's a curse on us."

If you are also a Gentile like me, you and I were never under the law. Therefore, you were never under the curse of the law, either. Even if you are Jewish, if you were born in this day and age, you were never under the law. The law began with Moses, and it ended 2,000 years ago when Jesus said, *"It is finished."* It was fulfilled.

Curse of the fall, curse of the law

There were actually two curses. The first curse was the curse of the fall. When Adam and Eve sinned, all of mankind was affected: death came, and slavery to sin, and all bad things. The curse of the fall affects everybody. The second major curse was the curse of the law which only affected the Jews who were under that covenant and who were committed to keeping the law. Was the law ever meant to save them? Of course not. The law was meant to expose all of our need for a Savior. When the law says, "Thou shalt not", and we end up doing it anyway, we hopefully realize our need for a Savior from Heaven!

The disease of sin is exposed before the law of God. That's the only purpose, so the people would cry out for a Savior. That was the whole purpose of the law. And this verse says Christ redeemed us not only from the curse of the law but also from the curse of the fall. "Christ became a curse for us."

When Paul writes this, he says that Christ redeemed "us." He's talking about the Jews. Paul was a Jew. He's talking about the Jews. "He redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us." It goes on in Galatians 3:14, "...that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles..." That's us. What does that mean? We get brought in. Jesus redeemed the Jews from the curse of the law, and He redeemed us ALL from the curse of the fall, so that together we could move on into the New Covenant and we could all have the blessing of Abraham by faith in Christ.

God had to liberate the Jews from the law so that we could be brought into Christ together as one new man, Jew and Gentile together. You and I have an invitation as Gentiles to receive the blessing of Abraham, that amazing blessing of Abraham, through faith in Jesus Christ. But even Abraham didn't have the promise of the Spirit, like we do today in Christ. (Galatians 3:14) He wasn't born again. He didn't have the Holy Spirit living with him and in him the way we do. We receive something Abraham didn't even get. In Christ, we become sons and daughters of God with the Spirit of the Lord living in us.

So if we weren't part of the covenant of law, where were we? What did the Bible say about us? It says in Ephesians 2:12 *"that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."* We had no covenant with God. We had nothing. We were without God and without hope in the world. But through Jesus Christ, we are now God's sons and daughters. We have it all!

Accepting God's blessing

Often, the evidence of the curse in operation is when people go from tragedy to tragedy. They get blown from place to place. They never put down roots. They never get established. That's a curse. That's not a blessing. Living like that means that you're probably missing the blessing. So what do you do to get the blessing? Ask for it! Jesus paid for it. It's not about how good you are. Jesus paid for it. It's by faith. Are there steps of obedience involved? Sure. Abraham had to obey God. Isaac had to obey God. Jacob had to obey God. But the blessing is there for the asking. The blessing kicks in when we begin to ask for it. Asking God for His blessing is an act of humility and faith. And it honors God; He likes it!

Years ago, God taught me to ask for the blessing. It was hard for me at first. When I started to say, "God, bless me," something inside of me would say, "No, I'm not worthy." But I learned to pray, "God, bless me," because it

actually pleases God when you ask for His blessing. It's not selfish. It's an act of humility. It's an act of recognition of who God is. It's saying, "I need You to bless me. I can't do this on my own, and that's the way You made me, God. I need You to bless me, and I recognize the value of Your blessing. When Your hand comes upon my life and I have Your blessing, God, everything is better."

Once I learned to ask for the blessing, I started to ask for the blessing day after day. Like Abraham, I want to be a blessing, and you can't give what you don't have. And you don't have what you haven't received.

Abraham and Lot

Genesis 13:2 says that Abraham was very rich in livestock, silver and gold. Then in Chapter 14, some invading armies came and invaded Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham's nephew, Lot, was living there. The raiding armies carried off all their goods and all their people, including Lot and his family. So Abraham raised up an army and went and got all the people back and got all their possessions back. Afterwards, the two kings who got their possessions back because of Abraham came to Abraham. They wanted to reward him for helping them. They offered Abraham some of the treasure that he recovered for them.

But Abraham said to the king of Sodom: *"I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours lest you should say, 'I have made Abraham rich.'"* Genesis 14:22-23

Abraham was already rich. He was blessed by God, and he said, "Don't give me anything, because I don't want you going around claiming that you made me rich. I want everybody to know it was God." Abraham was more interested in God's reputation than he was in his own increase.

Later, when Abraham and Lot were traveling together, it says that they had grown too prosperous and too big to travel together. So Abraham said to Lot, "I'll give you first choice. Look around and choose the best land, the best place, the most fertile, watered, green place. You choose." Abraham could have said, "I'll choose first. I'm the senior guy. God called me, and you just tagged along." But instead Abraham said, "Lot, you choose first. Pick the best for yourself, that's fine, and I'll take whatever is left over." And Lot did it. He picked the best place. He picked the most fertile, blessed place that he could find.

Abraham basically said, "If you drop me off in a corner of the desert someplace, I will be fine." Why? He had the blessing of God. He trusted that he would continue to increase and prosper and be blessed because he had the blessing of God. That's what it means to believe in the blessing of God.

Isaac inherits the blessing of Abraham

After the death of Abraham in Genesis 25:11, God blessed his son Isaac. That's part of the blessing, too. Your children get blessed. What did the blessing look like in Isaac's life?

There was a famine in the landAnd Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines in Gerar. Then the Lord appeared to him and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you." Genesis 26:1-2

What was He saying? "Stay in the promised land where I called you to be. Stay in the place of my covenant, the place of my will, the place of obedience; stay there." God was telling Isaac that if he went down to Egypt, he'd

be out of alignment. Egypt represents the world, and when you go to the world for help, you're going down. You're going to a lower place. You're going to an inferior place. God wanted Isaac to look to Him for help. He says, "Live in the land of which I shall tell you." Stay in God's will. Stay in God's plan.

On to verse 3: *"Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father."*

Isaac is not operating under the blessing of Isaac. He's operating under the blessing of Abraham. There's no blessing of Isaac. There's a blessing of Abraham, and he's getting it...and we get it, too.

In verses 12 to 14, you see Isaac in the land of promise. He stayed in God's will. He was obedient to God's voice. Look at the result. Genesis 26:13 says: *Then Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him. The man began to prosper and continued prospering until he became very prosperous.*

What does the blessing of Abraham look like in Isaac's life? In a time of financial crisis and famine in the land, Isaac was prospering supernaturally!

