

Defining Moment



Scripture: *Genesis 32:24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.*

Introduction:

Jacob is a unique “War Hero”. His War was within himself. Ultimately it led to a Defining Moment with God.

His War Hero status is awarded him because he wrestled with his flesh, his thoughts, his actions, and finally with an angel or perhaps as some theologians think, with a Christophany, pre-incarnation of Christ Himself.

The result is a man who has his named changed from Jacob, meaning “Supplanter”, to Israel, meaning “God Rules” or “The Prince of God”, depending on which resource you use. You might say he had a defining moment.

You can't run from your sin:

Jacob made a mess of his life early on.

His mother, Rebekah, had been promised before he was born, that he, although born as the second twin, would rule over the first born, Esau. [\[Genesis 25:23\]](#) There really wasn't anything to have to prove or accomplish on his own. This was a predetermined position God had planned in the bigger scheme of history.

JACOB JUST NEEDED TO TRUST GOD'S PLAN AND GO WITH IT; NOT TRY TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.

But, for some reason, Jacob, instead of trusting God for His plan, was continually conniving his own plans, and in essence postponing as well as risking his future in Jewish History.

You may have heard the story of his brother Esau's lack of respect for his own birthright.

Esau being the first twin born had inherited the birthright to all of his father's inheritance and heritage. This was especially important in this family. His grandfather was Abraham and his father, Isaac. After all, God had already promised that the Messiah would come from their lineage as well as ownership of an abundance of land and many children.

Rebekah, Jacob and Esau's mother, schemed along with Jacob to get the birthright removed from Esau and placed on Jacob. Thing is, God would have worked this issue out, but Jacob didn't wait for God on the matter. He watched and waited and when the moment was ripe for the taking; he took it.

Jacob's heart was not to be a blessing to a future nation; instead, it was about Jacob having his own way by hook or by crook.

Esau, being the “whatever” attitude son, simply sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of bean soup. That pretty much tells you all you need to know about Esau. It was an easy sell. Jacob and his mother then plan to seal the deal when Isaac, old and blind and on his death bed wants to pass his official blessing onto Esau. He obviously has no idea what the two sons have agreed upon over bean soup.

So once again trickery and deceit is played out by Jacob when he deceives his father into believing that he is actually Esau, taking the blessing while Esau is out hunting. Jacob was a little hesitant in the deed, but all it took was his mother telling him it would be all right.

JUST BECAUSE A FAMILY MEMBER OR ANYONE TELLS YOU THAT SIN IS NOT SIN, DOES NOT MAKE IT SO. GOD IS THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND FOREVER.

As a result, Esau is out to kill Jacob. Jacob has to run away from home in order to escape death at the hands of his brother Esau. But before he leaves, he gets things PARTLY right with the family. His father Isaac tells him to go to this uncle's and not to marry outside of their faith and family ties; that is, not to marry an unbeliever.

He obeys and runs. But you can't run from your sins.

As a side note: Esau is so angry with the family situation that to spite his father, he purposed to take a wife of the Canaanites. His descendants show up throughout the Old Testament as unbelievers and enemies of Israel before they finally pass out of history. Genesis 28:8-9.

Alone with God:

As a side note: Jacob has an encounter with God in a dream often referred to as "Jacob's Ladder" on his way to his Uncle Laban's house. This experience along with the multiple trials [including having his bride switched at the altar] he faced once at Laban's had a hand in the way Jacob would view life. These appear to have "prepared him" for his Defining Moment that was yet to come.

JACOB THOUGHT ESAU WAS HIS PROBLEM; BUT THAT WAS NOT THE CASE AT ALL; JACOB WAS HIS OWN PROBLEM; HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD WAS NOT RIGHT; THERE HAD BEEN NO REPENTANCE, ONLY REMORSE.

Twenty years passed quickly at his Uncle Laban's family ranch. Jacob had many trials as well as victories.

He had been deceived by Uncle Laban consistently in his business and personal dealings for two decades.

Jacob was at the end of his rope. He and Laban had a parting of the ways leaving Jacob and his wives, his children, and his accumulated goods including sheep, cattle, and more with no place to go except Home.

So Jacob and his entourage head home; but there's a big problem. As he nears home, he is reminded of the family feud he left behind. He is reminded of his part in the deception and all of his sinful behavior comes back to haunt him as he receives word that Esau is coming to meet him and has 400 men with him, an army no less.

Jacob is going to have to face all of the tricks, the cheating, and the lying that he thought he had run away from.

Keep this in mind when you think you are leaving your problems behind.

GOD DOES NOT LET YOU RUN FROM YOUR PROBLEMS; HE WANTS YOU TO FACE THEM; REPENT OF THE WRONG; AND LEARN FROM THE TROUBLE YOU ARE IN. NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES.

Jacob's Defining Moment:

Jacob fears for his family and for himself. He imagines them all falling under the sword of Esau. So he does what he has always done first, that is, he schemes.

He divides up the herds, the families, and all the goods into groups. He lays a plan for meeting Esau so that some may escape if they are attacked.

But something different happens now:

- After he schemes, then he prays. But this is not the usual prayer you see recorded about Jacob; this time there is a shift in his attitude.
- He recites God's own promises back to God.
- He notes his own unworthiness to receive anything from God.
- He admits he is helpless.

THIS SHIFT IN JACOB'S HEART ATTITUDE CAME ONLY AFTER HE IS IN CRISIS; REAL CRISIS.

Now God has something to work with at last.

Jacob sets his wives and children across the creek; then settles down to try to sleep some before Esau arrives. He is alone on the shoreline; it's quiet. He has done all he knows to do. The family is strategically placed; he has sent envoys out ahead of himself to try to appease Esau with gifts; he has prayed to God.

But then: *Genesis 32:24-32*

24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

*28 And he said, **Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.***

29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

31 And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

Jacob was getting ready to sleep, but Someone shows up and they begin to wrestle. The Bible says they wrestled all over the ground all night. They fell onto rocks and Jacob was bruised and bloody. Then sometime during the night, Jacob realizes he is wrestling with God.

Once Jacob understood that, he held on and would not let go. This match went on for some time until God said "let me go" but Jacob said "I won't let go until you bless me."

God had finally got Jacob to the place that He wanted him to be. YIELDED.

GOD HAD NOT WANTED TO HURT JACOB; HE HAD WANTED HIM TO YIELD.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Jacob's Defining Moment? He yields to God! Years of running, years of scheming, years of denying he'd wronged people, years of saying "that's all in the past", finally, he yields to God.

Conclusion:

You don't have to waste decades of your life in turmoil. You have your life in front of you. Why not just yield now and save yourself and others all the heartache?

If you have Jesus as your personal Savior, then you can. Do you know Him? *(Present salvation here.)*

Trail Markers to Discuss:

Take each highlighted sentence and use as a discussion point asking some of these questions:

- Can you think of where this can apply to you today? Right now at this point in your life?

Activity:

Refer to: *War Heroes 2-Teen Workbook*