

Character Study: Jacob

Part 3 – Jacob Wrestles with God

Genesis 29:31-33:20

What's happening?

- Jacob had two wives, Rachel and Leah, though he loved Rachel more than Leah. Much jealousy and anger came as a result of the wives' desire for children. Between the wives, and even their use of their maids, Jacob bore twelve sons and a daughter. ([29:31-30:24; 35:16-18](#))
- After much bargaining and arguing with Laban, Jacob followed the Lord's command to return to Canaan. Jacob had served Laban for twenty years, and although things did become bitter between them, the men eventually agreed to depart in peace. ([30:25-31:55](#))
- Returning to Canaan, Jacob became fearful of how his brother Esau would react to seeing him again. He humbly pleaded for God's protection and prepared a gift to give Esau. ([32:1-21](#))
- That evening Jacob was alone and a visitor came and wrestled with him throughout the night. Jacob found himself helpless, but before day break, he sought a blessing from this individual. This person told Jacob that he would now be called Israel instead of Jacob, for he had struggled with God and with men and had prevailed. ([32:22-32](#))
- Esau arrived at his camp that morning. He ran up to Jacob and embraced him, showing complete forgiveness for Jacob's earlier actions. Jacob was thrilled that he was reconciled to his brother. ([33:1-20](#))

What's God doing?

> From these twelve sons of Jacob came the twelve tribes of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, and Benjamin.

> The identity of the individual who wrestled with Jacob appears to be God Himself (note [Gen. 32:30](#) and [Hosea 12:2-5](#)). As a blessing, God changed his name. The name "Israel" means "he who struggles with God," signifying this event that served as a turning point in Jacob's life.

What's to learn?

→ Jacob wrestled with God until God dislocated his hip, breaking his strength and will. Being brought to a place of submission, Jacob quit wrestling and just clung onto God. Is God trying to break you so that you will cling to Him? Abandon the struggle! Find your hope in Him!