


**Messy Life:
The Story of Jacob**
Part 13
Wrestling with a Gracious God

TALKING WALKINGPOINTS

Leader's Guide

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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- ❶ What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?

Observation—*What do I see?*

- ❷ **Why** does it shock us that Pastor Doug said, **sometimes God's grace must "cripple" self-sufficient believers in order to fully bless them** (Genesis 32:22-25; see the **Sermon Summary**)?
- ❸ This doesn't easily "fit" with current, sentimental views of love. So, **is** God loving? Explain.
- ❹ Pastor Doug further noted that **God graciously entrusts dependent believers with the things of his kingdom**. Does this seem fair? Why or why not? (With whom do **you** entrust **your** secrets?)

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- ❺ Nobody likes the idea of being incompetent. So, what did Jesus mean when he said, **"Apart from me you can do nothing"** (see John 15:5)? After all, atheists and non-believers **do a lot of things!**
- ❻ Read 1 Corinthians 3:10–15. What sorts of accomplishments actually "add up to nothing"?
- ❼ Read Matthew 16:24–26. What do you think it means to "lose" one's life and to "save/find" one's life?
- ❽ What requirements does Jesus place on the person who wishes to save his life?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- ❾ Who do you know who has experienced God's "crippling" and **as a result** has become **more** blessed and usable?
- ❿ In Luke 12:16–21, Jesus told a parable that **could have been** about Jacob at this stage of life. Although it was painful and as a result, he limped the rest of his life (see Genesis 32:24–25, 32), Jacob made the right decision. **How confident** are you that you're "rich toward God" (Luke 12:21)?
- ⓫ In what areas do you think you need to make some mid-course corrections? **Will you?**

At a loss for examples?
Take a look at this one...



- 1 Standard discussion-starter. You know what to do!
- 2 Because Americans have a sentimental view of love. “Love” never disturbs.
(Yet, as an act of love toward our kids, we immobilize them while a doctor jabs a needle in them!)
- 3 Absolutely. God so loved the world that he gave his Son.
He supremely loves that Son, and yet he subjected him to torment so that he could show love to us!
- 4 As is pointed out, **we** decide with whom we entrust **our** secrets—and we mustn’t hold God to a standard to which we give ourselves a pass! In John 15:14-15 Jesus said that those who obey him qualify as his friends, and he only entrusts details of his plans to his friends.
- 5 Question #6 will refer to the things non-believers can do as “wood, hay and straw”.
Yes, worldly people can pile up a mountain of wood, hay and straw, but when God judges the fruits of our lives with his fire, it will be a big pile of ash. So yes, worldlings can do a lot of things, but none of them will endure to eternal life.
- 6 **Anything** done for our own glory rather than God’s, in our own power rather than in God’s.
Sadly, unless they repent, think “Elon Musk”, “Jeff Bezos” and “Bill Gates” all rolled into one!
- 7 When Jesus mentions the word “cross” to his disciples, to them it would have evoked a picture of a violent, degrading death. Jesus demands total commitment from us—even unto physical death—and making this call to full surrender a part of the message they proclaimed to others. This call to life-or-death devotion to Christ is found in Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23 and 14:27.
For those who come to Christ with self-renouncing faith, there is true and eternal life (Matthew 10:39).
- 8 We have to let it go, not cling to it, “hate” it (John 12:25).
- 9 Be prepared with your own answer (or, Joni Eareckson’s), but wait for group members to speak first.
- 10 Ditto.
- 11 Ditto.

Sermon Summary Genesis 32:22-32

“Wrestling with a gracious God” could easily be the theme of Jacob’s entire life. Grace involves getting something for nothing—when we don’t deserve anything! (See Genesis 28:13-15 and 31:3, 24.) Jacob was continually in need of God’s grace, and God consistently was gracious to him. What can we discover about God’s grace in today’s text?

I. Sometimes God’s grace must “cripple” self-sufficient believers to fully bless them (v.22-25). Jacob decided to move his entire company across the river to the south side. Though the text doesn’t say so specifically, the implication is that Jacob returned to the northern bank of the Jabbok so that he could spend the night alone in prayer. When we get alone with God, good things usually happen. Now it is significant that the name Jabbok means “Wrestler”. Evidently, it was later given that name in commemoration of Jacob’s amazing experience that night (v.24-25). This section is considered by many to be one of the most difficult sections to understand in the entire Bible! It seems clear to me that the writer of this passage intended it to be taken literally. This conflict was not just spiritual or emotional. It was very physical—you don’t incur an injured hip from a mere psychological encounter!

