



RUNNING WITH THE GIANTS

Jacob

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Discussion Notes

The Crossing Church

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OPENING

This week we are continuing a series called “Running with the Giants.” The idea for this series comes from the Book of Hebrews where the author gives a long list of people who were giants in the faith. The race of life is a constant challenge, but we don’t have to run it alone. Now we are looking at the lives of biblical giants who ran with endurance and faith, and used their stories to build our own. This summer, we will be running with giants and discovering inspiration for our own journeys. We have these giants of the Bible who have gone before us who can share their life lessons and help keep us from making the same mistakes.

SCRIPTURE¹

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Genesis 32:22-31 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone.... So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.” But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” The man asked him, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he answered. Then the man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.” Jacob said, “Please tell me your name.” But he replied, “Why do you ask my name?” Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.” The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip.

Matthew 11:30 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

John 1:42 And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas (which, when translated, is Peter).”

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

OBSERVATION

The story of Jacob begins like the story of any deceiver. In fact, that is what his name means. He tried to control his life on his terms, to move it in the direction he wanted it to go. He manipulated the circumstances of his life and the people who got in the way. He stole his brother’s birthright and blessing

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated



which brought him money, power, authority. As a result Jacob ends up in a crisis that redefines his life. This is where he can speak to us – when life is not turning out as we had hoped.

Question: What in your life isn't turning out as you had hoped?

Question: What could Jacob say to you to help you run the race God has for you? What would he want you to learn from his life?

APPLICATION

We are as guilty as Jacob in all of his deceitfulness. We even try to manipulate God into giving us what we want. That is hard to accept, isn't it? Some of us go to church, but we don't really trust God. This will lead to crises in our lives. God may not cause the crises, but He will allow them because they will get our attention.

Question: What are you trying to manipulate God to do for you? What form does that manipulation take?

Jacob is trying to teach us to trust God with the outcomes. There are three huge lessons to be learned from his story:

1) Wrestling with God will wear us out. God allows us to go through hardships in order to bring us back! He tells us to keep working, but to do it in a different way – the yoke is hard when we are working in our own strength, but with Jesus our burden is light and one of the signs of God's work in our lives is rest. Rest is the condition of our souls.

Question: About what are you wrestling with God?

2) We'll get a new identity. Jacob's name was Deceiver, but God changed it to Israel, or Prince with God, after a crucible event in his life. Many of us have created names for ourselves based upon our pasts. But God doesn't see us from that perspective - He sees us as the people we can become. God calls us Forgiveness and Children of God just as Simon became Peter and Saul became Paul.

Question: How many crucible events have you endured? What have you learned from them?

Question: What identity have you created for yourself based upon your past? What new name would you choose?

3) Our limps can become our greatest strengths. The thing about scars and disabilities is they tell a story. If God is going to use us greatly, we'll have to walk with a limp the rest of our lives because God reveals Himself not in our strengths, but in our weaknesses. When we share our weaknesses, it produces community. The point of greatest inadequacy in our lives is God's greatest opportunity to show His power.

Question: What is your limp? How does it evidence itself today?

God is telling us that He is the God of people who have a past – the God of that part of us that we don't want others to see. He is the God of our struggles, our victories, and our defeats. We can't let our pasts steal our futures from us any longer.

Question: Child of God, what are you going to do to put your past away for good?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to trust you more in all areas of our lives. In our minds we know that You are trustworthy, but that knowledge hasn't yet penetrated our hearts. We begin now to make a commitment to ourselves, our families and to You to get beyond our shame, fears and the need for control and put everything into Your hands. In Jesus' name. Amen.