

GRACE FOR A CROOK

OCTOBER 2026



DR JOHN NG

Before Jacob became a patriarch, he was a manipulator. Before he became Israel, he was a deceiver. And before God transformed him, Jacob was simply a son shaped by a deeply dysfunctional family.

His story¹ is not merely a story about sibling rivalry. It is a sobering portrait of a family where favoritism, deception, manipulation, and spiritual compromise were passed down

from one generation to the next. Yet remarkably, it is also a story of God's grace pursuing flawed and broken people.

1. A Family of Mirrors — A Lying Legacy

Imagine a family portrait where every smile hides a secret.

Abraham lied. Isaac lied. Rebekah schemed. Jacob deceived. This was not merely individual failure. It was a family culture.

When Abraham feared for his safety, he lied that Sarah was his sister.² Years later, Isaac repeated precisely the same deception about Rebekah.³ Then Rebekah orchestrated one of the greatest deception recorded in Scripture, persuading Jacob to impersonate his brother Esau in order to steal the blessing of primogeniture.⁴

Children rarely inherit only their parents' genes. They also inherit their parents' fears, habits, values, and dysfunctions. The family becomes the first classroom of the soul. Modern psychology confirms what Scripture has long taught:



What remains hidden in one generation can become the burden of the next.

the environment in which a child is raised becomes the blueprint from which that child interprets life, relationships, success, and even God Himself. The health of society ultimately rises or falls on the health of the family.

I understand this more than I would like to. I started selling durians from the age of six. My father taught me many things about the business. Unfortunately, some of them were what he considered the “smart tricks” of a successful seller.

We sold the durians with split openings first, because insects and worms might already have entered them. We covered rotten portions with leaves so customers would not notice. We opened only the ripe side of the durian while concealing the unripe or spoiled sections. And sometimes, we pressed harder on the weighing scale to make the durians appear heavier.

My father did not consider these actions dishonest. He considered them clever business practices. Without realizing it, I was learning

not merely how to sell durians—I was imbibing a worldview.

The lessons our children absorb are rarely the ones we intentionally teach. They are the ones we consistently model.

A 2025 report from Duke-NUS Medical School revealed that approximately one third of youths in Singapore experience severe mental distress resulting from intense societal pressure and authoritarian parenting. Research indicates that Asian families have consistently demonstrated that authoritarian parenting often produces “socially prescribed perfectionism” — the overwhelming belief that one’s worth depends entirely on meeting others’ expectations. The result is often anxiety, depression, chronic stress, and a lifelong fear of failure.

Our family values matter. What happens at home does not stay at home. It shapes generations.

2. The Famine at Home — Esau Sold His Future for a Bowl of Broth

A starving hunter. A simmering bowl of stew. One impulsive decision. And a destiny exchanged. The story of Esau selling his birthright to Jacob⁵ is one of the Bible’s most tragic examples of trading the eternal for the immediate.

In the ancient world, the birthright represented far more than material inheritance. It included: A double portion of the family estate; Leadership and authority over the clan; spiritual privilege of carrying God's covenant promises. Esau possessed extraordinary spiritual rights.

But, he surrendered everything for physical gratification. The writer of Hebrews later calls Esau "godless"⁶, not because he was immoral, but because he despised sacred things as though they were inconsequential and disposable.

Esau chose immediate indulgence over future blessing; physical appetite over spiritual inheritance; temporary comfort over eternal calling. His tragic question still echoes today: "What good is my birthright to me?"

But Jacob, despite all his flaws, understood one thing

differently: God's covenant mattered. Jacob was crooked. Esau was careless. One deceived to obtain the blessing. The other despised the blessing altogether.

