



# Love Community Baptist Church

## Wednesday Night Virtual Bible Study

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## God Never Gives Up On You – Max Lucado

### CHAPTER 1

### “The Tilted Halo Society”

This book is for members of the Tilted Halo Society. For strugglers among us and the fumbler within us. For those of us who are part saint, part scoundrel. We mean well, but do we? Well, we don't always. We have breakthroughs, for sure, but breakdowns as well, often in the same hour. We need no reminder of our failures. We have not forgotten them. But we could use a refresher course on God's stubborn refusal to give up on us.

#### WHO WAS JACOB?

Jacob began life the way he would live it, **grasping for a better position.**

Jacob's nickname was **Deceiver**, and deceive he did.

- (1) He took advantage of his famished sibling
- (2) pulled the wool over the eyes of his dying father
- (3) and met his father - in - law's guile with guile.

#### He walked with a limp.

Sound familiar? You've wrestled with God about your past, your future, your pain and problems. You, like Jacob, have walked away with a gimp in your spiritual gait. Some people mount up with wings like eagles, a few run and never grow weary, others walk and never faint.

You? Me? Jacob? We limp. Jacob's story is for limpers.

Jacob's story is hard to read because he misbehaved so often. Then again, the Jacob story is a relief to read because we misbehave so often. We wonder, If God could love and use Jacob, might he be willing to do the same with us?

**Jacob lived 147 years.** Yet the heart of his narrative covers only twenty years of his life (ages seventy - seven to ninety - seven) and eleven chapters in the book of Genesis (25 – 35). We know very little about Jacob's life outside of those twenty years. But what we know of those two decades is worth pondering.

In his later years Abraham decided to find Jacob a wife. Abraham sent a servant back to the land of his birth to *“get a wife for my son”* (Gen. 24:4 NIV). The servant prayed for God to grant him success. He'd hardly said an “amen” when he looked up and saw Rebekah, Isaac's wife-to-be. The servant sought the blessing of Rebekah's father and the permission of her brother. The brother was named Laban.

Remember that name. In short order he will trick Jacob, who had just tricked his father, Isaac, and his brother, Esau. Lots of tricking in this story. Laban gave Rebekah to the servant. The servant gave Rebekah to Isaac. Isaac gave his heart to Rebekah. And Rebekah gave twin sons, Jacob and Esau, to Isaac.

There was tension between the brothers from the get-go. Rebekah's womb felt like a cage fight. "The children struggled together within her" (Gen. 25: 22 ESV).

The description in Hebrew reads, "The children smashed themselves inside her."

Once, as they kicked at each other, she begged God for an explanation. He gave this:

*"Two nations are in your body, and two groups of people will be taken from you. One group will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." (GEN. 25:23 NCV)*

In the ancient clan plan the elder son would inherit superior rank over the younger. Yet in God's plan Jacob would trump Esau. The older will serve the younger. Had God not said it, Rebekah never would have imagined it. When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. (Gen. 25: 24–26 NIV)

### **And Rebekah loved Jacob.**

He was more metro than macho, more bookish than brawn, more indoor than outdoor, more Saturday in the library than weekend in the wild. Jacob was, well, let me just say it because you'll soon read it. Jacob was a mama's boy. He was a "quiet man and stayed among the tents. Isaac loved Esau...But Rebekah loved Jacob" (Gen. 25:27–28 NCV).

This was some family. Brothers who squared off in the womb. Parents who played favorites. Esau and his brawn, Jacob and his brains. Dysfunction junction.

Even so, the twins might have coexisted were it not for the aforementioned birthright privilege. It promised financial perks, preeminence in the clan, twice the inheritance, and all the privileges. But most significant was this: the firstborn of Isaac would be the next bearer of the covenant that God had made with Abraham, namely that God would bless the world through the descendant of Abraham — Jesus Christ (see Gen. 12:3; Acts 3:24–26).

We would logically assume, then, that Jacob would be one special dude, a who's who in the Holy Hall of Holiest People. Shouldn't he love the poor? Comfort the sick? Counsel the distraught? Write proverbs? Pen a few psalms? Be born with an iridescent glow? One would think so. He did none of the above. He will have his moments. Just not many. He will inspire us, yes. But bewilder us even more. His résumé was more the stuff of the Happy Hour Highball Club than a Sunday school curriculum. He married two sisters but loved only one. He was passive while his wives squabbled. He slept with the maids. His family worshipped foreign gods. He chose to do nothing when his sons went Rambo on a village, slaughtering a tribe. His oldest son had an affair with his maidservant. His favorite son was sold into slavery by his brothers. He spent two decades as a fugitive. He was a dyed-in-the-wool sneak. The guy never preached, prophesied, or said anything worthy of being framed. If you are looking for a star in a Hallmark movie, Jacob is not your guy.

If, on the other hand, you want to see God's steadfast devotion . . .

If you need to know how long God will put up with a scoundrel and his scandals...If you are wondering if God's plan has a place for botchers, bunglers, schemers, and Joad - like last chancers who toss a coin to choose between their will and God's will...

If you could benefit from a tale of God's unending, unbending, unswerving faithfulness...If you wonder if God could use a person whose halo has slipped...Then the story of Jacob is what you need.

God used Jacob in spite of Jacob. Period. The word for such devotion? Grace.

Grace came after Jacob. Grace found him in the desert. Grace protected him when he lived in exile. Grace wrestled him to the ground in Jabbok and blessed him. Grace led him home to Canaan.

Jacob's story is a testimony to divine, unexpected, unrequested, undeserved kindness.

Do you know such grace?

God's grace isn't only as good as you are. God's grace is as good as he is.

God's grace did not happen one time, long ago. God's grace happens now, today...to anyone who'll

His grace never quits.

That's the kind of God he is — he's the "God of Jacob." Our God is the God of those who struggle and scrape, sometimes barely making it, hanging on for dear life.