

# The Struggle is Real

Gen. 32, 33:1-4

Hey Kingdom4C Thanks for joining us today on our service. It was a blessing to see some of you on the Easter Sunday service live, I deeply miss seeing everyone face to face. This week we are back on track with our **biblical narrative series** and we are still in Genesis. I want to encourage all of you to continue or even start our reading plan this week, it's less than 10 minutes a day and it is so beneficial for us to discipline ourselves in order to grow.

So today, we will continue to follow Jacob on his journey. So far, he went to live with his uncle Laban, and married his cousin Leah and her sister Rachel and has a bunch of kids, Long story. You would have to go back and read it, or Sparknotes. Jacob then continued to lie and deceive his uncle Laban, caused a lot of drama, like he did with Esau, so God told Jacob to come home to his father Issac. Now he has to come face to face with his brother Esau. And this is where our story picks up.

Have you ever been in an awkward situation where you have to be in the same room with someone that dislike you? I have, in freshmen year, I was not the best kid, and I was not the brightest kid either. But I had a very popular reputation of "the kid that freaks out, when poked on the side", as most of you know. So there was this one bully that always made fun of me and pokes me, so that I freak out. My insanity was his joy. This went on for all of freshman year, and I hated him so much. I really wanted to hurt this kid. The struggle was real. Then junior year came by, and I found out that I had theater class with this kid. And surprisingly enough, guess who I had to sit next to... Him. This was very uncomfortable and awkward, but good thing we were actors.

In our story today, Jacob also felt like he was stuck in a very uncomfortable spot. Where he had to face his brother, Esau. Have you ever felt like you were stuck in a situation that you couldn't get out of? For Jacob this could have been a life or death situation. For me, being assigned to that chair, was like an embarrassing moment waiting to happen. And I understand a lot of us can relate being trapped and confined in our houses right now. I definitely felt really frustrated being stuck in one place. But how many of us feel spiritually quarantined, spiritually stuck in a place that you can't get out of? Maybe it's because of an xGF or xBF, or a dark thought that you can't get out of your mind, or is it a deep concern or worry that you have about the future, or maybe it's an unforgiven friend or family member that you have been ignoring? The struggle is real! There are certain situations that we wrestle with, that we don't want anyone to know about.

Jacob was there, he was stuck in that situation, and he had to wrestle with his thoughts and with God, and through that, God blessed him in that place of struggle. And God can also use your place of struggle for blessings. And I will show you what those blessings are. But first we will dive into Genesis 32 and see how this story starts.

Genesis 32:1, "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.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

<sup>6</sup> 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."

<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> He thought, "If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape."

So right here, I want to point out his situation, he heard that Esau is bringing 400 men. This sounds bad right? So Jacob acted in great fear and distress. Btw his game plan was not that bad, it's the same strategy we use in Cross the Ocean, "you go that way, I will go this way, and that way they can't catch both of us."

<sup>9</sup> Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, Lord, you who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. <sup>12</sup> 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.'"

In his prayer, we get to see what he is really struggling with. He says, “God I know who you are, and what you told me, v10 I am unworthy. V11 I am afraid. What Jacob was struggling with was the sins of his past that made him feel unworthy, and the fear of the future held him captive. Jacob was stuck in one place, because of where he had been, and where he is going.

And friends, if you feel trapped in a place right now, because of what you have done, or fearful of tomorrows uncertainties, I want to tell you, you are not alone. Jacob reminded himself of what God had said, and so should we. Jesus says, “I will not abandon you, or forsake you, if anything, being in this place, will help you see the God who struggles with you.” **Because the struggle is real!**

I don't know about you, but I would rather struggle with God, than struggle without him. I want to show you, that's exactly what Jacob did.

13 He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift for his brother Esau.  
21 So Jacob's gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp.

So Jacob being overwhelmed with all this, he decided to camp out and spend the night in Mahanaim which is in verse 1 the place he met the angel of God and named that place “*the camp of God*”. And I think in times when we feel spiritually stuck, we should spend the night in the campgrounds of God. If you want spiritual answers, be willing to seek out spiritual places. That means Godly people, not just your friends, promises in the bible, not just relying on FB quizzes, it means invest in the church, not just attend it. Spend the night in the campgrounds of God and see what he will do. If you are going to be stuck somewhere, be stuck wrestling with God than without him.

And that's exactly what Jacob did, he wrestled with God.

“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.

I want to point something out really quickly, he sent off his wives, servants, and sons because this was something he had to struggle with alone. No more distractions, no more interactions, this was between him and God. And I don't know about you, but I definitely felt that through this time of quarantine, I felt like God used my social distancing, for me to face my own sins and to draw me closer to himself. At times God needs us to be alone to get our attention. I think that's why spending quiet time with God is so important. If I can get anything out of this epidemic, it was that my soul desperately needed time alone with God.

24 So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 25 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. 26 Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.”

So who is this man? Is it a person, is it God, is it an angel? From my study of this passage I believe this God-man is Jesus Christ before his Incarnation, meaning before he was born hundreds of years later.

Jesus even says, “*before Abraham was born, I am*” (John 8:58) meaning he was there in the beginning and he is standing before Jacob.

So guess who you really need to wrestle with? Jesus! Have you realized that every time when someone comes to Jesus there is an internal WWE competition? In any wrestling match there will always be someone that overcomes and the other person that surrenders in defeat. In verse 25 it says that

25 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. 26 Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.” But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

I know some of you are thinking, wait, I thought we are the ones that should surrender, why is the God-man sounds like he's surrendering. And my response is, “he is surrendering his life.” Have you realized that before you surrender to Jesus, he laid down his life in full submission to God?

