The Wrestle

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Date: 01 November 2026

Preacher: James Tang

[0:00] Today we're going to kick off with a little bit of a different introduction. We're going to have an interview with someone that's very dear to my heart. But how dear, the evening that Alex and I got engaged, we went to a beach in Repulse Bay.

And we had this dear brother wait for us on the shore to get back at night. And we took like three extra hours than we needed because we were stuck in the sea. And we had our engagement dinner with this guy, Fred Wheeling, us. That's how close we are.
As one and the only Uday, would you invite Uday up? Many people don't know that story. But I met Uday before he was a believer, before he was good looking, before he was a man, when he was a little boy, chubby little boy.
And before he had these guns, he had these little water pistols that he would carry around at HKU as a geeky, nerdy student. And here he is. Today we want to honor and celebrate him.
He recently got engaged to the lovely Cardia. And we're going to invite Cardia up later. We're going to just pray and bless them. But I wanted the community here, actually, to hear a bit of his testimony, his story.
[1:10] So I've got three quick questions to ask him. But I want to ask Uday, just maybe share with us just kind of your story before coming to HKU, coming from Delhi. Like what life was like? What was your worldview like? And how did God completely transform that?

You know, for you meeting Jay in the dorms and everything. I mean, just a little bit of that. Yeah, thank you, Joe. Sometimes the way he introduces me, it's hard to believe he's actually my friend. But yeah, let me pray first. Dear Heavenly Father, this is your testimony, not mine. So Lord, you speak. Your servant is listening. In Jesus' name I pray.
Amen. So yeah, when I think about my life before I met Jesus and then after. So I was not a believer for about 19 years of my life.
I'm 26 right now. So in my entire time in India, I used to believe in Hinduism. And when I think about my time before meeting Christ and then after, I think that initially I was disillusioned.
[2:12] Then I was confused. And finally, I was found by Christ. I was disillusioned in high school because I thought there was only one way to have a successful life.

Everything around me told me that I needed to get into the engineering schools in India and get a very good job. And without it, I would end up on the streets. So it's either that or end up on the streets.
And then if you're on the streets, you're done for. But then I got into HKU, which was not the Indian engineering schools. And I got over here and everything was just like, I was just confused.
My whole worldview was shattered because clearly the school is really good. But then this is not what I thought success was going to be like. So I didn't really know what to follow.
So I was looking around and everyone was either getting new fates or losing their fates. But none of it really seemed to make sense. And then when I wasn't really looking for faith in any way possible, I met Jay, who introduced me to Jesus.
[3:12] And as I got to know Jesus, I remember thinking back then, even then, that there are two things that need to be true about anyone who claims to be God. One is love. Because I knew that if my mother, who is not God, knows how to give me unconditional love, how much more should a God who has created me love me?

And each and every person that who he has created. An unconditional love, not just because we pray to him and ask him for things. And the second thing was that God should not be subject to the world.

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All I had heard my entire life was, you pray to this God, you get this. If this is not working out, you pray to this other God. It's hard to not think about God even like that today.
But then when I found out about Jesus, that seemed to be very true. Jesus is a person who walked the earth. He died on the cross. And he was not subject to the powers of the world despite being tempted. Like each and every one of us are.
And in so many ways more. So just thinking about these things is what eventually led me to saying yes to Jesus. And what makes me say yes to him even today. Thanks.
[4:21] I think even that resonates with a lot of us here in Hong Kong, with those who aren't in the faith, who are different feng shui, sifu, different guun yam. Like if this is not working, go to the next temple. Go to the next temple. Just constantly looking for that thing that gives us what we want, thinking what we need.

Thanks for that. And you met Jay. I remember Jay was someone I was walking with. He was a student at the time. And all I remember was Jay saying, hey, can you pray for my dorm mate? There's an Indian student in my dorm.
I just feel like he's just got such a good heart. I really want him to know Jesus. And I would meet Jay every week. And we would pray for him by name. I had not met him for like a good year later. And so, again, incredible just how God uses one roommate of yours who persistently prayed with a community behind him.
And here you are today. Well, when you look back at your spiritual transition and becoming a Christian, maybe tell us a little bit. How did you see God working through you and orchestrating these things and do immeasurably more than what you could even imagine and how your life has turned out here in Hong Kong?
Honestly, I feel like my life is more a testimony of just God moving through different parts.
[5:39] I don't even feel like I actually have that much faith to move. But God just is just bridging those gaps constantly. My family is not a believer. And often just having any source of conversations with them is difficult about faith.

And it is really hard for me to believe that one day they would become Christians as well. So every time I see them, there is always this weird pressure that I need to evangelize to them.
But then this distance I feel because they see me in a completely different way having spent those 19 years of my life not being a Christian. They see me grow up. And now suddenly I'm this different person.
Which in some ways I am and I'm not. So recently we went to India. And this time was special because Kardia and her family went with me as well. And we made this trip for my grandparents because they're getting really high up in age.
And the second time we had met my grandparents was really special because it was unplanned. It was just me and Kardia with them. And just as we were leaving, I felt that there was some work that was unfinished over there.
[6:47] And I said to Kardia, hey, I feel like I should have prayed for my granddad. Like he has a health condition and it's deteriorating over time. And it's just hard because medicines are just not working.

