

Small Group Study

Desperate Hope: Wrestling with God by Roger Sodsod

Events Coming Up

Encounter God: Friday, Feb 26th (6:30-9pm) and Saturday, Feb 27th (8am-1pm). A weekend retreat that provides an opportunity for intense spiritual growth. The goal is to experience the freedom that God has made available to believers. Freedom from guilt, freedom from sin, freedom from hurts, freedom from 'strongholds' - those areas of our lives that have not yet been brought under the Lordship of Christ. Sign up online at vineyardkcnorth.com.

Learning to Minister Like Jesus: Friday, Mar 5th (6:30-9pm), Saturday, Mar 6th (8:30am-1pm). Topics include healing prayer, the revelatory gifts of the Spirit, the Kingdom of God, and spiritual warfare. Sign up online at vineyardkcnorth.com.

Scripture

Genesis 32:22-30 *22 During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two servant wives, and his eleven sons and crossed the Jabbok River with them. 23 After taking them to the other side, he sent over all his possessions.*

24 This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break. 25 When the man saw that he would not win the match, he touched Jacob's hip and wrenched it out of its socket. 26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking!" But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

27 "What is your name?" the man asked. He replied, "Jacob."

28 "Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "From now on you will be called Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have won."

29 "Please tell me your name," Jacob said. "Why do you want to know my name?" the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there.

30 Jacob named the place Peniel (which means "face of God"), for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared."

Ice Breakers: Use the questions below to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. Tell us about a physical injury you once had. How did you hurt yourself?
2. Have you ever been in a fighting or wrestling match as a kid? Tell us about it.
3. What are some other names you've gone by in the past?

Questions

I. Who was the "man" Jacob wrestled with throughout the night?

2. Read Hosea 12:3-5:

3 *Even in the womb,
 Jacob struggled with his brother;
when he became a man,
 he even fought with God.*

4 *Yes, he wrestled with the angel and won.
 He wept and pleaded for a blessing from him.
There at Bethel he met God face to face,
 and God spoke to him—*

5 *the LORD God of Heaven's Armies,
 the LORD is his name!*
6 *So now, come back to your God.
 Act with love and justice,
 and always depend on him.*

So...did Jacob wrestle with a man, an angel, or God? And why do you think the identity of his wrestling partner would be intentionally concealed?

3. Whether it was God himself or a messenger sent by him, clearly the God who promised to protect Jacob is also the God who wrestled with him—a very interesting phenomenon! In John Calvin's commentary on the book of Genesis, he explains, “He arranges the conflict in such a way that while he attacks us with one hand, he defends us with the other. He supplies us with more strength to resist than he uses to attack us. We may rightly say that he fights against us with his left hand and for us with his right hand. For while he opposes us in a gentle way, he gives us invincible strength so we can overcome.” It is no small thing to fight against God, as Jeremiah 21:5–6 makes clear:

5 I myself will fight against you with a strong hand and a powerful arm, for I am very angry. You have made me furious! 6 I will send a terrible plague upon this city, and both people and animals will die.

Have you “wrestled” with God on some issue in your life? Did you sense him both opposing and supporting you? What was the outcome of your spiritual wrestling match?

4. After wrestling physically, Jacob and “the man” wrestled verbally as daybreak approached. What did Jacob demand of his opponent before Jacob would let him go? Here the stranger’s identity is revealed, for as Calvin said, “It is in God’s nature alone to bless us.” Consider how God blessed Abraham and his descendents in the following verses:

Genesis 12:1–3: *1 The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”*

Genesis 17:15–16: *15 Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. 16 And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.”*

Genesis 26:24: *“I am the God of your father, Abraham,” he said. “Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you. I will multiply your descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will do this because of my promise to Abraham, my servant.”*

And in Numbers 6:22–27: *22 Then the LORD said to Moses, 23 “Tell Aaron and his sons to bless the people of Israel with this special blessing:*

24 *‘May the LORD bless you
 and protect you.
25 May the LORD smile on you
 and be gracious to you.
26 May the LORD show you his favor
 and give you his peace.’*

27 Whenever Aaron and his sons bless the people of Israel in my name, I myself will bless them.”

God specifies exactly how a blessing is to be spoken. What blessing was given to Jacob by “the man?” and what did it signify?

5. The blessing came with a slight curse as well. What do you think the limp means to him?