3. The Conspiracy — A Mother's Whisper, A Son's Disguise

A mother's whisper. Goat skins on trembling hands. A blind father blessing the wrong son. This is one of the most heartbreaking accounts in Scripture. God had already promised Rebekah that "the older shall serve the younger."⁷

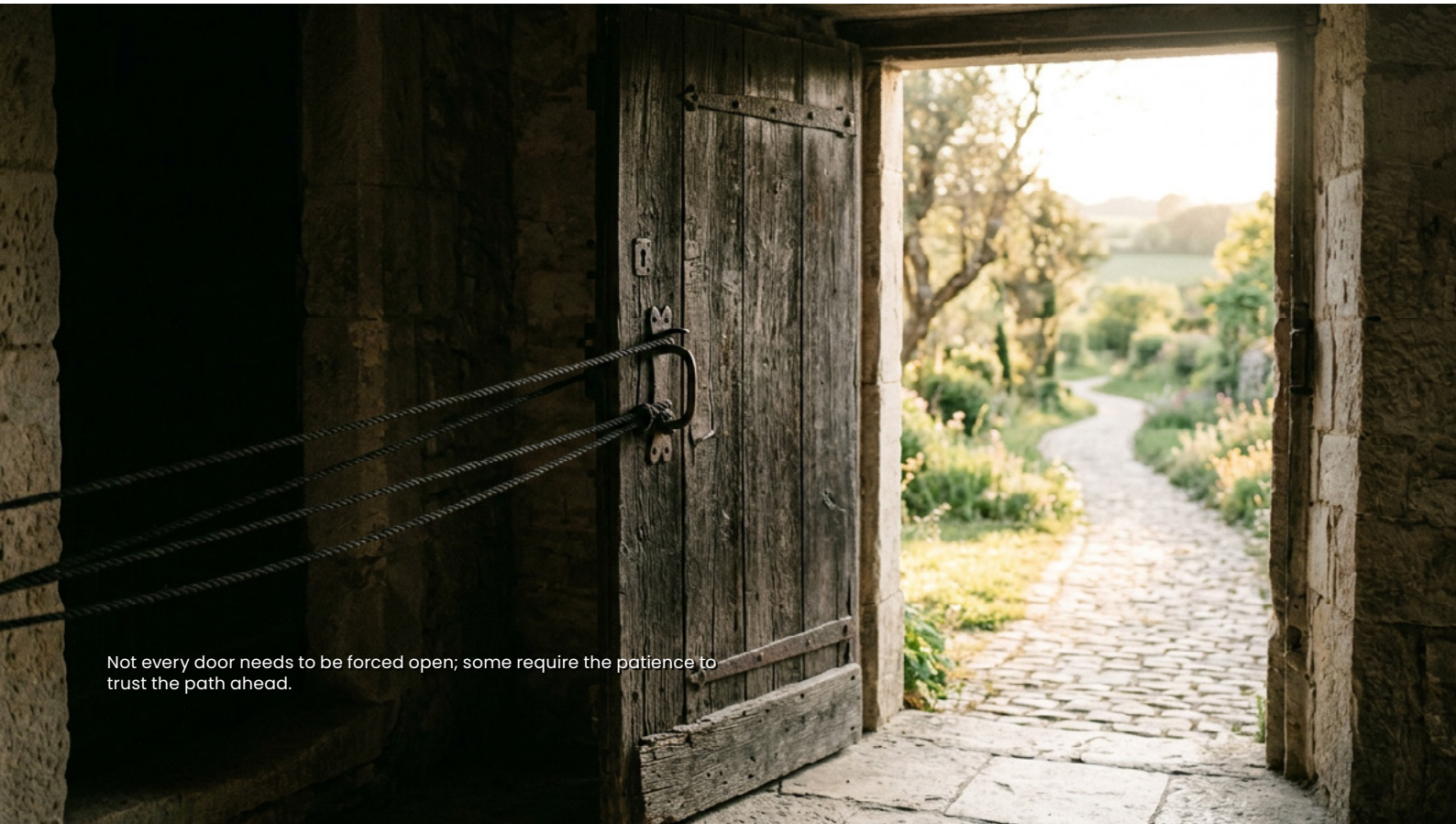
While Rebekah believed God's promise, she did not trust God's process. So, she devised a conspiracy: She prepared Isaac's favorite meal. She dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes. She covered his hands and neck with goat skins. She coached Jacob through an elaborate deception.

