

# Wrestling with God

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Great. Good morning, everyone. That's good. It's been a hard week for me. A very sad night last night. We're talking about being broken and blessed today, so I feel like a broken man this morning. Let me just pray for us, actually, before we start. Father, we want your word not to just go in our ears and out the other ear, but we want it to go in our ears and down into our hearts and to change and transform our lives. So I pray that you would do that this morning. Take my words. Lord, remove anything that's not from you, but, Lord, bring your power into our hearts so that we would actually see you this morning.

Let us encounter you, I pray, through your word. In Jesus' name. Amen. I don't know how many of you come from a dysfunctional family. In fact, I do. All of us come from dysfunctional families. It doesn't matter how good your parents were, how amazing your siblings were. There is something about family life that sin enters into it in different ways and causes different levels of dysfunction. Sometimes brothers don't get on because of money. Sometimes parents and children are distant because they never knew how to show affection. And we're going to look at a story today which is very much about family dynamics. But the whole of the Bible story can be told in this idea of a family relationship with God as the head of the family and us as his children together, supposed to be living under his wise, loving, gracious counsel, provision, and rule.

And yet sin comes in and brings dysfunction. So Adam and Eve, they start fighting each other. They blame each other. They start having a go at each other in different ways. And the cycle just kind of continues throughout generation and generation and generation. And what happens is the Bible story shows we're like the Thai boys who have an amazing story just this week. But we wander into caves of our own selfishness, doing our own thing, and we get trapped in sin. And no matter how strong we think we are, no matter how great a leader we think we are, we could have Abraham, we could have Jacob, we could have David, we could have Solomon. It doesn't matter where you go through the whole story, not one leader, not one person is able to swim out against the tide of God's anger and judgment at our sin. And instead, the Old Testament story leaves us like those boys trapped in a cave, scared and waiting for rescue to come. Who is going to rescue us? That is the question the whole of the

Old Testament is leading towards. And the New Testament comes with the answer and it says, the diver who comes to carry us out is Christ. That's the one who's going to rescue us.

And so we're going through this series looking at Christ in the Old Testament because we want us to see that the Bible is one big story. Some of us kind of, we camp out, we read the New Testament, it's like the Old Testament seems like scary, angry God. New Testament seems like lovey-dovey God.

[ 3 : 38 ] But actually, the whole of the Bible is actually saying, God, the Old Testament is providing signposts to show you and to reveal you who this rescuer, who Christ truly is. And so that's what we're doing in this series. And last week, we looked at Abraham and showed how Abraham prayed for a righteous one to come, pointing us to see that only Jesus Christ was the only one who is righteous and who could make us righteous. And so today, we're going to look at what I think is an amazing story in the life of Jacob, who is Abraham's grandson. Okay? And what I'm going to do is I'm going to tell the story and just walk us through it and give a bit of background to Jacob's life. And then I'm going to go through just three points, which I think the story shows us. Okay? You with us?

Good. One person. That's great. Let's go. So Jacob's story. It's nighttime. And Jacob has just told his family and everything he owns to go over a river ahead of him because his brother Esau is coming.

And Jacob stays on this bank of the river alone. It's pitch black. And running through his mind are the events of his life. From the moment he was born, he's been fighting, competing, trying to get ahead in life. In fact, when his mom gave birth, he was grabbing onto the heel of his older twin brother, Esau. His father doted and loved Esau, the older brother, more than him. And he craved to be noticed by his father. Jacob just wanted to hear his father say, I love you. But he never did. And like a streetwise kid, he learned how to hustle and cheat his way through life to survive. To get ahead, he cheats his brother Esau out of two things. Out of his birthright, that is the right of an older son to inherit all the father's possessions. And he also cheats him out of his blessing, which is basically he dresses up, pretends to be Esau, tricks his father, his blind father to bless him instead of Esau. And how do you think Esau feels about this? He's not happy. In fact, he's so furious, he threatens, he wants to kill him.

