

Revitalize: How to Wrestle

One of the great things about watching the Olympics is learning about unfamiliar sports. This summer I watched part of the Greco-Roman wrestling. It wasn't much like the High School wrestling I was familiar with. And it really wasn't anything like any of the WWE or WWF wrestling you see on T.V. From what I gathered as I was watching was that in Greco-Roman wrestling you can't touch your opponent below the waist. And I didn't see that they had to pin shoulders, but they earned points somehow. The wrestlers reminded me a lot of kids on a playground pushing each other, trying to stay on their feet. Or it looked like a fight my sister and I would have had. It wasn't really very exciting to watch, except that you could tell how intense the men were. Wrestling with God can be a lot like what I saw in Greco-Roman wrestling. I think you just start out pushing back at something that God wants you to do.

I have wrestled with God a time or two. My most intense wrestling match with God came soon after I had my youngest daughter. I remember I was in the garage getting the girls out of their car seats and was feeling very intense love and protection when I felt God say, "The girls are mine". Like a mother bear with threatened cubs my hackles rose and my claws came out and I growled (in my head), "These children are mine". I battled and argued and wrestled with God for about two weeks before I surrendered. My children belong to God first.

God illustrates wrestling with him in Genesis 32:22-32. Jacob was traveling with his family and belongings to meet his estranged brother, Esau. He sent everyone and everything on ahead of him across a river. "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 men and have overcome'." Genesis 32:24-28

We don't know exactly why Jacob was wrestling with God. He was strong and persistent and didn't want to let go. In fact, God had to remind Jacob of his ultimate power, his omnipotence, by crippling his hip, leaving him with a limp. But God also gave him a blessing, a name change.

We wrestle with God over so many things. Often our first wrestling match has to do with surrendering our lives to Him. Just like a child not wanting to do what's good for him, we know we should, but we fight it.

But wrestling means you are holding onto God, even if you are fighting what He wants you to do. If you weren't wrestling you'd be running away or at least standing at a distance, maybe with your back turned.

As you read Jacob's story you notice the injury to his hip, that gave him a limp. When we wrestle with God, He might cripple us for our own good to receive a blessing. We can be crippled with financial

hardship, physical illness or broken relationships. But if you are like Jacob, even through the pain, the crippling, you hang on and keep wrestling.

It's so important to hang on through the night, through the dark times of your life. You hang on and keep wrestling—don't get lost or left alone in the dark. Keep wrestling until daybreak, until the sun shines again. And when daybreaks, the blessing comes.

Jacob got a name change from 'holder of the heel' or 'supplanter' (not a very positive or flattering name) to Israel, May God Prevail, because he overcame all his struggles with man and God. What a blessing.

You may ask if I received a blessing after wrestling with God about my children. I did. I have seen both of my daughters accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. And I am blessed by the true commitment they have to following Him. So whatever you are wrestling with God over, hang on even if you feel crippled. Wait for the daylight, the blessing is coming.

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