



DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Holding Pattern
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Main Idea – How do we let go of the holding pattern that is keeping us from progressing forward to accomplish what God planned for our lives? Similar to Jacob, God will move us (if we allow Him) in the direction of the progress He plans by bringing us to the place where we confront the heel that holds us back.

What is a ‘holding pattern’? What does it reveal?

- A holding pattern is maintaining, but not moving in a direction of progress.
- The story of Esau and Jacob’s birth shows us a clear example of a holding pattern. Jacob holding onto Esau’s heel is symbolic of feeling inferior, striving, and fighting to overcome.
- In ancient times, the first-born received all of the inheritance. Thus, Jacob’s holding onto Esau’s heel was an attempt to adjust his position so that he would be first-born rather than Esau.
- God’s purpose and plan for a holding pattern is different from what we understand, as revealed in His prophetic word to Rebekah:
Two nations are in your womb,
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;
One people shall be stronger than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger.” Gen 25:23(NKJV)

The symbolism in Jacob holding onto Esau’s heel, and how God used it to break the holding pattern. Genesis 25: 21 – 28 (NKJV)

- Esau’s name from birth is descriptive of his appearance (**Gen 25:24**). Jacob’s name at birth is descriptive of his nature (**Gen 25:26 NKJV**).
- In scripture, references to the word “heel” refer to oppression. In the picture of Esau’s and Jacob’s birth, Jacob was holding onto Esau’s heel in hopes of changing the order in which they were born.
- This resulted in a holding pattern as he moved through life. However, God would eventually break Jacob’s holding pattern.
- The focus shifted when he wrestled with God - from hanging onto to the heel of Esau to holding onto God, who can truly “heal.”

1. Understanding the meaning of the heel

- The heel in scripture is symbolic of oppression. It is the lowest part of the human body. It represents the one thing that stands in the way of achieving what you were born to do.
- In Jacob's life, it represented what he wanted and needed: to feel valued and validated by his father Isaac. This led to Jacob's use of deception to receive his father's blessing. **Gen 27:22: So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice *is* Jacob's voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau. (NKJV)**
- Heels in our lives are real. We should not invalidate the experience of others by claiming they are not real. It is God who uses the heel in our life to bring forth what He purposes.
- God used Jacob's birth order to bring Jacob from a place of feeling inferior to a place of healing.

2. How Jacob used his birth order and how it led to a holding pattern

- Jacob made a decision that he would become the heel, which led to others trying to hold onto him.
- Jacob's decision to be the heel resulted in being manipulated and falling into debt to Laban (**Gen 29**); his wives fought over him and his children fought for his affection.
- We can see from Jacob's decision to become the heel that 'striving is contagious'.
- It took a decision by Jacob, who became weary of being in a holding pattern of being the heel, to break the pattern. **Gen 32:24 – Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day." (NKJV)**

3. Breaking the holding pattern - Gen 32: 22 - 28 (NKJV)

- When Jacob wrestled with God, God revealed what Jacob was holding onto: continually trying to find his own way to achieve God's plan, rather than focusing on God's way.
- When Jacob wrestled with God, Jacob did not lose his grip. However, God deteriorated Jacob's position to allow him to see a familiar position (picture of the womb). This allowed Jacob to see when the holding pattern began.
- God wanted Jacob to claim his name. This is a picture of making the choice between holding onto the heel of a man (Esau) or breaking the holding pattern to hold on to the heel of God.
- We are not in a position to serve when we are in a place of being wounded, feeling inferior, or feeling less than what God says we are.
- We are qualified to be multiplied when we want to serve the purpose God has for us, when we view ourselves based on how He sees us.

- To break the holding pattern, we must be willing to challenge our ego, let go of our fears, insecurities and feelings of inferiority to take hold of the 'heel' of God.

God's purpose for a holding pattern:

- Like with Jacob, God's plan for a holding pattern is to fulfill his plan for our life.
- He wants to move us from fighting to winning, from striving to thriving, to seeing the unseen, the miraculous, and to using our 'new name'. Jacob's name changed later in life to Israel.
- We cannot be concerned about looking to see if we are winning. We need to focus on holding onto the feet of Jesus. God knows how to line up situations that help us deal with our inferiorities, so our face and hands are on the appropriate heel.

Reflective Questions for The Holding Pattern

1. What heel have you been holding onto?
2. What is out in front of you that you are trying to get ahead of without allowing God to show you the way?
3. Have you decided to be 'the heel' that others are pulling on, rather than letting God fulfill his plan for you? What steps will you take to break this holding pattern?
4. Are you willing to wrestle with God and let him reveal what holding patterns are keeping you back? Can you say, I won't let go till you bless me?