And he even says, isn't, he's deceived me, this Jacob. Isn't he rightfully called Jacob? That's what he says. Which actually means, the word Jacob means, he grabs the heel, he cheats, he deceives. That's what his name meant.

And so the story continues. Jacob runs off for his life, goes to his uncle, sees a beautiful daughter there called Rachel, wants to marry her. But he gets tricked into working for her for 14 years to get her.

[ 6 : 45 ] But Jacob is smart. He's a smart guy. And what he basically does, he cheats his uncle out of his best possessions, his cattle and sheep, and he runs away again. You know, in Hong Kong, we would think Jacob, like Jacob would get serious street cred, because he knows how to get ahead. He gets respect, because he can get wealth whichever way he wants to.

But with all the physical blessing he has, all the wealth, the women, beautiful wife, kids, Jacob's missing something. He's had 20 years of a broken family.

Parents who haven't seen him, a brother who hates him and wants him dead. And he sends a message to Esau saying, hey, let's forget about the past. Let's kind of, let's just kind of meet up again.

And then he hears, Esau is coming with 400 men. Does that sound like good news to you? That's like saying, Esau's coming with four tanks and machine guns. And Jacob is terrified.

And so he goes into the only mode he knows, which is kind of this hustle mode, okay? And he hopes to try and buy him off with providing lots of gifts for him. So the time he comes, he's not going to be so angry, because he's so many gifts that he doesn't know what to do with them.

[ 8 : 08 ] And for the first time in the story, Jacob prays. And then he sends his family off ahead of him, knowing this could be his last night. And that's where the story we read picks up.

He could lose everything he has cheated and hustled for all of his life, including his own life. And then suddenly, out of the blue, he gets knocked to the ground, into the dust of the ground, by a man who starts wrestling with him, like WWE style.

It's pitch black. He can't see who this guy is. Is it Esau? Come to get revenge? This guy's strong. And they're wrestling on the ground.

But Jacob is also strong. And they wrestle all night. Have you ever seen two people wrestling, like two kids wrestling? Like, after ten minutes, they're just exhausted.

Right? Right? So for the wrestle all night, just think how much determination, just think how much strength you've got to have to do that. And then it says this, when the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.

[ 9 : 30 ] Do you know how much force it takes to dislocate a hip? Now, I'm not a doctor, but I looked up on Wikipedia, which is very reliable. And it said, okay, I'm just quoting, it said, hip dislocations are typically due to a significant trauma, such as a car collision or a fall from height.

But this man dislocates his hip with just a touch. Do you see how powerful this man is? How strong he is?

And it, but it's kind of weird. Why does he wake all night wrestling with him? He could have done that right at the beginning and saved a whole lot of time. But he doesn't.

And actually, it gets even weirder, because then the guy who's got the advantage now says, let me go, for the day is broken. And you go, but I thought you were winning.

There's something going on in this story. And then Jacob says, this is even weirder. He goes, I will not let you go unless you bless me. The guy has just smashed your hip.

[ 10 : 41 ] He's just been wrestling. That's agony. You've just exhausted. And the guy wants to let you go. And you won't. And instead, you're asking him to bless you. Do you see there's something going on in this story?

Because somewhere in the wrestling, Jacob realizes he's not wrestling with an ordinary man. He's wrestling with God himself. Because this is God himself.

God is seeking to protect Jacob from seeing his face with the dawn coming. Because you can die if you see God's face. But Jacob is stripped of everything.

He's alone. And he's desperate. And he realizes God is the only place I can run to for blessing. And he says, I'll not let you go unless you bless me.

I'm willing to be broken more. I'm willing even to die to find the blessing that I've been looking all my life for. Now, what is he asking for when he's asking for blessing?

[ 11 : 47 ] You know, when we ask for blessing, we're asking for what we think will make us happy and fulfilled and live a flourishing life. That's what we're asking for, right? And Jacob had spent all his life looking for that blessing in his father's approval, in women, in wealth, in family, in intelligence, his own smarts.

