

THE PRETENDER

Genesis 25 - 32

If you are a complicated person, you are in good company. We all seem to be a smorgasbord of complex, conflicted issues. We wrestle with the conflict between who we are and how we would like to appear. We stress over how others perceive us and who we think we're supposed to be. Obviously, this leaves little time or inspiration to become who we are. God has created us to be unique in this world. He built us to fit. God cannot bless our imitation of someone else. To be who we are is a struggle, and the first obstacle to vanquish may surprise you and will certainly be a tenacious, formidable foe.

SEARCHING FOR THE REAL YOU

1. **There is always conflict in the womb of anything God births into this world.**

Jacob has a couple of meaningful wrestling matches in his life. In one, he wrestles with a man that later is revealed to be God (*this is called a Theophany*) while in the other, he's wrestling in the womb and hasn't even been born yet. Rebekah inquires of the Lord and receives a prophetic answer revealing the future role of her two sons in the development of God's Kingdom.

2. **ME - first is a miserable ambition and ultimately doesn't work.**

Jacob's name means "heel grabber." He was born trying to get ahead, grabbing at his brother's heel. ME-first is miserable. It's miserable to be grabbing at heels, trapped inside yourself, never having a bigger thought than what's best for me, and being disconnected from everyone around because your only focus is on yourself.

3. **When your life is centered on ME First, whatever you have is never enough.**

The Christian philosopher, C.S. Lewis, stated, "We don't actually take pride in possession itself, but in having more of it than anyone else." Jacob buys "The Birthright" from his brother, Esau, but that's not good enough. He must have "The Blessing" too. ME-first is never satisfied with success. This is an empty ambition that imprisons its adherents. Enough is NEVER enough!

4. **God can't bless who you pretend to be.**

God can't bless Jacob dressed like Esau. Can you identify with this? There's the me that is. This guy kind of frustrates me. There's the me I hope to be. This guy is incredible. So, between real me and future me is the guy I am in the meantime – fake me. We put hair on our neck and arms and put on Esau's clothes so we can imitate someone else and learn to lose who we are.

5. You have found yourself when you hold on to God even when it would be easier to let go.

After twenty years Jacob has finally worn out his welcome with Uncle Laban. He is on his way back home with all his family when, in a late night/early morning wrestling match at Jabbok, ninety-six-year-old Jacob exhibits a character trait uniquely demonstrative of the change in his heart. Jacob has always been the one doing the grabbing. He is now grabbed by God and holds on and declares, "I will not let you go until you bless me." (Genesis 32:26) Jacob has been holding on to stuff all his life, but now he is holding on to the real thing, and he will not let it go until he is blessed.

6. Once you admit your old name, God can give you a new name.

It's not always your success and accomplishments that define you. Sometimes it's your struggles that show who you really are. Aren't you glad God gives you a new name? God gives you a new name for a new start. He doesn't call you what you used to be. He calls you what you are in Christ. That's your new identity.