

REFLECTIONS

August 21, 2005

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Jeremiah 29:11

Letting Go

In my work I am frequently drawn into family owned business situations to assist with management succession issues or to help resolve relational matters that spill into the business from family dynamics. It is not unusual to find a parent holding on to children by finding positions for them in the family business. The reasons for holding on are many and varied, but holding on to preserve a legacy or protecting them from the outside world are common factors. Another common theme is holding on to keep the loved ones near. Such was the case in some of the first family business stories on record.

Jacob was one of Abraham's grandsons. Jacob was a clever and hard working man who learned sheep ranching under the tutelage of his father-in-law, Laban. Laban was a very possessive man and he managed his affairs in ways to ensure that his daughters would remain near him. One of those ways was to entrap Jacob with dependence on the family business. But Jacob wanted something for his own household, and Laban would not let go. So, Jacob used his genius for genetic engineering in a scheme to build his own herd and free himself. Laban's plan for Jacob was not God's plan, and Israel was better for it.

Jacob went on to enjoy success in growing his herds of sheep and goats. He found places for all of his twelve sons in the family business, that is until the older brothers sold the younger Joseph into slavery. There Joseph went on to endure many hardships and to suffer through many troubled times before finally becoming a wise and resourceful leader of Egypt. Had Joseph remained in the family business his many talents probably would have gone undiscovered because Jacob, like Laban, showed no signs of letting go. Jacob's plan for Joseph was not God's plan, and Jacob's family was better for it..

We are all called upon to let go, and often we do so unwillingly. Like Laban and Jacob, we want to manage our affairs to achieve our own desires. But when we are called to let go of our children, to let go of our past, to let go of our parents, or to let go of our dreams and our possessions, let us remember that our plan is not God's plan, and we will find God's blessing for it.

"You are the light of the world,"

Richard +

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