But now he's at the end of himself. And he's looking to the only true source of blessing, which is God himself. And it's interesting, as the story goes on.

God doesn't say, okay, I'll bless you. I'll make your life work great. Promotion, new Lamborghini, kids all in the best universities. He doesn't say that. God asks him a question.

He says, what's your name? And that's kind of nice after a whole night's wrestling to just kind of, hey, and by the way, what's your name? But, you know, when God asks you a question, he's never asking for information.

What he's doing, he's exposing and revealing your heart. Do you know, like, when God asks Adam in the Garden of Eden, where are you? It's not because he couldn't find him.

[ 13 : 05 ] It wasn't a game of hide and seek. It's because when he asked, he wanted to open Adam's eyes to see the reality of his own sin and his own situation.

That's why God asks the question. And when God asks Jacob, what's your name? It's a very personal question. Because in Hebrew thought, your name is your character.

It's who you really are. And so what he's doing, he's exposing his heart. And Jacob's reply is actually his confession. He says, my name is Jacob.

What does Jacob mean? It means he grabs the heel. He cheats. He'll do anything he can to get his own way in life. You see what he's doing?

You know, I remember watching the confession of a New Zealand cricketer. Now, Bernard's not here today. But there was a guy who'd been caught match fixing, which is basically receiving money to lose matches.

[ 14 : 11 ] And he posted a video after being caught of his confession. And you can go and Google it. It's an extraordinary confession. This is how he started. He started, my name is Lou Vincent, and I am a cheat.

That's how it starts. Now, how many of us, if we tell a lie to our family member or a friend and we get exposed, do we go, yeah, I'm sorry I lied.

It's because I'm a liar. How many of you say that? Don't we normally go, no, I'm sorry, I was only exaggerating. No, I'm sorry, I didn't mean you to take it like that.

Isn't that what we do? But what happens here is that is not biblical confession. Jacob is actually confessing. He's facing up to the painful reality of who he is and what his behavior shows him about him.

He says, my name's Jacob and I'm a cheat. I'm dysfunctional, just like my father and my father and his father and his father, all the way back to Adam.

[ 15 : 14 ] Just like you and me, all the way back, my father, his father, his father. And biblical confession, when you encounter God, is not just saying sorry.

It's recognizing what your sin reveals about who you really are and owning it and saying, my name's Chris and I'm a liar.

Painful, to be honest. And you will never encounter, truly encounter God until he exposes you with that question. What's your name?

But do you see how God replies to that confession? And I love this bit. He doesn't say to Jacob's confession, finally, you've seen what I've been trying to tell you all along.

He doesn't say that. He says, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel. For you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.

[ 16 : 22 ] Now, do you see what he's just done? He said, Jacob is who you were. But because you've confessed and been real about who you are before me, that's no longer who you are.

I give you a new identity. I give you a new name. You are now Israel. All you have been, all the dysfunction of your family, all of your own decisions which were so self-centered, all the ambition that you had for yourself, all the craving you had for love and blessing in your life, no longer defines you, no longer binds you, no longer holds you.

You're a new person. You're a new person. You know, there's a guy called Chuck Colson, Charles Colson. He was one of the most brilliant political strategists in the 1970s.

In fact, it was he who got the American president, President Nixon, elected. And he had this reputation for being a dirty tricks artist. He built lists of political opponents just to be able to discredit them and find ways to break them down.

But he got arrested for his involvement with the Watergate scandal, if any of you remember that or know what that is, which actually brought down the president.

[ 17 : 44 ] And during this time where he was in such turmoil, where he had been exposed, he met God. And at his trial, he acted against all the advice of everyone who he'd ever associated with.

And he pleaded guilty to the obstruction of justice. And this is what he said. He said, pleading guilty was a price I had to pay to complete the shedding of my old life and to be free to live the new.

Do you see what he's doing there? He's owning up to his sin, whatever the cost. But in that so doing, he is able to receive the new identity that God had for him.