And I told her that I just felt too embarrassed, like too scared to do it in front of them and in words. So we just did it quietly. But what she said to me was, if you go back, I'll stand with you.
So you went back. And by the grace of God, what was extended in love was actually received in love by them as well. They loved it. They were so moved that we chose to walk back to their home just so we could pray for them.
And it's just God's timing that in that moment my mom was also on the phone with my grandmom. And she was really moved by this as well. And often my parents are wondering if I don't care about them anymore because I became a Christian.
And this was a moment where my mom was just so elated that you care so much about your grandparents that you would come back just to pray for them. Because that is actually the best thing you can do in that moment.
[7:52] And just, yeah. So I'm just honesty and awe. And I'm grateful for her of God just being there to bridge the gap where I did not have enough faith.

Wow. Give me a round of applause. Glory to God. I mean, it's emotional. Just hearing that. And Cardia, I honor you to encourage your man to go back and stand with him.

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That's what marriage, that's what relationship, that's the marriage that God's called you into. And it's sometimes, Josh and many of us probably think the same. Like sometimes when he's service leading here and we're like, Uday, your story, your journey, like none of it is explainable by human standards.
Only God, only Jesus. Can he be standing here preaching to us? And now you're praying to your grandparents? Like that's God. That's really powerful. You've been through many transitions.
I know you joined a big bank, your dream job, and that bank got bought very quickly. And you lost your, you had to transition very quickly. It's so many different things. Relationships.
[8:57] Tell me, just encourage us all, because we're all going through different transitions as well and challenges. How did you, even with your parents, I mean, talking about having both parents blessing your marriage, that's a miracle in itself.

Before these things worked out, there was a lot, a long time of prayer, wrestling, surrendering. How did you get through that? And what did God teach you through that?
Maybe encourage us a little bit. I don't feel like we still are through the transition periods, because it's a battle every time I see my parents.
It's difficult to have certain conversations. But I feel throughout all of this, what I've learned is to just persistently pray. Even when it feels like my prayers are not feeling genuine, I just want to, even if it is as a discipline, just keep praying.
Just keep praying the same things over and over again. I think about the parable of the unjust judge. How much more would God listen to us? Because he cares for us.
[10:03] He loves us. And in times where I've prayed for things that, for mountains, things that seem like mountains, especially for our relationship, in the way that both of our families would accept us, in the way that my family would accept a Christian girl, these things felt like mountains.

And just those persistent prayers, even sometimes without meaning, have made these mountains just fall down over time. And I'm just so grateful to God for that. How can we pray for you?
Yeah. I mean, I'd love Cardia to come up as well. And we'd love to pray for you, talking of that persistent prayer, persevering. Maybe, Cardia, you can share. Yeah. Okay.
Hi, everyone. Hi. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Cardia. I think for us, we're praying about how we could pour out together as a couple.
Like, we have personal journeys with the Lord for so long. And, like, God has used us in different ministries in different places. So we're just praying about transitioning into married life.
[11:14] What would that look like together? And does it, yeah. And our heart is really for our communities as well and how God can use us together.

Yeah. Anything? Same. All right. Let's stretch out our hands and pray. Father, we thank you. We thank you for your clear fingerprints, your tangible love, and mark, both of them, and both their journeys.
And this is just a snippet of what you've been doing in their lives. And we give you all the glory. God, we thank you for that moment that Cardia gets to stand with Ude as he prays for his grandparents, two generations before, who don't know you in a place where you aren't so welcome.
But, God, we thank you that you are everywhere and that you are moving. And, Lord, I pray even now in faith and boldness that Ude's family can be saved, that they come to know and call upon the name of Jesus.
Yes. And, God, I thank you for the marriage that they're about to embark on. We thank you that above all, Lord, as I prayed earlier, that this marriage isn't just so that they can be happy, just so that they can complete each other.
[12:22] No, Lord. They're already completed in you. They already find deepness and fullness of life in you. And they're simply running this race together so that they can be a witness and testimony to their families, to their friends, to everyone that they meet.

And so, God, I encourage, bless them. Even everyone here, whether we're on our journey, single, married, widowed, Lord, you are what completes us. And so, God, I just pray that, yeah, all of us, they're heading to that direction, to that same destination, to see you face to face.
May we run with perseverance. May we run that race marked out for us. So, bless this couple. May they run this race so well. May they complete it together until they hear the words, good and faithful. And I pray that continuously, Ude will, yeah, not just make Cardia happy, but their goal is to make each other holy. And in serving each other and making each other holy, they'll be infinitely, infinitely

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more happy.
So, we bless them. We pray this in Jesus' mighty name. Amen. All right. Round of applause for the two of them. Bless you. And we bless. We'll quickly pray for James as he comes up.
[13:32] As he takes his hat off. Everyone, put your sunglasses on. Whoa, whoa, whoa. Whoa, there's a heckler. There's a heckler. Lord, we let our words be for you.

