

Part 6: “Encountering God’s Process”

Genesis 32:24-32

Introduction

In Genesis 32:24-32 we find the story of Jacob, the son of Isaac and Rebecca and the twin brother of Esau. After deceiving his brother, Esau, out of his birthright (Genesis 27), Jacob returns to Canaan twenty years later and is faced with meeting Esau again. Jacob feared that his brother planned to kill him, so he sent messengers ahead of him with valuable gifts to attempt reconciliation. He eventually sent his entire convoy, including his two wives, ahead of him (Genesis 32:22-23).

At the point when Jacob felt most alone, a man appeared in order to wrestle with Jacob until daybreak. Jacob later realized he had struggled with the Angel of the Lord Himself. Jacob named the land, “Peniel, for *he said*, ‘I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved’” (Genesis 32:30). Jacob had proven himself to be able to swindle his way to the top. However, God intended to demonstrate to Jacob that neither wit nor wealth would be able to free him from this struggle. Like Jacob, believers will enter periods of desperation and struggle that can lead to brokenness. But brokenness has the potential to rid us of flaws in our character and sin in our flesh. The process of brokenness is God’s way of stripping us of our self-sufficiency. God often allows deep and painful spiritual struggles in our lives to take us to the next spiritual level.

After a full night of struggle, the Angel of the Lord dislocated Jacob’s hip. Even with a broken hip, Jacob continued wrestling with the Angel because he was committed to battling until he received a blessing. At this point, the Angel of the Lord informed Jacob, whose name means “deceiver,” that his new name would be Israel, which means “one who God has helped” (lit-translation, “God fights/contends/prevails”). Jacob’s decision to fight, even after being broken, revealed his commitment. Like Jacob, believers must make a spiritual connection to our struggles (seeing God) and commit to holding on to God (trusting God) during the process of brokenness. God uses this brokenness to change our identity and build our character just as He did with Jacob.

Out of Jacob’s struggle came a greater spiritual blessing as he had a deeper experience with God. Experiencing God at this level changed the trajectory of his life. Though he had to live with a limp, his life and legacy were positively impacted. As believers, we can expect purification throughout our struggles coupled with priceless blessings when we hold on to God. Many believers don’t get the blessings God intended because they are not willing to stay in the battle. Instead, they allow discouragement and frustration to overtake them, and thus they give up the fight. You may begin to doubt that good can come from your struggles, yet, you must trust God’s strategic, intentional, and ultimately beneficial growth process for your life.

Getting Started

1. Why do you think God allowed Jacob to wrestle with the Angel of the Lord as opposed to being immediately overcome?
2. What was the significance of Jacob’s name being changed to Israel? What changes in his character did you observe that were consistent with the name change?

Let’s Get Personal

1. Many of us often feel as if “life” has broken us down. We lack awareness that it was the process of brokenness orchestrated or allowed by God. Has God taken you through a breaking process? Tell your group about a period in your life when God was breaking you. What did you learn? What was the blessing you received? What identifiable growth did you experience?
2. In what areas does God need to break you now?
3. As you listened to this week’s sermon, did it change your perspective on pain?

Take the Next Step

1. Have you considered that your current struggle is actually one with God? Do you need to commit to holding on or “wrestling” with God until He blesses you? Spend time this week praying about these areas of your life.
2. Want to go deeper? Take a look at the following passages: Genesis 46:30; 48:3, 8-9; 2 Corinthians 1:8-10; 4:11; and Hebrews 11:21

Renew Your Mind

“But he said, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’” Genesis 32:26b