That is what is going on with Jacob here. In fact, Chuck Colson became one of the leading activists for prison reform. Thousands became Christians through him. But that was a defining moment for him.

And this is a defining moment for Jacob. Confession and repentance leads to freedom. And the story just continues.

[ 18 : 52 ] Jacob asked God for his name. He thought, well, you ask mine, I'll ask yours. But he knows you can't dictate terms with God. And God doesn't tell him his name.

But he blesses him. And this was the first blessing Jacob had ever received in his life, which he didn't have to cheat for. He didn't have to deceive.

He didn't have to try and manipulate to get what he wanted. It was a pure gift of grace. Because he had met with God. And he calls the name of the place where he encounters God, Peniel.

Which means the face of God. Or the presence of God. And as the sun rises, Jacob has met with God. And he crosses over the river to meet his family, Esau, with a new name.

But he's walking with a limp. That's the story. It's an incredible story. I want to just draw out three things from this story.

[ 19 : 59 ] First thing. God wants you to wrestle with him. God wants you to wrestle with him.

Okay. Throughout the story of Jacob, Jacob actually has experiences of God. He's actually a religious guy. He even builds a little pillar to God saying, oh, this is a pillar to God.

God. But he knows that there is this God. And he calls this God in his prayer before this incident. He calls him, you're the God of my father, Abraham.

And you're the God of my father, Isaac. But he wasn't fully his God. He didn't truly know him personally for himself. For him, God was a bit like, do you know there's pest control?

Or, you know, you bring them in when you have cockroaches in your flat. And then, you know, when life's not working for you, when you've got problems, you just bring in help. And then when it's fine, you just forget about him.

[ 21 : 02 ] That's what Jacob's God was for him. And, you know, I've chatted with many students and many people actually over the years, many of whom have even been brought up in Christian homes.

You've been in church for a long time. You know the ritual. You know the answer is always supposed to be Jesus, even if the question is, what's the capital of France? You know it. And yet, when I talk to some of you, you tell me honestly, if I'm really honest, I'm wrestling whether this is really true or not.

It seems distant to me. I understand it here, but there is something missing. I can never truly say I've really encountered God. That's some of us here this morning.

And some of us have said to me in the past, actually, doing what my friends do, doing what my peers do, actually, if I'm really honest, seems more attractive to me than Christianity.

If I'm really honest. It's more attractive for me just to chase my career, have sex, get drunk, get a reputation, get respect, whatever it is that my peers are trying to do.

[ 22 : 21 ] That seems more attractive than really Jesus, even though I know I'm supposed to love Jesus. And do you know what? Often, our faith can be based on somebody else's faith.

It can be based, you know, somebody once said, come into church. Driving into McDonald's doesn't make you a burger. Going into church doesn't make you a Christian. Because a Christian is defined by having the encounter with God.

And so what happens if we haven't encountered God, we actually start looking for blessing in all other places, even though we may be very religious. And I want to challenge each one of us are we like that?

Are we actually like Jacob looking for blessing everywhere else? Or are we coming to wrestle with God? Do you know how you wrestle with God? I had a friend who really liked this girl.

He really liked her. In fact, he asked her out, I think about 20 times. Now, he wasn't a kind of creepy guy. So like, let's add that, otherwise he'll shoot me.

[ 23 : 41 ] But, and so every time she said, no, for one reason or another reason or another reason. And most guys would have gotten the hint after the first time.

but not my friend. And he pursued her and pursued her wisely, not unwisely, because he knew that he, he saw all the other options and he's like, no, I want her because that is what I think is right before God.

And after three or four years, that's persistence, right? Yeah. She finally said yes.

And you know, actually now they're happily married with kids. Three kids, I think. But you see, that is somebody who is willing to wrestle with a determination because he knows what is important to him.

Sometimes God will wrestle with you because he wants you to see, are you really serious about me? Or are you just fooling around with me? And if you're a Christian, I wonder how many of us actually wrestle with God in that kind of determined way.

