

Jacob a Wrestler

Objectives

To learn about Jacob's struggle in life and how it mirrors our daily experiences and to learn from his wrestle with God

References

"Interpretation of the Book of Genesis" by Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

Scriptural Verse

"And He said: Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed" (Genesis 32:28)

Lesson Guidelines

1. Jacob's life is full of strife and struggle against others

A. Genesis 25:19-26

- The twins struggled together within the womb, Jacob grabbed Esau's heel as if to pull him back in an effort to be the first born
- The name "Jacob" means "schemer, cheater; one who grabs from behind."

B. Genesis 25:29-33

- He wrestled with his brother Esau to get his birthright

C. Genesis 27:1-23

- He and his mother formed a tag team as they wrestled with his father to obtain the blessing of the firstborn

D. Genesis 29-31

- He wrestled with his uncle Laban over flocks, herds, and his daughters

2. The Reasons Jacob Wrestles with God

A. Genesis 32

- Jacob has, for a long time, walked the road of his own choosing: self will, selfish goals, relying on his own strength and resources rather than on God.
- Now that road leads past the Jabbok River, a name which means "wrestling."
- He is completely alone hiding in fear of his brother Esau, instead of trusting God.
- Jacob was growing weary of his wrestling, his struggle with life.
- Jacob had left home with a father who was disappointed in him and a brother who swore to kill him, and a mother who loved him very much had died.
- He had problems with his uncle Laban and the in-laws.
- He has two wives who were continually fighting.
- He was also struggling with his destiny – as he knew he was supposed to be heir to the promise of God given to Abraham.
- Jacob struggled with the timing of God's plan for his life as well as the direction his life had taken.

3. Results of Jacob's Wrestling Match with God

- Jacob began to pray that night, crying out to God.
- For the first time in his life, he earnestly wrestled in prayer.
- God's presence and purpose became more and more real to him until, suddenly, He was real!
- Jacob in his desperation realized the precious opportunity before him.
- If he let go, then God would leave with his needs unmet, his prayers unanswered!
- So, Jacob WRESTLED WITH GOD! (Genesis 32:24)
- God in His grace and mercy allowed Jacob to wrestle, to work out his fleshly nature and anxiety.
- In his struggle and wrestling, his faith and understanding were growing!
- God touched Jacob in the hollow of his thigh dislocating the ball-and-socket joint of his thigh (Genesis 32:25)
- Suddenly he was weakened and immobilized.
- Jacob yelled out in pain, as he stopped wrestling and started clinging!
- There is a difference between wrestling and clinging - to "wrestle" is to contend and fight for dominance but to "cling" is to hold on to, to grasp in desperation.
- Jacob was now holding on in faith, rather than wrestling in fear (Genesis 32:26)
- We are to "wrestle" in prayer:
- "Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." (Colossians 4:12)
- The word "laboring" in the Greek (agonizomai) means to contend in the gymnastic games, to fight and struggle.
- The Lord desires our prayers to be fervent and persistent.
- "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Luke 11:9-10)
- God blessed Jacob, because Jacob was ready to receive the blessing.
- "So He said to him, 'What is your name?' He said, 'Jacob.'" (Genesis 32:27)
- As Jacob hung onto Him in pain, he answered: "I'm Jacob, the schemer, the one who grabs from behind, the con-man, the self-centered, self-serving, self-sufficient one!"
- Humility is knowing who you really are!
- "And He said: Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." (Genesis 32:28)
- This is who you were, from now on you are the one who prevails with God, not wrestles without Him!
- God's blessing to Jacob was a new name, a new nature.
- As Jacob released God, he walked with a limp, a weaker man, yet stronger.
- "Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me: My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure

in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:8-10)

5. Our Own Wrestling Match With God

- We all have the name and nature of Jacob.
- We all have the tendency to wrestle with life, to take things in our own hands, to set our own agenda, and work things out in our own strength.
- The result is much the same; we make a mess of things which drives us to the river gorge, the banks of our own Jabbok.
- Family problems, financial problems, relationship problems, no purpose, no sense of destiny, fear about the future
- They all drive us to the end of ourselves and hopefully into the arms of a God who has revealed Himself in the person of a loving, caring Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- We must stop wrestling and start clinging!
- We must surrender our lives, our wills, our dreams and schemes, to the Lord Jesus Christ and let Him change us.
- In the Lord Jesus Christ, we can have a new name, a new nature, a new destiny, and a secure future.
- "To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it." (Revelation 2:17)

Conclusion

Jacob spent his entire life wrestling with life. He finally began to wrestle with God in prayer. Then he began to understand his weakness, and began to cling onto God. Let us begin to cling onto God to receive our new name and our new nature.

Activities/Discussion Points

1. What sort of struggles do we face daily that leave us weary, and tired of life?
2. How can we attain peace when dealing with these struggles?
3. How can we learn to wait on God's appointed time?