

How Wrestling with God Will Change You Forever

Do you remember the story of Jacob and Esau?

If you do, you will remember that Esau was favored by his dad and Jacob was favored by his mother. When their father Isaac was on his death bed, he asked Esau to kill some wild game for him with the promise that he would then bless his oldest son.

While Esau was out hunting, Isaac's wife Rebekah helped their younger son Jacob come up with a scheme to trick Isaac into blessing him instead.

When Esau returned, Jacob had already received the blessing—which guaranteed him a double portion of inheritance. Esau was furious and vowed to kill him, so Jacob fled.

Jacob Wrestles with God

After years of living apart, Jacob decided to return to his home and hoped to make peace with his brother. One night on the journey, he sent everyone ahead of him while he stayed behind.

Genesis 32:24-29 NASB

Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he could not defeat him, he struck Jacob's hip socket as they wrestled and dislocated his hip. Then he said to Jacob, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

- *"What is your name?" the man asked.*
- *"Jacob," he replied.*
- *"Your name will no longer be Jacob," he said. "It will be Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed."*

Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name."

But he answered, "Why do you ask my name?" And he blessed him there.

I've always been curious about this passage, about how **Jacob**—now known as Israel—wrestled with God. I simply couldn't understand what it meant.

Until now...

For the last year, I have been wrestling with God. I have wrestled night and day, asking for *a fresh vision of who he is* and *what he wants for my life*.

I've had situation's that has caused me to lose many nights of sleep—*nights spent wrestling with God in prayer*.

I've begged God to give me clarity because *I know that God is the author of peace and not confusion*. I've spent countless hours crying, seeking God's face.

And I've finally reached a place of blessing—a place of peace where I know God has revealed himself to me, a place where I can walk forward in confidence knowing that he is in control.

Blessings Come When You Wrestle With God

As I began reading through my Bible this year, I came across this little verse tucked away **right after Jacob's wrestling match**:

Genesis 33:20 - *And he set up an altar there and called it "God, the God of Israel".*

Do you see it?

Right after Jacob—now known as Israel—*wrestles with God*, he built an altar and called it the "God of Israel."

Still missing my point? Let me take you back to a few passages before the divine wrestling match.

Genesis 28:13 - *Yahweh was standing there beside him, saying, "I am Yahweh, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac..."*

Notice anything?

Let's try another one:

Genesis 32:9 - *Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my grandfather Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac—O Lord, you told me, ‘Return to your own land and to your relatives.’ And you promised me, ‘I will treat you kindly’.*

How about now?

Here’s yet another one:

Genesis 31:41 - *If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, certainly now you would have sent me off empty-handed.*

There is a common thread throughout these passages:

- God is the God of **Abraham**.
- God is the God of **Isaac**.
- *It doesn’t say that **God is the God of Israel** until after he wrestled with God.*

You see, **until Jacob had a divine wrestling match with God—**

- until he had **a very personal struggle with God—**
- **his faith** was not cemented.
- It was **not** his own.
- Yes, **he knew of his father’s faith.**
- He had most definitely heard the stories of his grandfather’s faith.

He was only living his faith vicariously through their faith; it had not been solidified in his life.

We find a similar sentiment in the book of Job.

After literally losing everything—his kids, his wealth, his health—and spending untold hours **arguing with God** and his friends, **Job finally sees things from God’s perspective.**

He says this:

Job 42:5 - *I had heard rumors about You, but now my eyes have seen you.*

I have been a Christian for a long time now.

- I gave my heart to Christ and never looked back.
- I have spent most of my adult life teaching scripture,
- ***Encouraging others to hold on to God*** as they walk through the fire.

However, ***I had never truly been through the fire myself*** like I have been the past nearly year.

As I have found myself walking through a season of trials—a season of losing ministry—my faith has become my own.

It has been a **long, painful process**, but I completely understand **Job's** sentiment.

As I look at my relationship with Christ today in comparison to what it used to be, it is as if *I had only heard about him* before.

Psalm 34:8 – Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

- **Today, I have tasted and I know that the Lord is good!**

Peace in the Wrestling

Right now, I find myself in a new season of testing.

- **As I enter the fire this time, I have an overwhelming sense of peace.**
- I know that God—**my God**—has seen me through before and he will see me through again.
- **I have been through a divine wrestling match with God, and he touched me—just as he touched Jacob's hip.**
- **I am not the same person that I once was.**

I can tell the change in myself as I talk about God today.

- **Thoughts of my Savior** spontaneously cause a smile to sweep across my face.
- I find such **joy in sharing** how God has seen me through trials—**and in reminding others of how he longs to redeem their situations.**
- There is simply a **sweetness to my relationship with Christ** that never existed before I wrestled with God.

As we move to the end of Israel's life, there are a few hints that he experienced a similar change in his relationship with God.

Genesis 35:3 - *We are now going to Bethel, where I will build an altar to the God who answered my prayers when I was in distress. **He has been with me wherever I have gone***".

- You see the personal relationship, the recognition that **God was with him throughout his life**.
- It's that sense of closeness to the One who has **walked with him faithfully**.

Again, as Israel is dying and blessing his grandchildren, we see a tender moment as **he reflects on his relationship with God**:

Then he blessed Joseph and said,

Genesis 48:15 - *"May the God before whom my grandfather Abraham and my father, Isaac, walked—the God who has been my shepherd all my life, to this very day, The Angel who has redeemed me from all harm—may He bless these boys"*.

I can see the smile creep across his face as he remembers all the years with his Savior, his Yahweh.

I can hear him telling his children and grandchildren gathered around him **about the night his life changed, the night he wrestled with God and took his faith as his own**.

I can sense the peace in the room as he prepares to breathe his last breath, to forever enter the presence of his Savior.

CLOSE: Keep Wrestling and You Will Be Changed Forever

Are you struggling with your faith today?

Do you find yourself in a divine wrestling match with God?

- I know the battle is raging.
- I know the pain and the fear.

- I know the frustration as you try to come to peace with God's plan for your life.
- I understand the fear of letting go of every burden and turning them over to God.

PRAISE TEAM:

I also know *the change that takes place in your heart when you have taken the time to engage God, to get to know his heart.*

I know how *he touches you and changes you and blesses you* *when you seek him* with every ounce of your being.

I know the joy of a relationship that is fully yours, **that is truly personal.**

Are you in a wrestling match today?

Wrestling with God Will Change You Forever

- Hang in there.
- **He will change you forever.**