[ 24 : 55 ] God, I've got to have you. I need you. Because sometimes we read the Bible and we're like, yeah, I didn't get much out of reading the Bible. So we just kind of give up, right?

Anyone do that? Or sometimes we like, we pray a prayer, maybe we pray like for a week, two weeks, and then God doesn't seem to answer and then we kind of give up, well, it didn't work.

Let me just go to something else. But this passage is shouting to us, God wants you not just to read the Bible, not just to pray prayers, but he wants you to encounter him.

Did you get that? He wants you to encounter him. How much do you want that? How much do you want that? How much of us are willing to pray when we read the Bible or when we pray, saying, God, unless you bless me, unless you reveal yourself to me, unless you take the words off of this page and reveal yourself to me, I'm just going to find delight and look for blessing in all kinds of other ways because I need to see that you are the one who satisfies.

I need you. I wonder what would happen in our church, and I've been praying this for myself because I'm convicted, but how much of us would we change the way we view God if we actually started wrestling with him, not just kind of doing a little thumb war with him.

[ 26 : 18 ] And maybe we are serving a lot, maybe we're doing a hundred things for God, but God is actually after your heart and saying, will you come to me and wrestle with me until you see me, until you realize that I am the place which can give you blessing more than anything else.

God wants you to wrestle with him. Second thing, God breaks us to bless us. God breaks us to bless us.

This is challenging. Jacob was strong. Jacob was strong. He was smart. And it says, as he wrestles, it says, the man realized he could not prevail over him and so he touched his hip and dislocated it.

Why does the man touch his hip? Why didn't he touch his nose or his ear? Why does he touch his hip? Because the hip, when you're wrestling, is the base of your strength in wrestling.

You cut the hip, man, you've got no way to hold yourself. And I'm told the hip is one of the strongest parts of the human body. Because many of us think that what holds us back from knowing God is our weaknesses.

[ 27 : 41 ] You know, the times you fail, the things you mess up in. I don't think that's true. The thing that holds you back from really knowing God is actually your strength. It's your strengths.

Because that's what we tend to rely on. That's where we tend to feel good about ourselves. That's where we base our security and our identity on what we think we can do. You know, and it's actually that which often ends up devastating relationships.

You know, you're smart. You know how to get ahead. You're educated. You're experienced. You're talented. You can speak well. You've got money. You're disciplined. Whatever it is, I don't know what your strength is.

That was Jacob. He had his strengths. But you see how afraid Jacob gets when Esau is coming. When you're in a situation when your client, when your friend, when your kids and you don't know how to handle it.

And if that's the base of your strength, you realize it's actually a very shaky foundation when Esau starts coming into your life. And right there, you know, sometimes the most gracious thing God can do to us is to dislocate our hip, is to break our strengths, to show us that we need God for everything in life.

[ 28 : 59 ] You know, I had another friend. Let's call him Frank. He was a top executive, well known for his expertise in his field.

He was highly respected, highly experienced, highly driven. He was a good guy. And yet his marriage was actually a mess. But he flies into New York for a meeting with his boss.

He's only got a few minutes to get his input on a number of decisions. So he starts off saying, hey, listen, I need a decision on this and this and this. And his boss cuts him off and says, thanks, but I wanted to tell you that we don't need your post any longer.

His whole world came crashing down. He was broken. Everything that he'd worked for, his whole identity, broken in one second.

his hip dislocated. And at that moment, as he processed it, as he wrestled, he realized he'd built his whole sense of identity and value on his work because he was good at it.

[ 30 : 13 ] But actually, as God humbled him and broke him in the pain, he found that actually he had another place he could run to, which was an identity in Christ, which is actually a much surer foundation, that nothing is going to else break you.

and what happened in his life, he actually, as he was humbled and broken, he began to see some of the things he was doing in his marriage and he began to own up to the sin in his own life and just say, man, I've really just been blinded by myself.

And there began to be healing that began to come and God gave him a new path in life where he was actually able to serve many, many people through his next career. You see, God wants to break you to bless you.

