



August 2, 2026 | *Wrestling with Perception?* | Pastor Eddie Eddy

Genesis 32:22-31 New International Version (NIV) Jacob Wrestles With God

²² That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. ²⁴ So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. ²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." ²⁷ The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered.

²⁸ Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." ²⁹ Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." ³¹ The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.

Wrestling with Perception

Some of life's most crucial turning points are recognizable only in retrospect. It's when we look back and reflect on the decisions we made thoughtlessly or casually that we can see the impact those decisions had on our lives. But there are other times that we are completely aware of the outcome of a decision, even as we are in the midst of a struggle.

I'm sure you have heard the phrase "Perception becomes reality", well, our lack of perception sometimes is the reason why we need God's guidance in our lives.

Kevin just read the bible's description of **one** of the crucial turning points in the life of Jacob...a turning point that comes as he wrestled through the night with the messenger of God.

You see, Jacob was a bit of a con man...but his future life...is about to change. After this wrestling match...Jacob is going to turn from a con man, whose name meant "thief"...to a man of faith whose name would be "Israel," which means..."one who prevails with God".

As we look at the pilgrimage of the man for whom the nation of Israel is named, we can see turning points that parallel our own lives. Jacob grew up in what we would call today a "dysfunctional family". His mother Rebecca was a strong-willed woman who had traveled across deserts and mountains to marry Isaac, the son of Abraham without ever meeting him. With that kind of driven personality, it's no surprise to find her aggressively trying to assist her favorite son in the struggle to secure his twin brother's birthright and blessing from his father. Rebekah was the one who set an example for Jacob.

So, his perception of how things are done became his reality. The stage was set for Jacob to deceive his blind father Isaac into thinking he was giving his blessing to Esau. He also took advantage of his brother, the hunter Esau, at a time when Esau was vulnerable. Esau had been hunting and was famished. Jacob tricked Esau into trading a meal of lentils in exchange for his birthright.

It seems that from most of his life...Jacob wrestled within himself on how best to connive people into getting what he wanted for himself.

But how blessed are we when we wrestle with things in our own lives and hit those turning points when our wills begin to submit to God's will.

Jacob had those points too. The first turning point for Jacob came like many of ours do. It happened when he was in trouble. He was running from the consequences of his own actions. He finds himself alone and sleeping on the ground with a rock for a pillow. And he had a vision in a dream. In his dream...God was at the top of a ladder and his angels were ascending and descending on a ladder from the sky. Then God promises Jacob that he will carry on the promise God made to Abraham. God said...

"I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All people on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Here is one thing that happens in this dream. Jacob finds out that God is bigger than he had thought Him to be. He had always seen God as limited **only** to the place that **his** family occupied. Now he says, "Surely God is in this place and I did not know it."

Jacob's understanding of God has been expanded. This vision is an insight to the grace of God. Jacob wrestles with the idea that God brings assurance to this flawed and imperfect man. He now sees that God will bless the world through him.

And here is the amazing thing about this promise. God didn't wait till the perfect day where Jacob could change his attitude or make up for his mistakes. He simply declares his intention to use and bless Jacob's life right where he was.

All of this happened in a place Jacob called Bethel, "the House of God". It marked the first turning point encounter with God in Jacob's life.

PAUSE

How amazing it is that God who knows all about our weaknesses...doesn't cure those flaws before we are trusted us with his purpose and plan. We don't clean up our acts in hope that so we can deserve something like that. Truth is...We can never deserve it. It's only by Grace we have these blessings we too often take for granted.

PAUSE

The next encounter with God comes in the scripture we have read together today. Jacob had spent about 20 years in a livestock partnership with his mother's brother Laban. And in Jacob fashion...he leaves that partnership taking what he wants, rather than what he deserves. He ends up making a truce with his father-in-law and...they agree to disagree...but also not to cross each other's paths anymore.

Jacob no sooner dodges this bullet and then he hears that his brother that he swindled...is on the way with an army of 400 men to see him. You know...no matter what we do...life has a way of catching up with us. And it seems that is always in those deepest crises...when we feel we are trapped in a corner...when we have to really wrestle with the realities of our own thoughts and our own actions...it's in those moments that our greatest turning points often emerge.