Jacob then executed the

plan with astonishing boldness. He lied repeatedly. He invoked God's name falsely. He impersonated his brother. He deceived his blind father. The tragedy is not merely that they sinned, but that they sinned while trying to accomplish God's will. Rebekah's spiritual error remains one of our greatest temptations: We trust God's promise, but don't trust His timing.

Faith waits; Manipulation grasps. Faith surrenders; Manipulation controls. Faith obeys; Manipulation schemes.

Rebekah's love for Jacob blinded her judgment. Instead of confronting her own wrongdoing, she arranged Jacob's escape plan. Ironically, she lost both sons. Esau became consumed with hatred. Jacob fled for more than twenty years. Scripture never records Rebekah seeing Jacob again.



Not every door needs to be forced open; some require the patience to trust the path ahead.

Her intentions may have been honorable. Her methods were diabolical. Whenever we attempt to accomplish God's purposes through sinful means, we create suffering that extends far beyond ourselves.

4. Hatred Ignited — Esau's Rage

Esau's cry shattered the household. His grief turned to anger. His anger turned to hatred. His hatred turned to murder. He vowed, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."⁸

Betrayal exposes the darkest parts of the human heart. Unresolved hurt becomes anger. Uncontrolled anger becomes rage. Unrestrained rage seeks destruction.

The family that began with favoritism now stood on the brink of fratricide. Sin never remains isolated. It always spreads.

Lessons for Today:

1. The Hidden Cost of Parental Favoritism

Isaac loved Esau. Rebekah loved Jacob. Their favoritism poisoned the family. Research consistently demonstrates that parental favoritism deeply wounds both the favored and the less favored child.

The less-favored child often develops low self-worth; resentment; depression; relational insecurity; chronic inadequacy.

The favored child often suffers from performance anxiety; fear of failure; dependency on approval; burnout; difficulty handling criticism.

Studies from Cornell University suggest that both favored and less-favored children experience long-term emotional consequences, and sibling relationships frequently remain fractured well into adulthood. Favoritism does not build families. It breaks them.

2. God's Sovereignty Does Not Cancel Human Responsibility

Neither Jacob nor Esau deserved God's covenant blessing. Esau was impulsive. Jacob was deceptive. Yet God chose Jacob according to His sovereign purposes. Genesis reminds us that God's purposes prevail despite human sin.

But God's sovereignty does not excuse human wrongdoing. God wants us to do the right thing in the right way. The process matters as much as the outcome.

3. Spiritual Privileges Can Be Despised

Esau possessed what millions would long to have. Yet he treated sacred things casually. We may not sell our birthright for a bowl of lentil stew. But we can exchange God's covenantal relationship for existential benefits. Career advancement, financial security, social approval, pleasurable gratification. The incisive question to us is: What am I willing to sell my soul for?



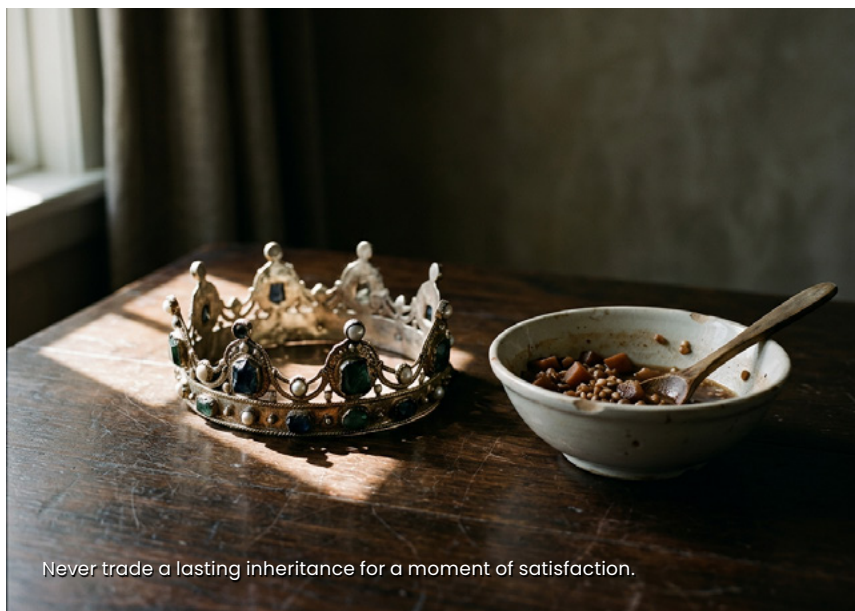
A trustworthy path may take longer, but a shortcut can cost you the very destination you seek.

