

GENESIS

PART 8: WRESTLING WITH GOD

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A. LESSON GOALS

1. To examine Jacob's wrestling with God and what resulted from it.
2. To better understand those times when we also wrestle with God.

B. SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 32:24-30



"So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 25 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. 26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." 27 The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. 28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob ("heel grabber"), but Israel ("struggles with God"), because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." 29 Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."" (Gen. 32:24-30 NIV)

C. SETTING

Jacob is on his way back home to Canaan with his tribe of wives and children after a twenty-year sojourn in Paddan-aram. And he is scared to death, because his estranged brother, Esau, is coming to meet him — with four hundred men (Genesis 32:6). This is no welcome party; it's an army.

So, after splitting up his household into two camps to try and avoid complete annihilation, Jacob, understandably suffering insomnia, intends to spend the night alone — no doubt in thinking of ways to appease his brother Esau through manipulations or false gestures of kindness so that Esau will not kill him.

But a strange man who shows up and wrestles Jacob until daybreak, rudely interrupting his plans. At some point during this weird contest Jacob realizes that he is wrestling God. And when God decides it's time to end the match, he dislocates Jacob's hip and demands to be released. But Jacob, in significant pain, replies, "I will not let you go unless you bless me" (Genesis 32:26).

D. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what ways did Jacob obtain blessings *before* he wrestled with God? On whom was he dependent to get what he wanted (Gen. 25:31; 27:19-24, 35; 30; 30:42-43; 31:20)?
2. What do Jacob's repeated words, "the God of my father" (Gen. 27:20; 31:5, 42) suggest about his view of God before he wrestled with God?
3. What is the intended goal when two people wrestle with each other?
4. How did Jacob obtain a blessing *after* he struggled with God (Gen. 32:26b, 29)?
5. What do Jacob's words, "I saw God face to face" (Gen. 32:30) and "They are the children God has graciously given your servant" (Gen. 33:5b) suggest about his view of God after he wrestled with God?
6. In what ways do you see Jacob changing after his struggle with God?
7. How can we as Christians today learn to trust more and more on God no matter what?

E. FIVE THINGS WE CAN LEARN FROM THIS

1. Jacob learned that his manipulative, deceiving ways, was not the way to get _____.
2. God decided to bless Jacob, but first Jacob had to _____.
3. Jacob effectively won the struggle by _____.
4. God may also wrestle with us when we _____.
5. God's blessings always come when we _____.