

9AM & 11:15 Sunday Notes

5/26/19 - Jeff Lyle

“Beautiful Body-Slam” Genesis 32:22-32 Sunday 9AM

So many believers live according to what describes them, but not what defines them. We can be described by our gender, age, ethnicity or socio-economic class. It is not that these things are untrue, it is just that they are not all-true. These things do not define us. Others may be qualified to describe who we are, but only God defines who we are. The story of Jacob is one of lost identity, false identity and then restored identity. God will go to great lengths to bring us into the understanding of who He says we are. This is attached to our destiny and purpose in life. If we live by the descriptions assigned to us by people, we will live beneath the full identity that God has prepared for us from before the foundation of the world. To bring us into this reality, sometimes god must do with us what He did with Jacob: bless us with a beautiful body-slam. Learn what it means to wrestle with God in order to step into your identity.

I. The Precursors of The Slam (various Genesis passages)

Jacob is son of Isaac and the grandson of the great patriarch of Israel, Abraham. He had destiny from heaven on his life but, like so many others, seemed to live in opposition to his destiny. From the womb, Jacob is seen in scripture to be grappling for position, power and possessions. To secure his security and prosperity in life, Jacob had embraced a false identity (**Genesis 27:15-24**) as he pretended to be the first-born son, Esau. This sent Jacob on a long stretch of years where he lived for decades under the cloud of his deception and carnal approach to securing blessing for himself. Later, as God was beginning to bring Jacob into his true identity, he had a personal, supernatural encounter with God in a vision (**Gen. 28:11-16**). Separated from his family for many years, Jacob had been enduring a life of struggle, frustration, toil, with some outward success as he served his shrewd father-in-law (**Genesis 29-31**). When word came that Esau was coming with a band of men toward Jacob and his family, Jacob was thrust by God into overwhelming circumstances, resulting in Jacob's panic (**Genesis 32:1-12**). All of this chaos led to the time when God would refuse Jacob the option of running away from his identity and destiny any more.

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II. The Pain In The Slam (22-27)

A. Jacob's isolation from others (22-24a) - "He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. 24 And Jacob was left alone..."

For anyone who spends years living outside of their God-given identity and destiny, the reality of overwhelming aloneness eventually finds them. As Esau was bearing down on Jacob, possibly to kill him and his family, Jacob is forced to send his family on without him for safety's sake. Jacob is still running the show in his flesh and according to his own understanding. The end result is that Jacob is left all alone. Nobody can help him. He has nobody to speak to. He is without his own home, his own family and sensing distance from God as his false identity is finally catching up to him. The words, "and Jacob was left alone..." speak more than just the fact that his family moved on without him. It speaks of the state of his soul in this moment.

B. Jacob's conflict with God (24b-25a) - "...a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob..."

When the wrestling match with God is first described, it is presented in terms of human wrestling. We find out as the passage develops that Jacob is wrestling with God in human form. The match lasts all night long with Jacob refusing to lose. This represents our own wrestling matches with God when He desires to pin us in His will, breaking our stubborn striving and bringing us into full surrender to Him. Jacob was not having it. In his wandering years, Jacob had learned to fight for everything he had ever acquired. This stranger in the dark was not about to kill Jacob. As the sun began to rise, Jacob was still refusing to break. His strength was gone, his desire to prevail was still strong, and he refused to bend or break during the wrestling. Part of Jacob's false identity was that he refused to yield to anyone. He trusted himself. He was a schemer, a liar and a deceiver and had lived in that way for a very long time. The long wrestling match pictures the willingness of God to let us run out of our own strength. He intends to pin us just like He is about to pin Jacob.

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C. Jacob's wound in the wrestling (25a) - "...he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him."

In the end, all that was required was one touch from Jacob's opponent. When God touched Jacob's hip, it immediately fell out of joint and Jacob's strength was removed. In essence, the wrestling match was over. God could have done this in the first minute of the match, but He did not. Part of what God wanted Jacob to experience was the breaking of his will and the need for him to run out of his strength and his self-reliance. One last touch after a long night of wrestling accomplished the end of the contest. Jacob was incapacitated physically, and God was about to now break him inwardly.

D. Jacob's confession in the crushing (25b-27) - "Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me. 27 And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, Jacob."