I had a close friend who told me that it was impossible for him to surrender his life to Jesus, he said that, “no one can do that, no one can give up everything, that's crazy!” And maybe that's true, but **the gospel** says that once you encounter the God-man that has given up everything for you, even his own life so that you can live again, you are able to surrender your life and follow him.

Maybe the campground that you need to spend the night this week, is at the foot of the cross, where Jesus spent his darkest nights for you. When you pitch a tent for three days at the tomb, see what will happen on the third day. There is resurrection power on the other side, there is breakthrough on the third day. And sometimes breakthrough requires something breaking at daybreak. For Jacob it was his hip. Look at verse 25 <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

My question for you is, what will it take for you to acquire his blessings?

- ❖ Maybe it's a group of friends that you must break apart from,
- ❖ Maybe a bad habit, addiction that you have to break out off,
- ❖ Maybe it's through a breakup that God used to get your attention.
- ❖ Or a health scare.

At times our hardest struggles are God's campground to set up a blessing.

And that's what Jacob demanded from God, he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

That's a good reminder for us, if God has given you a promise, you can hold him accountable to that, because he will come through.

And in this story, I want to show us that God grants 3 blessing to those who wrestle in the campgrounds of God. For those who are willing to bring their struggles, doubts, fears and problems to the foot of the cross and spend the night there alone.

### **3 blessings when you struggle in the camp of God**

#### **1. You will receive a new identity (v27-28)**

"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."

I want to show you how personal this is to Jacob, because when the Godman asked him, "What is your name?" It wasn't because he didn't know Jacob's name, he was reminding Jacob of where he had fallen. You see in Genesis 27:18 When Jacob tricked his father to receive his blessings.

<sup>18</sup> He went to his father and said, "My father." "Yes, my son," he answered. "Who is it?" <sup>19</sup> Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my food, so that you may give me your blessing."

It seems like when we struggle with God, he always brings us back to the place where we have fallen, to face our sins. But God doesn't define us by our sins, if anything, we like to define ourselves by our own sins.

Jacob responded with his name Jacob, I am Jacob, 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."

What's powerful about this new identity is that his name Jacob in Hebrew is "Yakob" means "deceiver" "grabbing the heel" "trickster" and God changed it to Israel, meaning "overcomer", or "God will prevail" can you imagine his whole identity has been changed from who he was, Jacob, the deceiver, to Israel, the overcomer.

When you struggle with the Godman you will receive a new identity, you are no longer defined by who you were, or what you have done, but first you must face what you have done. You have to confess, I was a stealer, I was a pathological liar, I was unfaithful, I had premarital sex, I misused and abused drugs and was living in hiding. God will not punish you for what your sins deserves, but he will bring to mind those sins, so that you can lay them before the cross, where Jesus had struggled with your sins and overcome. So now, anyone who is found in him, belongs to him, and are defined by him alone. When you struggle in the camp of God, you will receive a new identity. You are an overcomer, because Jesus has overcome your grave.

#### **2. You will discover his mercy (v29-30)**

29 Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

Peniel means “face of God”, God is so holy that if anyone sees God’s face they would die. But here Jacob said he saw God’s face and he was spared. In other words, he was allowed to live, he was forgiven, he found mercy in the eyes of God. he was spared.

And I am going to ask you right now, what do you think would happen if you encounter Jesus face to face, and he looks straight into your eyes and all your sins are exposed? What would happen when your darkest sins are brought before an all perfect God?

And here we see that when you struggle in the camp of God, you will discover his mercy in his eyes.

Mercy is a blessing from God, to anyone who receives Jesus as their Lord and Savior. You see, mercy means that you have been forgiven, even when you don’t deserve forgiveness. The Gospel says that God freely gives us mercy, because Jesus has taken all our sins to the cross. **“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,”** (Rom. 8:1)

Jacob asked for the name of the man, but His said, why do you ask my name? But after the man blessed Jacob, he will soon discover that his name was Mercy. Because there is salvation in his name.

### **3. You will not walk the same again** (v31-32)

**“The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.**

Now every time Jacob walked, he is reminded of where he had encountered the Godman and lived. It was in this place of struggle did he receive a new identity and was changed.

I have always wondered why his hip. Have you? Why not his lying lips, or deceptive hands? But after reading the next chapter, in the reading plan, I quickly realized why. Since God had wrenched his hip, guess what he can’t do? Run! Jacob had been running away from his problems his whole life, not being able to face his brother Esau. But now this limping leg was what allowed him to face his brother in Genesis 33.

**<sup>1</sup>Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; <sup>3</sup>He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. <sup>4</sup>But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.**

You see, the struggle was real, the struggle was painful, and the struggle was necessary, for Jacob to break down his pride to bow down before his brother. Sometime God allows painful things to happen so that we can face the things we need to face. And forgive the people that we have wronged, and fix the problems that we have created, and mend the things that we have broken.

Just because God has given you a limp, doesn’t mean you are left behind. Maybe you may be slower than others, you may think it an inconvenient disability, you may feel like it’s an uncomfortable situation, but you don’t know what God may be using that for, he could be preparing you for something greater, he may be helping you to face a situation, and we know that he is working everything for a good outcome.

This was a truth that I had to hold on to while in HS, sitting next to my arch enemy, Austin. I hated him because he would bully me around because of my “conditions”, but because we had theater together we learned to tolerate each other, until one day when he ask if I would go watch “Gods Not Dead” with him to make up for being a total butt to me, that’s when we became really good friends. To this day we still catch up and hang out. And because of that I got to share my faith with him. Who would have thought that this relationship started because of my poking condition.

So, if you feel like you are struggling right now in any area of life, know that you are not alone, and God is able to struggle with you through it. Turned to him today and know that he can turn any struggle into a blessing. Have a bless day.