Isaac's son, Jacob, inherits the blessing

God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan Aram, and blessed him. God said to him your name is Jacob. Your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name. So, He called his name Israel.
Genesis 35:9-10

Isaac had a son, Jacob. Jacob was a schemer; he stole his father's blessing from his older brother and continued to manipulate and deceive through the early years of his life. His name means "deceiver, manipulator." In the Bible, your name represents your nature. In this passage, God tells Jacob that his nature is changing. He calls him Israel. He says, "You're not the schemer anymore. You're not the manipulator anymore. You're a prince with God now. You're a changed man. You're a transformed man." That's the blessing!

In verse 11, God said to him, *"I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body."*

What is Jacob most known for? He is Israel, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. His sons and grandsons became leaders of tribes and nations. This is the blessing of Abraham operating in Jacob's life. And this is how the blessing of Abraham can operate in your life, producing leaders and spiritual fathers and mothers through your ministry and influence.

Jacob's son, Joseph, walks in the blessing

Joseph was Jacob's favorite son. All of his brothers were jealous of him, so one day they took him out in the wilderness and sold him to Egyptian slave traders. They took his shirt to Jacob and told him he had been killed.

Joseph was sold into slavery and carried off to Egypt. He was purchased at a slave auction by a man named Potiphar, a wealthy man. Joseph was brought into the house of Potiphar as a household servant. He was a slave, but the hand of God was with him: *The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the*

house of his master, the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. Genesis 39:2-3

Joseph inherited the blessing of Abraham. So Potiphar made him the steward or overseer, the manager of his household and all of his resources. This was a great position of trust and authority. Joseph was a slave, but he was raised up to a position of authority and leadership.

Then Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. He was a man of honor, and He resisted. But she falsely accused him, anyway, and he was thrown in jail. Where was the blessing of Abraham now? Where was the blessing of God on this man?

But in the prison, it says the overseer of the prison noticed Joseph and saw what kind of man he was. He raised Joseph up to be his right-hand man in overseeing the prison, overseeing all the affairs of the prison and all the prisoners. Verse 23 says: *The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.*

Trials in blessing

You can clearly see God's blessing at work in Joseph's life, but from Joseph's perspective, it probably didn't look that way. Joseph might have said, "I got sold into slavery, betrayed by my brothers, and falsely accused and thrown into jail in Egypt. Where is the blessing of God?" Blessing doesn't mean you won't go through trials and troubles. It doesn't mean you won't be challenged and attacked. How did the blessing of God work in Joseph's life? It raised him back up into a place of authority again and again and again. Anywhere he went, he was raised up to a place of authority. And the blessing of Abraham can work the same way in your life!

It's like when you go fishing; the little bobber will tell you when the fish bites. It gets pulled underwater, but it's going to pop back up again. That bobber will pop back up, and that's the same thing with you. You may get pulled under from time to time, but with the blessing of God on you, you will pop back up. Call on God for that blessing. Trust God for that blessing, and be a man or a woman of integrity like Joseph. The blessing will bring you back up!

(Look at King David. The prophet Samuel called him out and said he was going to be the next king of Israel. Pretty soon, the current king, Saul, got jealous of David and spent the next 15 years trying to kill him. David spent 15 years escaping in the desert, hiding in caves, running for his life from King Saul. What did he learn during that time? He learned how to trust God! And he developed godly character. God worked in his heart, and he became the man who could be king. Through his trials, he became the man who could carry that blessing. Did he end up with the blessing of God? Yes, he did. In a moment, everything turned around. David became king of Israel with the greatest kingdom ever. But he had to become the man who could receive that blessing, who could carry that blessing.)

Ultimately, Joseph became known for interpreting dreams, and one day the pharaoh, the king of all Egypt, had a dream he couldn't interpret. Somebody remembered Joseph and sent for him. So Joseph interpreted the pharaoh's dream by the Spirit of God, and Pharaoh placed Joseph at his right hand over the entire kingdom, second in authority only to the pharaoh himself.

Joseph went from being a slave to being second in command over the nation of Egypt because of the blessing of God. How did the blessing of God work in his life? It brought him back into leadership, back into government again and again and again.

The blessing of God for Abraham, the blessing of God on Isaac's life, on Jacob's life, on Joseph's life, we see how it manifests: supernatural prosperity in times where the world is having trouble, multiplication, raising up leaders, reproducing people of influence in leadership, being raised up into government and leadership yourself. That's the blessing of Abraham!

Prayer

In the name of Jesus, any curse in my life, any operation of the curse, I take it to the cross where Jesus became the curse and cancelled the curse, and, by faith, I leave it on the cross.

In the name of Jesus, all of the curse, get out of my life, out of my family, out of my home, out of my health, out of my finances in the name of Jesus. God, wash it away in the blood of Christ.

Father, bless me with the blessing of Abraham, your covenant blessing. Bless me, God, and make me a blessing to others.

ACTIVATING THE BLESSING

Melchizedek, king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was the priest of God Most High. He blessed Abraham and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all. Genesis 14:18-20

Abraham, who was blessed by God, had heard that an army had attacked his nephew Lot's city and had carried off all the people and goods. In response, he raised up an army of his own men and went after these invading armies. He recaptured their goods and the people, including Lot and his family, and brought them all back. After this victory, it says suddenly a mysterious figure named Melchizedek showed up.

In those early generations, there was still a knowledge of God in the earth. There were people alive who knew God even though sin and corruption was spreading throughout the world. There were priests of God who were representatives of God in that culture. Melchizedek appears to be one of these people. He came to Abraham, and what is the first thing he did? He blessed him. Why did Abraham get blessed by Melchizedek? Wasn't he already blessed by God? Is it okay to get more blessing? Absolutely!

My life's goal is not to get as much blessing as I can. My life's goal is to get as many people saved as I can and to teach as many people the Word of God as I can. That's my goal. But along the journey, do I want the blessing? Yeah. And if there's more blessing to be had, do I want that, too? Absolutely!

It's not selfish, because God told Abraham, "I will bless you, and you will be blessing." As long as we're focused on receiving from Heaven and giving it away to other people, it's all good. It's all good. That's what God wants us to do.

Melchizedek showed up and blessed Abraham. Abraham was already blessed, but here comes more blessing. That's good. That's the heart of God!

The flow of blessing

Hebrews 7:1 talks about this interaction with Melchizedek: *For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him...,*"

Paul goes on to talk about that event, about the blessing, and explains more about it. In verse 7, it says, *"Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better."*

God establishes chains of authority or leadership. Think about the home. Who is the leader in the home: the parents or the children? Hopefully, the parents. There's an order of things. There's a flow of authority and a flow of blessing and a flow of leadership that God establishes. He wants people who are in a place of authority to bless those who are under them.

For instance, if you're a parent, God wants you to bless your children the way Melchizedek blessed Abraham. That's one of the things you're called to do. If you've ever been in a house you know has the blessing of God, you can tell. You can feel it. Have you been in a house where you know that the blessing of God is not there? You can tell the difference can't you?

