

I love stand-up comedy (Charlie Kray!)

- Dara O'Brien's Catholic/Protestant wedding
- what we fight for reveals our depth
- shallow faith = fight for trivial details
- deep faith = fight for things that really matter

Let an unlikely character teach us what to fight for...

Genesis 32/22-32

- Jacob's back-story and character -

Our passage:

- on a physical journey to get a physical blessing – had to persevere in travel
- on an emotional journey to restore a relationship – had to persevere despite fear
- on a spiritual journey to reach his destiny – had to persevere with God

In any of those situations Jacob – who had always cheated and taken the easy route before – could have given up, but he knew there was something worthwhile to gain by persisting → he knew that if he wanted to be blessed he had to fight for it.

The only blessing you get through a short-cut is a temporary one:

- Samson didn't stay true to his convictions & identity and the line of Judges ended with his death
- King Saul was a compromise, and fell short
- King Jehoshaphat was half-hearted, so he only won three victories

Going for it 100% doesn't mean you'll never fail, but you will receive blessing:

- King David failed time and again, but never gave up his struggle for God
- Peter failed time and again, but never gave up his faith in Jesus

What about us?

1. we can learn from Jacob about our relationships → in the same way as he approached Esau, we have to be prepared to endure some hard things if we live in relationship with people
2. we can learn from Jacob about our understanding of God → nothing wrong with struggling to find God or identify Him in your life. The man/angel doesn't introduce himself or his reason for being there, and I wonder if Jacob knew what was going on at first! We don't have to just accept: God said it; I believe it; that settles it. Navigators: 'a careful reading of the gospel of John reveals [Jesus'] attitude was...' 'this is God's word, stop and think about it & let's talk about it.' Not right to mindlessly go with someone else's faith – doesn't grow depth. No spiritual grandchildren!
3. we can learn from Jacob about our approach to God → prayer is not just some formula or ritual (wedding story), and nor is it easy: 24/7. Sometimes we have to force ourselves, and sometimes it can feel like we have to force God, but it gives us roots. MHC: 'However tried or discouraged, we shall prevail; and prevailing with Him in prayer, we shall prevail against all enemies that strive with us... Those who would have the blessing of Christ must resolve to take no denial.' Pray without ceasing.

Jacob was so utterly transformed by this experience that he was changed in both name and nature – this is not out of anyone's reach!

God is worth fighting for!