We pray that today, your word will be preached and your name will be glorified. In Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you. Thank you, Joe. I'm going to give it a pass today.
Do you know why? Because it's Joe's birthday today. Okay. It's actually not just his birthday.
It's actually his wedding anniversary as well. So, that's beautiful. It's actually not even just that. It's a very special day for us. It's because it's actually the day. And we were just talking about it this morning as we were having breakfast as brothers.
Because the word anniversary is often used for positive things. But it's actually for us also a source of pain. It's also the day that our dad entered into heaven. So, this day is a very special day for Joe.
[14:33] So, because of that, I'm just going to be nice. I'm just going to be nice. And honestly, even the songs, even that, Christ is Enough. Just a huge song of following Jesus.

It's a defining song for me. Because eight years ago when I came to Hong Kong, actually, whilst this heckler was interviewing me for a role in the church. And this was the song I was leading.
And I was in tears. I was in tears. And I could not sing this song. I'm not a great singer anyway. But it was bad. Because it was like, wait. Jesus, I believe you.
I kind of trust you. Wait, but I've got to follow you. And I can't turn back. Oof. That's tough. So, I mean, that interview, I'm sure you remember. I was just, I was all over the place.
And then he came to hug me afterwards. And he says, it's okay. And I'm like, it's not okay. It's not okay. It's a tough one. And just to hear this as well.
[15:34] Oode, Kardia, just so, so special. I think about Jay. I think about Josh, who's been in your life. I think about you leading, you know, serving in your group with Nathan and just all the people that have been surrounding you.

You are by far our favorite Indian in this church. In fact, so much so that our son, Micah, for many, many years in his two-year-old life, any person from India, he calls Oode.
It's just, he's just, that's it. It's just you forever. So, thank you. I'm struggling because there's so much I want to share about. Even as he was sharing, I was like, I'm going to change my message because there's something else.
But actually, let's submit ourselves under the word of God here. God is who we are here for. And we pray that we'll hear from him. And I've invited Sarah, actually, to come and bless us with ministering to us by reading the word of God to us.
So, can I invite you to stand for the word of the Lord? We will be going through Genesis, chapter 32. Okay, let's read.
[16:49] Verse 22. The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his 11 children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream and everything else that he had.

And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket.
And Jacob's hip was put out of his joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, let me go, for the day has broken. But Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me.
And he said to him, what is your name? And he said, Jacob. Then he said, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel. For you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.
Then Jacob asked him, please tell me your name. But he said, why is it that you ask my name? And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, for I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.
[17:58] The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip. Therefore, to this day, the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of his thigh.

This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, Sarah. Please take a seat. Before we jump in, let's just spend the moment just to rest in his word.
Jesus, your word gives life. And is living and active. Capable of piercing us right through into the very depths of our souls.

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So we invite you today to do just that. You are the great physician. Do as you please. Speak as you please. Your servants are listening.
Thank you. In your name we pray. Amen. It's a big chapter. It's a big day today. Why? Because Jacob is becoming a Christian. Let me tell you why I think that.
[19:14] He has been a believer of sorts. He grew up in a pretty significant household. The patriarch, the covenants family, you could call. So he grew up there. He knows the deal.

But up until this point, I would argue that he's probably not an actual Christian yet. He might be a believer, but he's definitely not a follower of Christ. So this moment is his coming of age party. This is where he becomes a Christian, where he goes from, I'm going to believe in you from far off. You are my dad's God. You are my granddad's God. But today you are going to be the God of Jacob. And how? He meets him face to face. But more so, he wrestles with him. And so that's what we're going to go through today.
But maybe just a little bit of a recap, just to rewind your mind. Previously in Genesis, this is what happens. He's going home. He's going home. He's going back to the promised land. He's finally going back. It's been 20 years.
Remember the last time he left the promised land, his brother Esau, hairy red Esau, said, I'm going to kill you. And that was pretty much his final words. And then he leaves. And then his mom, Rebecca, says, hey, don't come back until I send for you.
[20:17] Okay? 20 years later, two wives, 12 children later, still nothing from mom. But now he thinks it's time to go home. I just want to help us understand the context of the story as he heads back into the promised land.

So verse one, Jacob went on his way. And again, I don't want to pass over this too casually, but actually we're going to focus on his interaction with his brother Esau next week. Gabe's going to do that. But he's on his way.
And the angels of God met him. Don't we want to just see those kinds of things? Just to be reminded that we don't live in a world that is just what we see here, but there's something that we don't understand. And so he goes back into the promised land.
The first thing he sees are the angels. When was the last time he saw the angels? Yes, you're correct. Four chapters ago when he left the promised land. Remember when he left, when he stole the blessing and his brother said, I'm going to kill you.
And then he goes and then it's dark. So then he finds a rock to sleep on. And then he has a dream. And then there's the ladder. And he sees the angels going up and down. That was the last time, four chapters ago for us, 20 years ago for him.
[21:20] So he goes back to that same place and he sees angels. And straight away, he's like, this is God's count. I mean, how cool would that be? He hadn't seen these guys for 20 years. And now you're like, oh, something's up here. I'm on the right track.