What God wants us to do is to bless those that He puts under us for care, for protection, to raise them up, to teach them. He wants us to bless them. Create an atmosphere of blessing in your home. Create an atmosphere of blessing for whoever God puts under your care.

The same thing applies to churches. God expects pastors to create an atmosphere of blessing. He wants them to bless the people and to create an atmosphere in which people can thrive, where people can be blessed.

During the ministry of Jesus, Mark 10:13-16 says, *They brought the little children to Him. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."* And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

Parents brought children to Jesus that He might touch them. As they were bringing in the children, it says that *"the disciples rebuked those who brought them."* So they were bringing little babies and children to Jesus, and the disciples were telling them, "Keep those kids away from Jesus. He's an important man, and we have important stuff to do. Don't bother Jesus with the children." But then verse 14 says, *"When Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.'"* The kids are precious and valuable, of huge value in heaven. Jesus said in verse 15, *"Assuredly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."* There's a huge revelation right there. How do you gain the kingdom of God? You receive it as a child.

How does a child receive? If you tell a child they're going to Disneyland tomorrow, they're excited now because they believe you. Children trust, and they easily believe unless they are taught not to. That's how you receive the kingdom of God. The first step of being childlike is when you first admit that you can't do it on your own, and

you need a Savior. That's a childlike act of faith. I've learned that as you grow in the kingdom, you don't grow more religious, you don't grow more complicated; you actually grow more childlike as you grow in the kingdom. Childlike means more trusting, more surrendered, more joyful, more at peace, more enjoying the moment, and more trusting of whatever God has to say to you. The entire kingdom of God is received in a childlike way. It is freely given to you in Christ.

Now, in verse 16, what's the first thing Jesus did with those kids? He took them up in his arms. It's the first thing Jesus did with those kids. He hugged them. What does hugging say? Hugging says, "I love you. You're precious. You're valuable. You're worth my time." Everybody needs a hug. Jesus did that.

What's the next thing Jesus did? He laid His hands on them. That was different from hugging. Hugging was affection; laying His hands on them was imparting the anointing and presence and power of the Holy Spirit into their lives. Then He blessed them. He spoke it. I believe Jesus spoke over the children, "You're going to grow up healthy and strong. You're going to be an amazing leader. You're going to be a great man of God. You're going to be a great woman of God. There's going to be a great gifting in your life, and you're going to influence lots of people. You're going to prosper. You're going to have wisdom." He blessed those kids and spoke blessing over them.

I used to do that with my son when he was little. When I would put him into bed at night, I would lay my hands on him and pray over him and bless him, saying "You're going to be an amazing leader. You're going to be a great man of God. You're going to have lots of wisdom. You're going to grow up strong and healthy and confident. You're going to know the voice of God. You're going to have a good heart."

If you're a parent, can you do this if your kids are already grown and out of the house? Yes. Call them on the phone and say, "I really believe in you. You're going to be an amazing leader. You're going to do such great things. I so believe in you." Bless them.

Blessing in the spiritual family

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, "This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.' So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them." Numbers 6:22

God says, "I want my people blessed. When the people are assembled together, bless them and speak these words over them." What's significant about this? First of all, He told them to say it. God needs us to speak the blessing, and the Holy Spirit will back it up. When you speak the blessing over your children or your grandchildren or whoever, God is there to back it up. The Holy Spirit is there to enforce and activate that blessing that you're speaking and to partner with you in that, but He wants you to speak it. God's heart is revealed here. He wants His people blessed.

What does this have to do with us today? That blessing was part of the Old Covenant with Israel. But I believe the same thing applies today. We're a spiritual family. And God has called some to be apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists, teachers, and leaders in the body of Christ. As a church, we're a body of spiritual fathers and mothers and children who are being raised up spiritually. Spiritual fathers and mothers in the body of Christ

are to do the same thing: bless those who are being taught and raised up spiritually to the point where they can ask for God's blessing on their own.

Why do you, as a parent, bless your children? It's because they don't know how to ask for it on their own. You cover them. You bless them. The time comes, though, if you teach your children, when they will know how to ask for the blessing of God as an adult. Up to that point, you bless them, and you cover them. In the same way, you who are pastors and spiritual fathers and mothers in the body of Christ, you should bless the people that God puts under you. Bless them, cover them, and then teach them to come to the place where they can ask for the blessing of God and walk in that blessing themselves.

The prayer of Jabez

The book of Chronicles mentions a man named Jabez. He is mentioned in the Bible only one time, in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10: *Now Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!"* So God granted him what he requested.

Change my name

The name "Jabez" means pain. His mother gave birth, and she said, "That hurt," and she named him pain. How would you like that for an identity and a self-image? My name is pain. Apparently, I cause pain. Apparently, I bring pain.

In the Bible, names mean something. Jacob, the schemer, had his name changed to Israel, a prince with God. Isaac meant "laughter" because he was born of a promise. Names mean something. They have significance. If you name somebody "pain," it becomes part of their identity, part of their self-image, part of their sense of destiny.

Jabez called on the God of Israel. A big part of his prayer was a change of his identity, of his sense of who he was and what he carried. And God granted him what he requested. You may have something that you feel is part of your identity, part of your self-image, part of what you carry, part of who you are that needs to be changed.

What do you do? Bring it to God. I did that. There was time in my life when I felt within myself that I carried failure. I felt it was part of my destiny. I felt that it was something I couldn't escape.

And one time, the Holy Spirit showed me what to do. I did what Jabez did. I began to really cry out to God specifically about this issue, and the Lord showed me what to do. I wrote the word "failure" on a piece of paper, folded it up, and I took it to a wooden cross like you have in a church. I took it to a cross, and I literally nailed it to the cross. I said, "God change this," and He did. I walked away from that changed. I started noticing the blessing of God in my life, and I began to ask for the blessing.

When I first started doing what Jabez did, something inside of me would rumble, "You're not worthy. You're not good enough. God can't bless you." Something inside of me would fight, and my choice was to keep praying "bless me" or to give up and give in to whatever that was. Old tapes were running in my head, saying "You're

not worthy. What a selfish prayer. Who do you think you are? You can't ask that." I was struggling. But I kept praying, "God, bless me" over and over, shutting down those rumblings, and after a while I started noticing the blessing of God working in my life.

Bless me indeed

Jabez understood that our God is a God of blessing. Having God's blessing doesn't mean you won't go through trials - you will. But the blessing will bring you up again and again. And so Jabez says, "*Bless me indeed.*" I like the word "indeed" because I think it translates today as "supersize."

