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Insights

The Way to a New Life
JULY / AUGUST 2011

RECEIVE
JUSTICE
*for what the devil
has done to you*

Key ingredients that will
redefine your life

PART
2





Key ingredients that will

(PART 2)

redefine your life

IN THE LAST ARTICLE, we began exploring the lives of a few of the patriarchs of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11. We're on an intentional journey together, looking for a divine pattern in these godly men's walk with God that can help us redefine our own lives. We're asking the question: *How does God build His character qualities into His people in order to bring His good plan to pass in their lives?*

Abraham (originally called Abram) — the earliest patriarch of faith through whom God instituted His plan — is the first man whose personal journey we're studying.

There is a scriptural explanation for the seeming gap between the mistakes Abram made in the early stages of his walk with God and the man we know as "Abraham, the father of faith." A time came in Abram's life when everything changed — when God literally redefined him

and gave him a new name. Abraham finally stopped trying to figure out on his own how to make God's Word to him come to pass. From that point on, he began to simply trust the Lord to do what He said He would do.

Genesis chapter 17 relates the moment in time when God redefined Abram. Before that moment, Abram had received a word from God but hadn't yet truly believed it. Abram still staggered; he was still trying to work it out



himself — to do everything he could think of to see the promise fulfilled. He couldn't seem to stop trying to figure out how everything God had promised him was going to happen.

This sounds a lot like the way some of us try to approach our faith challenges even today. We know that God wants to accomplish big things through us according to His plan, but we just can't figure out how those God-given dreams are ever going to come to pass. So sometimes we try to find a way to reach that goal with our own natural reasoning — a strategy that never works well. Only as God reveals to us *His* way to follow His plan, just as He did for Abram — and only as we act in obedience to God's direction — do we begin to experience the blessing of walking out His will for our lives.

Chapter 17 relates the time God spoke to Abram a second time. Immediately preceding that chapter, the last verse of chapter 16 says this: "And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram" (Genesis 16:16). Let's just touch on a few highlights of what happened between the first and the second time God spoke to Abram.

Hagar was the handmaiden of Abram's wife, Sarai. Abram

to Abram and said to him, 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.' Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations" (Genesis 17:1-5).

Notice the first thing the Lord said to Abram: "...As for me, behold, My covenant is with you..." *That* is "God-talk." God is essentially saying the same thing to us right now. As far as He is concerned, if we're in Christ, we are His people, and His covenant is with us. We are His chosen ones — those whom He has designed to fulfill His purposes on this earth by His power.

However, God's words to Abram in verse 5 are perhaps the most significant of all: "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham. For I have made you a father of many nations." *This was the moment that Abram was redefined.* From that point forward, he became what the apostle Paul described him to be in Romans 4: someone who was *strong in God, who gave glory to God, and who did not stagger at the promise of God* (vv. 20, 21).

This was the moment when Abram truly embraced the covenant God had made with him and began to see himself as a man in covenant with Him. In other words, *Abram believed.* It was at that moment that God declared: "...And it was accounted to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3). At that moment, everything changed for this man of God. Abram's name was changed to Abraham, and God's power began to move through him to accomplish His purposes on the earth.

After that second word from Heaven, Abraham and his wife Sarah did conceive a child in their old age — their son Isaac. Thus, God used Abraham to establish the first crucial ingredient that was required so His plan could be ultimately fulfilled to bless every person in every nation. In other words, *Abram believed.* He hoped against hope, believing that God would perform His promise in the face of all contradictory circumstances (v. 18). In the natural, it didn't look like God's promise to Abram could ever come to pass; nevertheless, Abram chose to believe what God said.

Today we are called to follow Abraham's example of faith. We must maintain that we're not just casual believers who "believe in God." Many people can say that. They believe they are Christians, yet they have no biblical concept of what it means to be a Christian or to live by faith in the Word of God.

Abraham was the father of this new kind of life in God, and he passed on the baton of faith to his son Isaac. There are a number of Scripture passages we could study to understand how powerful Isaac was as a man who walked in the Word. But one particular event really set Isaac apart from everyone else in his generation. It's found in Genesis 26, where God spoke to Isaac much like He spoke to his father Abraham years before:

"Then the Lord appeared to him and said: 'Do not go



...the only way we'll ever experience the harvest of blessing He has ordained for us is to believe His Word and to sow in faith, regardless of what we see in the natural. "

and Sarai were already quite old when God promised they would have descendants. Sarai couldn't figure out how that was supposed to work out — so she came up with her own plan. She told her husband, "You're to conceive a child, Abram, with my handmaiden Hagar."

