



## THE GOD WHO IS SUFFICIENT

Genesis 32 |

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### RELATED SCRIPTURES

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### SUMMARY

The Bible is not what we think at first. Stories like Jacob's are not morality tales to get us to behave well (as though God is some granny dispensing tales on the importance of not marrying too many wives, or on getting along with your brother). No, the Bible is not about showing you how to live a good life, or giving you heroes to emulate. **What stories like this one show is something far better:** His life shows us our limitations and how God is sufficient to meet people who aren't looking for grace and don't deserve it with the very grace that they need.

**I think that is why the story of Jacob resonates so deeply.** We all mess things up in our lives in ways that seem irredeemable. Just take a look at this family. All of them contribute to the catastrophe that unfolds. Laughter, as he was called, and Rebekah not only each prefer one son over against the other, but they let each run unchecked into folly. We've all been foolish to be sure, but this family actively and passively fanned the flames of their foolishness. Nowhere is there quick repentance, no asking for and receiving grace from God and from one another. Instead each hardens themselves against the realities of life. **"Hell is other people" Jean-Paul Sartre said and each person in this family proves it** as they try to get one over on the other in a never-ending, ever-quickening race for Machiavellian dominance.

**No one stops to ask God what he thinks.** In fact God is nearly absent from these chapters. He's nowhere on the tongues of his chosen family, nor in their actions. It's not until Jacob is on his way into exile that God shows up, but even then Jacob just wants to negotiate with him: "If you will....then I will..."

But when Jacob is finally out of options he breaks down and prays to God: "I know I don't deserve it, but give your steadfast love to me anyway!" God meets him not with a tender breeze, but by knocking the wind out of him. The wrestle all night, and even as God fights with Jacob, he fights for Jacob. He doesn't crush him. Cripple him? Yes, but Jacob is amazed that he's survived the encounter. He rises with a new limp, a new lease on life, and a new name.

But remember this is no morality tale. The point is not to look for ways to avoid becoming like these people. The point is that we ARE these people. We ARE no better than them in our seemingly minor dalliances with sin. We ALL live our lives independent of God. We ALL need God to show up in our lives just at the right moment when all is seemingly lost.

## GROUP QUESTIONS

- Read through the story of Jacob (feel free to skim the full story). What stands out to you? Why do you suppose God put this in Scripture? What are we meant to see?
- When Jacob met God he was transformed. It was a renewal worked out over a lifetime, but a metamorphosis nonetheless. You don't come face-to-face with God and leave the same. What has been the nature of your encounter with God's grace? A wrestling match? A crippling? A healing?
- If there's one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of these portions of Scripture, what is that thing?

## PRAYER

God of all that is, was, and will be, you hold it all in your hands. And yet, we confess that our hearts are often like that of Jacob: wanting the moon, but not its Maker.

Remake our self-sufficient hearts, O God, and hobble us to do it if you must. It is surely better to walk alongside you with a limp than to sprint through this wilderness alone.

But don't stop there! Continue working out your redemption of us by your Spirit. And not just today, but tomorrow, and every sunset and sunrise until we return to the dust, only to rise with you into the undying lands of the New Creation. Amen