Stubborn Jacob had lost the match but still refused to completely surrender. Something had shifted during the wrestling and he seems to now understand that he had been fighting God, or at least someone representing God. He demanded a blessing from the very one who had pinned him to the ground and defeated him in the match. Intentionally, the Lord confronts Jacob with the issue of his true identity when He asks Jacob's name. The last time we find someone demanding to know Jacob's name was when his father, Isaac, asked him. Jacob lied multiple times and told his blinded father that he was Esau. God was not going to allow Jacob to move on without bringing him back to this moment when he had stepped out of his God-given identity so long ago. Jacob had been pinned physically by God. Now he was being pinned spiritually. Beautiful body-slams from God bring the truth out of us. He admitted to God that he was, and always had been, Jacob. This was the moment when false identity was repented of and true identity was acknowledged. Jacob could have sung, "I am who He says that I am!"

III. The Power From The Slam (28-32)

A. Jacob received a renewed identity (28a) - "Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel..."

Upon his confession of his true identity, God does something surprising. The name Jacob means deceiver. Once Jacob owned that part of his history, God gives Jacob the new name of Israel, a name that would become the name of a mighty, indestructible nation in covenant with God.

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B. Jacob experienced an expanded capacity (28b) - “...for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

While the etymology of the name Israel, is debated, what is not unclear is that God associates the meaning of the name with the wrestling match that Jacob had endured. Amazingly, though Jacob lost the physical match, God declares that Jacob had actually prevailed in the fight. It is not that Jacob beat God. It is that Jacob, in wrestling with God, beat Jacob. The old, misidentified life of Jacob was destroyed that night. The new life of Jacob included an alignment with his God-given identity and destiny. Jacob stepped into the life which God always had for him. He lost the wrestling match but won the greatest prize. Jacob was restored to the lord and became Israel.

C. Jacob expressed an inner curiosity (29) - “Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him.”

Jacob is now aware that this was no mere mortal that he had fought. In asking the man what His name was, Jacob was revealing that he wanted to be certain about the identity of the God who broke and blessed him. When God reveals to us who we are and who He has created us to be, our response will be that we actually begin to desire to know him more than anything or anyone else. *You have given me my identity, Lord, now please tell me who You are. Make me to know You. What is Your name? What are You like? I want to know You, God.* These are the desires of one who has found out who he or she truly is in Jesus. We are not told the details of the blessing from God released upon Jacob there. What we are told is that God intentionally, verbally blessed Jacob, removing all doubt that Jacob had met God face to face as he wrestled with Him through a long night that left Jacob broken and surrendered.

D. Jacob survived a stunning reality (29-30) - “So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.”

Here is Jacob’s revelation. The brokenness, the exhaustion, the confrontation over his identity, the longing to be blessed by God and the growing desire to know God more intimately - these things all linked together to leave Jacob with the unshakeable conviction that He had

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encountered the God of Abraham and Isaac. Jacob now knew God for Himself. In that long, hard night, Jacob received his new name and was aligned into his own destiny from God.

E. Jacob continued marked with humility (31-32) - “The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip...”

Poetically, after the blessing found Jacob, the sun rose, and a new day began. It was Jacob's new start. Potential battles still awaited him, but he now walked with God. Notice also how Jacob walked: he had a limp from his wrestling with his God. The encounter with God that imparted to Jacob a new identity also imparted to Jacob a new walk. The walk would serve as a reminder of Jacob's weakness and need to lean upon the Lord who gave him his new name. Every step he would take for the rest of his life would whisper to Jacob, “I need God. I need God. The God who loves me. The God who pursued me. The God who confronted me, wrestled me, pinned me and blessed me. I need God - the God who told me who I am. He is the one I need.”

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"Identity Theft" Genesis 3:6-10 Sunday 11:15am

It is an awesome sight to behold when we encounter those people who know exactly who they are in the Kingdom. God does not merely impart forgiveness through the Gospel of Jesus, God imparts our identity to us. His delight is to introduce us to the person He has destined us to be before the foundation of the world. When this discovery finds us and we embrace it, we become people who are able to bring Him glory with our lives. Because of this, the enemy fights viciously to assign us a different identity, a lesser one. This message takes us through a handful of examples of people in the bible who were fought in the discovery of their God-given identities. The very first humans stepped away from whom God said that they were. Every single human since then has to be restored to the identity which God has chosen for them. This includes you. God knows who you are meant to be. Receive motivation and hope that you can begin to be that person today.