Abram agreed, and Hagar later gave birth to a son named Ishmael. But this wasn't the way God wanted to bring about the fulfillment of His promise. God never did look on Ishmael as the son of promise — the son through whom all nations of the earth would be blessed.

At the end of chapter 16, Abram was 86 years old. The very next verse states: "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1).

Abram was 86 when the Lord first spoke to him, and he was 99 when he received the second word from Heaven. That means there was 13 years of total silence between those two divine visitations. We have no record of Abram receiving any word of encouragement or instruction from God during those years.

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared

down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. 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. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (Genesis 26:2–5).

Isaac and his clan were living in the midst of a great famine in Canaan. People were leaving the region and traveling to Egypt because there was no way for them to grow crops without rain. But God spoke to Isaac and gave him a divine directive. In essence, the Lord said, “Don’t do what everyone else is doing or go in the same direction everyone else is going. They are running for their lives, and I don’t want you to do that. I want you to stay where I planted you and to trust Me.”

There will be times in each of our lives when God has a similar message for us. The crowd, the society we live in, and even our friends may be headed in a certain direction. But God will tell us, “I want you to stand your ground. Don’t quit; don’t give up; don’t change directions; and don’t modify your course. I want you to stay in place and do what I tell you to do.”

The moment God spoke those words to Isaac, this man of God made a life-and-death decision that would affect his entire clan. If they didn’t leave for Egypt and things didn’t work out, everyone would starve. But Isaac chose to obey God, and verse 12 tells us the outcome of his obedience:

“Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the Lord *blessed* him.”

Notice that last phrase: “...the Lord blessed him.” That word “bless” just keeps popping up in the accounts of these patriarchs’ lives! In the midst of that famine, Isaac began to prosper — and he continued prospering until he became very wealthy, possessing so many flocks, herds, and servants that the Philistines envied him (v. 14).

Now, Isaac’s goal was not to cause people to envy him. His desire was simply to do exactly what God told him to do. And here is the instruction God gave him: “I want you to *sow seed*, even in the face of drought and famine.” So Isaac obeyed God, and that act of obedience is what distinguished him from everyone else of his time. He believed God and sowed seed — and as a result, Isaac received a hundredfold in that same year.

As we study the lives of Abraham and Isaac, it becomes clear that God was building a system of successful life in His Kingdom, founded on the law of faith, through the lives of these two men — a divine system that operates for those who will believe God’s Word like Abraham and who will be sowers like Isaac. Because Abraham and Isaac walked in line with God’s law of faith, they both were blessed and they both prospered — and the people around them noticed it.

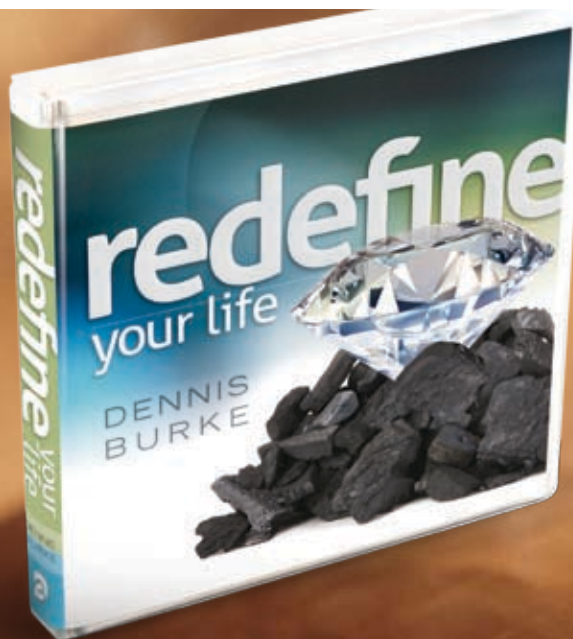
As God’s people who base our lives on His Word, we believe in prosperity. We believe that He wants to prosper whatever we set our hands to do as a testimony and a witness to those around us. We’re not serving God for the money; we’re doing it for the furtherance of His Kingdom. This is what separates us from the rest of the world.

People in this world often choose to take certain actions according to the money they might gain. As believers, we do what we do because we believe God’s promises and want to obey the eternal principles He sets forth in His Word. This will always include sowing seed into His Kingdom — and just as was true with Isaac, that act of obedience will always result in our reaping a harvest of greater prosperity.

