

How Divine Wrestling Changes Our Identity

All of us at some point will hit a place of getting the wind knocked out of us. We all experience unexpected detours and times when there seems to be no way out.

But there is One who lives in us, the Lord Jesus Christ, who gives us the strength to overcome obstacles. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us as we battle giants, distractions, pain and disheartening moments. We can overcome because there is life beyond the moment of what we are going through.

My friend, Robert Stearns, from Eagles' Wings, believes these times are life-defining moments to be embraced. "Jacob became Israel after he wrestled. Your identity is changed in the wrestling. In those various moments of genuine, life-defining crisis, you have to step into the place of wrestling with God."

Sometimes, he says, this looks like an extended fast, where we say, like Jacob, "God, I am not letting You go until You bless me! I have got to get breakthrough in this."

He continues: "I had a wonderful mentor in my early years of the Jewish-Christian work that I do, Rabbi Gerald Meister. He spoke eight languages fluently. He was just absolutely brilliant. He looked at me one day and said, 'Robert, never trust a spiritual leader who doesn't have a great crisis of faith at least every five years or so.' Wow!"

He explains that if we don't face a crisis of faith, it means we're not journeying with God. "You're not becoming," he said. "You're just settling."

I remember being a wrestler in high school and the discipline,

practice and courage it required to face challenging and intimidating opponents without fear. Likewise, Robert says, we should not be afraid of the wrestling in life or the journey that leads us to those moments.

“Don’t be afraid of asking deeper questions of yourself, of God and of the people around you,” he says. “Don’t be afraid to say, ‘Why are we doing what we’re doing?’”

When we wrestle with God for revelation, He reveals Himself in new ways and brings us into new levels of relationship with Him, which changes our identity. We see this in John 15:15 when Jesus says to His disciples, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

As Robert says, “It’s about embracing the wrestling, embracing the journey and understanding that my identity is going to be changed. Jacob became Israel. Cephas became Peter. Saul became Paul. Their identities were changed, but each time it followed moments of really divine wrestling.”

Dr. Doug Stringer is founder and president of Somebody Cares America/International. As an American of Asian descent, Doug is considered a bridge-builder of reconciliation amongst various ethnic and religious groups. He is a sought-after international speaker, addressing topics such as persevering leadership, reconciliation, community transformation, revival and more. He is host of A Word in Season with Doug Stringer & Friends, with new programs posted weekly on the Charisma Podcast Network.