

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. **Enjoy discovering more about Him!**

"THE MANY ROADS OF FATH: JACOB- FAITH THAT LIMPS" | HEBREWS 11:21 | PASTOR ANDREW LACASSE

WARM-UP QUESTION:

- What comes to mind with the word "limps"?

"Faith That Limps Knows I Am Not the Hero" Genesis 27: 1-29

Jacob deceives his father, making an enemy out of his brother, yet God still blesses Jacob, showing grace for a sinner.

- Why is it hard for someone to recognize they are in the wrong and need unearned grace?

"Faith That Limps Gives Rather Than Grasps" Genesis 29

Jacob continued to grasp at more, and it led to him being deceived by Laban. Yet God was with him in his circumstances.

- Why does giving to others show faith more than grasping for desires?

"Faith that limps has been overcome by God" Genesis 32: 22-32

Jacob wrestles with God as he is about to face his brother again. He prevails but is physically broken, gaining a new identity.

- How does brokenness lead to a dependence on God?

"Faith that limps has learned to look beyond oneself" Hebrews 11:21

Jacob blessed his sons and grandsons, believing God would do more that he would not be able to see.

- How can you let God bless others through your humbled, limping faith?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Jacob deceived many as he grasped for more and more. That had led to his exile and to being taken advantage of by others. Yet God was with him and blessed Jacob through it all, eventually overcoming him and naming him Israel so as to show His power and grace that would carry on to future generations.

- Have you been resisting confessing that you are the villain in your story and God is the hero?
- What are you still grasping for that you need to let go and trust God?
- What is a way you can let God use your brokenness to show His grace to others?
- Pray that God would humble you and walk with you in an intimate way.

Jacob: Faith that Limps

Introduction

If there were a modern documentary about Jacob, it would begin with a series of people telling how he'd wronged them and they never wanted to see him again.

Jacob is a complicated figure.

<SLIDE 4> By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. (Hebrews 11:21, ESV)

<SLIDE 5> 1. Jacob the younger son — Genesis 25–28

- Birth and rivalry with Esau
- Birthright
- Deception for Isaac's blessing
- Flight from Esau
- Bethel – “The Lord is here and I did not know it.”

1	Jacob and Esau are conceived ; God tells Rebekah, “the older shall serve the younger.”	Genesis 25:19– 23
2	Jacob and Esau are born . Jacob emerges grasping Esau's heel, giving rise to his name, “Jacob.”	Genesis 25:24– 26
3	Jacob and Esau grow up ; Esau becomes a hunter, while Jacob is a quiet man who stays among the tents. Isaac favors Esau; Rebekah favors Jacob.	Genesis 25:27– 28
4	Jacob acquires Esau's birthright in exchange for a meal when Esau comes in famished.	Genesis 25:29– 34

5	Isaac prepares to bless Esau , but Rebekah and Jacob deceive Isaac. Jacob disguises himself as Esau and receives the blessing intended for Esau.	Genesis 27:1–29
6	Esau vows to kill Jacob after Isaac’s blessing. Rebekah sends Jacob away to her family in Paddan-aram.	Genesis 27:30–46
7	Isaac sends Jacob to Laban to find a wife from among Rebekah’s relatives.	Genesis 28:1–5
8	Jacob’s dream at Bethel: He sees a stairway reaching heaven, with angels ascending and descending. God confirms the Abrahamic covenant with him. Jacob vows to serve God.	Genesis 28:10–22

Jacob is the keeper of the Abrahamic blessing.

God would bless those who bless Abraham and curse those who curse him, give him a special land, a multitude of descendants, and through him all the families of the earth would be blessed.

He is chosen as the younger, which shows God’s sovereign power and role. God says that he loves Jacob and hates Esau – or he chose Jacob and Israel.

He is appointed as preeminent yet still manipulates to get it.

After fleeing a broken relationship, Jacob encounters God in a vision. God confirms the covenant. Some of the details are convoluted and confusing in terms of what part of the blessing from Isaac is the Abrahamic blessing and what part is the more standard, family blessing. But here it is clear from God has chosen him.

<SLIDE 6> Faith that limps knows I am not the hero

You are not the hero of the biblical narrative(s).

James Sanders says that biblical people serve better as mirrors for identity than models for morality.

<SLIDE 7> You are a sinner, but not only a sinner.

You are the villain in someone’s story.

A life defined by grace comes when we truly lay down our arms and know we are sinners. We were the villain in the story of redemption. **Romans 5:8**

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Christian character is able to take responsibility, not seeing oneself as always in the right.

<SLIDE 8> We are sinners, but not only sinners. ~~Some Christians base their identity on being a sinner. I think they have it wrong—or only half right. You are not simply a sinner; you are a deeply loved sinner. And there is all the difference in the world between the two.~~ David G. Benner and Basil M. Pennington, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Formatio, 2015):

Luther: simul justus et peccator (at once just and a sinner)

<SLIDE 9> Jesus is our champion.

Jesus is the man of truth. “The Way, the Truth, and the Life”

We can look through Jacob at our true hero.