In His wisdom, God began building this divine system of living by faith when His people were still only an obscure, small clan. He was establishing a system on this earth that enabled His people to know how to come through every challenge they faced victoriously throughout all generations, even to this present hour.

Now it’s up to us. We must choose, as Abraham and Isaac did, to act on the instructions God gives us to walk out His special plan for each of our lives. It may be difficult for our natural minds to grasp what the Lord is telling us to do. But the only way we’ll ever experience the harvest of blessing He has ordained for us is to *believe His Word* and to *sow in faith*, regardless of what we see in the natural. As we do, we’ll become living examples of God’s divine system on this earth — passing on the baton of faith to the next generation of believers, who must learn from our example so they can receive their own harvest of blessing for the unique challenges *they* will face in the days to come.

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture references are taken from the New King James Version.



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a time to finish strong

BY VIKKI BURKE

NEAR THE END OF LAST YEAR, the Lord spoke this word to me about the year 2011: “This year you will finish strong.” Clearly, however, if we don’t gain an understanding of what God’s strength is intended to accomplish, that word from Heaven won’t sound that exciting.

When God offers us strength — or anything else, for that matter — He does so for a definite purpose. For example, after Moses died and Joshua was established as Israel’s new leader, God offered His supernatural strength to Joshua so he could lead Israel into the land God was giving them. And as Joshua obeyed, God made this promise: “No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live...” (Joshua 1: 5). That’s a far cry from the person who says, “Praise the Lord, I survived another year!”

I’ve come to realize that when some people hear God say, “Be strong and courageous,” they mistake this to mean, “Don’t be afraid.” I remember the time a friend asked me and several fellow believers to pray for him before an interview with an investigative news broadcast. The Lord impressed me to tell him: “Be strong and very courageous, and no man

will be able to stand before you.”

The friend’s response startled me. He said, “Oh, I’m not afraid.” But no one had mentioned fear — except him! He completely missed what the Lord was offering him.

Notice in Joshua 1:9 that the Lord made a distinction between strength and fear when He commanded Joshua, “...Do not be afraid or discouraged...” Had my friend understood what God was offering him, he would have said: “I receive Your supernatural strength and courage — and no one will succeed against me!” The Lord wanted to empower him with the same supernatural ability He gave Joshua. There is far more to the strength of God than just surviving or being unafraid!

God first revealed the reason Joshua needed supernatural strength when He

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won’t be
given to the
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promised Moses, "Therefore, be careful to obey every command I am giving you today, so you may have strength to go in and take over the land you are about to enter" (Deuteronomy 11:8). The strength the Lord offered Joshua is the supernatural ability to possess what He has already promised. This same strength belongs to us, and it's designed to defeat *every* enemy that dares stand between us and God's promise.

Joshua defeated 31 kings and kingdoms — not with the strength of a skillfully trained army, but with an inexperienced band of former slaves. This generation of Israelites had never been trained for combat. However, once they received God's supernatural strength and courage, no one could defeat them.

This is the same strength that God said could empower us to finish this year — possessing what He has promised already belongs to us. That means whatever the enemy has withheld, delayed, sabotaged, blocked, or stolen from us must be released.

Has the enemy stolen or robbed anything from you? Maybe he's stolen your health, your children, your job, or your home. Wouldn't you like to receive justice for what the devil has done to you? Notice what Isaiah 61:8 (AMP) says: "For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong. I will faithfully give them their recompense in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant or league with them."

God loves justice, and He promises to repay you for any injustice you've ever suffered. Are you ready for a year of justice and recompense?

In Luke 18, Jesus revealed to us in a parable how to get justice: "...There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me'" (Luke 18:2-5 NKJV).

Contrary to what religion teaches, God is not the unjust judge in this parable. God has never committed — nor will He ever commit — one act of injustice. "But, Vikki," you may ask, "how can you be so sure?" Because Psalm 97:2 says, "... Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne." The purpose of a foundation is to uphold a house or building — and Jesus said a house divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:25). So since justice is the foundation upon which God's throne is built, if He committed an act of injustice, His throne would collapse. And that's not going to happen!

No, God is not responsible for any injustice, nor is He behind anything that has ever been stolen from us. *Satan* is the mastermind behind every evil thing that has happened to humanity. He is the perpetrator responsible for sabotaging the promises of God — the thief whose mission is to steal, kill, and destroy.

