



LIFE FROM CHAOS: GENESIS  
**STUDY 8: THE GREAT WRESTLER**  
Genesis 32:1-35:29



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 **Key Idea**

God's wrestling with Jacob is just the thing that gets Jacob to put his trust in the right place. God might need to wrestle through things with us too.

 **Listen**

This study is written to be used together with the sermon preached at Trinity Church which you can find on our church website.

[www.trinitybay.church/sermon-archive/](http://www.trinitybay.church/sermon-archive/)

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 **Talk About**

1. Share with your group what you think of this statement. Do you think it's true? Why or why not?  
"The life of a Christian is going to involve lots of (probably metaphorical) wrestling with God."

 **Explore**

We're now on our third week looking at the story of Jacob. It's been a life of scrapping, wrestling and deceiving. This began even as far back as the womb, where Jacob fought his twin brother, hoping to get the blessing that would naturally come to the firstborn. While his twin Esau was born first, Jacob eventually managed to scheme his way to Esau's birthright and blessing, but this left Esau so mad that Jacob had to then flee for his life. For the last 20 years he's been in the East with his uncle Laban. Last week we saw Laban pull off a deception of his own, leaving Jacob married to both of Laban's daughters; Leah and Rachel. Since then Jacob's also married both Leah and Rachel's servants and had 11 sons. He's also worked hard on paying Laban back, scheming his way to ownership of a large portion of Laban's livestock and has accumulated a small fortune. There's still one thing looming large in his mind though - his brother, who as far as Jacob knows still wants him dead, is still out there.

 **Read Genesis 32:1-21**

2. How has Jacob's life changed since last time we read about him? What signs are there that God's promises are being fulfilled?

3. In verses 3-5 how does Jacob address Esau? How's the tone changed from last time he saw his brother? What's Jacob trying to do?

4. What does Jacob do to try and make for a positive reunion with Esau? How is this typical of Jacob's approach to life?

## Read Genesis 32:22-32

5. What strikes you about the passage? It's pretty bizarre, so what do you think's going on? What questions come to mind straight away for you?

6. Who's the mysterious man that Jacob meets? When in the night do you think Jacob twigs to the man's identity?

7. Why do you think God picks the night before Jacob's reunion with Esau to appear to Jacob in this way? What might this tell us about the significance of the encounter?

8. Jacob means "grasper", "supplanter", "wrestler" or might even be translated "deceiver". Israel means "God strives" or "one who strives with God". Why do you think God changes Jacob's name to Israel? What do you think changes about Jacob in this moment?

## Read Genesis 33:1-20

9. How does Esau react to Jacob? Are you surprised by Esau's reaction? What does this say about all the effort Jacob went to in the previous chapter to appease his brother?

10. Where does the story leave the two brothers? How are we seeing God's promises to Abraham being fulfilled?

## Application

11. Jacob's had to learn that blessing isn't found in his scheming and deception but in striving with God, trusting wholly in God. How might a Christian today make the mistakes Jacob made in the earlier part of his life? What would it look like to learn the lesson Jacob learned? Are there areas of your life where you need to learn these lessons?

12. God had to wrestle Jacob into this change. Are there things you've wrestled (Again metaphorically!!) with God about? Are you wrestling with him about something at the moment? Is wrestling with God a bad thing? What does it look like to trust God even in the middle of a wrestle?

## Some Extra Notes

The story of Jacob's wrestle with God is very perplexing and plenty of ink has been spilled over lots of the questions related to this passage. There's nothing wrong with kicking all those tricky questions around but I think today's passage is probably one where we're actually meant to accept that it's mysterious and we're not meant to totally have it all figured out. I think the context of where the story sits in Jacob's life is key though. He's fought so hard for blessing by his scheming and deception, and finally this seems to be the moment where he gets it. He finally learns that blessing is found in trusting God not trusting in himself. Somehow for some reason, it's a wrestle with God that brings him to this change.

- Question 1 - For what it's worth I think the answers yes. There are lots of tough questions we'll need to ask as we live a life journeying with God as our god. If we're not wrestling with those questions and wrestling with God are we letting him into the centre of who we are?
- Question 4 - Jacob's in trouble. What does he do? Come up with a scheme of course!
- Question 6 - People tend to argue over whether this is "God", an "angel" or maybe "Jesus". If it's an angel it's "The Angel of the Lord" which tends to be a term used interchangeably with God. Some would say if "Angel of the Lord" is a physical expression of God, that sounds a lot like Jesus. But then Jesus is God anyway, right? Gets a bit confusing doesn't it? Jacob calls the man "God" - I'm happy with that!
- Question 7 - For me I'd put it like this - Jacob thought his big problem was his relationship with his brother. God showed up at just the time he was most worried about his brother to show him that his real issue was his relationship with God.
- Question 9 - Again, like in our first week on Jacob, Jacob's been scheming when just trusting in God would have worked much better.