

GENESIS 32:8-12 JACOB PRAYS!

⁸ He thought, "If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape."

⁹ Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' ¹⁰ I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. ¹¹ Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. ¹² But you have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.' "

All of Jacob's fears must have come together with the message that Esau was on his way to meet him with 400 men. The load of guilt and the memory of Esau's previously declared intention to kill him, must have been overwhelming for Jacob. For the first time he is truly driven to God in prayer. Yet, you may be able to get Jacob to pray, but you can't get Jacob out of the prayer. While he acknowledges his unworthiness and God's gracious provision, he still refers to God as someone else's God (Abraham and Isaac), mostly throws God's promise up in his face and challenges him to be faithful to it, and expresses no interest in God's will but only his own safety. In the following verses, Jacob will then make provision for survival in the face of the worst possible outcome. As "immature" as Jacob's prayer was, God honored it and Esau's heart was changed.

The disciple's spiritual progression runs through the stages of trying to muscle his way into the kingdom, then realizing his powerlessness and asking God to supplement his attempts, and finally to a total dependence upon God. The manner in which we pray and the content of our prayers are good barometers of where we really are in our spiritual life. Constant contact with God through prayer is a major tool through which God reveals himself to the believer. The more we pray, the more we experience the presence of God, and as a result, the more our faith grows and we increase in our submission to his perfect will. Ultimately the progression of our prayers should reveal a movement from prayers about me and my needs to prayers about the needs of others and God's interests in the world.

Lord Jesus, as you taught your disciples to pray, tutor me through your Spirit so I may mature in the holy discipline of prayer. Take my puny efforts at prayer and strengthen them by aligning my heart with your heart and my desires with your desires. May the growth of your kingdom be the focal point of all my prayers. Amen.