The reason the widow received justice wasn't that the unjust judge feared God or had compassion for people. No, Jesus alerted us to the key to getting justice when He said, "...Learn a lesson from this unjust judge" (Luke 18:6). What can we learn? That the only reason the widow received justice is because *she troubled the unjust judge*. To "trouble" means *to reduce the strength of and cause weariness as though one had been*

Wouldn't you like to receive justice for what the devil has done to you?"



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...those with
**bulldog
 determination...**
 see God's
 promises come
 to pass...."

beaten. The widow's unrelenting cry for justice reduced the judge's strength until he felt as though he had been beaten!

In fact, the judge feared that by her relentless coming, she would weary him. To "weary" means *to hit under the eye; to buffet or disable an antagonist, such as a boxer or warrior.* This widow was not timid. She was bold about what rightfully belonged to her.

Timidity will get you pushed to the back of the line! Consider the woman with the issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48). Although she was weak from her illness, she boldly elbowed her way through the crowd to get what she needed from Jesus.

One drop of water will not erode stone, but the continuous drip, drip, drip day after day wears away even the hardest surface. In the same way, our relentless voice of faith proclaiming the promise of God will wear away the resistance of our enemy until he gives us what belongs to us! Jesus said, "...Shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He

will avenge them speedily..." (Luke 18:7, 8 *NKJV*). This is not for the fair-weather Christian! It is only for those with bulldog determination who, having done all to stand, continue to stand

until they see God's promises come to pass in their lives.

Proverbs 6:30, 31 says, "Excuses might be found for a thief who steals because he is starving. But if he is caught, he must pay back seven times what he stole...." We have tolerated injustice and allowed the thief to get away with robbing us instead of demanding that he repay. It is up to us to bring the mastermind of injustice to God's heavenly court of justice!

God gave Jacob a concept that brought him justice and made him wealthy, even after being cheated by his father-in-law for 20 years. During those years as Jacob had faithfully worked for his father-in-law, Laban unjustly changed his wages ten times! So one day while Laban was away shearing sheep, Jacob packed up his family and secretly slipped away. When Laban realized Jacob had departed, he

continued on back

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ran after Jacob and, of all things, accused Jacob of trying to cheat him. Notice Jacob's response to these accusations:

"For twenty years I've done this: I slaved away fourteen years for your two daughters and another six years for your flock and you changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not stuck with me, you would have sent me off penniless. But God saw the fix I was in and how hard I had worked and last night rendered his verdict" (Genesis 31:41, 42 *Message*).

Once Jacob had endured enough of Laban's lying and cheating, he decided to do something about it — and that's when God rendered His verdict! God expects us to bring the thief to justice! Jesus said, "Whatever *you* forbid on earth will be forbidden in Heaven..." (Matthew 18:18 *Phillips*). It's our responsibility to forbid the thief to steal from us.

Israel also experienced a grave injustice when Egypt held them in slavery for 400 years — but justice demanded recompense! Notice the instructions Moses gave Israel after persuading Pharaoh to free God's people from slavery: "And the people of Israel did as Moses had instructed; they asked the Egyptians for clothing and articles of silver and gold. The Lord caused the Egyptians to look favorably on the Israelites, and they gave the Israelites whatever they asked for. So they stripped the Egyptians of their wealth!" (Exodus 12:35, 36). Made slaves to the Egyptians for 400 years, the Israelites were penniless — but after God rendered His verdict, they left Egypt loaded with wealth and supplies. God's love for justice brought repayment for all the years Israel had been mistreated.

Years earlier, Moses tried to bring justice to Israel himself but it didn't work out very well. When he witnessed one of the Hebrew slaves being beaten by an Egyptian, Moses made sure no one was looking; then he killed the Egyptian and hid the body. After Pharaoh heard what had happened, Moses was forced to flee Egypt for 40 years — until he had learned from God how true deliverance was to come for Israel.

We cannot take vengeance against people into our own hands! We must let *God* deal with people. Our job is to execute justice on Satan — the mastermind behind every evil plot and plan against mankind. Vengeance belongs to God, and He will repay in His timing and His way.

God wants to render *His* verdict for those who have had enough of the devil's injustice. But justice won't be given to the fainthearted or the timid. Justice will come only to those who speak God's Word day and night until the kingdom of darkness gives back what rightfully belongs to them!

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

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