

JACOB

Week 6 | Rascals | Genesis 32:22-32

Deeper Dive

In order to better understand Jacob's life, we need to understand a few cultural practices in the Old Testament.

The "birthright" was typically given to the first born son by the father. This would entitle them to a double portion of inheritance and leadership over the family. Jacob famously "stole" the birthright from his older brother Esau. In this instance, Esau was hungry and sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew. (Genesis 25:29-34)

The "blessing" was a formal prophetic declaration of favor and divine destiny given by a father to his eldest son. This was a spoken covenant between them and God, and it would include the promises of God flowing to the next generation. In another act of deception, Jacob tricks his father, Issac, into giving him the family's blessing instead of giving it to Esau. This was the blessing and covenant originally given to Issac's father, Abraham, by God through which all nations would be blessed. (Genesis 27)

Day 1 - Grace meets us in the night

READ: Genesis 32:7-11; 22-23

Jacob's life was full of deception, lies, and desire for control. At this moment in Jacob's life, He has both acted as the liar and deceiver, and has also experienced being the victim of lies and deceit. First, Jacob tricks his brother, Esau, out of his birthright and blessing (see Deeper Dive section for more on this). Then, Jacob's uncle Laban tricks Jacob into working to "earn" one of his daughters, only to be tricked into working for the second daughter as well. After many years of struggle, Jacob is finally freed from his servitude to Laban and is allowed to take his family with him. As he is returning home, he learns that his brother Esau is coming towards him with an army of 400 men. He quickly divides his family and sends them in opposite directions to protect them from harm.

During the night in the wilderness Jacob is alone, fearful, and exhausted. God's grace meets him here. Jacob had spent most of his life striving, manipulating, and trying to control or coerce blessings from God. Jacob had tried very hard to manufacture a life for himself. Finally, in this "rock bottom" moment Jacob realized that he had reached the end of himself. We've probably all been there at some point in our lives. When all your striving for perfection fails, your false sense of control becomes shattered, and you can't climb your way out. Sometimes, God uses these spaces to show us His unconditional grace. When we call out in our fear, anxiety, and struggle He meets us there. He won't rebuke you for coming to Him in your suffering and need. God wants us to come to Him with our every need, every question, every doubt, every fear.

Even Jesus modeled this for us in the garden before he was crucified. In Luke 22:44 it says "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." Jesus called out to God in His darkest hour, when His friends couldn't even keep their eyes open. God met Him in that moment, and He will meet us there too. We are never alone, even at our "rock bottom".

- Spend time in silent prayer today. Take at least 10 minutes to be completely alone with God. Bring Him your authentic self, all your fears, anxiety, anger, burdens, questions, and all your brokenness.¹ Allow time for Him to meet you with His unconditional grace.

Deeper Dive

Additional scripture to meditate on this week.

- **John 16:33** ~“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”
- **2 Corinthians 7:5** ~ For when we came into Macedonia, we had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn—conflicts on the outside, fears within.
- **Philippians 3:8** ~What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ
- **James 1:2-4** ~Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
- **Romans 8:28** ~And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.
- **Psalms 34:19** ~The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all.

Day 2 - Grace wrestles until the sun rises

READ: Genesis 32:24-25

In this “rock bottom” moment, Jacob wrestled with God all night long. If you have ever been in a season of struggle, you can probably relate to feeling like you wrestled all night. Whether it’s an actual sleepless night, or it’s just a season of wrestling with God over things, we have all had these moments. This is especially true when it comes to experiencing pain, suffering, and trials. Just like Jacob, we often beg for a quick deliverance.

Unfortunately, God doesn’t promise an easy life. We are told over and over in scripture that we will have trouble in this world. Even Paul experienced feeling like he was struggling at every turn in 2 Corinthians 7:5. God’s promise is not that things will be easy, but that we are not alone in our suffering. God’s grace meets us during our sleepless nights. It’s through His grace that we can receive goodness from hard things. God sometimes uses the hard things to develop, transform, or refine something greater in your life. It’s often through the hardest parts of our lives that we see growth in endurance, perseverance, courage, faith and hope.

