



## JACOB - FROM BROKENNESS TO BLESSING PART 5: WRESTLING WITH GOD

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### BIBLICAL TEXT(S)

**TEXT:** *That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon." (**Genesis 32:22-32**)*

*"Jacob needed a new name, a new identity. He needed to be born again as he wrestled with God."*

*-Pastor Randy*

*In the womb he grasped his brother's heel; as a man he struggled with God. 4 He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor." (**Hosea 12:3-4**)*

*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." (**Isaiah 53:5**)*

*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. (**Galatians 3:13-14**)*

### MESSAGE SUMMARY

Jacob represents us well because we, like Jacob, grasp at life - holding onto control - and try to do life on our own. But complete control and autonomy is an illusion.

At this point in the story (Genesis 32:22), we see Jacob trapped between Laban, who he tricked, and his brother Esau, who he also tricked. But really it is God Jacob is running from. Jacob needs to not run from God, but be alone with God. We, as a culture, are not good at being alone. We are easily distractible. So, Jacob, when he is alone, wrestles with God till daybreak. When Jacob is struggling with God, there is desperation. There is a pattern in a Bible, and in the Christian life, that when there's desperation there is deliverance.

"The quickest way to the sun is not to run west towards a setting sun, but east into the darkness." - Jerry Sittser (author of "A Grace Disguised").

Jacob fights through the darkness in order to get through the morning. Before Jacob could be blessed, he had to come to terms with his weakness. Jacob ran all his life. But God broke his stubbornness (touched his hip), and now Jacob cannot run anymore. Jesus took upon himself our brokenness so that we can be healed.

Was it a fair match between God and Jacob? No! God let Jacob struggle, but in the end, all He did was touch Jacob's hip and it came out of his socket. But God wanted there to be a struggle between Him and Jacob, rather than a lopsided wrestling match.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*These questions are designed to help you lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker's message, helping them understand and apply the teaching.*

## LEAN IN

*These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.*

1. What is an example of a lopsided competition (i.e. a sports match in which one team was obviously a lot more dominant, a small business that recently had a big chain business open up across the street, etc.)?
2. If there were a scale for "high control" and "low control", what end of the spectrum would you place yourself in regards to your life, and why? In other words, do you try to have lots of control or little control in how your life?
3. Share a time in your life in which it seemed you were stuck between a rock and a hard place. How did it turn out in the end?

## LOOK DOWN

*These are questions on the passage and observations about what's been read.*

*Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max*

1. Who was around when Jacob began wrestling with the "man"? Look at verse 24.  
Answer: Jacob was alone. Bonus follow-up question: Why is this significant?
2. What is the reason Jacob gives for not letting the "man" go? Look at verse 26.  
Answer: Jacob would not let the man go until he received a blessing.
3. What is the meaning behind Jacob's new name "Israel"? Look at verse 28. Answer:  
"You have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."
4. What is the name Jacob gives the place in which he wrestled with God, and what does it mean? Look at verse 30. Answer: Peniel, which means "The face of God."  
Bonus follow-up question: Could this have significance with Psalm 27:8? Does seeking the face of God sometimes involve wrestling with Him?
5. What is the Hebrew tradition that was birthed from Jacob's wrestling with God? Look at verse 32. Answer: They avoid eating of the thigh sinew because that is where God touched Jacob.

## LOOK OUT

*These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.*

*Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max*

1. We live in a culture that emphasizes having control over your life as well as being autonomous. What are the ways people try to control their lives?
2. What are examples of you see of people attempting to be independent?
3. In the context of the story of Jacob wrestling with God, we find that Jacob is on the run and is stuck between a bad relationship with Laban and a really bad relationship with Esau. But in reality, He is on the run trying to get away from God. What are some of the things we find that people run away from (i.e. God, responsibility, feeling alone, etc.)?
4. The longing in Jacob's heart when He was wrestling with God was to receive a blessing. What are the deepest longings you see our society? Which of these longings can be found in God?
5. Who are some examples that come to mind of people who wrestled with God in times of darkness and suffering?

**DISCUSSION  
QUESTIONS,  
CONT.****LOOK IN**

*These are questions that help you consider personal application.*

*Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max*

1. What in your life do you find that you are grasping at - trying to control?
2. What would wrestling with God look like in your life? What are some examples, if you have any, of times in your life in which you wrestled with God?
3. How well would you say you're able to sit still and be alone with God? If you find that this is a great challenge for you, what is it that prevents you from getting alone with God?
4. Jacob wrestles with God because he wants to receive a blessing. What is the deep longing in you that God may be inviting you to wrestle with Him over?
5. After his struggle, Jacob forever walked with a limp. What in your life was a struggle that has caused you to have a limp, but God can use for the healing of others (just like how by Jesus' wounds we are healed)?

**LIVE IT OUT**

*These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.*

*Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.*

1. How can you set aside time this week to wrestle with God over whatever in your life is causing stress and worry? You could do this by going on a prayer walk, journaling, reading a Psalm as a prayer to God, or simply praying with greater honesty.