

The Painful Key to Greater Anointing and Intimacy With Jesus

My grandmother lived in a pink house surrounded by as many pink flowers as she could grow. I don't have a lot of memories of that house, but those I have are good ones. I know Grandma was my Lois and prayed for me often. I serve the Lord today because she prayed for me in the 1950s.

I called to tell her about my radical salvation at the age of 19, and she reminded me that I "went forward and was baptized" as a young boy. She told me to make sure I was in a church that preached Jesus. She loved Jesus and wanted the best for me.

She also loved her wrassling. She knew the correct word and spelling, but her wrassling show was appointment TV. Time stood still as she dropped anchor in her knitting chair to watch burly men put on a show every Saturday night. No one had better ever suggest to her that the show was scripted or that her boys were anything but top-quality athletes. She knew those hulks by name, and she shouted for them and wailed against the bad guys, who won too often for her taste.

Grandma would be so happy to know her great-grandson wrestled in junior high and high school. He was a good wrestler because he never gave up and worked hard to meet weight classes. Finally, at the end of one season, he told me he didn't want to wrestle anymore. I was surprised but empathetic when he told me, "Those guys are all sweaty, and they smell bad."

From then on, he focused on golf, where his opponents still sweat, but his nose wasn't rubbed in it. He made the high school golf team and, to this day, regularly humbles me on the golf course. I'm glad he doesn't want to wrestle with me.

Perhaps these stories help explain why I remain fascinated by Jacob's wrestling match with God. We know Jacob was born to wrestle. He wrestled with his twin, Esau, in their mother's womb. And of course, the boys continued to fight throughout their lives.

So it's not a surprise that "a man" came to wrestle with Jacob at Mahanaim: "Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him there until daybreak" (Gen. 32:24).

This verse gives us our first clue that what Scripture describes was, in fact, a wrassling match. The two battled all night long! I think I would have cried uncle or tapped out much earlier. But we know Jacob was a fighter, and God dealt with him in the manner he would best understand.

"When the man saw that He did not prevail against Jacob, He touched the socket of his thigh, so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated, as he wrestled with Him. Then He said, 'Let Me go, for the day breaks.'

"But Jacob said, 'I will not let You go unless You bless me'" (Gen. 32:25-26).

Here, we see evidence of the first submission hold. Jacob limped for the remainder of his days. But what a match!

I believe A.W. Tozer referenced this bout when he said: "Never trust anyone who doesn't walk with a limp." His message clearly points to the notion that people of God are tested and proven faithful through victory over trials and tribulations. We earn the right to lead others when we press on through trouble and display our victory in Jesus.

We read in Acts 4:13 about the time when Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrin Council: "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were illiterate and uneducated men, they marveled. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus."

Both Peter and John had a New Testament limp. They walked in a powerful anointing. They modeled what they preached. They wrestled their way through ministry with Jesus.

It seems easy to note people who walk with what I call an “invisible limp.” They have persevered through their trials and emerged with strength renewed. Those afflicted from their walk have a quiet confidence. They may even skip as they walk because of the hope set before them (see Heb. 6:18).

It seems certain to me that the way we wrestle through life, how we speak and handle its storms, testifies to the faith deep within us.

We preach the gospel with the blessing of an invisible limp.
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