He said, "Supersize my blessing. I want serious blessing." That's what he's saying. "Bless me indeed." Not just a little - we pray that way sometimes. "Oh God, just bless me a little. I don't want to be selfish. I know that you're really busy with other people's problems. Just bless me a little." Heaven's got lots of blessings. Say, "Bless me indeed!"

Enlarge my territory

Then Jabez said, "*Enlarge my territory.*" I believe what he meant was in the context of the Promised Land, Old Covenant Israel. He was probably praying for a bigger piece of real estate in the Promised Land. But what I take it to mean for us is, "Enlarge my influence. Enlarge my ministry. Enlarge the number of people that I'm touching and influencing." You can pray that way, too. "God, enlarge my influence. Enlarge the circle of people that I touch. Bless me, and make me a blessing. Enlarge my spiritual authority. Enlarge my faith. Enlarge my vision. Enlarge my understanding and knowledge of you, God."

Your hand be with me

Next, he prayed, "*...that Your hand would be with me.*" There are verses throughout the Bible that refer to the hand of the Lord. In the Book of Acts, when the early church was out preaching the gospel with fire and passion, it says, "*The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.*" (Acts 11:21) The hand of the Lord is the manifested presence and intervention of God. It means that God is with you. Jabez knew that, and he said, "God, I want your hand to be with me."

Do you think that's a brazen kind of prayer, or do you think that's faith? Do you think God likes it, or was God offended by that? I think He liked it. "God, I want you with me. I know I need Your blessing." Asking for His blessing honors Him. It is a great act of humility to say, "God, I recognize that You are the one who can bless. I need Your blessing. I can't do it myself, and I don't want to do it myself. I want Your hand with me. I want You to bless me." That's a great act of humility.

Keep me from evil

Finally, Jabez said, "*...that you would keep me from evil so that I might not cause pain.*" Jabez was asking God to change his identity, the destiny of pain prophesied in his name. He didn't want to carry pain or to cause pain. His prayer was: "Change my name. Change my destiny. Change who I am, God."

Prayer

Bless me, Father, bless me indeed. Enlarge my territory, my influence, my ministry. Let Your hand, Your manifested presence and power, Your grace and favor, be with me. Keep me from evil; keep me from causing pain. Bless me, Father!

I humble myself. I recognize that You are God, and I need Your blessing. I ask for Your blessing. God, let Your hand be with me and upon me.

God, change my name. I take the old me, the old identity to the cross and leave it nailed there to the cross, in Jesus' name. Give me a new name, a new identity, a new destiny, a new sense of who I am.

DO YOU VALUE THE BLESSING OF GOD?

God called Abraham, blessed him, and made him his covenant man. Abraham had his son Isaac, and then Isaac had a son named Jacob. Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah as his wife. Genesis 25:21 says: *Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife because she was barren; and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.*

Many of the Bible stories involve women who were barren. Abraham's wife Sarah was barren. Hannah, the mother of Samuel the prophet, was barren. And now Isaac's wife, Rebekah, was barren. All these women called by God were originally barren until they cried out to God and got a breakthrough, a miracle, and began to bear children.

That kind of relates to a time in my life as a minister. There was a time when I really felt like I was not being as fruitful as I wanted to be. God drew my attention to the stories of those women who were barren, and I realized that I felt like that spiritually. Those stories began to speak to me. On our own, a lot of times we can't bear the fruit that we want to. We cry out to God, and by His grace, by His anointing, by His miracle, we begin to be fruitful, and He gets the glory.

So, I started to cry out, "God, I feel like I'm barren. You know I'm not bearing the kind of fruit I want to as a minister, and I need your grace. I need your anointing." After that, I felt a breakthrough, and more people started to be saved under my ministry.

Jacob and Esau

The LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

And the LORD said to her:

*"Two nations are in your womb,
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;*

*One people shall be stronger than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger.”*

*So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau’s heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.
Genesis 25:21-26*

Esau came out all red-haired and hairy. Next to come out was Jacob, and he came out holding Esau’s heel. So they called him Jacob, which literally means “heel grabber” or “supplanter.” “Supplanter” means somebody who takes somebody else’s place by trickery or deception or manipulation. It means someone who takes somebody else’s rightful place.

So the boys grew and Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a mild man dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game. But Rebekah loved Jacob. Genesis 25:27-28

Rebekah and Isaac each have their favorite, and there was a little bit of conflict. Now, somewhere along the line, it says that Jacob cooked some stew. Jacob was home cooking, and Esau was out on the field. Esau came home weary and tired and hungry, and verse 30 says that *Esau said to Jacob, “Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary.”*

Jacob realized this meant he had some leverage. So, he said, “I have an idea; just sell me your birthright.” Now, this was a big deal. In that time and culture, the firstborn son would get what’s called the birthright, which among other things means he would get a double portion of the inheritance of his father’s goods, his resources, and his land. The firstborn son would get a double portion of everything, and he would be the next recognized leader of that family. As they got older, the father would lay his hands on the sons and give them a blessing, and the firstborn would get the best blessing.

So Jacob said, in typical scheming fashion, *“Sell me your birthright today, and I’ll give you some stew.”* Esau said, *“I am about to die, so what is this birthright to me?”* So he sold his birthright to Jacob. Finally, verse 34 says, *“Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.”* What that means is that he didn’t value his birthright appropriately. He didn’t understand how precious and valuable this birthright was. He didn’t appreciate it, and he sold it cheap.

Our birthright

Hebrews 12:14 says: *Pursue peace with all people and holiness without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.*

What does that mean for us? Do we have a birthright? If you’re a born-again Christian, the moment you were born again you became a son or daughter of God, and you have a birthright. What is the birthright? It says in Romans 8 that we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. We inherit the kingdom with Him. We will rule and reign with Jesus forever. We’ll be His body, His bride, His people, His government forever.

Here in Hebrews, it says, “Don’t sell your birthright the way Esau did for a bit of food.” Don’t sell your birthright for what the world has to offer. Don’t trade what God has given you for what the world would offer you. Forget it. It's not a good deal.

Jacob seeks the firstborn blessing

After Jacob got the birthright, he wanted something else. He wanted the blessing, too. As the years went by, Isaac got very old. He was basically blind and had very little time left, and he was ready to give the blessing to his sons - particularly the best blessing to his first born son, Esau.

Isaac called Esau and told him to go hunting and bring back his favorite game to make his favorite stew. After that, he said, he would lay hands on Esau and give him the blessing of the first born. So Esau went out to hunt; he had sold his birthright, but now he had the chance for his blessing. While he was out hunting, Rebekah and Jacob hatched a plan.

