



Counterintuitive Kingdom: The Wrestle and Surrender

Dave Ellis – 10th May 2026 ([watch talk here](#))

Dave continued our sermon series, encouraging us to adjust our perspective to see how the right-side-up ways of the Kingdom help us to live like Jesus in this upside-down world. In this talk, Dave addressed the struggle we can often experience in trying to live out Jesus' counterintuitive invitation to surrender. The world says, *'hold onto your life – do whatever you need to do to be secure'*. Jesus says, *'whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.'* (Matthew 16:25). Jesus tells us the Kingdom of God is not found by holding on but by letting go in surrender.

When we resist Jesus' invitation to surrender, we can end up wrestling with God as Jacob did in Genesis 32:22-28. In keeping with his name meaning "heel grabber", Jacob strives, manipulates and deceives to control and take for himself the life he wants. Then he has an encounter with God that changes him. After wrestling with God, Jacob receives a new name and a limp – a mark of surrender which changed the way he walked out his life from this moment onwards both physically and figuratively.

Dave encouraged us that while surrender will always cost us something, we experience a new freedom when we choose it. When we shift our dependence on our own limited strengths, capacity, competence, or abilities to fully depending on God through surrender, our faith and trust in God deepens and we are empowered and strengthened by him to do more than we could ever do on our own.

Reflect and discuss

- What stood out to you from this talk?
- Dave emphasised the difference between submission, which is often forced and painful, and surrender which is chosen. In surrender we choose to submit our will and our ways in obedience to follow Jesus, even though it's costly.
 - Share your experiences of submission and surrender. How have these differed?
 - What have the costs and benefits been of surrendering to God?
- **Read Genesis 32:22-28** together.
 - What do you notice about Jacob's life-changing encounter with God?
 - How does this resonate with you today?
 - Jacob was left with a limp as a permanent mark of his surrender – what marks are you left with because of wrestling with or surrendering to God?

Share & Pray

In smaller groups, share honestly with one another anything you're currently wrestling with. What is God's invitation to you in this? Pray for each other for the grace you need to surrender.

Activate

Dave encouraged us that the habit of fasting can help us in learning to surrender. Fasting is an active choice to give up our dependence on something for a period e.g. food or social media. This act of surrender exposes something deep within us, revealing how quickly we reach for comfort instead of reaching for God and how unstable we become when those things are removed. Through fasting we learn we don't have to control everything or satisfy every desire or craving. As we keep up this practice over time, slowly we will notice something begins to shift as our grip on what we once held onto for control begins to loosen. We learn like Jesus that *'man does not live by bread alone, but by the word of God.'* (Matthew 4:4). Commit together as a group to fast once a week for the next month and report back to one another what you noticed through this experience.