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**God...Are You in this?
Genesis 46:1-7**

I remember as a kid watching those opening scenes of ABC's "Wide World of Sports". The thrill of victory and agony of defeat! The agony of defeat part made me cringe as I watched a very painful ending to an attempted ski jump. The skier appeared to be in good form as he headed down the jump, but then for no apparent reason, he tumbled head of heels off the side of the jump, bouncing off the supporting structure. What the viewers didn't know that was the ski jumper had chosen to fall rather than finish the jump. Why the dramatic change? He explained later that midway down the jump he discovered the surface had become too fast and he realized that if he completed the jump he would land beyond the safe sloping landing area and his jump could have been fatal. As it was his crash looked devastating, but he suffered no more than a headache from his tumble.

Change. Change can be very difficult, dramatic, even painful at times. Change can be necessary. But certain change is better than a fatal landing at the end. Most of us do not like change. But all of us will need certain changes. Making a move can be very disconcerting. Change breeds insecurity. Pulling up your roots and moving to another place can be fearful and depressing. Leaving all your friends behind and the security of knowing how to live and where to shop and where to get things done. All of that can be quite unsettling. The older we get the more difficult change can be. Familiar surroundings equal security and comfort. The older we are the more set in our ways, the less adventuresome and risk-taking. There is something about our minds as we get older that enjoy continuity, the known, habitual and comfortable. Those things all bring a restedness in our minds. Change is difficult. It

may not just be a geographical move. It could be a change in career, a new position, a different job. It could be a change in the home. Perhaps you are experiencing an empty nest with the kids leaving home. Perhaps you are getting married moving from singleness. Perhaps a new baby or another person is going to begin living with your family. Perhaps you are looking at retirement soon. Change is not easy. This morning the question is this. How can I respond in a spiritual and godly way when I come to the crossroads of change in my life? What do I need to remember that will bring security when the winds of change and fear are blowing into my life? How can one who is spiritual respond to change?

Turn in your Bibles to the book of Genesis chapter 46. Joseph's brothers have returned from Egypt with some incredible news for their father, Jacob. Joseph is alive! 45:26 says that when Jacob hears the news he is stunned. Literally the Hebrew says, "His heart became numb". He could scarcely believe the good news. But after seeing all the wagons of riches and goods sent from Joseph and the Pharaoh. After seeing Benjamin, v.27 says Jacob's spirit revived. He believed what his heart could not have before dared hoped for. His much loved son Joseph was alive and wanting him to move the entire family down to Egypt to live with him and enjoy the provision and protection of Egypt's wealth while they wait out the famine. As I read Genesis 46:1-7 listen for how Jacob responds to this huge change. Jacob is not young. He is 130 years old but I love the way he approaches this major change. I think there are some lessons we can learn from it in the way he responds to change. (READ) Genesis 46:1-7

V. 1 Notice that Jacob's other name is being used now, Israel. Israel was the name given to Jacob by God denoting his position as father of a mighty nation. As father of a mighty nation it was on his shoulders to decide the course of direction for his family, his core of a nation, to change or not. It must have been a very fearful thing to do for Israel/Jacob otherwise God would not have said to him in v.3 "don't be

afraid to go down to Egypt.” I can almost picture Jacob having a conversation with God that went something like this. “Lord, my son Joseph is alive down in Egypt. I can hardly believe it! He has promised to provide for us. Joseph has promised a life of ease and comfort for our entire family down there during this terrible famine. He wants me to come down there and bring the entire family. I sure want to see him again too. Pharaoh has even given his blessing to host our entire family and wants to give us some of the best of the land. It all looks really good, but I need to know God. Are you in this? This is a huge big change. I’m getting way too old for this kind of move away from my neighbors and everything familiar. God is this what you want me to do? I know you promised me I would be the father of a great and mighty nation. But if I take my family down there to Egypt, will we just become swallowed up by the pagan Egyptian culture? With Israel leaving the promised land there is no longer any Israelite left in the land of Israel. This is big change. It looks like its not moving forward to accomplish your plans for me and my family. God I need to know; are you in this? God, are you sure this is what you want me to do?”

