

GENESIS Why The Beginning Matters

Study 21

Jacob Wrestles with God

Genesis 30-32

Part 1 of 5: Journey Back to Promised Land by God's Orders

Genesis 31:3

Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

Genesis 32:1-6

Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is the camp of God!" So he named that place Mahanaim.

Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. 4 He instructed them: "This is what you are to say to my lord Esau: 'Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now. I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, male and female servants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes.'"

When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, "We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him."

1) a) Fill in the Blanks/Comprehension question. Based on Jacob's prayer in Genesis 32:9-12, he seems to have transformed. Write down how Christians today can learn from his transformation. (You may find new testament verses with similar concepts to answer)

Genesis 32:9-12	The Transformed Jacob	Application for Christians today
Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, Lord, you who said to me,	A. Identification and Standing with God	Our Identification as sons Romans 8:14-17 "Abba Father, heirs" Same team/standing with God Romans 8:31-33 "If God is for us who can be against us"
Lord, you who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make	B. Praying Based on God's Will and Plan	Praying for God's desire to happen, not weaponizing faith to make God fulfill our desires

you prosper,		John 9:31 We know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him.
I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two camps.	C. Sense of Unworthiness of God's Grace and Faithfulness	1 Cor 15:9-10 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.
Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, ... But you have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.'"	D. Petition For Deliverance Based on His promises-Covenantal Faithfulness	2 Corinthians 1:20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.
for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children.	E. Expression of Emotion-Fear	1 Peter 5:6-7 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

b) Reflection question. Share which of the following criteria for a transformed prayer you currently have the most trouble with incorporating into your prayers to God.

A. Identification and Standing with God	B. Praying Based on God's Will and Plan	C. Sense of Unworthiness of God's Grace and Faithfulness	D. Petition For Deliverance Based on His promises-Covenantal Faithfulness	E. Expression of Emotion-Fear
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Part 2 of 5: Jacob's Strategy

Genesis 32:7-8

In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. He thought, "If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape."

Genesis 32:13-21

He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift for his brother Esau: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. 16 He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, "Go ahead of me, and keep some space between the herds." He instructed the one in the lead: "When my brother Esau meets you and asks, 'Who do you belong to, and where are you going, and who owns all these animals in front of you?' then you are to say, 'They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us.'"

He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: "You are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. And be sure to say, 'Your servant Jacob is coming behind us.'" For he thought, "I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me." So Jacob's gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp.

2) Discussion Question. Does Jacob's Strategy of being the last to see Esau means he does not trust in God completely?

Part 3 of 5: Wrestling with God

Genesis 32:22-32

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."

3) a) Fill in the Blanks/Comprehension question. Answer the questions on Jacob's wrestle with God.

Relevant verse	Questions	Answers
<p>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."</p>	<p>Who was Jacob wrestling with?</p>	<p>God</p>
<p>So Jacob was left alone,</p>	<p>Why is the encounter personal?</p>	<p>Most major crises in life are faced alone,</p>
<p>and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.</p>	<p>Why was the wrestling all night?</p>	<p>God let Jacob wrestle all night to see how strong his self-will really is</p>
<p>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."</p>	<p>What was the breakthrough for Jacob?</p>	<p>A breakthrough occurs when we move from trying to overcome God to refusing to let go of God. From fighting God to hanging onto God</p>
<p>The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.</p>	<p>Why was a broken hip necessary?</p>	<p>Brokenness help Jacob depend on God and be blessed.</p>
<p>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."</p>	<p>Why would God ask for Jacob's name?</p>	<p>To give him a new identity from Jacob the supplanter to Israel-He who strives with God strives</p>

Part 4 of 5: Meeting Esau

Genesis 33:1-3

Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.

Genesis 33:10-11

No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.

b) Discussion Question. Which other bible characters were broken before God used them for His blessings?

Takeaway

Summary of Abraham, Issac, Jacob

God's Saving Action thru Scripture-the most important thing is God's promise to be with us

Summary of Gen 33-36



His new name, does not shield Jacob from the obstacles and tragedies of life-loss of Joseph

Gen 33	Gen 34	Gen 35	Gen 36
			
Reconciliation	Rape of Dinah Massacre Shechem Force Jacob to leave land he bought there	Altar at Bethel Covenant renewal Birth of Benjamin Death of Rebekah and Isaac Reuben has sex with Bilhah	Genealogy Esau family Edomites

Case Study

Case 1 – Wrestling with God

Jerry was born into a wealthy family who ran a shipping business. He grew up in church with his parents who were faithfully attending Penang Baptist Church.

One day, calamity struck and the shipping business went bust due to low demand for logistics and the disruption in the supply chain. This caused Jerry's father to declare bankruptcy and led Jerry's family into great financial distress. They were evicted from their bungalow and had to sell everything of value that they had to survive.

Jerry was only 17 at this time and struggled with God because of this incident. He became very broken because all his friends abandoned him. He tried to find ways to earn money to get back what his family lost but failed miserably and was bitter towards God. Nevertheless, Jerry held on to God's promise in Proverbs 3:5-6 to "trust in the Lord with all thine heart".