This account is mysterious. One of those mysteries has to do with this attacker’s identity. “Who is this person wrestling with Jacob?” Was he an angel of some kind? The Old Testament prophet Hosea affirms that indeed he was (Hosea 12:3–5). There is a mysterious figure in the Scriptures who is referred to as, “The Angel of The Lord”. Many Bible scholars believe Jacob’s wrestling opponent was this angel. In the Old Testament, there are numerous references to this “Angel of the Lord”. There are three major interpretations concerning the identity of “the angel of the Lord”: **(1)** he may be **merely an angel** with a special commission, **(2)** he may be **God himself temporarily visible** in a humanlike form, or **(3)** he may be **the preincarnate Christ**, the second person of the Trinity. Although this mysterious man wrestling with Jacob is not identified in the text as “the Angel of the Lord,” both the prophet Hosea and Jacob conclude that this man is indeed God in human form.

II. God graciously entrusts dependent believers with the things of his kingdom (v.26–29). Warren Wiersbe notes that *“All night long, Jacob defended himself and refused to surrender or even admit that he had sinned. Then God weakened Jacob, and the wrestling Jacob could only cling! Now instead of scheming for a blessing or bargaining for a blessing, he asked God for the blessing—and he received it!”* Hosea 12:4 is the language of surrender. God wants that surrender from us, for there is a bit of Jacob in us all! Jacob went to the Lord in prayer, and this wrestling match was God’s answer to that prayer. God meets us where we are and lifts us to where He wants us to be (Psalm 18:26).

During this “dark night of the soul,” Jacob discovered that in his striving against others, he had really been fighting God and resisting His will. On this night he realized that the only way to victory with God was through surrender. God wanted Jacob to become a man of godly character and great faith. But before we can bear the fruit of godly character, we must see ourselves for who we really are (v.27-28). In the Bible, receiving a new name signifies a new beginning. It is only when God rules our lives, that he can trust us with his power. Otherwise, we will use that power to advance our own agendas, our own kingdoms, rather than God’s.

III. When we know God is with us, we become bold in our faith (v.30). The name Peniel means “face of God.” The impact of this encounter was shocking for Jacob. Seeing God was something no one survived. This experience emboldened Jacob.

IV. Epilogue (v.31–32). After this fateful night, Jacob walked with a pronounced limp. It served as a permanent reminder of his meeting with God at Penuel.

We have **four takeaways** from today’s passage: **1. God’s grace meets us where we are in order to take us where he wants us to go.** God knows what we need, when we need it. His grace is always on time. He knows how to get our attention. He knows how to break through and move us to where he wants us to go. Think about how God has graciously intervened in your life, to move you to where you are today. God knows how to get our attention. He knows how to move you to where he wants you to be. How painful that becomes is largely up to you. **2. Sometimes God’s grace must “cripple” self-sufficient believers in order to fully bless them.** It’s not because God enjoys that crippling process. He does not. It’s just that God loves us so much, he will do what he must to get our attention to put us in a position—to be blessed by him. Suffering precedes glory. It is the cross before the crown. Surrender precedes usability. **3. God graciously entrusts dependent believers with the things of his kingdom** (Proverbs 3:5–6). God wants to bless us. He wants to entrust us with Kingdom responsibility. He is looking for dependent, faithful people (Luke 16:10–11). **4. When we know the God of grace is with us, we become bold in our faith.** Jacob finally realized that God’s blessing comes through surrender. After surviving this wrestling match with God, he was ready for whatever Esau wanted to bring on. He knew that despite his weakness, God was with him. Knowing that God is with us as we seek to make disciples should give us the confidence we need to serve as God’s agents of redemption in the world (Matthew 28:18–20).

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Pastor Doug suggested that we study a notable biblical character, observing how God shaped him for usefulness. Take for example, Jacob's son, Joseph...

Monday— Study Genesis 37:2-14. Note Joseph's relationship with his ten half-brothers.

Tuesday— Study Genesis 37:18-20, 23-28. Notice the brothers' venom and insensitivity.

Wednesday— Study Genesis 39:1-20. Why did wicked things happen to a righteous man?

Thursday— Study Genesis 40:1-15, 23. No gratitude?! Why not honor this simple request?

Friday— Study Genesis 41:39-44 and 42:1-6. Joseph in power—time for revenge?

Saturday— Study Genesis 43:25-30; 45:5, 7-8 and 50:20-21. No revenge?! What was Joseph's concern?

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]