

life groups

NLC Weekly Sermon Study

Week of March 12, 2017

Sermon: Nothing New—Don't Wrestle With God



NEW LIFE
CHURCH

Schedule

30 MIN Eat, Meet & Greet

15 MIN Ice Breaker Game: **Name That Person! Instructions:** Divide into two teams. Give each person a blank piece of card. Ask them to write five little-known facts about themselves on their card. (For example, “I have a pet iguana, I was born in Iceland, my favorite food is spinach, my grandmother is named Doris and my favorite color is vermilion.”) Collect the cards into two team piles. Draw one card from the opposing team pile. Each team tries to name the person in as few clues as possible. Five points if they get it on the first clue, then 4, 3, 2, 1, 0. The team with the most points wins.

NOTE: Feel free to use as much or as little of the following study in whatever way flows most naturally for your group. If you lead a small group, you may choose to stay together and go straight through the study. If your group is larger—like a House Party or a City Group—you may want a leader to take the group through the main points, then save the questions for small group breakouts. How you use the study is always up to your discretion as a leader.

OPENING PRAYER

45–60 MIN Nothing New—Don’t Wrestle With God

- Today we review the story of Jacob the deceiver, who hit a wall in his relationship with God and ended up having an unusual wrestling match when the Lord met him at Peniel. He had messed up every relationship he had ever had, he was exhausted from trying to change under his own power, and he was forced to get to the end of himself. And as he wrestled with God, God changed his name, God changed his character, and God even changed the way he walked!
- When Jacob got real with God and was honest about who he was and what he was dealing with, God blessed him. God changed his name, and God changed his character—he was no longer Jacob the deceiver, but Israel. He was an overcomer because he refused to give up. God gave Jacob a limp that day that he had for the rest of his life, to remind him of that amazing day—the day God turned his life around.

Ancient Lessons to Learn from Jacob

1. Understand who is in control.
 - Like Jacob, sometimes where God wants us is in the middle of a crisis, because He often does his best work when there’s nowhere else to turn. And in the middle of that crisis, we have to remember that God is really, really good!

READ GENESIS 32:24–26

- This shows how Jacob was struggling, terrified to meet his brother, Esau. The last time he had seen his brother, he ran for his life, because he had deceived Esau, making Esau furious. So Jacob tried to control the situation by sending his family ahead to meet Esau.

Q1. Have you ever been in a wrestling match with God, maybe a situation that caused you to be uncomfortable—even in pain—and ultimately caused change inside of you? Is there something you are wrestling with Him about right now?

2. Understand the blessing of commitment.

- Jacob realized this was a battle with God and God was going to win, but realized he would not succeed unless God blessed him.
- God loves to find out that you really mean business with him, which is why he doesn't solve every problem immediately. Many people miss God's best in life because they give up too soon. But if you give up, you miss the blessing. Are you in a crisis right now? Hang in there. Don't give up, don't run from it, and don't try to escape. Instead, stick with it.

GALATIANS 6:9 "Let us not become weary in doing good for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Q2. Discuss whether you feel blessed by God or not and what does that look or feel like to you.

LET'S STEP BACK FOR A MINUTE TO GOD'S ORIGINAL INTENT FOR MANKIND.

READ GENESIS 1:26–28

- In Genesis 1, God is basically telling Adam, "Hey, man! I've made all this for you! I want you to walk with Me in the Garden, and I'll show you all you need to know about how to manage planet Earth! But mostly, I just want to hang out with you, because I love you."
- In the context of Genesis 1, it becomes clear that God created Adam as an extension of his own love. He created Adam, which means "man," to represent him as earth's manager. He put Adam in charge. Adam wasn't God, but he *represented* God, operating under God's authority on earth.

Q3. What similarity do you see between the responsibility God gave Adam and the responsibility He has given you?

