

GROUP DISCUSSION

Questions for facilitating dynamic discussion

The Reckoning
Week 5: Wrestling with God
Genesis 32:1-32

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Life can sometimes feel like a wild frontier. For Jacob, as we've been learning, the wilderness can be a place of encounters with God – both spiritual and physical. And wildly enough, even a hand-to-hand fight. As we'll see, wrestling with God is something our Creator expects and welcomes as a means to further both Jacob's journey and ours.

Kicking It Off:

What activity (sport/game/hobby) do you gravitate toward because you're pretty confident you'll win or excel at it based on your aptitude or skills?

Discussion:

1. Read Genesis 32 in its entirety. What encounter does the chapter open with (v. 1-2)? How should this have encouraged Jacob that he was correctly following God's command to return home?

2. When the messengers return to Jacob with word about Esau, it doesn't sound good. What is Jacob's first response (v. 7-8)? What does he do next (v. 9-12)? How can we tell this didn't feel sufficient to Jacob (v. 13-20)? Those three actions taken together reveal that Jacob has already begun wrestling internally, not yet ready to rely fully on God. Can you relate?

"But you have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.'" (Genesis 32:12, NIV)

3. Look at verses 22-26 about the night-long wrestling match. In the original Hebrew, the similarity of the words Jacob (*yah-ak-ōb*), Jabbok (*yah-bōk*), and wrestle (*ah-vek*) in this passage would have drawn attention and heightened the meaning of this event. Jeff explained that, "this fight becomes an expression of what his whole life has been – a wrestling match, a fight." What ultimately does Jacob want (v. 26)? Does this sound familiar (look at Gen. 27:19, Gen 27:34)?

"But Jacob replied, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.'" (Genesis 32:26b, NIV)

4. God had already blessed Jacob, by Jacob's own account (verse 10). How is this different?

5. Jacob is left to face his brother exhausted and visibly injured. Yet everything has changed (including his name). Can you connect this to a current situation in your life? How can relying on, as Jeff expresses it, "God's hand inside the glove" help you face the challenge?

Wrapping Up:

Ask God to reveal the wrestling matches happening in your group members' journeys of faith and encourage them that God isn't disappointed by their questions or doubts. Pray for fresh encounters with the God who longs to bless each of us.