4. Faith and Manipulation Are Opposites

Rebekah and Jacob teach us a painful lesson: Trying to “help God” usually reveals that we do not fully trust Him. Manipulation often masquerades as faith. But true faith waits, releases control, and trusts God’s timing as much as God’s promises.

God is more interested in who we are becoming than in how quickly we receive what He has promised. The story of Jacob teaches us that God’s sovereign purposes will ultimately prevail. When we attempt to accomplish God’s purposes through manipulation and deceit—we often create unnecessary pain ourselves and for those we love.

The lesson is timeless: By God’s Grace (Whose), we must do God’s will (What), God’s way (How), in God’s time (When), for God’s Glory (Why). The good news of Jacob’s story is this: God’s grace is greater than our crookedness.



Never trade a lasting inheritance for a moment of satisfaction.

“God’s grace is greater than our crookedness.”

Endnotes

¹ *Genesis 25–27*

² *Genesis 20:2*

³ *Genesis 26:7*

⁴ *Genesis 27*

⁵ *Genesis 25:29–34*

⁶ *Hebrews 12:16*

⁷ *Genesis 25:23*

⁸ *Genesis 27:41*

About the Author

Dr John Ng is the Chief Passionary Officer of META Consulting. He is also the Honorary Chair of the Governing Board of Eagles Communications.

YLDP 2027 Retreat 2 Report

By Jonathan Lee

The Younger Leaders Development Program (YLDP) 2027 cohort gathered for its second retreat from September 17 to 20, 2026.

Continuing its faith-centered and holistic leadership formation journey, participants were invited to look beyond what they do as leaders and examine who they are becoming through the Emotionally Healthy Spirituality framework.

Dr Jared and Joyce Tan led participants through Emotionally Healthy Spirituality (EHS), exploring the relationship between emotional health and spiritual maturity. Through tools such as the Iceberg and the Genogram, participants were encouraged to move from constantly doing for God toward learning to be with God.

Indonesian participant Timotius Tabe reflected, *"Being with God is enough to sustain doing for God. Out of the ten symptoms of emotionally unhealthy spirituality, two hit me directly: 'doing for God instead of being with God,' and 'using God to run from God.'"*

"I am a youth pastor. My weeks are full of preparing, teaching, and meeting people. What I saw in this session is that ministry activity can become a place to hide."

Dr. Meixi Ng continued the cohort's journey with *Tutoría*, where participants experienced learning as relational and reciprocal rather than simply the transfer of information. They explored the importance of knowing the learner, creating a safe environment and connecting learning to lived experience.

Moriyah Sriwirat from Thailand shared, *"I learned that effective learning requires us to feel when we learn... True intellectual health comes from connecting our emotions to our critical thinking which helps us deeply understand what we genuinely care about."*

"Being with God is enough to sustain doing for God."





Participants were also treated to a learning journey at Sheraton with Sales Director Ibu Agustina Onggo, who shared candidly about her career, leadership journey, setbacks and faith in the workplace.

Indonesian participant Gregory Siahaan reflected, *"I learned that being a leader is not about having a position or being the one who gives the orders, but about being responsible for the people I lead... leadership starts with serving, understanding the people around me, and setting an example through my own character and actions."*

The next in-person retreat will be held in Batam, Indonesia, in March 2027.





Fighting Anxiety, Depression & Suicide:

STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH IN A DISCONNECTED WORLD

By Justin Chew

Depression is common, treatable and often preventable, and yet many in the world today still suffer in silence...