<SLIDE 10> 2. Jacob in Paddan-aram — Genesis 29–31

- Rachel and Leah – sibling switch from Laban!
- Twelve sons begin to emerge
- Increasing wealth
- Conflict with Laban
- Departure for Canaan

9	Jacob arrives in Haran and meets Rachel at the well. He agrees to work seven years for Laban in exchange for Rachel.	Genesis 29:1–20
10	Laban deceives Jacob , giving him Leah instead of Rachel. Jacob then marries Rachel as well and agrees to work another seven years.	Genesis 29:21–30
11	Jacob’s children begin to be born through Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah. Eventually Jacob has eleven sons and at least one daughter while in Paddan-aram.	Genesis 29:31–30:24
12	Jacob prospers while working for Laban , acquiring large flocks through an arrangement concerning his wages.	Genesis 30:25–43
13	Jacob leaves Laban secretly , taking his family, servants, and possessions. Rachel takes her father’s household idols.	Genesis 31:1–21

1 4	Laban pursues Jacob and confronts him. God warns Laban not to harm Jacob. Jacob and Laban make a covenant at Gilead.	Genesis 31:22–55
1 5	Jacob prepares to meet Esau after returning to Canaan. He hears that Esau is approaching with 400 men and fears for his family.	Genesis 32:1–21

Jacob reveals a character that still strives and grasps – one that has to have its desires fulfilled.

“I must have more” vs. godliness with contentment (AP talked about on Wednesday).

James 4:1–4

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

We require so many things, often to extremes, and often in conflict with one another.

We are surprised when poorer people are happy without our things.

<SLIDE 11> Faith that limps gives rather than grasps

Nothing that Jacob wanted was bad per se: family, land, livestock, his father’s blessing, honor...

In fact, these are the elements of the Abrahamic blessing.

We may not desire wrong things, but replace God and His blessings with our desires.
(*epithumia*)

Jacob would lose his relationship with his brother (even if not forever), his parents, his favorite wife, his daughter’s wholeness, his favorite son (even if not forever), the second son of his favorite wife (even if not forever), his wealth, and his home.

“Faith is not proven by how the story turns out. Faith is proven by whom we trust in the middle of the story.” -**Brian last Sunday.**

What I lose in this life, I have more greatly in Jesus. What I pursue in this life should be in response to what I have in Jesus. “**Seek first the Kingdom**”

<SLIDE 12> Where Jacob took, Jesus gives. Where our world would eat you to feed me, Jesus sacrifices His body - blessed, broken, and given.

Phil. 2 – not a thing to be grasped.

Peaking ahead, Jacob's life begins with him grasping Esau's heel and ends with him deliberately giving the younger Ephraim the greater blessing.

<SLIDE 13> What are you grasping? *Are you surprised that you don't have what you want?* What are you anxious about losing? What are you grieving? Where might God be calling you to sacrifice? Can you yet trust that He has more in store?

<SLIDE 14> 3. Jacob/Israel back in Canaan — Genesis 32–36

- Afraid to meet Esau - Wrestling with God
- Name changed to Israel
- Reconciliation with Esau
- Dinah and Shechem
- Return to Bethel
- Rachel's death
- Isaac's death

1 6	Jacob wrestles with God/the “man” at Peniel during the night. His name is changed to Israel , and he receives a blessing.	Genesis 32:22–32
1 7	Jacob meets Esau. Contrary to Jacob's fears, Esau embraces and welcomes him. The brothers separate peacefully.	Genesis 33:1–17
1 8	Jacob settles near Shechem and builds an altar.	Genesis 33:18–20
 9	Dinah is violated by Shechem , and Simeon and Levi retaliate by killing the men of the city. Jacob rebukes them for endangering the family.	Genesis 34
2 0	God tells Jacob to return to Bethel. Jacob commands his household to put away foreign gods and purifies his household.	Genesis 35:1–15
2 1	Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin. Jacob's youngest son is born. Rachel is buried near Bethlehem.	Genesis 35:16–20
2 2	Reuben sleeps with Bilhah , Jacob's concubine.	Genesis 35:21–22
2 3	Isaac dies , and Jacob and Esau bury him together.	Genesis 35:27–29

<SLIDE 15> Faith that limps has been overcome by God

It was Jacob's name – his identity and character – that had to be changed. To see God as God is—not as who we want God to be—requires that we see our self as we actually are. For the same cloud of illusions obscures our view of both God and ourselves.¹

Jacob's victory comes through his defeat.

On the one hand, he has “wrestled with God and prevailed;” in another sense he has been defeated. Either way, he is blessed.

Our culture despises losers. F. Scott Fitzgerald said that there are no second acts in American life. But only losers can enter the Kingdom of God.

A horse lives according to its design and potential once it is broken. A dog gets house “broken”.

Jesus indeed suffers for us and with us – like Jacob bearing his limp forever, so Jesus bears in His body forever the scars of His sacrifice. We are overcome by an incredibly loving God.

<SLIDE 16> God may bring us to a crisis so that we truly come to depend on Him.

Often when things are solid, we can know that we are dependent, but not truly live in active, actual dependence. It takes a desperation that clings to God like Jacob did – a desperation that says I am so lost and broken I don't even know what to tell myself.