Jacob wrestles with God in a moment that he is separated from everyone he cares about, and all his worldly possessions. In this raw lonely moment, it’s finally just him and God. In his weakness, fear, abandonment, and vulnerability Jacob comes face-to-face with God’s grace in a full on wrestling match. Sometimes, we have to get to this place so that we can focus on what truly matters. Life’s priorities tend to become crystal clear when we face suffering. Everyday concerns come to a screeching halt when we suddenly face a cancer diagnosis, a job loss, or a major life change. Perspective often becomes laser focused in these hard moments. Jacob is facing his family fighting against him, losing all his possessions, his wives and children, and even losing his own life. Instead of being tempted to run away and hide, or to just give up, Jacob locks into this wrestling match and stays engaged with God all through the night.

Spiritual growth & transformation often come from all night wrestling matches. When we struggle with surrender, disappointment, and trust, God’s grace can use these moments to shape and transform our hearts to align with His.

- Where are you wrestling with God in your life? How could God use this to grow, mature, or transform you? Does it give you hope to know that God is with you, even if it feels like a wrestling match?
- Is there a moment in your past that you can look back on and realize was a wrestling match with God? What did you learn from it? How has your life changed since then?

Deeper Dive

Additional scripture to meditate on this week.

- **2 Corinthians 12:9** ~But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me
- **Philippians 4:13** ~I can do all this through him who gives me strength
- **Isaiah 40:29** ~He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.
- **Romans 5: 3-4**~Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.
- **Romans 8:26** ~ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.
- **Isaiah 40:31** ~ But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Day 3 - Grace verses self-sufficiency

READ: Genesis 32:25

We like to feel self-sufficient, strong, competent, and in control. Reading this list, you probably said "yes, yes, yes, and what's wrong with that?". These are desirable traits in our culture and society. We often look for these traits when we hire someone for a job, or decide whether they would be a good teammate. We typically want to be around people that can take care of themselves, and we want to be able to take care of ourselves as well. While this may seem good, it can lead to a false belief that it's all up to us.

Paul struggled with wanting this self-sufficiency in his weakness. He repeatedly asked God to remove a thorn in his side. Instead, God asked for a greater dependence on His grace. This is when Paul says, "God's grace is sufficient in weakness". Paul's weakness became a display of God's strength.

Jacob similarly strived for self-sufficiency as he controlled and manipulated his way through life. This led him to being alone in the wilderness wrestling with God. As God asked for a greater dependence on His grace, He takes Jacob's hip out of socket. This turned wrestling into blessing and transformed Jacob's heart and life.

God's way of life is counter to our culture, and to our natural human desire. Let's look at how a life built on God's grace contrasts with a life built on self-sufficiency & control. As you look over this list, circle the areas where you struggle. What would change if you moved those areas into a space of dependence on God's grace?

Self-Sufficiency	God's Grace
"I need to be enough"	"Christ is enough"
"It's all up to me"	"I was never meant to carry this alone"
Strength valued	Dependence valued
Competence = Identity	Child of God = Identity
Control = Temporary Security	Trust in God = Lasting Peace
Weakness = Threat	Weakness = God is Strong
Failure = Shame	Failure = Invitation to Grace
Exhaustion is normal	Rest is possible

Deeper Dive

Additional scripture to meditate on this week.

- **Hebrews 12:1-2**

~Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- **James 4:8** ~Come near to God and he will come near to you.

- **Matthew 6:6** ~But when you pray, go into your inner room, shut your door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

- **Proverbs 3:5-6** ~Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.

- **Isaiah 55:8-9** ~For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Day 4 - Grace changes what we cling to

READ: Genesis 32:26

Why would God bless Jacob after he demands a blessing and won't let go? This honestly seems a bit forceful or demanding to say to a Holy God, doesn't it? Despite it seeming forceful, this reveals an important transformation in Jacob's heart. Instead of clinging to his own ideas, deceit or manipulation, he's holding onto God. There is a difference in striving for a blessing, and surrendering to the blessing giver. Jacob experienced God's grace while wrestling that night. His heart was being transformed. He clings to God as He is learning to trust in God's goodness and faithfulness. He was finally ready to trust and cling directly to God instead of himself.