- Fairly early in the story, we learn that Adam and Eve messed this up, changing everything! They went from no regrets, no guilt, and no shame to totally losing their innocence, their confidence, and their relationship with God.
- Without a mediator, they ran to hide (see Genesis 3:7-8)

1 TIM 2:5 “For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus.”

- “Mediator” means one who intervenes between two who have separated, for the purpose of restoring friendship and peace.

READ HEBREWS 4:14-16

Q4. Do you feel you can boldly approach God with confidence, or do you sometimes feel afraid to approach Him?

READ GALATIANS 5:22–23

Q5. Is your understanding of who you are consistent with the character and nature of the Holy Spirit who lives inside of you?

Q6. Have you ever been in a no-win situation, maybe even thinking, “What good can come out of this?”

- God loves you just the way you are, but He loves you far too much to let you stay that way.
 - › God allows a crisis in our life to get our attention, to help us grow into the person you were meant to be.
 - › Why? Because we rarely change until the pain we feel exceeds our fear of change.
- Sometimes success causes us to think we are in control, but either you are in control or He is.
- Our biggest struggle in life is not against the economy, the government, our neighbor, our in-laws, or our employer. Our biggest struggle is with Lordship.

3. Understand the power of an honest confession.

GENESIS 32:27 “The man asked him [Jacob] ‘What is your name?’ ‘Jacob,’ he answered.”

- God is asking Jacob his name not because God needed to know, but because Jacob needed to own who he was. The name “Jacob” meant “deceiver, manipulator, liar.” In ancient cultures you were always named for your character: Tall, Short, Brave, Lazy, Honest.

Q7. If you were named for your most prominent character trait, what would your name be?

- In this phase, we face the fact that we’re the problem. We admit, “I am the problem with my life.”

- At some point you must admit your contribution; you can't blame others for your problem. It's not "Sorry I've been caught," but "God, here is my weakness; work on me." Until you get this there is no major change in life.

2 COR 7:10 "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death."

Q8. What was God changing about Jacob's character that caused a name change?

4. One encounter with God will change your walk forever.

READ GENESIS 32:28–32

- The name "Israel" in Genesis 32:28 means "God prevails" or "prince of God."

Q9. Why did God dislocate Jacob's hip? Why did Jacob walk with a limp?

- As Jacob got real with God, admitted who he was, and pursued God with everything he had, God changed his identity and blessed him.
- Jacob wasn't the only one in the Bible to get a divine name change. God often changed people's names—from Abram to Abraham, from Sarai to Sarah, from Simon to Peter, from Saul to Paul. He loves to show his children who they really are—not who they've been or who they think they are.

Q10. What is it about your character that you feel like you will never be able to shake?

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

Q11. According to this Scripture, what did Jesus become for us? In exchange, what do we have the opportunity to become?

- In this verse, "righteousness of God" means "the state of him who is as he ought to be," "a condition acceptable to God, integrity, virtuous, pure." (See Strong's G1343 at blueletterbible.org).

Q12. How do these ideas mesh with how you described yourself in Question 7 above? Do you feel like you'll ever measure up to what you believe are God's expectations?

- We've spent a lot of time talking through areas where we may feel differently on the inside than we show on the outside about who we are—our identity. In your small group, agree with each other to maintain an environment of trust as you talk through areas of life

that may be sensitive or challenging to you.

TAKE PRAYER REQUESTS & PRAY OVER NEEDS

- After you have an encounter with God, you will never walk the same again. Reserve some time at the end to pray over any needs that have been expressed during the discussion time. Continue to pray for each other daily until you meet again.

ENCOURAGE

- Encourage the participants to seek an opportunity to spend time with someone this week, whether it's a friend or someone in your small group, whom you haven't spoken with recently. It could be a quick breakfast before work, a coffee chat, or a simple phone call to catch up. Spend time with others, because you need them and they need you, too! Remember, *we were not made to live alone.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Please refer to your weekend service guide for campus-specific announcements.