I'm heading in the right direction. Remember, there was no high speed rail. There was no Uber. This is him wandering in the wilderness. He left with one man, as one man, with a staff.
And he comes back with a huge, huge tribe. And so he comes in. He sees the angels. But he's scared. Because those words, I'm going to kill you, are still ringing in his ear.
And he's like, what's Esau going to be like? What's he going to do? Let me do what I always do, which is scheme. Let me do what I always do, which is basically rely on my own tactics.
Let me do what I always do. Let me send a messenger ahead of me so that at least they can die first and not me. And I'll find out a little bit more as I go. He sends a few messengers. The messengers go forward.
[22:17] And then what happens after that is they come back. And they said, yeah, we saw Esau. He's got 400 men with him. That's all they said. I don't want to spoil because actually next week is where we're going to talk about this interaction.

But 400 men coming at you. This is not a housewarming hospitality kind of party vibe. 400 men. If you remember rightly, many chapters ago, their granddad Abraham stormed and defeated five kingdoms with 318 men.
So 400 men coming towards him is no small thing. So Jacob's probably thinking words that I can't share here. And he's probably terrified.
And his messages come back and that's all they say. And then what happens is, okay, so verse 6. And the message returned to Jacob saying, we came to your brother Esau and he is coming to

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meet you. And there are 400 men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed.
He divided the people who were with him and the flocks and the herds and camels into two camps, thinking if Esau comes to one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape. He's got so much money. He's so wealthy. He has such a big family now. He's like, look, I don't want to lose all of us.
[23:23] How about we do this? Pragmatically speaking, why don't we split into two camps? And then our chances of surviving are now much better. At least one half of us will survive is what he's saying. And then he does the first thing that he's ever done.

He prays. Finally, he talks to God for the very first time. And then he says this. Oh, God of my father, Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac, Oh, Lord, who said to me, return to your country and to your kindred that I may do you good.
I'm not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant. For with only my staff, I crossed this Jordan and now I've become two camps. Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children.
But you said, I will surely do you good and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude. His very first prayer to the Lord is this. For those of you who struggle with praying and wondering what's a good way to pray?
And what does it look like? Is it, when's it me? When's it the flesh? When's it the spirit? It's all here. This is his first prayer. And I think it's actually, he's just confused. So some scholars think this is so encouraging.
[24:24] This is such a great moment for Jacob because he's finally praying to God. And it's such a prayer of just faithfulness and promise. And I'm like, no, I think he's actually really confused. Because he's like, God, God of granddad, God of dad, not God of me.

You told me to come back. You better help me, is what he's saying. Because I'm terrified. And I came on my own and that was okay. But now I've got family. I've got wives and children to feed and to look after.
Help me. You brought me here, God. Protect me, is what he's saying. Don't we all have those kind of prayers? What are they called? They're just called desperation prayers. Like, I don't even know what to do. I'm so, it's so out of my hands.
So I'm going to pray this prayer and pretend and make myself believe that I trust you. But in reality, I don't really trust you. I'm still going to rely on my own schemes and my own ways is what he does. And we see that straight after from verse 13 to verse 21.
This is exactly what he does. The messengers go. They come back. They said, 400 men are coming towards us. So then the next thing that he does is send three different parties of people, three waves of messengers and gifts.
[25:31] What is he trying to say to Esau, his brother? He's like, look, I'm really rich now. I can share all this with you. Here, take these rams. Take these goats. Take everything. Take all these things.

Please don't be mad at me. Please don't kill me. I know I stole your blessing and I know I stole your birthright and you're probably still angry at me. How's mom doing? I've not heard from her because she was supposed to give me a heads up. But she's now, I've not messaged.
I've not heard from her at all. Please take all these gifts is what he's saying. So even after that prayer, he then spends these three waves sending people ahead of him. I'm going to stop there when it comes to the interaction with him and Esau because that will be next week.
The question I want to ask you is this. When you are faced with uncertainty, when you are faced with not quite knowing what will happen tomorrow or next week, how are you reacting?
What emotions are you having? Is there an internal turmoil that you've got going on inside you as you wait? As you wait for that difficult conversation with the boss, you know, that terrifying statement that the boss says, hey, I need to speak to you.
[26:33] Can you come to my office? And those next few hours as you wait for that time, how are you feeling? When you're waiting for that exam result to come in, how are you feeling? It's funny.

We actually hate those moments of uncertainty because we like to be in control. We like to know exactly what's going to happen tomorrow. But the reality is we rarely know what's going to happen. I've shared this often. November 1st is the day Dad passed away for us and it came all of a sudden.

