

MAKING LEMONADE

"THE RIGHT FIGHT"

GENESIS 32:22-32

This Week's Core Competency

Personal God – I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life. Psalm 121:1-2

*I will lift my eyes to the hills-
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
the maker of heaven and earth.*

God certainly was involved in and cared about the daily life of the Patriarchs. He called Abram out of Ur in Babylonia and promised to bless him (Ge 12:2-3). He later made a covenant with him, assuring Abram that "a son coming from his own body" would be his heir and that his descendants would later inherit the Promised Land (15:4). When Abraham was a hundred and Sarah was ninety, Isaac was born, and after Abraham's death at a hundred and seventy-five, "God blessed his son Isaac" (25:11). When Isaac was forty, he married Rebekah, and twenty years later she gave birth to twin boys, Esau and Jacob (25:20, 26). Before the boys were born, they jostled with each other inside their mother. Their prenatal struggle proved to be a harbinger of future conflicts between them, in which Jacob would live up to the meaning of his name. Jacob means literally "he grasps the heel," but figuratively "he deceives" (see *The NIV Study Bible* marginal note on 27:36). First, he tricked Esau out of his birthright (25:29-34), and then he tricked Isaac into blessing him

When everything is at stake a night of prayer is no burden, but rather a life-line.

– Joyce G. Baldwin

instead of his twin brother (27:1-36). Unlike Esau (25:34), Jacob valued the blessing promised to Abraham, which was a good thing, but unfortunately, the methods he used to obtain it and his father's blessing were not. Jacob was a trickster by nature.

Nevertheless, God confirmed the promised he made to Abraham to him. When Jacob fled from Esau, who was determined to kill him as soon as their father died (27:41), God appeared to him in a dream at Bethel and said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (28:13-15).

Jacob lived in exile in Mesopotamia for twenty years without changing his old ways—at least, not until the very end. One commentator observes: "Until his name is changed to Israel, Jacob is ever trying to secure God's blessing through his own efforts. Tragically, in this important phase of his life, he continues prayerless. He is potent in physical strength, both to work hard and to sire a family, but spiritually he is impotent. He stumbles into a providential marriage with neither petition nor praise. He is duped by Laban into the marriage contract and is the toast of Laban's jest at his own marriage. As his wives struggle for God's blessing in children to validate their marriages, Jacob is

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reduced to a stud" (Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis*, 408). Jacob, the trickster, met his match in uncle Laban. Commenting on the Jacob-Laban episodes, another commentator quips: "In Genesis 27, Jacob is a deceiver; in Genesis 29, Laban is a deceiver; and in Genesis 30, Jacob is a deceiver of a deceiver of a deceiver" (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 518).

Jacob's time in exile left a mark, a transformative effect that would ultimately lead to God changing his name from Jacob to Israel (32:28). On his transformation, the first commentator above writes: "Jacob's twenty years of trial and the obvious presence of God to prosper him during the last years work a transformation in him. For the first time in this act [28:10-33:17], he emerges as a man of public faith, and takes the leadership of his home. He acts promptly upon God's command to return to the Promised Land (31:3-4), bears witness first to his wives of God's presence and provisions and then finally to Laban's whole family, and willingly undertakes the dangerous and difficult journey in obedience to God. For the first time, his wives follow his lead" (Waltke, 422-23). The night he camped along the Jabbok before reentering Canaan he wrestled with God and gave up his old ways, and God gave him a new name, Israel, which means "God fights," which suggests because of the patriarch's self-will, God chose to fight with him and because of his persistence, God will fight for him and the future nation that will come from him.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Genesis 32:22-32

Cf. another translation

22 That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. 24 So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. 26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

27 The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

28 Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

29 Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

31 The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. 32 Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.

22 During the night Jacob quickly took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 He took them and sent them across the stream along with all his possessions. 24 So Jacob was left alone. Then a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not defeat Jacob, he struck the socket of his hip so the socket of Jacob's hip was dislocated while he wrestled with him.

26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." "I will not let you go," Jacob replied, "unless you bless me." 27 The man asked him, "What is your name?" He answered, "Jacob." 28 "No longer will your name be Jacob," the man told him, "but Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have prevailed."

29 Then Jacob asked, "Please tell me your name." "Why do you ask my name?" the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there. 30 So Jacob named the place Peniel, explaining, "Certainly I have seen God face to face and have survived."

31 The sun rose over him as he crossed over Peniel, but he was limping because of his hip. 32 That is why to this day the Israelites do not eat the sinew which is attached to the socket of the hip, because he struck the socket of Jacob's hip near the attached sinew. (NET)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

* Underline "that night" in v. 22.

* Circle "Jabbok" in v. 23.

* Circle "alone" in v. 24.

* Highlight "man" in vv. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 and "God" in v. 30.

* Circle "wrestled" in v. 24.

* Bracket "could not overpower" in v. 25

* Double underline "Jacob" and "Israel" in v. 28.

* Box "but" indicating contrast in v. 28.