Jacob was willing to sacrifice his family and all of his possessions in a time like this. He sent everything ahead of him and he remained on the other side of Jabbock all alone. His life has caved in around him. In the night he encounters the Messenger of God...the Angel...and he wrestles with God through the darkness of the night. Jacob knew at this point...that no matter the circumstances his only hope to salvage the promise he had received...was to hang on to God, to pursue the truth...whatever the cost may be. And as he does so, he finds a new perspective about himself, about his purpose in life, about his relationship with others, and he finds the peace to live with the mysteries of God we receive through grace.

PAUSE

Can you imagine wrestling with God? The fact that you're here today...leads me to believe that you can imagine wrestling with God. You probably have a memory of wrestling with the One who has made you. Let me ask you...was it a turning point in your life?

This wrestling match was for Jacob. And here's why...In that tussle...Jacob wrestled with a penetrating question, "What is your name?" In essence, God asked Jacob, "Who are you?" Did God really need to know? Of course not. God knows everything about us.

But there and then...Jacob had to come face to face with who he had been, what he had done, and who he hurt in the process. The honest answer was, "I am Jacob, a deceiver, a thief, a con man, and a manipulator."

But hear God's grace at that pivotal moment, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

Friends...When you wrestle with God...and you take him seriously, he holds up a mirror that makes you face up to what you are. This is so we can experience the element of conviction of sin and shortcomings. So we can have insight into our own perception of who we are. This is Grace...this is how we are able to answer the call to repentance. It's only when we have the insight of who we really are, that we feel sorrow over what I am and what I have done, that we can admit that we are in need of a redeemer.

But a wrestling match with God can also reveal the other side, your best self as well. Dr. Phil on TV likes to say, "No matter how thin you cook a pancake it still has 2 sides". That mirror that God uses...will also reveal the parts of us he intends to use for his purpose. It makes it possible for you to see through the lens of God...to see the possibilities of what you can be. God opens the world to you as he reveals his intention for you.

It's these struggles that lead to turning points that God wants to bring to every human being...to every one of us...as a way to reveal a new image in which we see ourselves.

With a different image we get a new perspective and that creates a new purpose. Jacob now has a new perspective. He knows now that it's not all about him. With this clear view now, Jacob limps away from this encounter with a new attitude that makes him relate differently to others. And he is going to get the chance to put that new perspective to the test soon.

Esau is on the road, coming to him. Jacob believes Esau is a man hell bent on revenge. The new Jacob, now Israel, went out and discovered that Esau has experienced a turning point in his life too. Esau is not looking for a fight. He's not seeking justice or payback. He doesn't need Jacob's sheep or cows. What he needs...is his brother.

PAUSE

Hear this...When God alters your understanding of who you are and reveals his purpose for you, something alters in our relationship with others as well. A new kind of love flows through you. Love begets love. The more you give of yourself to God the more things change in the way you perceive other people, and the more things change in the way they relate to you.

It's a beautiful kind of spiritual and psychological, even physical awareness. God changed the relationship as Esau and Jacob discovered their true bond as brothers in God's kingdom. They found they didn't have to compete anymore because their hearts had become knit together in forgiveness and grace.

Turning points in our spiritual journey have to come to us again and again. We can always be renewed, refreshed, and rejuvenated in his service.

The essence of the second Bethel experience for Jacob...now Israel...is that God is the God of Another Chance. I know that there are many of us who are in the dark, wrestling with God on the riverbank of some crisis in our lives. We all get caught between who we were and who we were created to be...hanging on with the hope of finding new meaning and new purpose for our lives.

Our youth wrestle with getting through school or starting their careers. Others wrestle with health concerns for aging parents or themselves. Some of are wrestling with ending careers or loss of loved ones. The church wrestles with its identity in a changing culture. We all have to wrestle with something and the change that God has in store for us that leads us toward God's goal for each of us. Each wrestling match leaves us a bit tattered and scared. That's a good thing because we know that God has been with us, and that scar is a reminder that we have been healed and sent out into service again.

