

BIBLE STORY: JACOB WRESTLES WITH GOD
Genesis 32:22-32

Central Thoughts

- Jacob was an unworthy sinner who wrestled with God and held on to His promises tenaciously.
- Prayer is the voice of faith that will not let go of the Lord's promises of grace and blessing to us.
- Though we are unworthy sinners, we have the right to wrestle with God in prayer.
- We become a "prince with God" as we exercise the right that He gives us to make demands of Him according to the promises that He has made to us.

Discussion Questions

Background for the Story: Jacob had fled from the land of Canaan back to Haran after he had secured the birthright from his brother Esau and the blessing of his father Isaac. The deception that Jacob used to take his brother's favored place as the firstborn son angered Esau. Esau vowed to kill his brother Jacob once their father Isaac had died. Jacob dwelt with his uncle Laban in the land of Haran for many years. As Jacob had supplanted his brother Esau through trickery, Laban double-crossed Jacob on several occasions. Jacob had labored for seven years for the right to marry Rachel, only to have Laban give him Leah instead. He would work yet another seven years for Rachel. He became husband to both sisters and their maidservants. He was now the father of eleven sons and a daughter. The Lord had blessed him with undeserved gifts of children, wealth, flock, and herds. He finally left Laban to return to the land of Canaan where he would see his father again and confront the brother who had vowed to kill him. What would be the outcome for Jacob as he journeyed toward Canaan with uncertainty? Sending his family and possessions ahead of him, Jacob was left alone in the night.

Who confronted Jacob after he had sent his family on before him?

A Man.

Who was this Man?

The Lord.

What did the Lord do?

He wrestled with Jacob until daybreak.

What did Jacob do?

He wrestled with the Lord and would not let go of Him.

How is it possible that the Man, who is the Lord, did not prevail (or overpower) Jacob in the wrestling match?

Our Lord humbles Himself and allows faith in God's promises to overpower Him.

What did the Man ask of Jacob?

Let go of Me!

What did Jacob refuse to do?

Let go of the Lord until the Lord blessed Him according to His promise.

What does this teach us about the life of faith and prayer?

Faith that is born of God's promises holds on to the Lord in prayer and will not let go of the Lord until He blesses us according to His Word.

Why did the Lord touch Jacob's hip socket and pull his hip out of joint?

To remind Jacob that though he prevailed against the Lord by faith in God's promises, Jacob was still dependent upon the Lord for every blessing, grace, and protection.

What does this teach us about the purpose of suffering?

Through the suffering that God lays upon us, He teaches us to rely solely upon His promises of undeserved mercy and to cry out to Him in prayer for all our needs.

What is the blessing that the Lord gave to Jacob?

He gave Him the blessing of salvation and the promise of protection that He had first given to Abraham and Isaac. It is as if the Lord said to him, "I will save you, I will protect you, I will provide for you as I have promised. Do not be afraid."

Why did the Lord change Jacob's name to Israel?

Israel means "Prince with God" – In his struggle with the Lord, the wrestling match of faith and prayer, Jacob became a "prince with God" over all his enemies and every adversity. This "princely status" was a pure gift of God's undeserved grace and favor.

What did Jacob call the name of that place?

Peniel

What does "Peniel" mean?

"Face of God" – In the promise of the Lord to which Jacob clung by faith, he saw the face of God. He saw what God was really like in His nature. He is a God of grace and mercy toward His children, who even allows Himself to be overpowered by them when they cry out to Him with the voice of faith.

Why did the children from that day forward not eat the muscle of the hip socket?

To remind them of the blessing that the Lord had given to Jacob when He wrestled with Jacob throughout the night and changed his name to Israel.

Meditation on the Bible Story

When Jacob was young, he was proud, arrogant, and self-assured. He demonstrated this in the way he treated his brother Esau. He bought the birthright from him and deceived his father to obtain the blessing of the firstborn. At the heart of the father's blessing was that Jacob would be the son of the promise who would be part of the genealogy of the Messiah. All of this, including Jacob's deception, means that this story is chiefly about grace. God's undeserved love means that we receive what we do not deserve. Jacob was chosen to be the one who would carry the blessing, even though he was a sinner and the second born son of Isaac. The Gospel is the promise of God's grace in Christ for sinners. All prayer rests not upon our goodness, but upon the undeserved promises of God to us as sinners. Prayer is the voice of faith in which a sinner cries out to God for His blessings, according to the promises of His Word. Through the things that Jacob suffered—the hatred of his brother, the trickery and deception of his uncle Laban, the turmoil in his home with four wives and multiple children from each of them, he was taught to rely upon the Lord rather than himself. The same is true for us. We have the right to access God and wrestle with Him according to His promises, and that is precisely what Jacob did in His wrestling match with the Lord.

Prayer on the Bible Story

O Lord Jesus, as Jacob wrestled with You in faith and prayer, insisting upon receiving from You the blessings that You have promised, so teach us to cry out to You according to Your promises for everything that we need for our life and salvation, for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



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