During NEXLeaders fireside chat on the 23 September, Dr Muni Winslow, the Founder of Promises, and leading psychiatrist and pioneer in addiction and mental-health recovery, addressed the heavy topic on mental health, depression and suicide.

He explained that Singapore recorded 441 suicide deaths in 2024. Two-thirds were men. Adults aged 30–39 saw a sharp rise, while older men remain especially vulnerable.

"Depression does not always look like sadness." Dr Muni said.

Nearly half of those with depressive symptoms have never been formally diagnosed.

In older adults it frequently appears as physical complaints—fatigue, poor sleep, digestive trouble, aches—or as apathy, withdrawal from hobbies and slowed thinking.

Successful careers, stable homes and "reasons to be grateful" do not protect against it as biological factors, past trauma, chronic stress, loneliness and even certain medications can all play a role.

Warning signs include pulling away from people, talk of being a burden, increased drinking or risk-taking, and statements that life has no meaning.

Asking directly about suicidal thoughts does not plant the idea; it often brings relief that someone is finally listening. "Fine" is rarely a feeling—it can be a polite wall.

Prevention comes from self-care.

"Look after body and mind together, protect sleep, stay physically active, keep real conversations alive beyond work, and lighten stress loads early." Dr Muni said.

"Learn to look out for the signs and reach out twice to those who have gone quiet."

Depression is real, but it is not a moral failing and it need not be permanent. Early, honest conversations and timely support can change the trajectory—for individuals, families and communities alike.

Join us for the next NEXLeaders.com Fireside Chat featuring Mario Singh on the topic of **Investing: When is something 'Too Good To Be True'?** How we distinguish a genuine investment opportunity from a cleverly disguised trap?

Justin is a writer and avid storyteller with a passion for shining light on issues faced in society today.

He's a coffee lover, anime fan, psuedo food critic, looks forward to the day he can afford to be on vacation forever.



TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?

WISER INVESTING IN AN AGE OF SCAMS, FRAUD AND GET-RICH-QUICK SCHEMES

Mario Singh

Global Investor, Entrepreneur and
Co-author of *Currency*

We've all seen them. The message from a "friend" about a can't-miss crypto opportunity. The polished ad promising steady monthly returns with "zero risk." The investment group where everyone seems to be getting rich, except the people who ask too many questions.

Today's scams aren't just clumsy emails from faraway princes. They're sophisticated, persuasive and often wrapped in the language of opportunity. And they don't only target the financially inexperienced. They target something in all of us: our fears about the future, our hope for something better, our trust in people we know, and that nagging feeling that everyone else is getting ahead while we're standing still.

So how do you tell a genuine opportunity from a cleverly disguised trap?

This November, we're delighted to welcome **Mario Singh**, acclaimed financial expert, global investor, entrepreneur and co-author of *Currency Trading For Dummies*, 5th Edition, for a candid and practical fireside conversation on exactly that question. Mario will share how to protect and grow your wealth wisely, without compromising your judgment or your values along the way.

WHAT YOU'LL TAKE AWAY

By the end of the evening, you'll be better equipped to:

- Spot the warning signs of scams and fraudulent schemes before they cost you
- Recognise the emotional triggers (fear, greed, misplaced trust and FOMO) that cloud sound judgment
- Ask the critical questions every investor should ask before committing their money
- Weigh opportunities, risks and promised returns with a clearer, wiser eye
- Invest with integrity, stewardship, patience and contentment

WHY THIS CONVERSATION MATTERS

Wise investing is about more than market knowledge. It calls for discernment, discipline and a steady set of values, qualities that keep us grounded when a deal looks just a little too shiny. Whether you're just starting to invest, managing a family's finances, or simply want to help loved ones stay safe, this session will give you practical tools and a healthier way of thinking about money.

Settle in for a candid evening of real-world insight. Bring your questions, and leave knowing how to pursue financial growth while keeping your money safe, your mind clear, and your integrity intact.



Register here,
<https://tinyurl.com/Nov10MarioS>

Seats are limited. Feel free to share this invitation with friends and family who might benefit.

