

FAITH THAT CONQUERS ANYTHING: Don't Give Up
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Bible Study Series Handout Part 2
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I. Desperate Moments

- A. In a moment of desperation, when you feel like there is no hope, will you give up or will you cry out to God for help?
 - 1. There is something about a desperate moment—that causes us to call out God's name in distress.
 - 2. In that moment of desperation, when you feel like things are out of your control and there is nothing you can do, there is a profound opportunity.
- B. The point of defeat—the urge to throw up your hands and surrender—seems like the most desolate corner of creation.
 - 1. If you trace this idea in Scripture, you'll find that God's deliverance often follows closely upon a time of desperation.
 - 2. If you find yourself in the deep down dark, this is not the time to give up.
 - 3. When you hear words like "Stage four," or "I don't love you anymore," or "We're downsizing," your every impulse might be to give up.
- C. Jacob is another "face in the cloud"—a figure from the roster of powerful faith witnesses in Hebrews 11.
 - 1. In the last chapter, we learned about Abraham and his son Isaac.
 - 2. Jacob is Isaac's son, Abraham's grandson.
 - 3. There is an extraordinary story in the Old Testament of the time Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord.
 - 4. We know that in stressful situations, people have the impulses of **fight, flight, or freeze**;
 - 5. Jacob's technique for addressing his fear was running.
- D. Most of us have fears we'd rather not discuss.
 - 1. We fear coming into a responsibility and not being good enough: The Fear of inadequacy.
 - 2. What if something's wrong with me? What if I'm broken—not as smart? Not as beautiful? Not as funny or capable?
 - 3. We fear failure, so we don't apply for the promotion or try out for the team or ask the girl on a date.

II. Run Away

- A. Genesis 25:27 tells us that Esau hunted and loved the outdoors, but Jacob preferred staying inside.
 - 1. Dad favored his outdoorsy son, while Rebekah, the mom, doted on Jacob.
 - 2. It was a classic case of brain versus brawn.
 - 3. The first great example comes as Jacob cons Esau out of his birthright.
 - 4. Jacob has grown up hearing about Grandfather Abraham and God's blessing on him.
 - 5. That blessing and its birthright have passed to Isaac and will now go to Esau, who beat his brother to the birth canal in a thrilling finish. As the eldest, Esau has dibs on all the stuff that matters.
 - 6. Scripture teaches us that he tricks his brother out of his birthright.

- B. Now Jacob has both the birthright—meaning the inheritance and legacy—and the father's blessing, essential even if received through deception.
 - 1. Esau may be a little slow on the uptake, but eventually he figures out that he has been duped.
 - 2. He wants to go hunting again, but this time for his Little Brother.
 - 3. Jacob realizes he has scammed himself: he can't enjoy the prize he's won because it would require a fight, and Jacob doesn't do fights.
 - 4. After a long journey, Jacob connects with his uncle Laban and gets a steady job;

- C. Up to this point, that verse is the story of Jacob's life.
 - 1. He manipulates, he's found out, he runs away because he's afraid.
 - 2. Like Jacob many of us think we can out maneuver or outthink our way through things and when it doesn't work we simply run.
 - 3. The problem is that fear distorts our perception of reality.
 - 4. Fear convinced us to give up before we even try.

- D. Here are a few fears that somehow hold people back:
 - 1. There is a difficult conversation I need to have with someone.
 - 2. Fear of failing as a husband or wife.
 - 3. Giving up without a fight can also look like the following:
 - 4. Fear causes us to run from what God may intend as a means of blessing.
 - 5. Fear causes most of us to run away. That's what Jacob did.

III. Nowhere Left to Run

- A. Jacob makes a pack with Laban to go to another border but where he is going is where Esaú is located.
 - 1. Jacob hasn't seen Esau since cheating him out of his birthright and running away.
 - 2. So he sends a delegation with gifts and a message that he's coming in peace.
 - 3. Those men return with news—and it's ominous.
 - 4. They've met Esau, and he's heading their way with four hundred men (Gen. 32:6).

- B. We read that Jacob is terrified. Who wouldn't be?

1. For once, the opposite direction—his favorite place to flee—is cut off.
 2. He divides up his wives, his children, his servants, his livestock, and all of his possessions, so that when Esau attacks one group the other group will have time to escape.
- C. Genesis 32 tells of the amazing events that follow.
1. Jacob finds himself all alone in a desolate clearing.
 2. Getting everyone sent off had been loud and chaotic. Now he sits in silence.
 3. He suddenly hears something behind him. The sound of footsteps getting closer.
 4. The stranger grabs hold of Jacob and throws him to the ground. The two men begin to wrestle.
 5. The man reaches out and touches Jacob's hip, which then wrenches out of its socket, and cries out, "Let me go, for it is daybreak!" Jacob says, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."
 6. Instead of giving up, Jacob asks God for help.
 7. The stranger says, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome" (Gen. 32:28).
 8. Jacob gets a new name!
 9. Jacob is a changed man because he finally stood and faced God and his true self.