May we all find ourselves hanging on to God until we get our blessing...no matter how long we have to wrestle it out.

To each of us, God calls with this promise: "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Keep this in mind as we come to the table to experience God together.

To God be all the Glory

Communion Invitation

Friends, Jacob wrestled through the darkness until he received a blessing. In many ways, we all come to this table carrying our own struggles. We wrestle with our past, with our failures, with fear, with doubt, and with the people we have hurt or who have hurt us.

Yet this table reminds us that our hope has never rested in our ability to win the struggle. Our hope rests in the One who meets us in the struggle.

Here, Jesus Christ welcomes those who have turned toward Him in faith. Here we discover that God's grace is greater than our sin, His mercy is deeper than our failures, and His love is stronger than our brokenness.

If you desire to repent of your sins, to receive God's forgiveness, and to follow Jesus Christ as Lord, then this table is prepared for you. Come not because you have everything together, but because Christ alone is enough.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, Like Jacob, we confess that we have often relied on ourselves instead of trusting You. We have sought our own way instead of Yours. We have carried pride where there should have been humility, fear where there should have been faith, and selfishness where there should have been love.

Forgive us, Lord.

Meet us again in our wrestling. Change our hearts. Renew our minds. Help us see ourselves through the eyes of Your grace and others through the eyes of Your mercy.

Thank You that through Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven and our lives are made new.

Amen.

Invitation to the Table

On the night in which He gave Himself up for us, our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to His disciples, saying:

"Take, eat; this is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me."

When the supper was over, He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying:

"Drink from this, all of you. This is My blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

And so, in remembrance of these mighty acts of God in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as we receive this holy meal.

Prayer Before Receiving

Pour out Your Holy Spirit upon us gathered here, and upon these gifts of bread and cup. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that as we receive them in faith we may be nourished by His grace, strengthened for Your service, and transformed into His likeness.

Just as You changed Jacob into Israel, continue Your work of changing us, until the world sees Christ living in us.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

As we come to this time of offering, we're reminded that Jacob didn't leave the river with more possessions—he left with a new heart. God wasn't interested in what Jacob owned nearly as much as who Jacob was becoming.

The same is true for us. Our offering is not simply about dollars and cents. It is an act of trust. It is a declaration that everything we have comes from God and everything we are belongs to Him. We give because God has first given to us. We give because He continues to meet us in our struggles, reshape our perspective, and bless us with grace we could never earn.

As we present our tithes and offerings this morning, may they be an outward expression of hearts that have wrestled with God and discovered that His ways are always better than our own.

Closing Prayer with Dedication

Gracious and loving God,

We thank You for meeting us where Jacob met You—in the middle of the struggle. Thank You for not walking away when we wrestle with fear, doubt, pride, regret, or uncertainty. Instead, You remain with us until Your work in us is complete.

Lord, give us the courage to be honest about who we are, so that You can shape us into who You created us to be. Change our perception. Help us to see ourselves through the eyes of Your grace, to see others through the eyes of Your mercy, and to see every circumstance as another opportunity to trust You more deeply.

As we leave this place today, remind us that sometimes the greatest blessings come with a limp—a reminder that we have encountered the living God. May every scar become a testimony of Your faithfulness, every struggle become a place of transformation, and every turning point become another step toward the people You are calling us to become.

Now, Lord, we dedicate these tithes and offerings to You. Receive them as acts of worship and gratitude. Use every dollar, every gift, and every willing heart to proclaim the hope of Jesus Christ, to strengthen Your Church, to care for those in need, and to draw people from darkness into Your marvelous light.

May what has been given today accomplish far more than we could ever imagine because it is placed into Your hands.

And now send us into the world with the courage to hold on to You until Your work in us is complete. May we leave with a new perspective, a renewed purpose, and hearts that are forever changed by Your amazing grace.

We pray all of this in the powerful name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.