Real Faith, Real World Part 2

Choosing Faith Over Fitting In

A STUDY IN THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

SPEAKER: WILLIAM TANG

Executive Director of Eagles Communications

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TRUSTING
God
IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

18 NOV 2026 | WEDNESDAY
RECEPTION AT **6.30PM**
DINNER AT 7PM

GRAND BALLROOM
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EAGLES EVENTS

OCTOBER NOVEMBER PROGRAM

15

THURS
OCT



ELDP 2027 RETREAT 2 (4 DAYS)

BANGKOK, THAILAND

17

SAT
OCT



REAL FAITH, REAL WORLD PART 2

CHOOSING FAITH OVER FITTING IN
A STUDY ON THE EPISTLE OF JUDE
WILLIAM TANG

24

SAT
OCT



REAL FAITH, REAL WORLD PART 2

CHOOSING FAITH OVER FITTING IN
A STUDY ON THE EPISTLE OF JUDE
WILLIAM TANG

31

SAT
OCT



REAL FAITH, REAL WORLD PART 2

CHOOSING FAITH OVER FITTING IN
A STUDY ON THE EPISTLE OF JUDE
WILLIAM TANG

07

SAT
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WHEN THE WORD BECAME FLESH

WHEN THE INEXPLICABLE BECAME TANGIBLE
A STUDY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
DR NG LIANGWEI

EAGLES EVENTS

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

14

SAT
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WHEN THE WORD BECAME FLESH

WHEN THE INEXPLICABLE BECAME TANGIBLE
A STUDY ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
DR NG LIANGWEI

18

WED
NOV

EAGLES GALA NIGHT CELEBRATING 58TH ANNIVERSARY

TRUSTING GOD IN UNCERTAIN TIMES
GRAND BALLROOM SINGAPORE MARRIOTT
TANG PLAZA HOTEL

GOD'S TOUCH

One of the great stories of Greek Mythology is that of Antaeus and Hercules. Antaeus, like Hercules, was of gigantic stature and marvelous strength. His parents were Neptune and Terra – ocean and earth. When he and Hercules engaged in mortal combat, Hercules proved to be stronger, but every time Antaeus was exhausted to point of defeat, his flesh would touch Mother Earth, and his strength would be mysteriously renewed, and he resumed the conflict with fresh vigor.

Hercules finally slew the mighty Antaeus by lifting him into the air, where he

could not touch the earth. The Greeks were saying by this legend that there is great power in touch. The earth was the source of life for Antaeus, and when he was not in touch with earth, he lost his power, and, therefore, his life.

That metaphor can be used to describe our dependence on God. We will shrivel and die unless God touches us. Of course, that is anthropomorphic language, the use of human analogies to understand God's dealings with us.

Touch is an intensifier. A touch from someone you love intensifies that love. A touch from someone you dislike deepens the aversion.



When we reconnect with our source of strength, we rise again.

God touched people in the Scriptures, and He continues to touch others today. One certainty is that after God touches anyone, s/he experiences a permanent transformation.

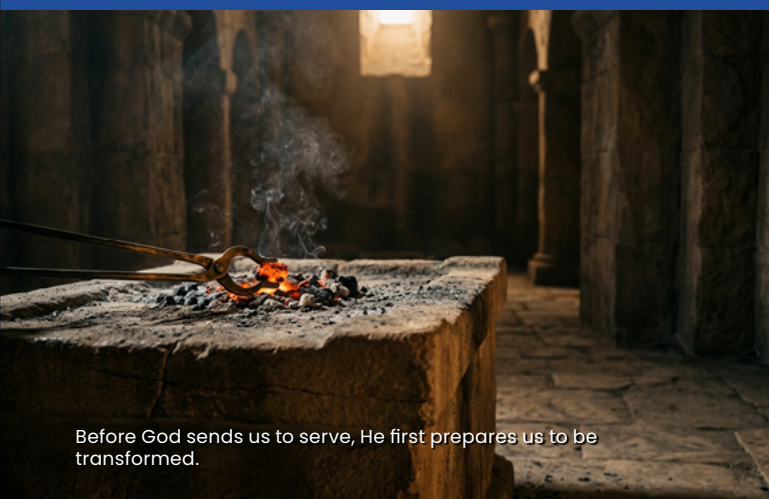
But first, let us understand what the touch of God is, given that God does not have a physical body.