Give thanks to God

How does Jacob respond to change? First he worships God. He gives thanks to God. Look at 46:1 “he came to Beersheba and offered sacrifices to the God of his father”. On the way to Egypt, Jacob makes a stop at the southernmost edge of the promised land. He makes a stop in Beersheba. He stops there to worship God. Beersheba was the place where his grandfather Abraham made a covenant with king Abimilech and called on the Lord. In Beersheba his father Isaac had built an alter and encountered the Lord. Jacob himself had made Beersheba home earlier in his life before heading off to find a wife in Haran. Jacob wanted to give thanks to God that his son was alive. Jacob wanted to seek God’s

wisdom and blessing for this big change, a move of the family down to Egypt. It is good to see that Jacob and God are on speaking terms again. Jacob is once again listening to God, worshipping God and God is speaking. Are you in the middle of a big change? Are you at the crossroads of something new and different. Spend time in God's presence. Worship the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord for all He has blessed you with in your present situation.

God knows our name

Look at v.2 God speaks to Israel in a vision, "Jacob, Jacob", "Here I am" replies Jacob. God knows Jacobs name. He repeats his name twice. Personal. Individual. When you are facing the crossroads of a fearful big change, there is a very secure feeling to remember that God knows our name. He knows not only the names of the important Bible characters like Jacob, Daniel, Moses and David. He knows your name. He knows our fears and worries and doubts. Matthew 10:30 "But the hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore do not fear." He knows your name. He knows every tear that falls and hears us when we call.

He is God

V.3 God says, "I am God...do not be afraid." When we are facing change that could incite fear and worry and unrest. Worship God. Remember that He knows our name. Remember that He is God. That is what God reminds Jacob. I have not stopped being God Jacob. I was the God of your grandfather Abraham when I led him out of the land near Babylon, Ur of Chaldees. I am the same God promised Abraham even when he was old and his wife was advanced in years and had no heir to carry his name that his descendants would be like the stars in the sky and become a mighty nation. I am the same God that has blessed and

provided throughout the years. Jacob. I am God. I know your name. I have promised to bless you and I will not stop fulfilling that promise. V. 3 “I will make you are great nation there (in Egypt).”

God will fulfill all His promises for you.

I think that is encouraging to know when facing change. We worry that somehow God will stop working in us. We worry that somehow we will leave the plan that God has for us. We worry that we might somehow short-circuit the promises that God may have in store for us. Here God is reassuring to Jacob. I am God and I will fulfill all the plans and purposes I have for you. It may not seem like the right track, but its my plan to take you down to Egypt and grow your family into a great nation. There is an element of faith there for Jacob isn't there? It doesn't seem like taking the family out of the Promised Land would be the next step to growing a nation. When one takes all the Israelites out of Israel it seems like a backward step. But there are times God will have us take a back step in order to move forward again.

The rest of chapter 46 specifically names the 70 people in the family that Jacob takes down to Egypt. He is worried they will dissolve into the Egyptian culture and cease to be a family that could grow to a nation. His worries have merit because in the Promised Land, his own boys have married Canaanite wives and began to melt into the culture. I think this was one of the reasons that God sent them down to Egypt; not only to provide during the famine, but to protect them from cultural dilution. Sent to Egypt to be protected from getting wiped out. This reminds me of the Christmas story (Matthew 2:13) when an angel appeared to Joseph, baby Jesus father, and warned him that King Herod was on the rampage to wipe out the baby king. Joseph made a huge life change and left that very night to escape to Egypt where they spent two years protected and provided for until it was safe to return.

At the end of Genesis 46 we find out how God protected Jacob's family from cultural invasion in Egypt. The Jacobs boys happened to all be shepherds, and v.34 tells us "every shepherd is loathsome to the Egyptians." This prejudice kept them from being melted into the Egyptian society. The family ended up spending 400 years down in Egypt growing from a clan of 70 people to a nation of 1 to 3 million people. As it mentions in 47:27 "they lived in the land of Egypt and acquired property and were fruitful and became very numerous." God sent them to Egypt not as an interruption of covenant promises, but as an incubation of the covenant people. God sent them down to Egypt to provide and protect the people because they were being threatened by the Canaanite culture.