When we walk through life's struggles, when we wrestle with God, when God's grace becomes our dependency, it will change what we cling to. Instead of clinging to comfort, control or approval, we learn to cling to our faith. By clinging to faith, we can hold tightly when God's answers seem delayed, when our hearts are heavy, and when circumstances are full of uncertainty. We can learn to pursue God Himself instead of the outcomes or the blessings we desire. We can learn to trust that His ways are higher and greater than ours. We can put our faith in His timing, His provision, and the goodness of His plans. Let's look at what clinging to God looks like in our daily lives.

1. **Throw away polished prayers** - Cling to God when you are alone, in the dark, in your mess, with all your raw fear, anger, frustration, needs and exhaustion. Cry out in honest authenticity. Wrestle with Him. Take off every mask, and learn to sit in the hard emotions with your Father. He can handle it. His grace will meet you there.
2. **Trust before change** - Cling to God before anything has changed. Trust in His goodness BEFORE you know the outcome. Worship BEFORE you feel relief. Keep reading His Word BEFORE you fully understand. Refuse to let fear have the loudest voice. Cling to His goodness and promises then fear and anxiety begin to creep in.
3. **Give God space** - Cling to God instead of your performance, perfectionism, success, and striving. As an act of full surrender, STOP all your over-planning, fixing, rescuing, goal setting, striving, and controlling outcomes. Give God the space to move and work in your life. Allow the Spirit space to interrupt your day.
4. **Find joy in your limits, and rest in your weaknesses** - Cling to God when you feel weak, or face your limitations. Instead of resenting and lamenting over your human limitations, rejoice in how they invite dependence on God. Rejoice in the limited hours you have in a day/week/month. Instead of staying up later, or striving to increase your limits, cling to God's promise to provide everything you need to accomplish what He has for you today. 4

Deeper Dive

Additional scripture to meditate on this week.

- **Philippians 1:6** ~Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
- **Isaiah 43:1** ~But now, this is what the Lord says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.
- **Ephesians 2:10** ~For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
- **Isaiah 62:2b** ~you will be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will bestow.
- **2 Corinthians 5:17** ~ Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come!

Day 5 - Grace transforms identity

READ: Genesis 32:28-32

Jacob entered the night with a name that was associated with deception and striving. Jacob in Hebrew literally means “supplanter” or “deceiver”. At the end of the night, God gives Jacob a new name and a new identity. He walks away transformed by grace, with a limp, and a new identity. His limp served as a reminder of his dependence on God, instead of on his own strength. The new name God gave Jacob was Israel. This name reflected his transformed relationship with God. Israel literally means “one who struggles with God and man”. God reaffirms this name change in Bethel (Genesis 35:9-12) once Jacob sets aside all of his idols and finally purifies himself.

Just like Jacob, our faith journey is ongoing. Encountering God’s grace is transformational. Instead of being rooted in our past failures and fears we can walk confidently with the new name that God gives us. Even as God continues to work on us, we can rest in the hope that He is doing a good work in us, and He will carry it to completion.

- As we think about the old names we often cling to verses the new names that God wants to give us, which of these are the hardest for you to embrace?
- Who in your life knows your old name, and your new name? Who could join you to hold you accountable in clinging to the new name?
- What would it look like for you to take time this week to wrestle with God over these truths? Is there something that God is trying to wrestle out of your life?

Not enough	Complete in Christ - Col 2:10
Unwanted	Deeply Loved - Rom 8:38-39
Alone	He is with you - Is 41:10 & will never leave you - Heb 13:5
Rejected	Accepted - Eph 1:6 & Chosen 1 Peter 2:9
Worthless	God’s workmanship - Eph 2:10
Unseen	Seen and known - Ps 139:1-16
Guilty	You are redeemed - Is 44:22 & not condemned - Rom 8:1