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We were just having dinner at the table as a family, celebrating Joe's birthday. And that moment, the lights went off and he fell off his chair and that was it. From that moment, I picked up my first idol, which is the idol of control.
Because I was like, I want to always be in control now. I never want to be taken by surprise. I want dinners to go as smoothly as they possibly can. And from that moment, I'm always wrestling with that very thing.
But the reason why I have no hair is because of the stress I've accumulated these years since then, where first I was ending up. I ended up in hospital as a young man where I had to stay there for a whole month, not eating anything, nil by mouth is what it was.
[27:40] I had two operations, which is on my stomach here, which is how I explained to my wife why I can't have a six-pack. That is medically proven. And so I remember that month in the hospital.

I'm like, when am I ever going to get out? Am I going to get out? Fast forward a few years, we get married and then we have Alicia. Five days into her life, she has to have a surgery and we're in the neonatal ICU for another month, waiting.
Are we going to get out? When are we going to get out? How are we going to get out? What's it going to be like? When we first heard about a potential role here in Hong Kong, that we had to go, wait, Christina and I went on walks pretty much every night in the beautiful British summer evening, cool weather.
And we would walk and we would wrestle with God going, do you want us to do this? Is this really a thing? I hate uncertainty. I like to know exactly what's going to happen tomorrow.
I like to know exactly what's going to happen next week. And yet the reality is we never know at all. And all of life is an exercise to build our trust in him.
[28:48] Often I ask God, can you just remove this tension from me? I just want to know. I want to know why my boss is angry at me. I want to know what my result for this exam is going to be. But it's often in those moments of uncertainty, God speaks.

It's in those moments of uncertainty that we must wrestle. Corrie ten Boom says this, never be afraid to entrust your unknown future to a known God.
Never be afraid to entrust your unknown future to a known God. When you don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, you cling on to the things that you know about God, is what she's saying.
It's that fridge magnet quote, I don't know what tomorrow holds, but I know who holds my tomorrow. That's what we're trying to grow here is our faith.
Charles Spurgeon was the one who said, if you cannot trace God's hand, you must trust his heart. You can't see what God's doing in your life, the masterpiece he's drawing, fine. You can't just trace his hand, fine.
[29:50] But you must trust his heart. And what does trusting his heart mean? Trusting his heart means you actually have to wrestle with him.

Verse 22 is where Sarah read for us. The same night. So he sends the two camps away. He sends three waves of gifts over. The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants and his 11 children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.
He took them and sent them across the stream and everything else that he had. And Jacob was left alone. What's the prerequisite of facing this uncertainty in wrestling with God? Is to do it alone in the dark of the night.
When was the last time you spent time alone? Is my question to you. I've been reading a book with a friend of mine. It's John Mark Coburn's new book called Into the Quiet.
And his premise is talking about how we are just, our lives are just saturated with noise. And actually C.S. Lewis in Screwtape Letters says, noise is the sound of hell. He said, we've lost our relationship with silence.
[30:55] We've lost our relationship with stillness. We can live. I can live in this city and completely banish silence and stillness from my life. We keep saying we want to hear from God, but did we know that his voice is often a still small voice?

And guess how you need to change yourself to hear a still small voice? You have to become still and small yourself. But we don't do that. I put my noise cancelling AirPods on and I blast my Ed Sheeran mix.
And then I ask God, why aren't you speaking to me? He's like, I can't. Ed's speaking to you. When was the last time you did business with God in the silence?

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One of my favourite quotes of all time was this French philosopher, Blaise Pascal, who said, all of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit alone in a room on his own.
I'm paraphrasing by the way. All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit alone in a room quietly. Why? What do you do when you're alone, quiet?
[32:01] You're doing business with your creator. You're doing business with yourself. How is your relationship with yourself? So often we distract ourselves, hang out with all these people.

Some of us are cultural Christians. Why are you a Christian? I'm a Christian because my grandparents went to church and then my parents went to church and then actually church is a really cool place, really good place to hang out, do sports, meet people, meet girlfriends.
You're a cultural Christian. Take away all the people. Are you still a follower of Christ? Is the question here. Jacob sends everyone away. There's no one else now. It's dark.
He's on his own. And what does he have to do? He has to do business with God. I remember watching the movie Oppenheimer a few years ago and the whole battle is about the atomic bomb, right?
Both sides just worrying about the other side. And that quote came up in my mind. I was like, if only, if only either side of these people would just sit alone with their thoughts, confront their own fears and insecurities and their pride, maybe we wouldn't have got to where we were at.
[33:07] All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit alone in a room. Jacob finally sits alone in a room. He finally comes to the end of himself and he's just like, this is the night before he meets his brother.

Can you imagine his feelings? Have I achieved that, that you can understand how he's feeling now? And guess what happens as he sat alone? A man comes to wrestle with him. This is a really confusing passage in scripture, by the way.
You might sit here and go, what on earth is happening here? Let me encourage you. You're not the only one. The great Martin Luther, who translated the whole Bible, he actually said, this is the most confusing passage in the Bible to him.
It's hard to understand because Jacob sat alone and suddenly some man, some guy comes and wrestles with him. I don't know what he's thinking. It's dark. It's night. Okay. Okay. So there's no light. There's no light bulbs around.
So he must think, could this be Esau? Did Esau sneak up on me? Thankfully, I've sent all my wife, my wives and children away now. So then he wrestles and he wrestles for a long time.
[34:08] And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. Who knows what he's thinking? But at some point, something clicks. Why? Because even though this man was wrestling with Jacob and Jacob couldn't overpower him, but actually the man also couldn't overpower Jacob, it's just a wrestling match that's been going on for a long time.

