TRY HARD SERIES

WEEK 1 — The Wrestle, Not the Shortcut

Opening Scripture: Genesis 32:24–28

"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day… And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

Has anyone in this room ever been called a **try-hard**.

You studied when everybody else coasted.

You were kind when the room was cruel.

You showed up early, stayed late, prayed when it was awkward, respected people who didn't respect you back—and somebody looked at you like you were doing too much.

They didn't call you faithful.

They called you extra.

I came to tell you tonight: heaven has another name for that.

Before Jacob ever wrestled an angel, he tried a **shortcut**.

In Genesis 27 he wanted the blessing so bad he put on his brother's clothes, covered his arms, changed his voice, and when his daddy asked, "Who are you?" he lied. He said, "I am Esau."

That's the first way people go after a blessing:

Dress like somebody else. Sound like somebody else. Hide your real name.

And it worked… for a season

He got the words. He lost the house. He lost the relationship. He spent years running from a blessing he stole instead of a blessing he could stand in.

Some of you have been living in Genesis 27.

You want the grade, the position, the approval, the "in" crowd—so you shrink, you fake, you play small, you act like you don't care… **because caring got you mocked.**

Just like Jacob it's a costume.And costumes expire.

Years later Jacob is alone at a river called Jabbok. Family is already across. Tomorrow he has to face the brother he cheated. And the Bible says a man wrestled with him **until the breaking of the day**.

Not a three-minute altar moment.

All. Night.

That's the difference between a the carnal shortcut and a spiritual wrestle.

A shortcut asks, "How little can I give and still get it?"

A wrestle says, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

Can I talk to the try-hards for a minute?

You are not extra.

You are in a fight most people quit at midnight.

"You can't get a new name until you tell the old one."

The man looks at Jacob and asks the same question Isaac asked years earlier: *"What is your name?"*

Last time Jacob said, "Esau."

This time he tells the truth: "Jacob."

Heel-grabber. Deceiver. The one who takes shortcuts.

YOU HAVE TO TELL THE TRUTH

FACE THE FIGHT

And *then*—not before—God says, "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel."

God does not rename the costume.

He renames the person who finally stops hiding.

Some of you want the Israel life with a Jacob mouth.

You want the blessing without the honesty.

You want the new identity without admitting who you've been.

That's why you're tired.

You're wrestling in a costume.

#1. Shortcuts feel faster. They cost more.

Jacob got the blessing and lost peace. That's what half-hearted living does. You get the thing and still feel empty, because you didn't meet God in it—you managed people.

#2. The blessing that lasts is wrestled for.

He left that place with a limp. Don't despise the limp. The limp is proof you stayed when it would have been easier to let go. Some of you have a limp called "they talk about me." Wear it. It's the mark of somebody who wouldn't quit at 2 a.m.

#3. God will ask for your real name.

Not the Instagram name. Not the "I'm fine" name. The real one. The one you've been covering because you're scared they'll call you a try-hard.

I came to tell somebody: **the mockery is not the verdict. It's the evidence you're in the FIGHT.**

People who have already decided to live small will always call full effort "too much."

That's not a diagnosis of you. That's a confession of them.

Jacob didn't get Israel because he was slick.

He got Israel because he stayed.

So here's the question for week one:

Have you been putting on Esau's clothes… or have you been willing to stay at the river until He changes your name?

You don't have to announce it.

You just have to stop letting go.

IS THERE ANY FIGHT IN ANYONE TONIGHT?