Rebekah told Jacob to put some goat hair on his arms and wear Esau’s hunting jacket so he’d smell like Esau. Then they made stew the way Esau would and took it to Isaac with Jacob pretending to be Esau so that he could get the blessing in his place. Esau was still out hunting, and they came before Isaac. Jacob said, “Here I am, Father, I'm ready for my blessing.” Isaac felt his arm, and he felt like Esau. He smelled like Esau. So Isaac laid his hand on his head and gave him the firstborn’s blessing.

Then Esau came back for his father’s blessing and discovered that Jacob had “supplanted” him. He cried out to his father. *Esau said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look he has taken away my blessing.” And he said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?”* Genesis 27:36

So Isaac gave him a blessing, but it wasn’t the firstborn blessing. He couldn’t do that anymore. It was already given.

The value of the blessing

I struggled with this story for a number of years because the Bible says very plainly that Jacob was God’s favorite, not Esau. It says very plainly that He chose Jacob and rejected Esau. I couldn’t understand it. Jacob was lying, scheming, and tricking, and Esau apparently was pretty much upfront and honest about everything and lost out.

So I struggled with it for a long time, until the Lord spoke to me about it. The Lord helped me realize that Jacob knew the value of the blessing, and he wanted it. Esau sold out his birthright. He still wanted the blessing, but he didn’t value it the way Jacob did. Jacob knew the value of the blessing of God. He knew the value of it, and he wanted it.

Do you want the blessing of God? Do you know the value of the blessing of God? Now, do you still have character issues? Of course you do – we all do - yet we do understand the value of the blessing of God. God can deal with character issues. What matters is that you know the value of the blessing.

That’s why Jacob was chosen and Esau was not. He valued it. He valued the blessing of God.

The fragrance of the firstborn

Jacob kind of represents us, doesn't he? He's born without the blessing, without the firstborn position. He wants the blessing, but he's got character issues. He wants the blessing, but he has no right to it. Esau has the right to it. So Rebekah puts the goat hair on him and Esau's clothes on him and makes him smell like Esau and brings him before his father. The father says, "You smell like my firstborn. I'll give you the blessing."

What Rebekah did for Jacob is what the Holy Spirit does for us. He makes us smell like Jesus. He clothes us in the presence of Christ and makes us smell like Jesus. Then He takes us before the Father, and the Father says, "You smell like Jesus. You smell like my Firstborn. You're clothed in His righteousness. I'll give you the blessing." But there's no trickery there. He planned it that way. He's given us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is participating with the Father, making you and me smell like Jesus, clothing us with the presence of Christ.

He brings you before the Father so that you get the blessing of the firstborn which you didn't have a right to otherwise. It says in 2 Corinthians 2:14-16 that we carry the fragrance of Christ. As believers, we carry the fragrance of Christ. To those who are saved, it's the fragrance of life.

The blessing of Abraham on Jacob

After Jacob got both the birthright and the blessing, Esau was mad. He set out to kill Jacob. Rebekah went to Jacob and told him to pack his things and go back to stay with some family. So Jacob went off to their former homeland, and he ended up marrying. He ended up with two wives, and each of those wives had a maid servant who he took as wives, so he ended up with four wives and a whole bunch of kids.

His flocks multiplied, and he had many children, and he was very blessed. The blessing was working. But he still had his character issues. He was still kind of a schemer.

After several years, the time came when Jacob was ready to go back home again. So, he packed up his wives and his kids and all of his herds and flocks and started traveling back towards home.

Jacob had two problems as he headed home. One of those problems was that he was still Jacob, the schemer - and he knew it and wanted to change. The other problem was the consequences of the past. He knew he had a brother back home who probably still wanted to kill him.

Have you ever wrestled with your own character issues that you just couldn't seem to change yourself? And have you ever faced consequences from past decisions that were catching up with you? You can run away from things for a while, but eventually you have to face them. They catch up with you. That's where Jacob was. He had two issues: his own character and his brother, the consequences of the past.

Esau heard that Jacob was on his way home, and he gathered together a bunch of men to go and meet him. Jacob heard that Esau was coming to meet him with a bunch of men with him, so Jacob prepared a present. He got a whole bunch of his cows and goats and camels and some of his treasures, and he sent some men ahead of him and said, "*When you see my brother Esau, give him this gift, and say, 'Your servant Jacob is looking forward to seeing you. He hopes you forgive him. Please don't kill him.'*"

So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp. And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. Then Jacob was left alone. Genesis 32: 21-24

So he sent his wives, his children, and everybody else ahead of him, and Jacob was left alone, all by himself. He was left alone with his character issues. He was left alone with the consequences of the past. It was nighttime, which symbolically represents the darkest hour. Jacob was at a crisis point. He was facing his own character issues and the crisis of the consequences of the past, and he had nowhere else to go. The time had come to face it, to deal with it.

Jacob wrestles with God

So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. This was the Lord. Something similar happened earlier in Genesis chapter 18. Three men visited Abraham and ate with him, and later on it was revealed that one of those men was the Lord, and the other two were angels. The angels went off to Sodom and Gomorrah to bring judgment upon that city, but the Lord stayed with Abraham. So the Lord visited Abraham in the form of a man.

So, a man wrestled with Jacob until the breaking of day. I'm guessing this was not a wrestling match to see physically who was stronger. Jacob was coming to the end of himself. He was dealing with his character issues. He needed to be changed. He needed to surrender, and he needed to be transformed into the man he knew he was supposed to be, into a man of God, not a manipulator. Even though he loved the blessing of God, he needed to be changed. So he wrestled with the Lord, and really the goal was to surrender and be changed.

Now, when [the Lord] saw that He did not prevail against Jacob, He touched the socket of his hip, and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. Genesis 32:25

Was God not able to outwrestle Jacob? No, that's not what was going on.

Jacob needed to surrender, and he wouldn't do it. There's something about human nature even if you're born again and you love God. There's something about our nature that is pretty stubborn. We can put up a good, long fight until we finally come to the end of ourselves and surrender.

Jacob, out of that human stubbornness, would not surrender. He kept fighting and struggling. He wanted to be changed, but he wasn't changed yet, and wouldn't surrender. So the Lord knocked his hip out of socket. Has the Lord ever put you in a position where He helped you to surrender? The Lord was trying to help Jacob surrender. God loved Jacob, and Jacob needed to surrender.

Jacob wrestles for God's blessing

And the Lord said, "Let me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Genesis 32: 26

Everything was leading up to this point. This was what Jacob was after. Jacob's life pursuit was that blessing of God. It's what he was born for. It was the drive within him. It was something within. He wanted the blessing of God. Even with his character issues and whatever else, he wanted the blessing of God. He valued the blessing of

God. That's why God chose him. He got the birthright, but he got it through scheming. He got the blessing, but he got it through scheming. Now, what he wanted was the direct blessing of God. He wanted the one-on-one, face-to-face blessing from God.