Who does BJJ here? Put your hand up if you do BJJ. Missing Cubon was the guy that I missed. Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu? No one? Did you do it? No, you did. From what I hear, 10 minutes of BJJ is exhausting already.
A whole night of wrestling must have been absolutely exhausting. Not knowing who this guy was. And yet this is what happens.
And then what happens after that, there is a moment where the light bulb does click. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day when the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob. So the man actually couldn't overpower him either.
He touched his hip socket. Wait, that was it. He touched his hip socket and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. That was it. Is Lusander here today?
[35:15] Is Dr. Lusander here? Can I see Dr. Lusander? No, she's not here. Dr. Kalo is here. Congratulations, Dr. Kalo, for passing a very important exam as an orthopedic doctor. I went over to ask him just before service.

Say, what's so important about the hip? The hip's a very important one because you need it. You need it to walk. You need it to fight. It is a very, very, it's the primary load-bearing joint in the body. And this guy, this mysterious guy is wrestling with Jacob. Jacob doesn't know who he is. It's just spending the whole night doing this and suddenly the guy's like, you know what, it's time. Why? Because the sun's coming up. So Jacob's like, wait, what's the sun got anything to do with this? Okay, so Jacob's head is actually starting to turn. Wait, you're worried about this? You're worried about the sun coming up? Who are you? Ooh, could you be the one that we can't actually look at if

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we actually saw that we would die if we came face to face?
Could you be that person? Maybe you're not Esau. Esau wouldn't be scared of the sun. Okay, anyway, never mind. Keep wrestling, keep wrestling, keep it, boom, touch, hip, gone.
[36:20] Jacob realizes who he is. This man who has been fighting and withholding his strength the whole night suddenly decides it's time to finish this and he pops his hip joint.

Jacob now can't walk. He knows that he can't move that anymore but what can he still do? He can still keep him in a hold. So he keeps him in a hold and this is what happens. Verse 26, let me go for the day has broken is what the guy says, this mysterious man.
But Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me. He's like, I know who you are now. You don't want me to see you when the sun comes up because you're dangerous.
That's what C.S. Lewis says. About Aslan. Oh, no one said he was safe. He's powerful. No one said he was safe. He's dangerous. I will not let you go unless you bless me.
Here's the problem for Jacob. This evening is basically a microcosm of his whole life. This guy has been wrestling his whole life. From the moment he was in his mother's womb, he was wrestling with his twin brother.
[37:25] He's been stressing and straining and striving for the whole of his life. He comes out into the earth. His brother's stronger than him. So his brother's a jock. He decides, well, if you're going to be a jock, I'll be a nerd.

And so he spends all the time at home. But he's smart, way smarter than his brother. So he schemes and wrestles and struggles his way into a blessing and into a birthright. He goes to Laban, his future father-in-law, and he schemes and struggles and wrestles and finally has the wife that he wants.
He sees his whole household stressing and struggling and wrestling. This is Jacob's life. And this is the climax of it. And this is what God is here to change. He and I are not that different.
I also feel like I'm stressing, struggling. Career, family. I feel like I'm constantly trying to wrestle to have things my way.
What about you? I think Joe as he was praying he was like, we're just so tired of it. Are you not tired of it? I'm tired of it. I'm tired of not relying on the once and for all work of what Jesus did on the cross.
[38:32] I'm tired of trying to figure this out myself. Jacob's been wrestling this whole life. And this man comes right at the point where he's wondering, will Esau kill me and not just kill me, kill my whole family.

So God's got him right where he wants him. Here's what I'm saying. And then Jacob asks for a blessing. Don't you just admire Jacob's persistence? He's like, all I've wanted all my life is blessing.
Henry Nowen, one of my favorite authors, says this, the moment we leave our mother's womb, we are stressing and struggling and just, we are grieving the loss of connection because we were very happy in the womb. And so what happens when a baby comes out?
What's the first thing they do? They cry. And from that moment, we're craving connection. We're craving blessing. We're craving to be known and to be loved. Jacob knows that too.
And he's asking for this blessing. He's like, I'm not going to let you go. I can't move anymore. I can't walk anymore, but I can still get you with this hold. And it's a good hold. I will not let you go until you bless me.
[39:31] And then the man who we now can reveal is God, he said to him, what is your name? This mysterious man who was withholding his strength, who knew exactly who Jacob was, asked him for his name.

