

The Struggles of Jacob

Introduction

1. In each of our lives we have situations that come up that we struggle with.
 - A. By struggle I mean when we are confronted with a situation, we “wrestle” within ourselves to determine the best course of action to take in order to obtain the most favorable result.
2. Every person’s struggle is handled in different ways and the degree in which we “wrestle” with these struggles usually is determined by how “life-changing” they may be.
3. Learning how to deal with our struggles can help keep us functioning rationally and peacefully through life. The apostle Paul wrote:

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
4. One way in which we can learn how to deal with our struggles, is to look back in the Bible and find out how others dealt with their “life-changing” decisions.
5. Most all of us have read the story of Jacob.
 - A. We know that Jacob struggled with some “life-changing” situations.
 - B. But what did he do that helped him through his struggles, that we can also do today?

Background

1. **The Bible story of Jacob begins in Genesis 25:26 when he was born to Rebekah, the wife of Isaac.**
 - A. **But shortly before his birth Jacob was engaged in a struggle while yet in his mother's womb with his twin Esau (25:22).**

The Lord said:

Genesis 25:23 "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."

- B. **Jacob, the twin of brother of Esau, was born second and fulfilled this prophecy of the Lord.**
2. **Later, Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for some bread and a stew of lentils. (25:33-34)**
3. **Isaac is deceived by Rebekah and Jacob and pronounces his blessing upon Jacob instead of Esau.**

Genesis 27:27-29 And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: "Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field Which the LORD has blessed. Therefore may God give you Of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, And plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!"

- A. **This prophecy stayed with Jacob all the days of his life. He received the birthright – a birthright that was sold to him by Esau sometime before.**

4. **This deception angered Esau, and he was determined to kill Jacob in time.**
 - A. **Rebekah asks Jacob to go to her brother's home to flee from Esau.**

5. **Isaac sends Jacob away to the land of Rebekah's father (Padan Aram), to seek a wife from the daughters of Laban, Rebekah's brother.**

6. **On his journey from Beersheba toward Haran, he took a stone, put it under his head, and laid down to sleep.**
 - A. **What followed was of great importance to the molding of Jacob's character and how he would deal with his struggles to come.**
Genesis 28:12-21 "if God be with me....."

Jacob's Struggle with Laban

1. **In Genesis 29 Jacob meets a beautiful woman, Rachel, the daughter of Laban, who was the brother of Rebekah.**
 - A. **In Genesis 29:15-30 we read of the events which resulted in Jacob's service to Laban.**
Genesis 29:15-30
 - 1) **Laban deceived Jacob, yet Jacob still kept his vow. He worked for Laban 20 years.**

2. **During this time he had six sons and one daughter with Leah (Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun and Dinah. Two sons with Bilhah, the maid of Leah (Dan, Naphtali), Two sons with Zilpah, the maid of Rachel (Gad, Asher), and One son with Rachel (Joseph). 11 Sons, 1 Daughter**
 - A. **Benjamin had not yet been born during this time.**

- 3. Jacob asks Laban for permission to return to his own country.**
 - A. But Laban pleads for him to stay and asks him to name his wages.**
 - 1) Jacob only wanted the male and female goats and sheep that were speckled and spotted and also the brown ones from the lambs.**
 - 2) Over the course of time, Jacob's flocks grew larger and stronger than Laban's.**
- 4. Jacob served Laban but also helped himself. He kept his vow to Laban - working hard and was an honorable man. Yet:**
Genesis 31:1-2
 - A. The Lord then ordered Jacob to return to the land of his fathers. (OBEYED GOD)**
- 5. Jacob was faced with a serious struggle. He knows he must leave, he wants to leave, yet he still wants to have favor in the sight of Laban.**
 - A. He calls for Rachel and Leah and explains the situation to them.**
Genesis 31:5-13 "where you made a vow to me...."
 - 1) God reminded him of his vow at Bethel. Jacob trusted and obeyed.**
 - 2) Jacob fled to the mountains of Gilead - Laban catches up with him there. It was tense - but a peaceful end. (Genesis 31:25-55)**

Jacob's Struggle with Esau

1. The struggle that Jacob had with Laban was not as intense as the one he was about to face with Esau.
 - A. Remember, some 20 years earlier, Jacob fled from his home because of the anger of Esau, who was set on killing him.
 - 1) He's had to live these 20 years with this on his mind.
2. Now it was time to meet. He had just finished getting things worked out with Laban, now he must meet his own brother - with no idea how he would feel, but assuming that he would still be set on killing him.
 - A. He sent messengers to Esau and upon their return informed Jacob that Esau was coming with 400 men!
3. Jacob struggled within himself, he was greatly distressed – what would he do?
Genesis 32:7-12
 - A. He makes provisions for the people and flocks and then **PRAYS!**
4. Later, we find Jacob alone “wrestling” with God.
Genesis 32:24-29
 - A. His name is changed to Israel “for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

5. **Jacob, bowed before his brother and his brother Esau, RAN to meet him and embraced him, and kissed him! (33:4)**
 - A. **Jacob, filled with concern over his fate, trusted in God to protect him, and then what relief there was when the embrace of the two brothers brought forth tears of joy and happiness and relief to Jacob's inward struggle.**
 - B. **They made their peace and Jacob entered into Canaan.**

Lessons Learned from Jacob's Struggles

1. **At Bethel Jacob made a vow to God to that He would be His Lord.**
 - A. **Upon our confession and baptism, we have made a vow to God to be loyal to Him.**
Acts 8:37-38

Romans 10:10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

2. **Jacob had a two-way relationship with God. Sometimes God would tell him what to do, and other times he would ask for help and guidance. He allowed God to guide his life.**
 - A. **We need to have a two-way relationship with God. Let him tell us what to do and pray for what we need.**

Let God direct:

Jeremiah 10:23 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

2 Timothy 2:15

Talk to God:

Matthew 21:22 And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.

3. Jacob was not discouraged by others taking advantage of him. He remained loyal to God all his days. He struggled, but he endured.

A. We too must keep on keeping on even in the midst of our struggles and discouraging times as we “wrestle” to keep the faith.

Matthew 10:22 And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. **But he who endures to the end will be saved.**

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, **and having done all**, to stand.”

Ephesians 6:12-13