I. Loss of Identity Due to Shame (Genesis 3:6-10)

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. 8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" 10 And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

Adam and Eve pretended not to be fallen, hiding nakedness and shame behind insufficient fig leaves. We do not know for how long, but prior to their fall into sin, these two had walked in unbroken fellowship with the Almighty. Their experience as a son and daughter of God had offered them nothing but revelation and pleasure. They loved Him and knew that they were loved by Him. They had received their roles from God. They knew their names and heard Him when He invited them to spend time with Him. They loved one another in the beauty of marital perfection. Satan hated this, so he targeted them and tempted them to doubt God and act independently of Him. Both Adam and Eve disobeyed God and

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ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When they did so, their minds were exposed to knowledge that was inconsistent with who God was and what He had spoken over them. Suddenly, they saw their own nakedness that was no longer shrouded in glory with their God. Their impulse was to run and hide from God so that He could not see their shame. Desperately, they created fig-leaf garments to hide the results of their sin from an all-seeing God's eyes. Whereas ease, peace and trust once characterized their hearts, now shame and fear were ruling their relationship with God and one another. God moved toward them in proactive grace. He had them acknowledge their sin. He removed their weak attempts to hide their sin behind their fig leaves. They stood before Him uncovered and naked, with nothing to hid behind. That is when, in mercy, grace and love, God provided a proper covering for them which He made. He shed the blood of animals to atone for their sin and, in an act of atonement, clothed them in the animal skins as their proper covering. God provided the means for their shame to be removed. He restored them to Himself and welcomed them back into fellowship with Him. God does not want any of His children to live in shame, hiding their sin or shame with religious coverings. He shed the blood of His Son, Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb of God, and clothes us in His righteousness. Jesus sacrifice removes our sin and shame and releases us from our need to cover up who we are with manufactured fig leaves. He calls us out of hiding and fear. God comes searching for us so that we can be restored to Him and resume our identity as His beloved sons and daughters. God summons us to come to Him in trust. Then God reveals the sacrifice He has provided for us. We are assured that we are accepted by Him.

II. Loss of Identity Due to Greed (Genesis 27:15-24)

Jacob pretends to be Esau in order to secure a blessing for himself. God provided Jacob: First, a limp, then a legacy.

15 Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her older son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. 16 And the skins of the young goats she put on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. 17 And she put the delicious food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. 18 So he went in to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" 19 Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." 20 But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" He

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answered, "Because the LORD your God granted me success." 21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." 22 So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." 23 And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands. So, he blessed him. 24 He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I am."

Jacob was the second born twin of Isaac and Rebekah. Even in the womb, he wrestled his brother, Esau. When they were being born, Esau came out first and Jacob came out right behind him, literally clutching Esau's heel. It seems from the beginning that Jacob always wanted to be first. Later in life, it became clear that Jacob was the favorite son of his mother while Esau had the favor of his father. When Jacob took advantage of Esau's hunger and weakness one day, Esau agreed to give Jacob the birthright/inheritance of the first-born son in exchange for a tasty bowl of soup. Jacob had secured great material advantage with this manipulative bargain, and Esau could not undo what he had agreed to. The time came for Isaac to die so he called for Esau to prepare to receive the patriarchal blessing that always came to the firstborn son. Isaac had lost his sight and wanted to bless Esau before Isaac died. Rebekah overhears Isaac instructing Esau to prepare his favorite meal and, afterward, the blessing from Isaac would come. This is when Rebekah, shockingly, encourages Jacob to step out of his identity and to pretend to be Esau in front of blind Isaac. Conniving, deceiving plans were put into action. Jacob goes to great length to deceive his father and to secure the blessing which should have gone to Esau. Isaac feels something is not quite right, so he asks Jacob multiple times if he was really Esau. Jacob lies about who he is and assumes the identity of Esau. He ends up receiving the blessing of Isaac who had been deceived into thinking he was blessing Esau. The plan backfires immediately and the next few decades of Jacob's life end up being miserable. He loses his family ties. His brother wants to kill him. Jacob ends up in a distant land, living out the fruits of his false identity. Later, when God wants to restore Jacob, He wrestles with Jacob all night until He pins Jacob to the ground, injuring Jacob's thigh and leaving him with a permanent limp. In the wrestling match, God demands Jacob to state his true name. Eventually, Jacob declares that he is who he is, Jacob, the second born son to Isaac and Rebekah. As Jacob admits his true identity, God moves and assigns him a new name and destiny. Israel would be Jacob's new name, and he would receive the blessing of God the Father to become the human father of the nation of Israel. In order to bring Jacob into his true identity that he had abandoned in his deceptive pursuit of position, power and property, God left Jacob with a limp that never left him. We learn from this that we sometimes must

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be broken to step into our true identity and destiny. When we are broken, God leads us into our destiny.