So he wrestled all night. He was tired and wounded. His hip was out of joint, and I think he was out of fight at this point. He was not wrestling anymore. He was just holding on until the Lord blessed him. And he wasn't just asking for the blessing. He was already a rich man. In the natural, he had everything he could have wanted.

He was saying, "I need to be changed. I need to become the man that I know I'm supposed to be. I need to be changed, and I'm not letting go until you change me."

Change my name

So He said to him, "What is your name?"

He said, "Jacob."

And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." Genesis 32:27-28

Remember that in the Bible, your name is your identity. It's your self-image. It's your character. It's your destiny. It's who you are. The name is a representation of who you are. So what was the Lord asking Jacob?

Often people are in denial about their issues. They hide their character issues and try to pretend that they're not there and everything is okay. We wear masks, and we pretend, and we're pretty good at lying to ourselves, but we know. When the Lord said, "What is your name," He was asking Jacob to confess, to open up, to tell Him his issues. "What's your issue? What's your problem? Why are you here wrestling with me? What's this really about? Come out of denial."

And as long as we're in denial about something, the Lord has a really hard time breaking through and helping us. Sometimes we don't even see it ourselves until God turns on the light. And that's what He's doing. "Jacob, what's your name?" When Jacob responds, what he's actually saying is, "I'm a supplanter. I'm a guy who's been getting my way all these years through scheming and manipulating and cheating and whatever I need to do. That's who I am." He's coming out of denial, taking off the mask and asking God to change him.

Maybe you feel like your name is failure. Maybe you feel like your name is rejected or poor or angry or bitter. Whatever issue you might have, when the Lord asks your name, take off the mask and tell Him. "This is what I'm struggling with. This is what I'm carrying. This is how I see myself. This is how I perceive my destiny. Change me. Help me."

That's what Jacob did. He confessed, and the Lord said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob. Your identity is no longer the schemer, the manipulator. Your character, your nature is no longer the schemer and the manipulator. Your destiny and future is no longer the schemer or the manipulator. I'm changing your name. I'm changing your identity. I'm changing your life. A new name. No longer shall you be called Jacob, but now you're going to be called Israel."

One of the meanings of Israel is “a prince with God,” but if you break it down you can get a clearer translation. The “el” in Hebrew is “God,” and “isra” means “prevail” - to struggle against someone and to win. So Israel can mean “to prevail in God,” or it can mean “God prevails” or “I prevail with God” or “God prevails in me.” All good!

The Lord said to him that his name was going to be Israel because he struggled with God and with men and prevailed. This is kind of funny. Now, who won that wrestling match? Who ended up tired, surrendered and wounded? Jacob. But the Lord said to him, “You just won.” When you struggle with God and you come to the place of surrender, you win. You win, and your name gets changed.

From that moment, the change began to happen in his character. The transformation began to happen.

And then Jacob asked Him, saying, “Tell me your name, I pray.” And He said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And he blessed him there. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel. Genesis 32:29-30

The word Peniel means “facing God” or “face-to-face with God.” Jacob said he had seen God face to face. It wasn’t just a man. It wasn’t an angel. It was the Lord. He saw the Lord face to face and lived.

Finally, verse 31 says, *“Just as Jacob crossed over Peniel, the sun rose on him and he limped on his hip.”*

Jacob wrestled all night with the Lord. His character was changed. His name, his destiny and his identity was changed. And now, he walks off into the sunrise ready to face his brother and the consequences of his past.

Prayer

Like Jacob, God, I want to value the blessing. I want to understand and appreciate and value the blessing of God.

God, I want Your hand on my life. Nothing else will do. No works of the flesh. No abilities or self-reliance, none of that will do, God. I surrender that. I need Your hand on my life, God. I need Your blessing.

Thank you, God, that you give me the blessing of the firstborn. Holy Spirit, You come and You make me smell like Jesus. You clothe me in Christ, in His presence, His fragrance. Holy Spirit, You bring me before the Father to receive the blessing of the Firstborn. Thank you!

THE POWER OF THE BLESSING

After Moses led Israel out of Egypt, they headed for the Promised Land. At this time, God gave Israel victory after victory as they encountered resistance from peoples and armies. God gave Israel victories because He promised He would and that they would take the land. God had blessed them.

No one can curse what God has blessed

So, they marched onward, getting victory after victory, and the people ahead of them heard the news and were terrified. Israel was coming, and their God was giving them victory. One king, Balak, king of the Moabites, decided to go to a sorcerer named Balaam. Balaam was sort of a mixture of a prophet and a sorcerer. Balaam was called as a prophet of God, and he knew God and believed in God and respected the authority of God, but

his heart was not with God. He was for hire. He was known to be a sorcerer that could be called upon to supply curses.

So Balak, king of the Moabites, asked Balaam to curse the Israelites so that they wouldn't overrun his people. He offered to pay Balaam handsomely.

Balaam's answer was that he could only do what God allowed him to do. He wanted to do the job, but he knew the authority and sovereignty of God, so he said that he could only do what God allowed.

2 Peter 2:15 talks about people whose hearts are not with God. It says: *They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.*

Jude 1:11 also speaks of this: *Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.*

Both Peter and Jude acknowledge that Balaam's gift was for sale. He was called by God, but his gift was for sale, so his heart was not faithful or loyal to God.

So Balak came to Balaam with his money and asked him to curse Israel. And Balaam answered that he could only do what God allowed him to do, so he had to check with God.

Then Balaam said to Balak, "Build seven altars for me here, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams."

And Balak did just as Balaam had spoken, and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar. Then Balaam said to Balak, "Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go; perhaps the Lord will come to meet me, and whatever He shows me, I will tell you. So he went to a desolate height. And God met Balaam, and he said to Him, "I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered on each altar a bull and a ram." Then the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, "Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak."

So, he returned to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, he and all the princes of Moab. And he took up his oracle and said, "Balak the king of Moab has brought me from Aram, from the mountains of the east. 'Come, curse Jacob for me, and come, denounce Israel.' How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce whom the Lord has not denounced? Numbers 23:1-8

Balaam came back to Balak with a message that he couldn't curse someone who wasn't cursed by God. He couldn't go against God.

It goes on in verse 9: *From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him. There! A people dwelling alone, not reckoning itself among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob? Or number one-fourth of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his.*

In other words, Balaam said, "Oh, I want to be like Israel. I want to be as blessed as Israel is. He's numerous and he's powerful now, and let my end be like his." That was his prophecy to Balak, and Balak was not happy. He said: *"What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and look, you have blessed them bountifully!"*

So Balaam answered and said, "Must I not take heed to speak what the Lord has put in my mouth?"