For many years, Jerry lived a frugal life but remained faithful to the Lord. There came another turning point in Jerry's life, where he became successful in his own career as one of the directors of an MNC. Eventually, a recession came, the company was deeply impacted and he was laid off as part of the company's exercise in austerity. Nevertheless, he prayed about it and left his situation in the Lord's hands. Whatever the circumstances now, Jerry knew that God is faithful and continued to trust Him.

1) a) Discussion question. Was Jerry's brokenness a blessing or a curse?

Model Answer

It was a blessing – it made Jerry more dependent on God instead of his own self-efforts.

b) Discussion question. What evidence do you see of a changed character in Jerry?

Model Answer

When Jerry was younger, he strove to regain what was lost through his own strength. Additionally, he felt bitterness towards God. This stems from his belief that God owed him and that he deserved to have what he had.

The change in his character is seen later in his life, when he graciously accepted his circumstances and was trusting towards the Lord, not his own abilities. He also now prays in a crisis which he did not do before.

c) Discussion question. Give examples in the Bible of characters who went through periods of great difficulty in which God molded them.

Model Answer

Jacob, Job, Moses, Joseph, and Paul.

d) Discussion question. Consider the famous Romans 8:28-29. What is the purpose of our circumstances/suffering/struggle/wrestling according to this verse?

Model Answer

To be conformed to the image of His Son.

e) Discussion question. What was the “purpose” as it were of Jerry’s suffering?

Model Answer

It allowed Jerry to become more like the Lord Jesus, dependent on His God. Jerry is slowly but surely trusting the Lord whatever his circumstances may be.

f) Discussion question. Will our life as Christians be exempt from suffering/temptations/tests? Why or why not? And what are we to do under these circumstances?

Model Answer

God does not promise that his children will be exempt from suffering, temptations and tests. But there are numerous places where God promises to give us what it will take to meet the tests. (1 Corinthians 10:13 is one of many examples.) We need a sense of his presence, or an increase of courage and self-control, or wisdom to make a good choice, and so on. We may not know what we need for the situation, but God promises to give it to us.

Case 2 – Name, Blessing, and Limp

George is a new Christian who eagerly wants to learn more about God to know Him better.

He has been attending the Faithless Church where the preacher spoke about how God blessed Jacob and that as descendants of Abraham, we likewise should receive that blessing.

However, the blessing that the preacher was focusing on was the material blessing, and said that God promised this blessing to Abraham's offspring.

George later attended Gamma to study the life of Jacob where he learned that Jacob received a very different blessing, which wasn't material. There were 3 things that God gave to Jacob when he wrestled with Him, and that was a new name, a blessing, and a limp.

He learned that this was analogous to what all Christians received from their saving encounter with God – not the material blessings that were spoken of at Faithless Church.

2) a) Discussion question. As Christians, in what way do we receive a new name? What does this new name mean?

Model Answer

Jacob receives a new name, "Israel" (v.28). This shows that when we meet God we do not just receive an added boost to our lives. Instead, there is a completely new start, a whole new identity is forged. But it is interesting that this name incorporates what Jacob already is and yet still expresses a transformation.

"Jacob" meant "wrestler" — the one who grapples, claws, grasps. "Israel" literally means "God fights" and refers to Jacob's triumph in his wrestling with God.

When Jacob realized who he was struggling with, he did not stop wrestling. He is a wrestler after all! But he turned his prowess toward holding on to God rather than resisting God. As Derek Kidner said, Jacob's "combativeness" was turned into a "dogged dependence." In short, the new birth does not wipe out our old temperament and personality. We are new and yet continuous with what we were. As Paul says, the Christian is "me, but not me" (cf. Galatians 2:20). The new birth takes our fundamental capacities and directs them to new ends.

God would have all of Jacob's will to win, to attain and obtain, yet purged of self-sufficiency and redirected to the proper object of man's love, God Himself."

– Kidner, p. 169

b) Discussion question. Jacob's blessing was the declaration that he has overcome. In what way are we similar to Jacob? What declaration have we received from God? Consider Romans 8:1.

Model Answer

Jacob received a blessing when God says, “You have overcome.” In verse 28, God is saying — “You have won!” even though he has been maimed and crippled and is simply holding on for dear life. Yet he has won! Jacob is declared a winner.

This is a good image of justification by faith. Though we have all sorts of flaws and failures, and though we still have all our lives ahead of us, God declares us victors if we put our faith in Christ. “Now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1)

c) Discussion question. Jacob was crippled after his experience with God and received a limp. What is the purpose of his new disability?

Model Answer

The permanent crippling would be a reminder to Jacob of his foolishness in fighting with God. It was a permanent humbling.

How remarkable that along with the great affirmation of Jacob’s victory comes an abiding reminder of his failure! This is a great picture of what it means to be a justified Christian.

Luther said that we are *simul justus et peccator*. If we are saved by works, then we are bold (but not humble) when succeeding in our moral performance or humble (but not confident) when we are failing in our moral performance. But if we are saved by sheer grace, we are both bold and humble together. We joyfully limp. The sun rises on us but we walk haltingly. We know that we are accepted, but only by sheer grace.

d) Reflection question. Do we have a “thorn in the flesh” like Jacob and Paul? Share your own experience and how it has affected you.