

Genesis: The Book That Started It All

Weekly Devotionals | November 30

Begin this devotional exercise by finding a quiet place where you can spend time with God in His word. Before reading, pray that the Holy Spirit would open your eyes and heart to what God wants to say to you through His Word.

In Genesis 31-32 we come to the climax of Jacob's life. So far, we have seen Jacob in his youth, wrestling for influence and blessing. Essentially, he is fighting to attain that which God had already promised would be his. He wrestles with his brother, his father, and his father-in-law. But now, Jacob is vulnerable. He is on the run from his father-in-law and on his way to meet his brother, who had vowed to kill him. But in a surprising encounter, God meets with him and welcomes him to live into his destiny.

Open with prayer.

*Dear God,
You have a vision for my destiny.
I confess that at times I strive to take matters into my own hands.
Teach me to trust in you.
Meet me in the most vulnerable parts of my life.
Remind me that my past does not define me,
But that you use it to refine me
into your likeness.
Open my heart to encounter you today
in my wanderings
my wrestling's
and my waiting.
I pray this in the name of Emmanuel,
God with us.
Here at the christening of Advent.
Amen.*

READ Genesis 31 ... Jacob Running from Man

Jacob fled his Father-in-law on his way back to right a wrong with his brother and see his father before he dies. As he is on the run, his Father-in-law catches up to him in the hill country when Laban overtook him. In Genesis 31:40-42 Jacob says to him, "This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes. It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times. If the God of my

father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands ..."

- Have you ever found yourself running away from something or someone? What do you recall about that experience?
- Name the emotions you felt during this running away time of life:
- Perhaps you sense that you are on the run right now? What prayer would you like to offer to God in this season of your life?
- Jacob describes that God protected him and says, "God has seen my hardship." How has God met with you in your own moments of running from something?

READ Genesis 32 ... Jacob Wrestling with God

- Notice Jacob's prayer in 32:9-12. Jacob's prayer has four movements:
 1. Appeal to the Promise (32:9)
 2. Acknowledge God's Provision (32:10)
 3. Ask for Protection (32:11)
 4. Affirm the Promise again (32:12)
- Our prayers are often the raw material that God uses to prepare us for an encounter with Him. Take a few moments and think about where you find yourself leaning on God's promises. Using the outline above, write out your own prayer to God.
- It was night ... and Jacob was left alone (32:22 & 24). "... And a man wrestled with Jacob until daybreak" (32:24). You have heard the phrase, "It's always darkest just before the dawn." Isn't this true here for Jacob? Right in the moment you would expect that he wants God to come and comfort him, God does show up, but it's not like he would have wanted. Have you found yourself in a wrestling match with God in your life? Take some time to reflect on what that experience was or is like?

- God ends up touching Jacob's hip and Jacob ends up walking with a limp from that day forward. We think of a limp as a bad thing, but what if our limp is actually a sign of God's grace and a seal of your transformation? What is your limp (or limps)? How might this be a sign of God's grace? How has your limp been used to transform your life?
- This story is the transforming moment in Jacob's life. It is a defining moment for him. The One he wrestles with speaks to him, "You will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." What an identity! If God were to give you a new name that is connected to His destiny for you, what would that name be? How might he speak about your past (you are no longer Jacob ... a name that meant grasp or take or deceive)? What is it in your past that no longer shapes your present? And how might God give language about who you are that will shape your destiny?

CLOSE with the same prayer you began with:

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 Here at the christening of Advent.
 Amen.*

