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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

**The Oaks
Baptist Church**
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Jacob Called Israel Gen 32:22-32

Lesson Background and Introduction

The image of Jacob wrestling under the night sky with a mysterious individual has captivated thinkers, artists, and writers through the centuries. The sheer number of artistic endeavors that depict this event speaks to the text’s influence. Renaissance painters and modern alternative musicians have all used this event from Scripture to inform their art. However, Jacob’s struggle is more than a provocative backdrop for creating art. Nor is Jacob’s struggle merely a stand-in for the battle between good and evil. Instead, the struggle would define Jacob and his descendants. Today’s text comes from the larger set of narratives regarding Isaac’s son Jacob and his conflicts with others. Jacob’s struggle with his brother Esau began at their birth (Genesis 25:26). Their conflict became more intense by Jacob’s scheming (and meal preparation) when he acquired his brother’s birthright (25:29-34). Later Jacob tricked his father into giving him the blessing set aside for firstborn Esau (27:6-36). Jacob’s scheming destroyed his relationship with his brother. Esau “held a grudge” and threatened to kill Jacob (27:41). In response, Jacob fled to the household of his uncle Laban (28:5). Jacob worked seven years for his uncle to gain the hand of Laban’s daughter Rachel in marriage (Genesis 29:18). However, Laban required that Jacob first marry Leah, leading Jacob to another seven years in service to marry Rachel (29:26–27). Jacob flourished during his time in Laban’s land, but the relationship between the two men soured (Genesis 31:2). This was due to Jacob’s perception of unfair treatment regarding his payment from Laban (31:6–7). In response, Jacob and his wives took all that they owned and left Laban’s household in secret (31:17–21). Ultimately, Laban confronted Jacob and the two agreed to a covenant (31:44). Jacob’s struggle with his uncle had subsided. Today’s text comes as a part of Jacob’s preparation to meet his brother. If Jacob returned to the land promised by God, then he would have to be on good terms with Esau. Jacob initiated contact by sending messengers to request favor from Esau (Genesis 32:5). Esau responded with a promise to appear, along with 400 of his men (32:6). This response brought fear and distress to Jacob. It would appear that the time had come for Esau’s threats to be fulfilled. Jacob responded with alarm: he divided his camp (Genesis 32:7-8), approached God in prayer (32:9-12), and prepared gifts for Esau (32:13-20). Jacob’s fear was understandable; God had promised him descendants (28:14). An enraged Esau would likely not only kill Jacob but also Jacob’s household. Jacob, known for his scheming ways, openly admitted fear of someone else’s scheme. Throughout his life, Jacob’s clever planning had generally paid off in his favor, often to the detriment of others. A mysterious struggle would now define Jacob in unimaginable ways. English poet Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830–1894) used the example of Jacob’s struggle in her poem “Alas My Lord.” Rossetti interpreted Jacob’s struggle as a demonstration of “the clenched hand of prayer” that she desired her readers to practice. The poem concludes with a petition to the Lord “to hold Thee fast, until we hear Thy Voice” and “see Thy Face.” We may be tempted to judge Jacob’s stubbornness because of our familiarity with his story. However, we can admit that we need “the clenched hand of prayer” to sustain us during our struggles. God is present, we only need to open our eyes. Jacob’s struggle humbled him and gave him a new identity before God and man. When we struggle, spiritually or physically, our faithfulness to God will point others to him. He is the one who can give true rest (see Matthew 11:28).

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

In seeking God’s help in this difficult situation, Jacob encountered God face-to-face and emerged from it a changed man

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK:

Father, help me to see that life’s difficulties and challenges are opportunities for me to seek You in prayer and to grow in my understanding of who You are

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day

(Gen 32:24 NKJV)

(From "Our Daily Bread", Dec 12, 2020)

**Series: God’s Exceptional
Choice**

**UNIT 1: God Calls Abraham’s
Family**

NEXT WEEK

**The Scepter Given
to Judah
(Gen 35:22-26; 38:24-26;
49:10-12)**

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

The All Night Struggle (Gen 32:22-25)

Separation to seek guidance (22-23)

- Separation to have some uninterrupted time with God (Mark 1:35)
- Separation to pray in secret and with openness (Matt 6:6)
- Separation to be alone with God (Matt 14:23)
- Separation to come to terms with sin and its indignation (Isa 26:20)
- Guidance is being led to where God wants us (Num 9:23)
- Guidance in more ways than we think (Ruth 2:20)
- Guidance to know and follow God's ways (Ps 25:4)

Struggling with the Angelic Man (24)

- Struggling in prayer (Rom 15:30)
- Struggling in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:12)
- Struggling by praying in the Spirit (Eph 6:18)
- Struggling for safety and encouragement (Col 2:1-2)
- Struggling to stand firm in the Will of God (Col 4:12)

Being touched by God (25)

- Heavenly touches to provide our needs (1 Kings 19:5)
- Touches of faith in God (Matt 9:20-22)
- Heavenly touches that deliver (Acts 12:7)
- Touches that heals (Acts 19:11-12)

The Seeking of a Blessing and a Name (Gen 32:26-29)

Seeking through perseverance (26)

- Perseverance by being slow to speak and quick to listen (James 1:19)
- Perseverance that leads to good character (Rom 5:3-4)
- Perseverance to throw off everything that hinders our Christian walk (Heb 12:1)
- Perseverance that leads to maturity (James 1:2-4)
- Perseverance that leads to godliness (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Changing of a name (27-28)

- Changing of a name from Jacob to Israel (Gen 35:10)
- Changing of a name from Solomon to Jedidiah (2 Sam 12:24-25)
- Changing of a name from Simon to Peter (Matt 16:15-18)
- Changing of a name that God provides (Isa 62:2)
- Changing of a name of those who overcomes (Rev 2:17)

Receiving of a blessing from God (29)

- Blessing of a nation whose Lord is God (Ps 33:12)
- Blessing of receiving God's promises (Mark 10:29-30)
- Blessing of knowing that God rewards godly service (Heb 6:10)
- Blessing of receiving an inheritance that will never perish (1 Peter 1:3-7)
- Blessing because of suffering for the sake of God (Heb 11:24-26)

The Result of being Touched by God (Gen 32:30-32)

Seeing God face to face (30)

- Seeing God face to face will be such a joy (Job 19:27)
- Seeing and seeking God face brings healing (2 Chron 7:14)
- Seeing God face to face to see His glory (Exodus 33:18-23)
- Seeing God face to face like Moses (Num 12:7-8)
- Seeing God face to face like Gideon (Judg 6:22)

Generating a memorial because of God's blessing (31-32)

- Memorials that witnesses our obedience or disobedience (Josh 24:26-27)
- Memorials that remind to worship and fellowship (Josh 22:26-28)
- Memorials that proclaim what God has done (Exodus 3:15)
- Memorials that reminds us of God's guidance (Josh 4:4-7)
- Memorials that reminds us of God's rescue (1 Sam 7:10-12)