Why? He's getting a confession out of Jacob. When was the last time Jacob got a blessing? What is that Isaac?
What did he do? He said someone else's name. He said, I am Esau. You're not Esau, mate. You're Jacob. Jacob. This mysterious man now forces or nudges him gently, wrestles him to the ground.
To what? To get a confession out of him. What? Just to make him feel bad? No. The book of James says, when you confess your sins, you can be healed. You can be restored. So this man willingly put himself in the lock of Jacob, says, what is your name?
Can you imagine the flashbacks that Jacob is having right now? He wants this blessing so bad. He's been struggling for it so bad to the point where he would lie about who he is to his own dad. Now he's forced to come face to face with the one who knows his name and he needs to say what

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his actual name is.
[40:45] How many of us have gone through life living as an imposter? How many of you feel as though you're in your workplace and you feel like an imposter, that you don't deserve to be here, that everything that you have you don't deserve to have?

Jacob no doubt would have gone through all of those things. I've been blessed. I'm so rich now. I came with just one staff and now I have this whole tribe but I don't know. Did I trick my way into all of this? Was it supposed to be mine? Does God really love me?
The God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, is he really the God of Jacob? I don't know. I don't think he did and I think because of that he always kept God at arm's length. I think because of that he stopped at being a believer but he didn't go into being a follower of Christ until today.
He's nearly ready. He's nearly ready to sing the bridge of Christ is enough. Nearly. But not quite yet. He has to confess his name.
And what's his name? Jacob. What does his name, Jacob, mean? Heel grabber. He actually has to confess the thing that he's been doing. He's been grabbing heels, taking things that don't belong to him, stressing and struggling and taking matters into his own hand.
[41:49] He has to come to the living God and confess that he's been grabbing onto heels. And the moment he does, the moment he surrenders his identity issue, God blesses him.

What does he bless him with? And he said, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men and you have prevailed. It's this beautiful moment where he gives him a new name, Israel.
Meaning that you've strived with God and you've prevailed. It's actually really beautiful and really poetic. If you see it in a movie, I can imagine seeing it in a movie. Because straight after that, he gives him his new name.
Well, Jacob does something really silly. He goes, oh, well, please tell me your name. And then God says, and then just moves on. He says, why do you ask my name?
You obviously know who I am. And so then leaves. And then Jacob says, for I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been delivered. Why is this episode here? He's just about to enter into probably the biggest confrontation of his life.
[42:52] He had a little one with Laban, but he's about to head into the biggest one with his brother, with his long, longest rival, longest enemy, the one who about to kill him, the one who has the power to kill him, and he's wrestling with someone else.

Why? Because the truth is, in our lives, we keep thinking that we're wrestling with all these other things and all these other people, but the true wrestle that we have is actually with God. All the fears that we have of other people, all the fears we have about our jobs and our insecurities and our money and our finances, all these other things that we think we're wrestling with, that we think we're anxious about, the truth is, we're not actually wrestling with those people and those things.
The truth is, we're actually wrestling with our mistrust of God himself. So God, on the eve of his biggest battle, says, actually, it's not Esau you're most afraid of. You're most afraid of me.
You're most afraid that I won't provide for you. You're most afraid that I don't love you. You're most afraid that that blessing doesn't belong to you. You're most afraid that I disapprove of you.
Whew. So God comes to wrestle with Jacob to show him that it's not really about Esau. And actually, Jacob is elated because he's like, look, I've seen God face to face and yet my life has been delivered.
[44:03] He's in a good place. And actually, what's beautiful is this, verse 31, the sun rose upon him as he passed Penel. Rewind to when he left the promised land having stole the blessing.

It's dark, so dark that he can't move on so he has to find a rock to sleep on. Can you just imagine the poetic beauty of this? When he left this place, it was dark and lonely and when he comes back and he's got the blessing that actually belongs to him followed by his own true confession of who he is, the sun shines on him and he walks into the promised land.
Oh, correction, he doesn't walk anymore. He limps into the promised land. Why? Because he's come to the end of himself. He no longer can rely on his own strength to walk.
He will limp for the rest of his life but he will limp joyfully because he now finally knows that the only way to get the blessing is to lose himself. and he will now limp for the rest of his life in this promised land, continue to receive all the blessings but the limp will be there as a beautiful reminder of humility that nothing is there because of what he did.

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we all in some ways limp now as we head into our everyday and it's not a bad thing. We all must take ourselves into the dark lonely place to do business with God where we remove all the noise where we remove all the distractions most of all we remove all the excuses and all the other things that we project our fears onto and we just surrender ourselves to the living God with a limp knowing that we can only walk because he allows us to.
[45:44] We only live because he allows us to. Makes me think as we conclude here what is the uncertainty that you've got going on right now?

