



ENTER God's presence

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

– Psalm 51:10-12

Lord God, transform our hearts and renew our spirits as we gather to hear and learn from your Word. May we always hold firmly to the promises of love and mercy which you offer us through Jesus Christ, Amen



SHARE life together

1. **Where have you seen God's power at work in your life this last week?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **What is something you are wrestling or struggling with in your life at the moment?**
4. **What is one significant thing you have learned as a result of going through a difficult situation?**

Sleepless nights. Tossing and turning. Endless going over the playbook of what could be or not be or which direction to go or not go. Feeling raw, vulnerable. In tears. Begging for clarity...answers...peace. Sound familiar? All of these are signs that you've been in a wrestling match. It can be a struggle, uncomfortable and incredibly painful. But don't give up. In the struggle, there is growth. In the wrestling, there is blessing. In weakness, there is real power. That's what Jacob discovered and we pray, you will also rediscover as you encounter the God who keeps his promises and transforms us from broken to restored, from lost to found, from runaways to sons and daughters.

Week beginning:
Sunday 7th June 2020

Worship series:
Kid's Church:
Hold On



VERSE for the week

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

Genesis 32:26



REMEMBER this week

There is blessing in the wrestling. Hold on to Jesus and don't ever let go, for you may just end the night with a renewed faith and as the sun rises, find yourself a transformed person!



LISTEN attentively

Read Genesis 32:22-30

5. What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?
6. What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?
7. Why do you think this 'man' confronts and wrestles with Jacob?

Jacob was a shrewd and crafty kind of guy. You are probably familiar with the underhanded method he used which saw him receive the blessing and birthright of his older brother Esau (if not, check it out in Genesis 27). Jacob fled his home for fear of his brother and lived for about 20 years as a man on the run, often surviving through, quick thinking and fast talking but always through tenacity and persistence. Once he decided that he wanted something, he would hold on and not quit until he had it.



GROW deeper

We know that we sometimes conduct ourselves in ways that do not align with God's will for us or for others. When our actions don't meet God's standards, and sometimes when they even fail to meet our own standards, we can feel guilty and question God's forgiveness and love for us. It seems like this may have been part of the struggle Jacob was having. Could he still have God's blessing even though he had cheated his way into it?

8. Jacob does not back away from the confrontation. He wrestles with this 'man' and appears to put up a pretty good fight. In what ways do we wrestle with God and his promises today?
9. Jacob refused to let go until his opponent blessed him. He held on until he was confident of God's blessing. What do you hold onto in the face of adversity?
10. How does holding onto the promises of God help you to overcome adversity?

Jacob's life was always one of struggle. He struggled with his older brother for the birthright and blessing from his father, then he struggled with Laban to get the wife he wanted but all of these struggles were a diversion from his real struggle, his struggle with God. Sometimes knowing who we really are struggling against can be the biggest part of the challenge. You may have noticed that the text doesn't actually identify the man Jacob wrestled with as God. Jacob makes that claim himself after the event. But it was this struggle with God that transformed him most of all. He receives a new identity as a result and if you read ahead in the story, it is at this point that he stops running from who he was and what he had done and becomes who God had called him to be.

11. What do you think of this quote from Timothy Keller, "*God has to wrestle us into a transformed life rather than comfort us into one*"? Why do you think it is so hard to live a transformed life?

Jacob's story reflects our own in many ways. Like God's blessing which Jacob received as a gift from his father Isaac (albeit under false pretenses), God's blessings of grace, love and eternal life are also ours as a gift with nothing required on our part. Yet to live in the fulness of what that actually means is a struggle. This does require effort, we will butt heads and wrestle with God about what life throws at us and the fairness or unfairness of it all but the question is, will you hold on until you see the blessing come out of it? Will you refuse to let go of God, even when it seems like he has delivered a cheap shot to the groin and left you with a limp, in order to receive the benefits and transformation that comes through the struggle?

12. What would look different in our lives and in our church if we all had the same determination as Jacob to operate out of God's blessing in every area of our lives?



LIVE purposefully

It seems that in many ways we have grown to associate material and personal comfort with being blessed. But Paul, in his letter to the Philippians says this, "But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him."

- 13. What are some of the modern conveniences or comforts of modern life that might be distracting you from holding on only to God? Consider trying to do without them for this week and devote the time they would have taken up with prayer and Bible reading.**
- 14. Most of us have at least one area of our life that we know God wants us to 'do something' about. Maybe you have tried a few times to sort it out but had given up after a few failed attempts. Maybe you have refused to acknowledge it before and try your best to ignore it. Consider making a commitment with a friend or faith mentor to be accountable to working at this thing and sticking at it until you see God's blessing at the end.**



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for the many blessings he gives us every day and for those who wrestle with the big problems of facilitating law and order and good governance here in Australia.
- Ask God to strengthen those who are at risk of letting go in their struggles. May they find a way to hold onto Him and trust that He will lead them through their pain and suffering.
- Pray for the courage to endure and hold on when the going gets tough. Pray for our LifeWay leadership team as they continue to discuss how we move toward meeting together for worship as Coronavirus restrictions begin to be lifted.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], God is blessing you. Amen