

Digging Deeper

Shortly, after arriving in Canaan, Jacob had another encounter with God, who used the occasion to give him the name Israel, “the one who wrestles with God” (Genesis 35:9-12). This is the name that Jacob’s descendants would take for themselves, down to our own day.

Genesis 32 contains the fascinating story of Jacob wrestling all night with God. The whole wrestling match comes about during Jacob praying, and his physical struggle teaches us several lessons about prayer:

- **The blessings of God are released into our lives through prayer.**

Before Jacob was even born God had prophesied that the blessing would be his and not his brother’s (Gen 25:23). But it was not until Jacob took it in a prayer-wrestling match with God that it really became his. He laid hold of the promise of God through a night of prayer. So do not simply read through your Bible. Pray through it! The Bible is our primary prayer book, so read through it and lay hold of the promises of God!

- **The blessings of God are not obtained by our contriving.**

At the end of this wrestling match, God asks Jacob for his name. He already knows the name, but he wants Jacob to admit it. When Jacob had stolen the blessing, his daddy had asked for his name, and he lied: “My name is Esau.” But now he tells the truth: “My name is Jacob. I’m a deceiver. I’ve tried all my life to obtain these blessings for myself by my own manipulation. Now I am repenting.” So, God gives him a new name, Israel, which speaks of God giving the blessing, not Jacob wresting it for himself. The blessing you are searching for is not going to come from more striving or deceiving. It comes by submitting. Winning the blessing only comes by losing to God.

- **God is himself the blessing that we seek.**

God does not end the encounter with Jacob by assuring him that everything would be fine. He simply says, “Go to Esau. I am with you.” There is no promise that he will live through the next day. In fact, God has made Jacob limp, so he cannot even try to run away. But Jacob got a blessing that was greater than earthly blessing: the restoration of relationship. Whatever you are searching for, I can guarantee you that it cannot replace God. Sometimes God withholds blessing you are seeking to teach you that, because a relationship with God is better than any of his blessings. God does not always change your situation; sometimes he changes your identity. He changes you from a “Jacob” to an “Israel.” So, you can say, even amid the shadow of death, that God is with you, and that is enough.

Devotional Guide

For Individuals and Families (Issue #8)

THE JOURNEY OF JACOB

When Esau returned from his hunt and discovered what had happened in Jacob deceiving Isaac to gain the birthright, he flew into a rage. Soon he was plotting to kill Jacob. To protect her favorite son, Rebekah sent Jacob to Mesopotamia, to the home her brother Laban. One night at a place called Bethel, God appeared to Jacob in a dream (Read Genesis 28:10-15). These words have a familiar ring to them. They are like the ones God spoke to Abraham. By repeating them to Jacob, God was choosing to work through Jacob to carry out the earlier covenant with Abraham. But why Jacob? Here is a man who is a fugitive, on the run after swindling his brother and deceiving his father. This is hardly a man who deserves God’s kindness.

Which is the very point of the story. God is not showing kindness to Jacob because Jacob deserves it. God is simply saying that nothing Jacob has done stands in the way of what God will do with him in the future. Through the example of Jacob, God is telling us the same thing. No matter how badly we have ruined our past, God simply asks us to rise above those mistakes and become what He calls us to be. This does not mean that he approves of what we did wrong in the past any more than he approved of Jacob’s lying and cheating. But God does not want the weight of our past to impede the promise of our future. Quite a future lay ahead of Jacob.

For extra reading, read Genesis 29-37.

**Journey Through the Bible
Journey to a Better Family**

**Mile Marker
Genesis 28,35**

GENESIS 28 DISCUSSION

What charge did Isaac give to Jacob? (v.1)
To whose house was Jacob sent? (v.2)
Isaac wanted God Almighty to bless Jacob and make him fruitful and make him multiply so that he could be _____? (v.3)
What land did Isaac want Jacob to inherit? (v.4)
Padanaram was the home of Bethuel the _____? (v.5)
Who did Jacob obey? (v.7)
What caused Esau to go to Ishmael and get another wife? (v.6-9)
oward what city did Jacob go when he left Beersheba? (v.10)
Which of the following statements is true about 'the certain place' where Jacob tarried all night? (v.11)
What were the angels of God doing on the ladder that reached up into heaven? (v.12)
Who was standing at the top of the ladder? (v.13)
Which promise about Jacob's seed did the Lord not make? (v.14)
Who did Jacob say was in this place and he knew it not? (v.16)
What did Jacob NOT say about the place where he spent the night? (v.17)
What did Jacob do with the stones that he had used for his pillows? (v.18)
What time did Jacob arise? (v.18)
What did Jacob call the name of the 'certain place' where he had spent the night? (v.19)
What was the city of Bethel called at the first? (v.19)
What condition did Jacob NOT give for the Lord being his God? (v.20-21)
What portion would Jacob give to God if the Lord would meet his stipulations? (v.22)

Genesis 35

*How do you think the foreign gods Jacob refers to in verse 2 became part of Israel's "traveling family"?
Why do you think Jacob had tolerated such things to this point?

*What part does an altar play in worship (vs. 3)? Why is such an activity central to all worship?

*What does allonbachuth mean (35:8)?
When a person's life pleases God, is it a life free from tears and suffering?

*Does 35:10 have a familiar ring to it?
Why would God deem it necessary to give Jacob a new name all over again? Is there a parallel to this in the life of the average Christian?

*Why was Jacob not content to have a son named Ben-oni (35:18)?

*What do you suppose moved Reuben to take his action in 35:22?
What did this cost him later (49:3-4)?

*What percentage of "the sons of Israel" were born to Leah (35:23)? Why do you suppose it happened this way?

GOALS THIS WEEK

SUNDAY

- Review/Discuss notes from Bible class.

MONDAY

- Read THE BIG STORY from page #1
- Start on "Discussion" from page #2

TUESDAY

- Complete "DISCUSSION" from page #2

WEDNESDAY

- Review/Discuss notes from Bible class.

THURSDAY

- Read and work on MEMORY VERSES

FRIDAY

- Use DIGGING DEEPER from page #4 as a guide for discussion.

MEMORY VERSES

Genesis 28:15

Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. (ESV)

Genesis 33:4

Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. (ESV)