



GENESIS

The Book of Beginnings

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LESSON 10: JACOB-WRESTLING WITH GOD

A. CENTRAL QUESTION

Is it wrong to struggle with God over the way he answers (or doesn't answer) our prayers? Why or why not?

B. THE TEXT: 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. BACKGROUND

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. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is it wrong to struggle with God over the way he answers (or doesn't answer) our prayers? Why or why not?
2. What do you think is the significance of Jacob wrestling with the man throughout the night?
3. In what ways does this wrestling match symbolize the struggles and conflicts in our own lives?
4. Why do you think Jacob refused to let go of the man until he received a blessing?
5. What lessons can we learn from Jacob's persistence in seeking God's blessing?
6. How might this passage challenge our understanding of God's nature and interactions with humanity?
7. How does Jacob's encounter with God in this passage inform our understanding of prayer and seeking God's presence?

E. APPLICATION: FIVE THINGS WE CAN LEARN FROM THIS TEXT

1. Jacob learned that his manipulative, deceiving ways, were 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 _____.

“It’s a little strange that a passage wherein God allows Jacob to beat him in a wrestling match is a reminder of how big God is – big enough to handle the struggles, the questions, the doubts, the feelings, whatever we throw at him – even big enough to bless us for it, instead of rebuking or punishing our audacity. Our God doesn’t require unthinking, unfeeling, shallow assent and adoration – he wants us, as ourselves, struggles and questions and confusion and doubt included.” (Russell Doerksen)

F. DIGGING DEEPER



For more about this subject go to:

“What is the meaning of Jacob wrestling with God?”

< <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jacob-wrestling-with-God.html> >