What's that thing that you're waiting for? You're like oh if only I had that if I could only pass that test if I could only have that person if I could only do this I will feel so good about my life and I'll be good and I'll be marching and running and hopping into the promised land.
That's not the goal that's not God's hope for your life. God hopes that you would walk into the promised land with a profound trust in him and if he needs to give you a limp he will.
That's the wrestling match that we have going on. How's God trying to get your attention? Andy Stanley says when you feel tension in your life when you have uncertainty in your life the next thing the best thing that you should do is lean into that uncertainty lean into that tension and go why do I feel that way?
Why am I so worried about what that person is going to say about me? Why am I so worried about whether this job at work is going to come through or not? Why am I so worried about this project? And some of it is just we want things to go well but so much of it if we keep peeling back and back and back is actually God do you love me?
[46:58] Do you know me and can I trust you? I don't know what battles you have going in your life I don't know what Esau you have coming up my encouragement to you is wrestle not with Esau but wrestle with God and there's still so many questions here right?

This is still a confusing passage one of my confusing things is why did God withhold his strength? Why did he I mean he could have done it he could have said hey Jacob I'm God you're about to have a really bad guy that you're going to meet tomorrow but just just to let you know you're going to be okay your hip done we're moving on but he doesn't do that he wrestles with him for the whole night withholding his strength why?
My only conclusion is the same reason why I like wrestling with Reuben which we did just before we left church this morning and it's the only reason why I love wrestling with Micah it's because I just love the wrestle I just love the ongoing relationship together I don't like wrestling with Christina because she's a lot stronger than I God deliberately comes in withholds his strength I think because he just desires the ongoing wrestle that he has with us some of you are like I'm so afraid of that thing but I won't come to you God because actually it's not about you it's about this thing God's like no no no all of it is about me if you knew who I was and if you knew how much I loved you if you knew how powerful I am Esau is nothing compared to me all I want is you would we come to God in our wrestling and he is so gentle and he deliberately withholds his strength and we can see it here in Genesis 32 he deliberately withholds his strength and we know we are sat here because we know this was not the last time that he does it but many years later the king of heaven himself would come into the earth in human form and limit himself in just the same way he could have destroyed anything and everything in his path but what did he decide to do he decided to wrestle he decided to wrestle with mankind he decided to wrestle for mankind and he did it all in the garden why?
out of love for us he limited his own strength he emptied himself even though he was equal with God he came to wrestle if that doesn't fill you with faith I want you to I ask you take that into the dark take that into the quiet and go God loves me so much that he limited his own strength to come and meet me and wrestle with me to bless me of whom shall I fear?
the Lord is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid? only God only God is the answer our goal is to simply surrender actually to also engage in the wrestle God's not afraid of our wrestling we're not going to beat God he just wants you to be there with him so I'm so touched by even what Cardia said hey go back there and I'll just stand with you isn't that what God says to us?
[50:18] go and face whatever it is that you're facing go find Esau it's going to be different why? because I'm with you and yeah you're limping back into the promised land and you're getting flashbacks of all the stuff that you did that was wrong but now you've wrestled with me and you've survived you can do anything through me is what he says to you we're going to take communion now and I want to ask you you're sat here so the likelihood is that you're probably a Christian what

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we have to define here well and you might not be and if you're not welcome you're probably seeking and looking for something if you profess to be a Christian which would be my guess my next query and my next question to you is are you a believer or a follower do you say that you just believe in him why because your granddad did because your dad did your grandmother did your friends did but you've actually not gone into the dark deep woods to figure this one out yourself you've not crossed that border from believer into follower you've not wrestled with God you've not done business with him

I encourage you maybe this is a good moment to start and if you don't know how let me just suggest God are you here are you here are you are you wanting my attention I'm going through this thing and you've got my attention what do you want to say we sit here and we do communion together almost in remembrance of the struggle that he had the wrestle that he had in Gethsemane and he wrestled and he struggled all the way to the cross kept saying is this the only way is this the only way to save this group it seems so they're so entangled by the things of this world they're fighting shadows let me wrestle on their behalf and on the night he was betrayed he took bread when he sat around his family his friends and he said you don't have to struggle anymore
I'm the high priest that has made the sacrifice that will make the sacrifice once and for all his struggle is now not with those things that you're facing your struggle is with me and if you believe me if you believe in me and you follow me you will not perish and you'll have eternal life he says this is my body broken for you surrender all your other struggles and come wrestle with me let us take the bread in remembrance of what he did for us then he took the cup and he said this is the new covenant you guys broke the old covenant the thing I had with
Abraham the thing I had with Isaac you guys just kept failing the law was weakened by the flesh you could not fulfill it yourself but here's a new one I am the high priest is what he says I pour out my blood and it will be a symbol of the new covenant that will not be based on your own works but it will be based on mine trust it come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest so we take this cup in remembrance of the new covenant that we have in him God we come to you you are the God of Abraham you are the God of Isaac today we see you have become the God of Jacob you are the God of Joe you are the
God of Veronica you are the God of Caleb you are the God of Tim you are the God of Wes you are the God of Sarah you are our God the same God that chooses to come to us to wrestle let me let me finish with this quote Henry now and says wrestling with God means staying in the struggle until the light comes it is not a fight of hostility but a desperate embrace of love that refuses to let go until the blessing is given it is not a fight of hostility but it is a desperate embrace of love that refuses to let go until the blessing is given
[56:27] God of Jacob we entrust ourselves into your loving arms and choose to wrestle with you today

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