

Jake the Snake Gen 32

I don't know how many of you are familiar with the sport of wrestling, but it is one of the toughest sports ever invented. It is one of the few sports where every single muscle in the body is drained of its energy. Wrestling is also one of the oldest sports known to man. Drawings have been found in Egypt showing 400 wrestlers along with rules and regulations. Many of the moves shown are still used in wrestling today.

In Rome, wrestling was one of the most popular events at the Olympic games. It was developed by ancient Greeks to train soldiers in hand to hand combat. Today I want to invite you to an incredible wrestling match. In one corner you have Jacob, better known as "Jake the Snake" who fights dirty. He'll even steal from his own brother to get what he wants. In the other corner is an undefeated champion who knows all of Jacob's moves and with just one touch Jacob will be in a world of hurt.

The prophet Hosea mentions this story in Hosea chapter 12:3. In Hosea's spiritual application he exhorts the nation of Israel to follow the example of their grandfather father Jacob by having their own wrestling match with God to receive His blessings. The prophet points out that Jacob had some faults, just as the nation of Israel had faults, but what makes Jacob special is how he constantly searched for God. What are some of the things we wrestle with in life?

I. We Wrestle with Sin:

Eph 6:12 reminds us that we "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but principalities, against powers, against rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Long before Jacob's wrestling match with an Angel, Jacob was wrestling with sin, specifically deceit. In verse 27 the Angel asked Jacob a question, "What is your name?" Jacob was asked this question because there was a time when he was asked this question before.

In Gen 27:18-19, his father Isaac asked him, "Who are you my son?" Instead of answering Jacob, he answered with a lie. He deceived his father saying, "I am Esau your firstborn." In Gen 32, God is asking Jacob a much deeper question than his name. "Jacob is a schemer and a deceiver and God wants to know, "Are you going to continue with this type of behavior? Or are you going to come clean and change who you are?"

As long as Satan is around, we are in a wrestling match that never stops. We wrestle with the flesh. We wrestle with temptation. We wrestle a world that wants to drag us down. We wrestle with the Devil who is constantly trying to devour us.

II. We Wrestle with Problems:

Jacob is worried. He is soon going to reunite with his brother Esau and Jacob has no idea about how he is going to react. The last time Jacob saw his brother was shortly after he had tricked him out of his birthright. The last words he heard from Esau were "you're a dead man. "

Have you ever found yourself in a situation like Jacob's? Can you think of some sleepless nights where you tossed and turned struggling about what decisions need to be made? Do you remember how it affected you physically as well as emotionally?

Wrestling with problems is exhausting. We often use the term "Wrestling" to describe coming to grips with an important decision. What are some issues that we wrestle with? What can we do when we are faced with the wrestling matches of life? What did Jacob do? Jacob wrestled with prayer.

III. We Wrestle with prayer: Gen 32:9-12

I like Jacob's prayer. It's an honest prayer. He prays for himself. He prays for his family. He prays about how thankful he is to God and asks for God to rescue him from Esau. He reminds God about the promises made to Abraham and to him.

Prayer may or may not change a situation, but it will change the you. Look at what it did for Jacob. He went from self-centered to God centered. He went from trusting in himself to trusting in God. Is there something you need from God? If so, you're going to have to wrestle for it. Strive with God in prayer.

4. We Wrestle with God

Gen 32:24 says, "When Jacob was alone a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day."

Jacob never quit. It wasn't until the man touched and dislocated Jacob's hip that he realized, "This is more than a man." Jacob believed, this is God himself. Even though Jacob was defeated and powerless to continue, he clung to God, he held on to that angel and would not let go until he received a blessing.

God changes Jacob's name to Israel, which means "One who wrestled with God and prevailed." How did Jacob prevail? He prevailed by not quitting. He prevailed by pleading for God's blessing. He prevailed by relying on God and with new confidence, Jacob proceeds to his meeting Esau face to face while walking with a limp.

Have you wrestled with God lately? Sometimes we wrestle with God when we are facing a crisis. We wrestle with God over a broken relationship that needs mended. Sometimes we wrestle with God about problems we don't understand. "God why is this happening to me?" Is there something that you are wrestling with God about today? If so, cling to him and don't let go. God wants us to wrestle with him about our struggles. He wants us to admit to him when we have done wrong and have a desire to change so he can give us his blessing.

Close: What are you wrestling with today?

Are you wrestling with sin? Are you wrestling with problems? If so, then wrestle with God in prayer. Cling to the Lord and never let go.