Then Balak said to him, "Please come with me to another place from which you may see them. You shall see only the outer part of them and shall not see them at all. Curse them for me from there." Numbers 23:11

The first time Balaam was overlooking Israel, so Balak said, "Maybe if you're not looking directly at them, then you can curse them for me." So he took him to another place for a more distant view of Israel.

It goes on in verses 14-20: He brought him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah and built seven altars and offered a bull and ram on each altar. And he said to Balak, "Stand here by your burnt offering while I meet the Lord over there. Then the Lord met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, "Go back to Balak, and thus you shall speak. So he came to him, and there he was, standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab were with him. And Balak said to him, "What has the Lord spoken?"

Then he took up his oracle and said, "Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to me, son of Zippor! God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? Behold, I have received a command to bless. He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it."

No one can curse what God has blessed. It's really that simple.

Blessing vs. curse

When people are involved in witchcraft they are summoning demons. They're actually partnering with demons and sending them out on assignment to hurt people and curse people and bring tragedy to people and oppress people. If you've ever lived in a country or been in a country where they practice witchcraft, you know that stuff is pretty real.

In America, we don't think too much about it. There's not a lot of it, but there's some of it. I've known people who were Satanists in the past and have come to Christ. They told me what witches and Satanists do. There are people who actively practice witchcraft against churches, against Christians, against leaders. I've showed up at church different times and had satanic symbols on the sidewalk or dead animals, used in a ritual, left in front of the church.

Are they going to stop us? No, because you can't curse what God has blessed. Which is more powerful, the blessing of God or the curse of the enemy? The blessing of God!

I don't focus much on spiritual warfare or fighting the devil. I don't bother with most of that stuff. Focus on God. If you have the presence of God, if you have the power of God, if you have the blessing of God, you win. If you have the favor of God and your heart is aligned with God, you win.

I've had many experiences I can only describe as spiritual battles, and I believe in the blessing of God. I believe in the power of God. No one can curse what God has blessed.

Prayer

I thank You, God, that no one can curse what You have blessed. Bless me, Father. I trust that I am blessed with Your blessing, and no one can take that away from me!

THE RESTORATION OF THE BLESSING

When God created mankind, he gave them instructions. Then, at the end of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, after Jesus rose from the dead, He gave the Great Commission to his disciples. I want to look at the parallels between those two moments of instruction.

The image of God restored

In Genesis 1:26, *“God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness...’”* We're made in the image of God, and God wanted us to think like Him and have a heart like Him and know Him.

Since God made us in His image, as soon as sin happened, the image of God in man was corrupted and twisted. Man, because of sin, didn't look like God anymore. He didn't think like God, have a heart like God, or act like God anymore. Man became corrupted and twisted.

When Jesus came, He came to restore us to the image of God. Romans 8:29 says: *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren.*

The moment you call on Jesus and get saved, the moment you get born again, the Spirit of God comes into your heart. The image of God begins to be restored in you. Your spirit is changed, transformed, and it begins to affect your thinking and your mind and your personality. It begins to transform you from the inside out. God is restoring the image that got damaged.

Whose image do you bear?

During Jesus' ministry, all the Pharisees kept trying to trick Jesus. They kept trying to catch Him. They'd ask trick questions and try to get Him to say something wrong so they could accuse Him, but they could never catch Him. They never tricked Him, because Jesus always had these amazing answers. Mark 12:13-17 is one of those stories: *Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, “Teacher, we know that you are true and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men but teach the way of God and truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”*

Of course, that was a trap. There was deep divide among the Jews who really hated the fact that they were under Roman domination. If Jesus had said, “You have to pay taxes to Caesar,” He could have been accused of treason against Israel. But if He had said the opposite answer, “No, we don't pay taxes to Caesar,” then they would have immediately gone to the Roman government and turned him in. Either answer would get Jesus in trouble, so they thought they had Him.

Then it goes on in verses 15: *But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it." So they brought it. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's."*

And Jesus answered and said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Now, on the surface, it looks like Jesus got out of the trap because He's really smart. But there's a lot more to this story. The story is actually prophetic. It's a picture of our salvation. What was the point of what Jesus said? "The coin, whose image does it bear? If it bears Caesar's image, then give it to Caesar. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. Give to God what is God's." If you bear the image of God, you belong to God. If you bear the image of Caesar, you belong to Caesar. If you bear the image of the world, you belong to the world. If you bear the image of God, then you belong to God. And Jesus was saying, "I came to restore the image of God in you. And if you get the image of God restored, you'll belong to God again."

God breathed into man

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. Genesis 2:7

When God made man in His image, He formed his body and then breathed into him, and that's when man received his human spirit. In the New Testament, after the resurrection, Jesus' disciples were locked in the upper room with the doors shut, afraid of the Jews, because as far as they knew Jesus was dead. They must have been following the wrong guy. They didn't believe He was going to rise from the dead.

Then Jesus showed up in the room where they were assembled together: *So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."* John 20: 21-23

What did Jesus do? He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Jesus doesn't do anything by accident. Everything He does has meaning. Everything He does represents something. As soon as Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," everybody there instantly related it back to Genesis 2 when God breathed into man and gave him spirit and gave him life.

When Jesus breathed into them, Jesus was making a statement. He was saying, "I do what my Father did." He was saying, "I am God." He alone had the right to breathe into them, breathe upon them, and give them new life. When God originally breathed into man, He gave him life, but when Jesus breathed into his disciples, they did not just get restored to what Adam and Eve had or to what Adam and Eve were. They did not just get restored to that.

They got something more and better. They were born again with eternal life, and the Holy Spirit came to live inside of them. Adam and Eve did not have that. In the Old Testament, nobody had that until this moment. This was the first moment that the Spirit of God actually came to live inside of somebody. They were born again, and

it happened because Jesus breathed on them. The Great Commission after the resurrection was a new beginning. The Genesis beginning was natural. This new beginning was spiritual.

Dominion given and dominion restored

Let's look at another parallel. In Genesis 1:26, *"God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over all the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'"* God made us in His image to have dominion. What is described in Genesis is natural dominion, dominion over the physical world.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they became slaves of Satan. They lost their dominion. But Jesus came to restore our dominion.

Look at Matthew 28:19-20: *Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

When Jesus appeared to his disciples after the resurrection, He said, *"All authority is given to Me in heaven and on earth."* The first few times I read this, I wondered, didn't Jesus already have all authority? If He was God and created the world, didn't He already have all authority?

Philippians 2:6-7 tells us that when Jesus left Heaven to be born through the virgin Mary and become a man, He stripped Himself of His power as God and His knowledge as God. He stripped Himself of all of that. He lived as a man. He lived in obedience to the Father every step right up to death on the cross. He stayed in obedience, and did not give into sin, undoing what Adam and Eve had done. He had to live as a man. He could not cheat in order to save us and undo what Adam and Eve did.

