

Read: Genesis 32:22-30

Wrestle with God... and Win!

Genesis 32:22-28

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."

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."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

For a night, Jacob wrestled with the *almighty* God! It should have been no contest. God ought to have pinned Jacob in a second. But it *was* a contest. So much so, that in the end, Jacob won!

It was God that came to Jacob with the challenge. To understand why, we need to know more about Jacob. Jacob was shifty. His name, "Jacob," eventually came to mean "trickster." He tricked his brother into selling the birthright (the right to the family inheritance). He tricked his father into giving Jacob the blessing of the firstborn. But both the birthright and the blessing that came with it had already been promised to Jacob by God himself. Jacob did not need tricks. Jacob needed to trust God's promises.

Jacob's tricks failed to secure God's blessings. Just the opposite. Jacob was hours away from meeting his brother, Esau, for the first time since Jacob had run away. Jacob's last memory of Esau was his brother so angry he threatened, "I want to kill Jacob." And now Esau was approaching with 400 men! Jacob sent gifts in hopes of calming Esau's fury. He split his family and fortune into two camps thinking at least one could escape. And then Jacob slept alone.

In this moment of deepest weakness, God Almighty came to Jacob and challenged him. This wrestling match was the climax of Jacob's faith-training. God gave Jacob his word to protect and bless him. All God ever wanted was for Jacob to trust *God's* promises. No tricks; just trust!

After a long night of wrestling, Jacob finally demanded of God exactly what God had always promised. Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." So [God] blessed him there. Jacob wrestled with God... and won!

God has given us a Bible full of promises; promises to protect, provide, forgive, and empower us. Rather than rely on our own cleverness, God asks us to trust him. Like Jacob, in times of weakness God may come with challenges. We wrestle with him through his Word and in prayer. But all God has ever wanted is that we demand of him exactly what he has promised. Find his promises and then hold God to his Word.

You, too, can wrestle with God... and win!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What did the name "Jacob" mean?
- How much power does God have?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What was the climax to this account and why?
- List at least three promises from the Bible that God wants us to trust.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Recall a time in your life when you have wrestled with God in prayer.
- God gives Jacob a new name in this account. What is it, and why is that name significant?

Closing Prayer:

Lord God Almighty, humbly lead us to wrestle with you in prayer, understanding that you give us the victory when we pray according to your promises. Keep us under your protection until that day when we join you in glory everlasting. Amen.