III. Loss of Identity Due to Self-Will & Pride (2 Samuel 11:2-5)

“It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful. 3 And David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, “Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?” 4 So David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house. 5 And the woman conceived, and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.”

David was God's choice as king for Israel. God declared David to be a man who had a true heart for God. He was a worshiper, warrior, poet and king. He had endured many testings and come forth victorious. David was a beautiful representative of the God of Israel. Later in his life, when he was comfortable in all his circumstances, David succumbed to self-will and lust. He committed adultery with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. When he learned that he had impregnated Bathsheba, David did not repent. Instead, he moved further out of his true identity and concocted a way to have Uriah, a soldier in David's army, killed in battle. David pretended not to be an adulterer and ended up becoming a murderer - he was never to have been either. He was a king who was living outside of his destiny. Eventually, God exposed David's sins through Nathan the prophet. David finally repented after having lived in a false identity, assigned to him through his sinful actions and subsequent pride. God provided David firstly, grace and, later, glory. David acted in ways that were not consistent with who he actually was in relationship with his God. When he failed, he further compounded the situation by moving further into the sin of pride, fear, manipulation and denial. It took a radical summons from God to break David. When he confessed and forsook his in, God allowed David to enter back into his destiny as king, although there would be many battles coming his way as a result of his living in false identity for nearly a year. Humility will keep us anchored in our identity. Pride is the funhouse mirror that makes us appear different than we actually are. Sins will come, but only sins that refuse to be confessed and forsaken take us out of our identity. When we are humble and honest with God, we step back into the person He has destined us to be.

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IV. Loss of Identity Due to Distance (Luke 15:25-32)

“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ 31 And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

This parable that Jesus released is about two sons, one who was rebellious & one who was religious. Both sons forgot who their father was, and they acted in patterned behavior dishonoring to him.

A. Younger brother - the rebellious prodigal pretended not to be a son by demanding his share of his inheritance before his father had even died. He took all that wealth and used it in an egregiously sinful life. He left home, he lost his reputation, he broke his father’s heart, he gave himself to sinful pleasures and ended up losing everything. At his rock-bottom moment, he made the decision to return back to his father as a slave. This might have seemed better than continuing to live at a distance from the father as a rebel, but being a slave was not his true identity either. When the rebellious son came home, his father rejoiced and lavished him with all the welcome of a son who had never left. The father went out of his way to reconnect his boy to himself. He clothed him, put shoes on his feet, gave him the family signet ring and threw a fast in his honor. This is a picture of the Heavenly Father’s rejoicing when we come to him broken, seeking to be restored. He refuses to reject us. He refuses to receive us as a slave. When we have blown in and lost it all, the Father blesses our faith to return to Him with a welcome that reassures us that, even though we did not act like His child, He never stopped being our Father.

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B. Older brother - While the younger, rebellious brother was more obvious in his denial of family identity as a son, the older brother was no less guilty. The elder brother was also a pretender who denied his father honor. He pretended to love his father by doing all the right things. He never wandered off. He was blameless in his behavior. He took care of the family business. In all of this obedience, however, the older son was exposed as one who was not living in an identity that truly honored his father. When the party was thrown for his younger, rebellious brother, this man was furious. He felt owed. He felt entitled. His father's grace to the rebel felt like and injustice to the obedient son. This lavish grace of his father exposed that the older brother was obedient to his father, but not close to him. He did not know his father's heart, and he became very angry with his father. His identity was found in his works, his deeds, his obedient behavior. He lived by the scorecard, not by heartfelt love and honor for who his father was. The father pleads with his older son to come in and celebrate the very thing that made the father's heart rejoice. The older son refused and ended up staying outside while his dad went back in. He chose his anger over his father's love and joy. His identity was in what he earned, not in who he was to the father.

To the rebellious son, the father provided unreasonable restoration. He welcomed him home.

To the self-righteous, the father provided reasonable invitation. He invited him closer.

The answer for all instances of identity theft is for God's children to know, believe and walk in who the Father says we are. He assigns identity. Anything other than that is a counterfeit.