The touch of God, in essence, is the imbuing of His power to influence or change our lives. He could touch our bodies, hearts, or even circumstances. This divine touch can occur as we hear His Word, pray or when someone ministers to us. Similarly, He can touch us in an epiphany.

So God continues to touch people today as His power contacts us to change our lives to bring us into divine experiences.

God touched all four of the Major Prophets so they could do effective ministry. His touch was a way to consecrate them for the work He had called them to do.

To Isaiah's sinful preclusion from God's service, *Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips*, an angel took a live coal from the altar with tongs and placed it on Isaiah's mouth, and Isaiah was purged of his sin.¹ The purpose of this action was to cleanse Isaiah's mouth and to purify his lips to speak on behalf of God.



Before God sends us to serve, He first prepares us to be transformed.



God's touch empowers us to do what our own strength cannot.

Jeremiah was reluctant to serve as God's prophet, citing his inability and his youthful ineligibility.² God refused to accept Jeremiah's excuses. He touched Jeremiah's lips to empower him. It was God's bestowal of the gift of prophecy and touching the mouth was the point of contact for that gift.

Ezekiel's lips were touched for courage. While in bondage, he prophesied to slaves in Babylon under very difficult circumstances. His touch from God was different from the other prophets'. Ezekiel was told to eat and digest a scroll that was handed to him. He ate it and quickly noticed that the scroll tasted as sweet as honey.³ In ingesting the scroll, his lips and mouth were touched by God's Word.

The prophet Daniel testified: *Behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.*⁴ Upon God's

touch, Daniel said, *Speak, my Lord. since you have given me strength.*

God touched the prophets for different reasons: God touched Isaiah's lips to cleanse and purify them. Jeremiah had reluctant lips. He said he was too young. God touched Ezekiel's lips for empowerment. His lips were touched for courage that he needed to prophesy to the captives in Babylon. God anointed Daniel's lips for strength.

God's touch demonstrates His desire to become intimately involved in a person's life. What or who God touches experiences a transformation.

He touched Simon and he becomes Peter. He touched Jacob and the old trickster becomes Israel. His touch transformed Abram into Abraham. His touch transformed the defeated and despairing Elijah into renewed strength and determination. His touch changed Moses the murderer into Moses the leader of the people of God. His touch transformed a nobody named Jeremiah

into the Weeping Prophet of God. His touch transmuted James and John, the Sons of Thunder, into an early martyr and the Apostle of love, respectively. His touch is powerful.

God's touch brings healing and restoration. Jesus reached out to touch a man with leprosy, instantly making him clean.⁵ When He laid His hands on the blind, their sight was instantly restored.⁶



God's touch can turn despair into strength, fear into courage, and weakness into renewed purpose.

Humanity is mere clay,
biding its time between
birth and the grave with no
hope and purpose, until He
touches us. When He does,
everything changes!
God's touch has a
cleansing power,
emboldening authority and
a purposeful pursuit. We
are dependent on God's
touch, to be cleansed, to be
strengthened, and to pursue
a meaningful life.

Bill Gaither summarizes it
well in his Gospel song:



His touch brings healing, His mercy restores, and
His love makes us whole.

*Shackled by a heavy burden / 'Neath a load of guilt and shame
Then the hand of Jesus touched me / And now I am no longer the same*

*He touched me, oh, He touched me / And oh, the joy that floods my soul
Something happened, and now I know / He touched me, and made me whole*

Endnotes

- ¹ Isaiah 6:5-7
- ² Jeremiah 1:6-9
- ³ Ezekiel 3:3
- ⁴ Daniel 10:10
- ⁵ Matthew 8: 2-3
- ⁶ Matthew 20:34



**“When He does,
everything
changes!”**



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