

# Jacob

12•3•2022  
GENESIS 25-32

Jacob's story begins in Genesis 25, he is wrestling with his twin brother in his mother's womb and given the name Jacob, which means "supplanter or usurper." This theme of wrestling will follow Jacob throughout his life in an almost archetypal manner. Jacob tricks his brother Esau into selling his birthright for a bowl of stew and later continues his trickery, a wrestling, to get the family blessing.

Jacob leaves his home in fear of his brother's wrath and to find a wife. Instead of Jacob scheming, he is tricked into an arranged marriage and ends up working or wrestling years longer to marry the girl of his dreams. After a time, Jacob decides to return home, now hoping to reconcile with his brother. In the night, someone grabs Jacob and begins to wrestle him. The mysterious wrestler, with but a touch, damages Jacob's hip, revealing its divine nature. Jacob, unfazed, realizes who it is and asks for a blessing. In other words, Jacob is still wrestling! Even the Hebrew shifts in meaning from wrestle to embrace. Jacob is now embraced by God, pinned down, submitted. The wrestler blesses Jacob and changes his name to Israel, which means one who wrestles with God.

When I think of wrestling, I think of close physical engagement. It is not like boxing where you stay away from the person and throw punches. Wrestling is more intimate. That night, God could have just slapped Jacob upside the head or even knocked him

down with a blast of glorious light, but instead God chose to come close and engage in physical contact.

God wrestling with a human seems odd, but then I think about how we as parents often wrestle with our young children. When my kids were young, we would put pillows out all over the floor, and then they would try to wrestle or tackle mom or dad to the ground. As an adult, you get down on your knees and you don't exert your full strength because you know you could hurt your child. Many times, we used the experience as a fun, confidence booster and would say things like "Wow, you are getting so strong." I envision God treating Jacob in a comparable way using the opportunity to reveal Himself to Jacob in a very personal way. One of the things I notice repeatedly in scripture is how God is the one who pursues and the one who draws people close. Later in the New Testament, when Jesus arrives, he is called Emmanuel, "God with us." Just as God pursued Jacob and changed his name and gave him a new identity, God does the same with us. One of my favorite quotes comes from Eugene Peterson who says, "God loves you. God is on your side. He is coming after you. He is relentless."



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## PRAYER

*God, we thank you that you are the one who pursues, even when we don't deserve it. We wrestle to obtain so many things in life. We even wrestle with you in our sin, yet you long to embrace us. Thank you that through Jesus we can be embraced and given a new name. Amen.*



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