

# FOCUS

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

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## OUR STRUGGLE TO TRUST KATIE STUTLER

## TEACHING NOTES

God has given us hundreds of promises to reassure us of His love to us, His help, and His trustworthiness. We want God's promises to us to be true in our life. We want to wholeheartedly claim them. We want His help. His blessing.

### *YET WE STRUGGLE.*

Why are we so bad at trusting God?

### **CONTROL FEELS MORE SECURE THAN FAITH. BUT WHAT DOES MY DESIRE TO CONTROL SAY ABOUT MY BELIEF IN GOD?**

I don't believe God is trustworthy with my situation. And I'm capable. Smart. I got this!

**We use God's promises like they're a guarantee for God to help us with OUR plan. But God gave us these promises to reassure us we can trust His plan.**

We're going to talk more about this in a minute.

***GOD DOESN'T WANT YOU TO MERELY BELIEVE WHAT HE SAYS. HE WANTS YOU TO OBEY WHAT HE COMMANDS. ALL GOD'S PROMISES AND INVITATIONS WILL BE MEANINGLESS TO YOU UNLESS YOU RESPOND WITH FAITH AND ACTION.***

*Blackaby*

### **GENESIS 32: JACOB'S STRUGGLE TO TRUST**

#### **» What big event was he facing?**

Seeing Esau—20 years since he stole his birthright. The reason Jacob fled from his family was because Esau wanted to kill him. So Jacob is nervous about this family reunion. As they approach his homeland, Jacob sends his brother Esau a friendly message through his messengers and they come back with news.

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*When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, "We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. He thought, "If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape." Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, Lord, you who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two camps. Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. But you have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.'" (Gen. 32:6-12)*

### » **What news made him terrified?**

Esau was coming with 400 soldiers.

### » **What outcome was he dreading?**

Death of his family/loss of his flocks, herds, and wealth he'd worked so hard for.  
Jacob was fearful he'd get the revenge he deserved.

### » **How did Jacob react?**

Panic & strategy first, prayer second—He was terrified so he immediately took control to steer the situation toward a safer outcome.

## JACOB'S PRAYER:

### » **Remembered what is TRUE.**

### » **Asked for God's rescue.**

### » **Failed to ask for God's INSTRUCTIONS.**

Jacob wanted God's promises to him to come true in his life.  
He wanted God's help—His protection and rescue—but he didn't ask for God's directions.  
He didn't seek God's plan.

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### APPROACHING GOD'S PROMISES

» **Wrong Way:**

**We claim God's promises as our guarantee God will help us with OUR PLAN.**

God will work things out for good—so God please work my plan out for good. God has plans to prosper me, not harm me, and plans to give me a hope and a future—God's plans to give us hope and a future are not always the plan that we have for us in our mind. We see our situations as one-dimensional and so we see limitations. But God's abilities are not limited like ours are. He wants to do more for us than we can ask or imagine. God wants you to experience intimately the full amazing package we see in God's promises.

» **Right Way:**

**God's promises give us CONFIDENCE that God's plan and His directions can be trusted.**

### WHAT WAS JACOB'S STRATEGY? (verses 13-16)

- » **Gathered animals from his flocks and herds**
- » **Gave his servants specific instructions on what to say to Esau**
- » **Appease Esau by overwhelming him with gifts from his flocks and cattle**

***WE WRESTLE GOD BECAUSE WE WANT GOD'S HELP DESPERATELY AND WE WANT TO EXPERIENCE THE PROMISES HE'S GIVEN US BUT OUR SINFUL NATURE TO CONTROL IS SO DEEP AND STRONG.***

We want to trust God and experience His blessing. God desired to bless Jacob and Jacob knew God had chosen him to be a patriarch of the chosen people. But blessing had been withheld because Jacob was not allowing God to lead his life completely. Jacob still was holding onto control.

Beginning in verse 24 we have the story of Jacob's wrestling. In the dark, Jacob couldn't see at first WHO he was wrestling. That's why the Hebrew word translates mysteriously to "A Man". In the darkness, Jacob exercised dominance. He wasn't going to let this man win. And so while Jacob was poised, exerting his strength, this man simply touched Jacob's hip. Jacob felt a hand and then felt a power so strong that Jacob KNEW he was either a heavenly messenger or God himself.

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Our struggle for control is really a struggle against God. And as that realization hits that he is really struggling against God, God tells him to let Him go. He's going to leave. This might sound strange but we see a similar phrase when Jesus was walking on the water in the wind storm and was going to pass the disciples by. God waits for us to admit our distrust to Him before He rescues because in that crying out our hearts are humbled by our need for Him!

You can see that Hosea 12 has a little more about this encounter. We see that Jacob was weeping when he begged God for a blessing before he let go. Weeping signifies Jacob's brokenness and changed heart. His repentance and letting go of control.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life. (Psalm 139: 23, 24)*

Our control and fears of the future offend God. He cannot move us forward until we are willing to submit to His strength and power in our life. God wants our WHOLE heart.

### WHAT PURPOSE WAS THE INJURY TO JACOB'S HIP?

Jacob's sinful nature and traits of being a manipulator run so deep in his veins that his name even suggests his controlling nature (The name "Jacob" means "to follow," or "to be behind" but also "to supplant," or "to circumvent." Jacob was born holding the heel of his twin brother, Esau.) In order to change Jacob's life completely and resurrect him as the patriarch of Israel, God has to remove Jacob's strength in himself. Like a Father wrestling a child, after a night of struggle where Jacob thought he was dominating, God's touch gave Jacob a physical reminder of this meeting with God that he'd never forget—God simply touched him and Jacob was overcome. If God's finger can do this, can you imagine what His hand can do in our lives?!

Commentaries explain that when verse 28 says "you have fought with God and with men and have won"—it's referring to the struggle Jacob was having against God to trust and his struggle within his own sinful nature to lay down control.

When we release the control that our sinful nature craves, we have victory!

God's intent was not to harm Jacob. He was helping Jacob humble himself so Jacob would experience ALL God had for him. As long as Jacob was steering his own life, God couldn't make him the father of a nation like He promised. He needed Jacob's full trust.

So friend, let's not fear God's hand in our life. See in our weakness THAT is when God is strong.

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*For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength." (Isaiah 30:15 NASB)*

This encounter with God is a great gift. God gave Jacob an encounter with Him that changed the way he trusted God.

As Chapter 33 opens, we see that Jacob and Esau have a warm reunion.

### » **Our Control ROBS us of God's Blessings.**

Jacob's control and the plan he spun into action caused him to needlessly give Esau a large part of the property and provision God had blessed him with. God had changed Esau's heart and these gifts were unnecessary. Like Jacob, we stress over what we think is going to happen and devise plans rather than asking, "God, what do YOU want me to do?". Instead we needlessly give away resources and the provisions God has given to us. But God has a better plan!

I want you to write down...

**GOD IS FOR ME. GOD HAS GOOD AHEAD THAT HE WANTS ME TO EXPERIENCE  
BUT I WILL ONLY SEE HIM WORKING WHEN I SURRENDER. OTHERWISE, I AM  
WORKING AGAINST HIM.**

As we face each struggle to trust, let's remember God's promise that He will work GOOD out of every situation when we turn and ask Him for His plan. Our trust in God unlocks adventures. Each time we experience God working in our hardest journeys, we will become faster at laying it down and trusting God. And isn't that what we want? To TRUST God MORE? I am excited to think about what God has ahead for you. Let's pray:

*Search us, O God, and know our heart; test us and know our anxious thoughts. Point out anything in us that offends you, and lead us along the path of everlasting life. Amen.*