Someone once said this, God uses broken things. It takes broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken seed to give bread, broken bread to give strength.

It's the broken alabaster box that gives forth perfume. Jacob, after he is broken, in the next chapter, which we haven't read, he goes to meet with Esau, humbled, walking with a limp, the base of his strength, broken.

[ 31 : 36 ] But he's able to face his brother regardless of how his brother is going to respond to him because he's been in the presence of God, because he now knows that he's got acceptance and approval and the blessing from God that he'd been chasing everywhere else for.

Now he didn't need his brother for that. He didn't need his family for that. He had a security. And actually, restoration after 20 years takes place.

It's a beautiful story. Read the chapter afterwards. When you find that you don't need your love and acceptance, you don't need your security from any of these other things that you're chasing for, he was not defined by his father's lack of love or his need for approval.

It opens you up to find healing and blessing and to be released to love and serve other people. You know, many of us here, we are actually nursing wounds from our past, from our parents, from colleagues.

Maybe we wanted someone to say, I love you and you never heard that. Maybe you've been offended by what people have said to you and you've just nursed that wound in your heart.

[ 33 : 00 ] And there's so much tension that's come into family relationships through these things. And maybe you've just been working really hard to try and prove yourself, make up for all those things that you didn't feel you got before in the past.

But God wants to come and wrestle with you. God wants to break you. God wants to humble you so that you realize you are not defined by anything in the past that has happened to you.

You are not defined by even your own sin in the past. You can come before him, be broken of your strength and find strength in the God of all creation. There's no one who knows God deeply who doesn't walk with a limp.

No one. No one. And so I've been praying for myself, God, would you touch my hip? Do you know how scary that prayer is? But God, do I want to know God that much that I'm willing for him to dislocate my hip?

I don't know what your hip is. What's your source of strength? What are you looking for? Is it your friends? Is it your grades? Is it your health? Is it your work? Is it your appearance? I don't know what it is.

[ 34 : 15 ] You know. But are you willing to pray, God, would you break my hip that I might know you and your presence?

And encounter you. You know, I'm actually praying, maybe this is a little scary, but I'm praying for some of you in this congregation that God would actually break your hip.

Because some of us, we're relying on so many things which is actually wrapping us up and God wants to break us free from that. And that's what will bring healing in our lives.

Some of us are actually going through you feel like you're having a train wreck in your life at the moment. You feel like your hip is being broken right now. So what are you praying for?



Are you praying, God, just get me out of this situation? Or will you pray, I will not let you go unless you bless me? I want to know you more through this situation.

[ 35 : 18 ] Even if you keep me in this place, I want to know you. It's challenging, right? But this is how we come to encounter God.

Because at the end of chapter 33, which we didn't read, Jacob, for the first time, he erects an altar. And he calls this altar El Eloho Yahweh.

He calls him not the God, the God of Israel, which means this is my God. He was my father's God before.

He was my father's father's God before, but this now is my God. He's my God because I've met him, I've wrestled with him, I've been broken by him, but he's restored me and given me a new identity, and now I know him.

Do you want that? Do you want that? God wrestles, wants us to wrestle with him. God breaks us to bless us. Final thing. God chooses to be broken himself to bless us.

[ 36 : 24 ] God says, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.

I've often wondered, why does God himself say that Jacob has prevailed over him? Prevailed means to win, to conquer, to overcome.

Like, isn't that weird? And then I heard someone talk on the meaning of the name of Israel, and it's made up of two parts. The first part is Yashar, and the second part is El.

El means God, and it's the subject of the sentence, which means he's the one who's doing the action. Yashar means to strive or to fight or to struggle. So actually what Israel means is God strives, God fights, God struggles.

That's what it means. But then he says, God fights for you have striven with God and have prevailed. That's even weirder.

[ 37 : 32 ] But this name of Israel, which would come to characterize as the whole people of God throughout the whole of the Old Testament. He's saying, your name is God fights because Jacob, you fought with God, but actually the God of Jacob is the one who is willing to be prevailed over in order that he might win.