* Bracket the rhetorical question in v. 29.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Jacob was in "great fear and distress" (v. 7) "that night" at the ford of the Jabbok. Explain why.
2. What happened on "that night" leading up to Jacob's wrestling match?
3. Do you think Jacob's solitude was *intentional* or *circumstantial*? Explain.
4. Blindsided in the darkness, what must Jacob have thought at first?
5. On the one hand "the man" could not overpower Jacob, but on the other, he could easily wrench Jacob's hip. What do you make of that?
6. When did Jacob first realize his assailant was no mere man?
7. Jacob's assailant wanted to end the match at daybreak. Why?
8. Contrast the meaning of the name "Jacob" with the meaning of the name "Israel."
9. **Discussion:** Talk about how Jacob's life, as well as his name, was changed by his face to face encounter with God.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

The story of Jacob at the Jabbok becoming Israel at Peniel found in Genesis 32:22-32 is enigmatic to say the least. One commentator calls it "tantalizingly obscure, raising as many questions as it answers" and then observes: "The darkness of the night scene is matched by the opacity of the narrative" (Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2, *Genesis 16-50*, 295, 302).

Fortunately, the question and comments of another help to clarify things: "Why do the people of God attempt to gain the blessing of God by their own efforts? Faced with a great opportunity or a challenging task, believers are prone to take matters into their own hands and use whatever means are at their disposal. In such a situation there may even be a flirtation with unscrupulous and deceptive practices—especially when things become desperate.

"Jacob displayed these tendencies. All his life he managed very well. He cleverly outwitted his stupid brother—twice, by securing the birthright and by securing the blessing. And he eventually conquered Laban and came away a wealthy man—surely another sign of divine blessing. Only occasionally did he realize that it was God who worked through it all, but finally this truth was pressed on him graphically in the night struggle at the fort Jabbok.

"At Jabbok Jacob wrestled with an unidentified man until dawn and prevailed over him, and though he sustained a crippling blow, he held on to receive a blessing once he perceived that his assailant was supernatural. That blessing was signified by God's renaming the patriarch 'Israel,' to which Jacob responded by naming the place 'Peniel.' But because he limped away from the event, the 'sons of Israel' observed a dietary restriction" (Ross, 546-47).

The incident at the Jabbok cannot be understood apart from an understanding of the setting. Jacob is positioned to reenter Canaan after twenty years of exile in Mesopotamia, where he worked for his uncle Laban. He had hightailed it out of the land years earlier because Esau, his twin brother, was determined to kill him for taking his birthright and later their father's blessing. Before reentering the land, he fears Esau might attack him once he learns he has returned, so he decides to take preemptive measures. First, he notifies Esau of his return and desire for reconciliation (32:3-5). After which, his messengers

return with ominous news: "We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him" (v. 6). Beside himself, he divides his people and the flocks and herds with them into two groups. Should his brother attack, perhaps all will not be lost (vv. 7-8). Then he prays, "Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children" (v. 11), even though God had previously promised, "I will be with you" (31:3; cf., 28:13-15). Finally, he sends Esau extremely generous gifts to pacify him (vv. 13-21). Still, the outcome, his scheming notwithstanding, is outside of his control.

Jacob is alone when "a man" jumps him in the night. It's dark; he cannot identify his assailant. Jacob thinks, "Perhaps my messengers have led Esau straight to me, but no. Surely, either Esau would have identified himself or I would have recognized him—even after twenty years." The two wrestle throughout the night. Neither is able to best the other until the man strikes Jacob below the belt. He incapacitates him by wrenching his hip. According to the previous commentator, "When God touched the strongest sinew of Jacob, the wrestler, his strength shriveled, and with it Jacob's persistent self-confidence" (557). Jacob can no longer wrestle, but he can hang on for dear life, which he does. By this time Jacob knows his assailant is no ordinary man, so he asks him for a blessing to ensure an amiable meeting with Esau. Now crippled in his natural strength, he becomes bold in faith. With that, God blesses him. He changes his name from Jacob to Israel to mark the transformation in him. Jacob, the deceiver, who prevailed over people through trickery, is now Israel, the one who prevails through God. In the words of the same writer: "Jacob emerged from the encounter an altered man. After winning God's blessing legitimately [by faith] Jacob found that the danger with Esau vanished. He had been delivered" (557).

In the end, Jacob's preemptive measures go for naught. When he sees Esau, his brother runs to meet him, throws his arms around him, and kisses him. And when Jacob explains that the generous gifts, the "droves" (33:8), he sent to Esau in advance were sent to win his favor, Esau responds, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself"

(v. 9). Here's the point: the LORD reconciled Esau to Jacob, making Jacob's efforts to mollify him irrelevant. To commemorate what happened, Jacob names the place "Peniel, saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared'" (v. 30).

The *upper story* is about God who keeps his

promises to bless his own apart from their efforts to secure that blessing.

The *lower story* is about Jacob who learns that he does not need to scheme any longer to secure the covenant blessing. He simply needs to trust God to do what he promised.

