

## Friday – Wrestling All Night Long

Read Genesis 32:22-31. Jacob was preparing to reunite with his brother Esau. The night before they were to meet, Scripture tells us that Jacob spent the night wrestling with God. This lasted through the night and wound up with Jacob receiving an injured hip, a blessing, and a new name, Israel, which scholars say meant, “He struggles with God.” Have you ever wrestled with God? I believe that was exactly what Jesus was describing in His parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18. Jesus summed that up by saying, “Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?” God also encourages us to pray without ceasing. I suspect many of us have indeed wrestled with God in prayer over a variety of needs and concerns. What a blessing to know that we have a God who hears and answers prayer. His answer may not come quickly. We may need to wrestle for a while. The answer may not be what we want, but it will be what God, in His infinite wisdom, knows is best. We may not understand that answer today. We may see the reason in the future or we may not, but we can trust that His plan is always for our ultimate good. Keep on wrestling!

## Saturday – What a Crew!

You just cannot make this stuff up! I think one of the beautiful aspects of God’s story throughout Scripture is how He chooses to use ordinary broken imperfect people to accomplish His perfect plan. Jacob’s story is certainly a good example of that. With whom do you identify in this story? Do you see yourself in Isaac as he tries to ignore God’s plan and to substitute his own will? How about Rebekah who thinks she needs to help God out through her scheming and underhanded ways? Are you sometimes like Esau who was willing to trade the blessings of his birthright for the temporary pleasure of a bowl of stew? Do you identify with Jacob who was willing to go along with the sinful plans of others even though he had to know they were wrong? If we are honest with ourselves, we probably could identify with each of these people from time to time. And yet, God used these broken ordinary people to further His plan of salvation. Despite their brokenness, God was faithful. And so it is with us! Despite our faithlessness, God is faithful. His promises to us are sure. Just as He blessed each of these broken sinners, so He blesses us each and every day. Rejoice in the assurance that His promises are certain promises.

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# Bring It Home



*Devotions for  
the week of  
August 2, 2020*

## What Now?

Continue thinking and talking about the take-aways from this messy story of Jacob. I’d enjoy hearing more of your thoughts and insights – so email me ([gschlecht@ImmanuelLoveland.org](mailto:gschlecht@ImmanuelLoveland.org)) or drop me a note.

### **Monday – About That Birthright...**

Read Genesis 25:19-34. The concept of a birthright may seem foreign to us. In Jacob's day, Esau, as the firstborn son received the birthright. This entitled him to greater privileges than his brothers. He received a double portion of any inheritance and also became the head of the family when his father died. There were also responsibilities that went along with this birthright. As the head of the family, he was responsible for passing along the promise of the coming Messiah to the other family members. The birthright was a significant thing. It carried both the promise of blessings to come as well as responsibilities. While we don't think of birthrights today, in a very real sense, we, as followers of Jesus also have a birthright. We are children of God because the Holy Spirit has called us to faith. We were set apart as God's children in our baptism. We have an eternal inheritance as those children. Peter puts it this way: "In his [God's] great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you..." Our inheritance is an eternal one. We also have been given the responsibility of sharing the Good News of Jesus, the Messiah. Today, thank God for this great privilege and responsibility.

### **Tuesday – For a Bowl of Stew? Seriously?**

Jacob's elder twin brother came in as Jacob was cooking some lentil stew. Esau, who was hungry (and a bit overly dramatic), agreed to sell his birthright to Jacob for a bit of bread and some stew. Amazing, isn't it? Esau was willing to trade that precious birthright with its privileges and sacred responsibilities for very temporary relief from his hunger. (You can read the full story of this in Genesis 25:27-34.) We may shake our heads in disapproval and dismay at his priorities. How could he? And yet, do we at times, do the same thing? Do we feed our sinful human appetites at the expense of the eternal? We all fall into sin, ignoring our status as children of the King. We lose sight of our "birthright" when we feed our sinful desires with mere earthly pleasures, with lentil stew. Thankfully, we have a Heavenly Father who is eager to forgive. Read the familiar parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-24. See in your mind the picture of the father, waiting eagerly with arms wide open for his son to return. That is your Father and mine, eager to forgive and welcome us back when we repent. Thank You, LORD, for Your mercy.

### **Wednesday – Deception and Deceit**

Read Genesis 27. Isaac was getting old. He perhaps sensed that his time on earth was drawing to a close. He called his older son, Esau, with the intent of giving him the blessing of the oldest son. He did this despite God's revealed plan that it would be Jacob through whom God's covenant promise would be passed down. God had promised Rebekah, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." (Genesis 25:23) Rebekah schemed to deceive Isaac to have him give Jacob the blessing meant for the eldest son. Jacob went along with her plot. Their plan worked, Jacob received Isaac's blessing, and one of the end results was a bitter divide between the descendants of Jacob and those of Esau. That divide continued for centuries even though Jacob and Esau eventually reconciled. (In fact, King Herod who murdered the infants at the time of Jesus' birth, was a descendant of Esau.) Isaac thought he could ignore God's plan that the older, Esau, would serve the younger, Jacob. Rebekah thought she needed to help God's plan along through a bit of trickery. Perhaps she thought to herself that the ends justify the means. Certainly, we are never tempted by that thought, are we? While God certainly does not approve of sinful conduct, He will use even that to accomplish what He wills. His promises are sure!

### **Thursday – Stairway To Heaven**

Read Genesis 28:10-22. Isaac had sent Jacob to his uncle, Laban, to find a suitable wife. As Jacob was travelling, we read of this remarkable dream he had. He sees a stairway or a ramp reaching from the earth up to Heaven. Angels are ascending and descending the stairway. The LORD, Himself, is standing there. Some translations have the LORD standing right beside Jacob. Once again, the promise is repeated, the covenant is reiterated. Despite all that has happened, God is faithful. He will bless Jacob and will bless all people through his offspring. The promise, of course, refers to the Messiah, Jesus, who will be born many years in the future. The dream, itself, is a wonderful picture of the coming Messiah. In the same way that the ladder bridged the gap between Heaven and earth, so Jesus will bridge the gulf between God and sinful humanity. We could not reach Heaven on our own. So Jesus came to us. He would be born a child in Bethlehem, would live a perfect life, would be crucified and die for us, and would rise again victorious on the third day. All this was to come as a result of God's promise made first to Adam and Eve way back in Eden and repeated to Abraham, to Isaac, and now to Jacob. And we know that promise has been fulfilled.