He is the one who is willing to be defeated in order that he might bring victory. That is what the word means. And you know, throughout whole of history, all the other gods of Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, even the gods you see around, how do they express their power?

Through conquering, through dominating, through crushing people. Just read history. But this God is different. This God wins victory through being defeated, through being prevailed on.

And you know, throughout the rest of the Old Testament, many kings came and went. In fact, all of them sought to dominate and control. Just read the story. And then, when it comes to Jesus, Peter, one of his disciples, recognizes Jesus as the Messiah.

That means the king who's coming. And he's expecting this guy to be just like all the other kings, dominating and striving and overcoming with power. And do you know what he says? Jesus says, sorry, Peter says, you're the Messiah.

[ 39 : 03 ] And Jesus says to them, you're right, Peter, but I'm a different kind of Messiah. I'm going to die. And do you know what Peter says? He goes, no way. He says, no way.

That ain't the way it's written in the book. And Jesus says, actually, yes it is. Have you read Genesis 32? Because the God of Jacob is the God who comes down to the dust of the earth and wrestles with sinful humanity.

Those of you like you and me who compete and in this competitive, I mean, Hong Kong's competitive enough, right? And we're constantly competing and trying to get ahead and trying to wrestle and fight with each other.

But God comes down to wrestle with us. And then like Judas, you know, Judas was another hustler. He came and he was stealing money from the disciples' accounts because he wanted to get ahead.

But Jesus knew that he was going to betray him. And do you know what Jesus did? He allowed him to betray him. He allowed himself to be arrested.

[ 40 : 08 ] He allowed himself to be nailed cruelly on a cross for you and for me because when he died, he gained the greatest victory.

When he was broken, that was the sign the blessing was coming. You see, he could have hired a thousand legions of angels to come and rescue him.

He had power to break the strength of the Romans with a touch. But he chose not to because of you and me. Some people say the God of the Bible is just like the God of all other religions.

Let me tell you, this God is not like any other God. The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. Jacob had a limp. Jesus has nail prints.

Do you know in the book of Revelation there's this amazing bit where you see the picture of heaven with the God on the throne of all of creation. And do you know what it says?

[ 41 : 16 ] It says, and I saw a lamb, Jesus, who was slain. You saw the nail prints. Right at the moment of glory you see the moment of brokenness because this is our God.

God. So let me finish. A God who has such power to break your strength, your greatest strength with a touch is the God who in Jesus Christ wrestles with us.

Is the God who right now is calling you and saying, what's your name? He's exposing you. He's wanting to expose you today for who you are. He's the God that if we encounter him today, we will come away saying, I have seen God and my life has been delivered.

He's a God who will break us to heal us, who will wound us to bless us, who will bring us a new identity and a name. You're not defined by your past.

You're not defined even by your parents. You're defined by who you are in him. So will you wrestle with him today? Will you wrestle? Psalm 46 says this, be still and know that I am God.

[ 42 : 32 ] I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. You can rest in Christ right now.

Let me just pray for us. So I want you just to, right now, we're going to take communion in a minute, but I want you to think about those questions.

Have I wrestled with God? Am I wrestling with God? Or do I just treat him lightly? Do I really know this God?

Do I want to know him? How much do I want to know him? Am I willing to pray, God, would you even break my hip? Would you even break my hip that I might truly know your presence and who you really are?

Just take a minute to reflect on that. Because in a minute, we're going to take communion where we're going to celebrate the breaking of our Savior.

[ 43 : 51 ] If you're not a believer, I don't want you to come up to take the communion elements, but I want you to just think about that. Have I encountered God? Or am I religious? Or do I want to encounter God?

This God who is willing to be broken for you. So just do some business with God while we're waiting. I'll ask the communion stewards to come up.

And when you're ready, you can come up and take the communion elements. But maybe you just want to spend time repenting and confessing before him.