The Message of the Passage

The blessing of God is obtained neither by force nor by trickery—rather, it is received by faith.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the three "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 22 **that night** Cf., vv. 13, 21. "Note the chiasmic inclusio in 32:13 and 21 (spent the night//gift) framing this episode" (Waltke, 444). This was the night he spent at the Jabbok after sending his gift ahead to Esau (vv. 14-20). The archetype "night" contributes to the ominous setting. "Nothing could be more ominous than Esau's silence and his rapid approach in force" (Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, TOTC, 179). "The evening is often an image of distress and a time for the awesome revelations of God (see 28:11-22). This night will bring a true end to Jacob's dark nights since fleeing Esau" (Waltke, 444-45).

v. 23 **Jabbok** "This site was probably just a few miles east of the Jordan Valley (v. 22). The "Jabbok" (River) joins the Jordan River about midway (north-to-south) between the Sea of Chinnereth (Galilee) and the Salt (Dead) Sea" (Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Genesis*, 2016 ed., 240, www.soniclight.com).

v. 24 **alone** "It is not clear why Jacob should have brought his family across the Yabbok and then returned to the northern side alone. Was it duty, or anxiety, or simply to inform us that there was none of his party with him when he was attacked?" (Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 2, *Genesis 16-50*, 295). "Whether or not he felt his need to be left alone before the crisis, God saw it, and saw to it" (Kidner, 181).

v. 24 **man** See vv. 28, 30; cf., Hos 12:3-4. "Jacob perceived only that a male antagonist was closing in on him. The reader gradually learns his identity as Jacob did-by his words and actions" (Ross, 552-53). "The nondescript statement heightens the story's tension. Who has come to struggle with Jacob? Only later does the reader recognize the man as the invisible God" (Waltke, 445).

v. 24 **wrestled** "God wrestled (ye'abeq) with Jacob (ya'aqob) by the Jabbok (yabboq)-the author delighted in wordplay. Jacob had struggled all his life to prevail, first with Esau, then with Laban. Now, as he was about to reenter Canaan, he was shown that it was with God that he must 'wrestle.' It was God who held his destiny in his hands" (The NIV Study Bible, note on 32:24).

v. 25 **overpower** "Note that Jacob is ninety-seven at his point in the narrative. He can therefore hardly be considered a challenge to an angel in physical terms. Though there is no reason to doubt that a physical contest takes place, we cannot make the mistake of thinking that is the main point. When the text tells us that Jacob's opponent cannot overcome him, it is not suggesting that Jacob is physically besting the man. The ease with which he inflicts physical damage on Jacob (32:25) indicates that any inability must be in the spiritual arena, not the physical one. If the wrestler is unable to overcome Jacob spiritually, it is because Jacob is not willing to yield. Only when the man threatens to go without offering assurances of God's help does Jacob show his willingness to negotiate in the critical issues" (John H. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis*, 605).

v. 28 **Israel** "Here it means 'God fights.' This name will replace the name Jacob; it will be both a promise and a call for faith. In essence, the Lord was saying that Jacob would have victory and receive the promises because God would fight for him" (The NET Bible, 67sn on 32:28). "Jacob's new name represents a reorientation from supplanter and deceiver into prevailer . . . Heretofore he prevailed over people by trickery. Now he prevails with God, and so with humans, by his words, not by the physical gifts conferred on him at birth or acquired through human effort. His ambition to prevail has not been changed but properly reoriented" (Waltke, 446).

v. 29 **why** "Jacob sought [the man's] name. The answer, however, was cautious: 'Why do you ask my name?' On the one hand, he seemed to say to Jacob, 'Think, and you will know the answer!' (Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, p. 218)" (Ross, 556).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

The lawnmower broke again. My son swears it was full of oil when he started but somehow halfway through the neighbor's yard, it was empty and the engine had blown. My husband was in the middle of a major project that Saturday. He definitely did not have time to take on another fix-it issue around the house. However, he stopped what he was doing and went out to help my son. The lawnmower proved unfixable so together they headed to the store to purchase another one. Thankfully, my husband had a stash of Home Depot gift cards that reduced our out of pocket expense since a new lawnmower was not in the budget. What my husband demonstrated that day was loving sacrifice. A recent Focus on the Family article said it like this, "Sacrifice can feel weak and powerless, but as Christ demonstrated, sacrifice is powerful. We are at our strongest when we lay down our lives, even in small ways, for our families—maybe especially in small ways, because those are the most difficult sacrifices to make. In healthy families, men demonstrate a common characteristic: sacrifice. These men spend time with their kids even when they'd rather do something else. They talk with their kids when part of them just wants to watch the football game. They deal patiently with their kids when they've just spilled milk on the floor - again." Dad, your sacrifice does not go unnoticed as we celebrate you this week!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Genesis 32:22-32

1. Why was Jacob alone?
2. Who does the Bible say he wrestled with?
3. What was his name changed to?

What Do You Think

Sometimes we say that we are "wrestling with God" when we are praying through a big life change or making a big decision. This moment was important for Jacob. What do you do when you are making big decisions or in a big life change?

What R U Going To Do

This Sunday is Father's Day! Make your dad (or granddad or favorite uncle) a card this week telling him all the things you are thankful for in him. Draw pictures of special memories you have had together.

Core Comp

Personal God - I believe God cares about everything in my life.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:37 - *No, in all things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed Scrolls _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

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Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.
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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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