So after He died on the cross and rose from the dead, He said this amazing thing, *"Now, all authority has been given to me as a man.* I already had it as God, but now I came as a man, and I got it back because Adam and Eve lost it." He's saying that, as a representative and a member of the human race and also the head of the human race, He got the authority back. He got the dominion back.

Now, what did God first give Adam and Eve? He gave them dominion on the earth. What did Jesus do? He restored the dominion, and this time the focus is more spiritual. Now, He said, the enemy is under your feet. You have authority.

Be fruitful and multiply

And then what did He tell them to do? *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...* (Matthew 28:19) What was the first commission that God gave Adam and Eve? *Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth.* (Genesis 1:28) What did Jesus tell the disciples? Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth – but this time with the new birth. It's not natural now. It's spiritual. He restored their authority and gave them a fresh commission to multiply and fill the earth.

The blessing restored

We see in Genesis 1:28 that the first thing God did after He made Adam and Eve was to bless them. Then there was a flood, but God saved one man, Noah, and his family, and the first thing he did after that was to bless them. After that, God called out a man named Abraham to be his covenant man, and what's the first thing He did with Abraham? He blessed him. The blessing went to his son Isaac, to Jacob, to Joseph and on and on. God wants us to have that blessing.

Then we see the Ascension. The first thing God did with Adam and Eve after He created them was to bless them...and the last thing Jesus did before He went back to Heaven was to bless his disciples: *He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.*" Luke 24:50-53

That was the very last thing He did before He went back to Heaven. The very last thing He did was to bless them! He restored the blessing! He said, "All of Heaven is backing you up now. The reconciliation, the restoration is done. No curse works against you now. You're blessed. All of Heaven backs you up. You'll be fruitful. You'll prosper. You'll multiply. You will accomplish what I send you out to do. All of Heaven is with you, backing you up." We live in that same blessing today. It happened 2,000 years ago, but it's still on us. He blessed His body, and we're part of that body now 2,000 years later. We're living in that blessing.

Priestly blessing

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:

"The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make His face shine upon you,

And be gracious to you;

The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,

And give you peace."

"So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them." Numbers 6:22-27

When God led Israel out of Egypt by Moses on the way to the Promised Land, God told Moses to dedicate one of the tribes, the tribe of Levi, as the priests. The Lord spoke to Moses, instructing him to tell his brother Aaron that he would be the head of the priesthood and that He wanted them to bless the Israelites on a regular basis. He actually gave Aaron the specific words the priests should speak to invoke God's blessing.

Partnering with the Holy Spirit

When we speak words, God backs us up. The Holy Spirit backs us up because we're in covenant with Him. In the New Covenant, we're His body. We're part of Jesus. When we speak, we're an authorized representative of God. The Holy Spirit wants to partner with us in the words we speak. He wants to release blessing and life. Many times we mess that up. We start speaking junk and garbage, and the Holy Spirit can't get into agreement with that.

Sometimes, when we speak a lot of junk, what we're really doing is authorizing the devil. If we're speaking fear and doubt and lack and sickness and tragedy, the devil jumps at it. He says, "I can partner with you on that one. I can go to work on that one." You're authorizing him. But when you speak God's word and God's life and God's blessing, you're authorizing the Holy Spirit, because you are a legal representative of God in covenant. You're part of His body. That's why He tells Aaron the exact words for blessing the children of Israel. He doesn't want him to mess it up.

The Lord make His face to shine upon you

One of the things that God told Aaron to say was, "The Lord make His face to shine upon you." This is the first time this phrase shows up in the Bible. After this incident, that phrase shows up in the Bible a lot.

Psalm 31:16

*Make Your face shine upon Your servant;
Save me for Your mercies' sake.*

Psalm 67:1-2

*God be merciful to us and bless us,
And cause His face to shine upon us,
That Your way may be known on earth,
Your salvation among all nations.*

Psalm 80:3

*Restore us, O God;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!*

Psalm 119:135

*Make Your face shine upon Your servant,
And teach me Your statutes.*

Why does this phrase show up again and again? Because when God told them that this was how to activate the priestly blessing, they started making it a part of their regular prayer.

There are a lot of ways to communicate with somebody, especially today. You can call them on the phone, and you can hear their voice. But if you do that, you can't see their face. You can't look in their eyes or see their facial expressions. Or you can text them, and then you don't even hear their voice. You don't hear the vocal inflections to detect happiness or frustration.

But the best form of communication is face to face. You can see into the other person's eyes. You can see the facial expressions. You can discern their heart through their face. Face to face is the most intimate, personal way of communicating, and God told them to pray, "Let Your face shine upon us." When God's face shines on you,

His presence is there. His attention is on you. His mercy is on you. His grace is on you. His intervention is in your life. His blessing is on you, and there's revelation. You're seeing. You're understanding. You're experiencing.

So when you ask God for His face to shine upon you, you're asking for intimacy and the closest heart-to-heart kind of communication with God. You're asking for revelation. You're asking for His mercy and His grace and His intimate presence. It's a beautiful thing.

Prayer

As you blessed Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Joseph and Jabez, bless me now! As Jesus blessed the disciples as He returned to heaven, bless me now, Lord!

Restore in me the image of God. Make my heart and my thoughts just like Yours, God. Breathe Your Spirit into me, God.

Thank you, Lord, that You have restored me to dominion and authority. I receive that dominion. I receive that authority. The enemy is under my feet. I cannot be stopped, because the hand of God is with me.

I am a part of Jesus. I am a part of Your body now. Thank you, Lord. You've given me the fresh commission to multiply and fill the earth, this time with new birth, with people calling on the name of Jesus and being saved.

Let Your face shine upon me, God, and bless me! In Jesus name, amen.

From the very beginning,
God designed us for His blessing. He intended
us to live in His blessing. But one of the effects of living in
this broken world is that many people live from tragedy to tragedy.
They are constantly in a state of worry and fear, starting each day
wondering what is going to happen. What else is going to go wrong?
What other tragedy is going to hit me? But the Bible teaches us to live
from glory to glory, and from faith to faith. I want to build up your faith
and bring you into a full understanding of God's blessing. As you
read, I pray that you will receive a revelation of God's heart,
a revelation of God's goodness, and that it will elevate
your faith so that you will wake up every day
anticipating His blessing.



Mike Harding is the pastor of Love Gospel Church in Apache Junction, Arizona. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education from Arizona State University and completed the two-year pastoral ministry program at Rhema Bible Training Center in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. He is licensed through Rhema Ministerial Association International. Mike and his wife Cris have been active in pastoral ministry and missionary work since 1986.