They came to Egypt invited by Pharaoh as honored guests. Then in later years there came a king who "did not know about Joseph" Ex. 1:8 This king was intimidated by the sheer numbers of Israelites, fearing a takeover, he made them all suffering slaves. This too was God's plan to move the people of Israel back to the land of Israel. At times God will use pain to move us, change us, because He knows most of us will not budge unless we have some painful encouragement. In can be very comfortable for us down in Egypt and God wants to take us to a far better place. But He has to at times put a fire under us to get us to change and move. God has a plan, and He will fulfill all His plans for us. Perhaps even this change you are now facing is part of His plan.

God will always be with you

When facing the fearful crossroads of change it helps to remember that God will always be with us. Look at 46:4 "I will go down with you to Egypt," God is not confined to a certain location. God is not bound by geography. God is not stuck in one location. God has promised He will be with us where ever we go. At Christmas time we remember that Jesus came to this earth as a baby he was called "Immanuel" God is with us.

When Jesus left this earth and ascended into heaven He said Matt. 28:20 "...and lo I am with you always even to the end of the age." In Exodus 33 Moses is taking this nation out of Egypt and back into the promised land. God promises in 33:14 "my presence shall go with you and I will give you rest." Moses replies, "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here." At the crossroad of any change we desperately need to know that God will be with us and God will be leading us. Because if He is not with us, please do not send us anywhere.

God will bring us back to the place of our heart and give you the desire of your heart

God promises in v.4 "I will bring you up again and Joseph will close your eyes" What was the desire of Jacobs heart? His vision was to fulfill the promise of God that his family becomes the nation of Israel in the land of Israel. His desire was to become reunited with his son Joseph and die in rest and peace with Joseph nearby. Jacobs hearts desire was for his land and his family. He made Joseph promise that 47:30 "please don't bury me in Egypt. Take my bones back home where my heart is." As father of the prime minister in Egypt, Jacob could have had a grand funeral. But he preferred the promises of God over the acclaim of the people. He wanted his bones to be back where his heart is. Incidentally, Joseph wanted the very same thing when he died. His heart is still back in the Promised Land, Gen. 50:25. When we are facing change it helps to know that when we are seeking God and His plan, God will often give us even the desires of our heart. God is not out to make our life miserable without purpose or reason. He is not out to crush our fun and kill our joy. No. He delights to give us the desires of our heart. Psalm 37:4 says, "Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him and He will do it."

When you are facing fearful change know that God will work to give you the desires of your heart.

Reunion

Read v. 29-30. Jacob can die a happy man now. What a tear filled reunion between father and son who had not seen each other in over 25 years. God has granted him the desire of his heart, to see his son Joseph once again. V.30 "Now let me die since I have seen your face, that you are still alive." This scene reminds me of the Christmas story once again. Remember in Luke 2:29-30 Simeon's words when he held the baby Jesus in the temple, "Lord now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation." In Genesis Jacob was allowed to see his biological son Joseph who in Egypt was his savior from the famine. Jacob says he can die now. In the book of Luke we read that Simeon held in his arms and looked into the eyes of the Very Son, the Savior who save him from all his sin for all eternity. He looked into that infant Jesus arms knowing he would die in peace.

These reunions make me excited for the ultimate family reunion that Paul speaks of in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 (READ) We shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." Are you excited about Christ's return? Are you ready for Christ to come back? Are you part of the family of God so that too can enjoy that reunion that could come at any time. Everyone is welcome. God is still in the change business and it is not too late for Him to change you. Its not about being a good enough person. We don't get in the family by being good. It's not about being too bad that He would never let you in. We all have sinned. We all need the infant Savior who died so that we might have life and freedom. We all need to accept the free gift of forgiveness and salvation. Its there. Its on the table. All you

need to do is receive it, open it. And open your heart to have Him change you from the inside out. Now that is change that God really wants to be about. When real life change happens, God is very pleased.