<SLIDE 17> *"We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world."* — **C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain***

A broken reed He will not break; a smoking wick He will not snuff out. God uses our brokenness if we let Him. Our pain is never without meaning, without life woven into the fabric of our pain. As Jesus bears His wounds in His body eternally, so we bear our wounds. It is a limping faith that has truly come to trust in God.

¹ David G. Benner and Basil M. Pennington, [*The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Formatio, 2015).

<SLIDE 18> 4. Jacob in Egypt — Genesis 37, 42–50

- Joseph's disappearance and presumed death
- Famine
- Joseph's revelation
- Migration to Egypt
- Blessing Ephraim and Manasseh
- Blessing his twelve sons
- Death and burial in Canaan

2 4	Joseph, Jacob's favored son, is born earlier in the narrative, but now becomes the central focus of Jacob's family story. Jacob gives Joseph a special robe, provoking his brothers' jealousy.	Genesis 30:22–24; 37:1–4
2 5	Joseph's dreams suggest that his family will someday bow before him. His brothers hate him even more.	Genesis 37:5–11
2 6	Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery and deceive Jacob into believing that Joseph has been killed. Jacob mourns deeply.	Genesis 37:12–36
2 7	Famine strikes Canaan, and Jacob sends his sons to Egypt to buy grain.	Genesis 42:1–38
2 8	Jacob reluctantly allows Benjamin to go to Egypt on the brothers' second trip.	Genesis 43:1–14
2 9	Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. Jacob learns that Joseph is alive and serving as Egypt's ruler under Pharaoh.	Genesis 45:1–28
3 0	Jacob and his entire household move to Egypt. On the way, God speaks to Jacob at Beersheba and promises to make his family into a great nation in Egypt.	Genesis 46:1–27
3 1	Jacob meets Joseph in Egypt after more than twenty years apart.	Genesis 46:28–34

3 2	Jacob meets Pharaoh and settles his family in Goshen. Jacob tells Pharaoh that his years have been “few and evil.”	Genesis 47:1–12
3 3	Jacob blesses Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh , deliberately placing his right hand on the younger Ephraim.	Genesis 48
3 4	Jacob blesses/prophesies over his twelve sons , describing aspects of their future tribes.	Genesis 49:1–28
3 5	Jacob dies in Egypt at age 147.	Genesis 47:28–31; 49:29–33
3 6	Joseph and his brothers carry Jacob’s body to Canaan and bury him in the cave of Machpelah with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah.	Genesis 50:1–14

<SLIDE 19> By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. (Hebrews 11:21, ESV)

<SLIDE 20> Faith that limps has learned to look beyond oneself

It looks to God as our Answer Jacob had to learn that it wasn’t about having enough or being enough.

“You’re enough” is a common refrain, even in the Church, that is entrapping people. Freedom comes when we can embrace that we are not enough.

The gospel has no room and no power if you are enough. Acceptance of self must involve acceptance of all aspects of the self, including the sinful parts.

Jacob’s story of limping faith shows God’s faithful hand in the story of a flawed, complicated person. He is still the “Jacob” in “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Jacob’s ladder points to Jesus – the one who brings heaven and earth together.

Jesus to Nathanael: **John 1:51** And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

Jacob’s faith in passing on the blessing looks to more that God will do.

<SLIDE 21> It looks to those we bless: The Abrahamic blessing is ultimately the blessing of the Messiah to all the nations. *Your humbled, limping faith, extends beyond itself as it hopes in what God will do through you in the lives of many others.*

When Jacob’s sons carry his body to Canaan, it points to God’s fulfilment of the promise of the Holy Land.

Jacob the patriarch looks to Jesus is the greater embodiment of Israel. (e.g. in the wilderness in Lk. 4)

<SLIDE 22>

Theme	Jacob	Jesus
Israel	Father of the twelve tribes — Genesis 35:10–12	Faithful embodiment of Israel — Luke 4:1–13
Favored Son	Favored by Rebekah — Genesis 25:28	Beloved Son of the Father — Matthew 3:17
The Elder Brother	Takes Esau’s blessing — Genesis 27:1–29	Firstborn among many brothers — Romans 8:29
Deception vs. Truth	Deceives — Genesis 27:18–29	The Truth — John 14:6
Taking vs. Sacrifice	Takes the blessing — Genesis 27:36	Gives his body — Luke 22:19
The Undeserving	Deceiver who receives blessing — Genesis 27:35–36	Dies for sinners — Romans 5:8
The Champion	Wrestles and receives a blessing — Genesis 32:24–30	Triumphs over sin and death — Colossians 2:13–15
Offspring	Father of Israel — Genesis 35:10–12	Sees his offspring through his guilt offering — Isaiah 53:10
No Partiality	God’s purposes extend beyond human favoritism — Genesis 25:23	God shows no partiality — Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11

Closing

To the broken and unbroken, If you are encountering the Lord through loss, pain, and surrender, you are in a powerful place. Like Jacob said at Penuel, the Lord is here and I did not know it.