

Calvary Chapel  Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

Kindergarten

Sunday Morning

Study 10

Jacob Wrestles with God

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The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To show the Lord's ability to change the heart of any man, even a deceiver like Jacob.

Key Verses

Genesis 32—Main Teaching Passage

Genesis 28-31

Hosea 12:3-5

Memory Verse - Genesis 50:20 (November Memory Verse)

"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good."

Hook

Ask the students to name things they have changed about themselves. How many of them changed shirts from what they were wearing yesterday? Who has ever changed their hairstyle or hair color? Then ask if any of them can change their hearts. How would someone do that?

It is easy for us to change our shirts or our hair, but only God can change our hearts. The good news is that He can change any one of us, as we will see in today's story, where He changes Jacob the "heel-catcher" to Israel.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

In the last study, we saw how Jacob (“heel-catcher”) deceived his father and stole from his brother. This made Esau incredibly angry, and he promised that he would take his revenge on Jacob by killing him, so Jacob fled to his distant relatives’ house. Here he met his wives-to-be and deceived his new father-in-law Laban out of the very best of his flocks and herds. Eventually, Jacob fled again, this time from his father-in-law, and at this point had nowhere left to turn. This all is recorded in Genesis 28-31.

The Lord called Jacob to return to the land of his brother Esau, and Jacob did. In Genesis 32, he sent all his herds, servants, and family over the Jordan River, but he remained behind one more night. There on the other side of the Jordan, the Lord, in the form of a man, came and wrestled with Jacob all night long. Eventually, Jacob submitted to this Man, but would not release Him until he had been blessed. Of course, Jacob knew that it was the Lord, and the Lord saw how in this moment, Jacob had changed. He was no longer a man who lived by deceit, but one who relied upon and required the blessing of the Lord. God changed Jacob’s name. He was no longer the deceiver, but he Israel, meaning “he strives with God.” This again shows the change that the Lord had made in Jacob’s life.

LOOK

There is an old saying, “A leopard can’t change his spots.” It means that you are what you are, and there is no point in ever pretending to be something else. A leopard can pretend to be a zebra, but eventually it will get hungry and reveal its true nature by trying to eat one of the other zebras. When we say this about people, we are saying that there is no way that someone could ever change, and if they look different, watch out, because eventually they will start behaving the way they always have. In other words, a liar will always be a liar, or an angry, violent person will always be angry and violent.

This is a silly statement and we don’t believe it for one second. The whole reason that Jesus came to the earth was so that people could be reborn and their old ways could be done away with and they could live new, Christ-filled lives. We believe that the Gospel has the power to change the worst, most evil, most wicked heart, and make it clean and filled with love.

One of the reasons that we believe this is because we have seen it happen in ourselves, in other Christians that we know, and in many people in the Bible. Jacob was someone like this. He was a liar and a cheat.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK (Continued)

He cheated his brother out of his birthright. He stole the blessing by deceiving his father. Jacob even swindled his wife's father out of all of the best sheep and goats that he had on his farm and then fled. Jacob was a deceiver and he always did deceitful things. That is, until the night that he wrestled with God and God won.

Did Jacob try and cheat in the wrestling match? Probably. Can you cheat God? No. In fact, Jacob would not surrender until his hip had been dislocated, and he realized that He could never win against God. So he surrendered, but he also begged for a blessing. Jacob went from being someone who would steal and cheat, who would lie and deceive, to someone who relied upon the Lord for all things. Jacob gave his life over to the Lord, and the Lord blessed it. He healed the relationship between Jacob and Esau, and blessed Jacob with many sons. He even changed his name, showing that with God's help, anyone can be saved.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

Ask the students if there are any things in their lives that they would like to change. Pray with those students specifically about those things.

Pray: Praise the Lord that His mercies are new every morning, and that He can make all things new. Thank Him that there is no one outside of His love and grace. Ask Him to create in us clean hearts that love Him in greater ways.

Parent Question: Why did God wrestle with Jacob?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Genesis 32 by David Guzik

Genesis 32 - Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

A. Jacob hears of Esau's approach.

1. (1-2) Jacob meets the angels of God at Mahanaim. He realizes God is with him and he has angelic protection.

So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is God's camp." And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

a. **The angels of God met him:** We don't exactly know what this means. In some way, angelic being that are normally unseen were now made visible to Jacob, and he interacted with them. Perhaps God wanted Jacob to know how great His care was for him and his family.

i. This wonderful revelation of God's presence and care came *after* Jacob finally separated from Laban, the worldly man. Separation from the world brings greater insight to the believer.

b. **This is God's camp:** Literally, Jacob observed he was in a *double camp*. He was not alone; God had a camp of angels with him at **Mahanaim**.

i. It was not as if God's angels just joined Jacob. They were with him the entire time. Now Jacob could *see* God's angels with him and it provided great encouragement.

ii. Angels, though "higher" beings than us, are ordained by God to be our servants (Hebrews 1:14) and they minister to us even as they ministered to Jesus (Matthew 4:11). In 2 Kings 6:15-17 Elisha's servant had his eyes opened to see the tremendous angelic host surrounding them.

iii. John Paton, a missionary to the New Hebrides Islands, told of how one night hostile natives surrounded his missions headquarters, intent on burning the Patons out and killing them. He and his wife prayed through the entire night, and when daylight finally came, their attackers all left. A year later, the chief of the tribe became a Christian, and Paton asked the man about that night. The chief replied, "Who were all those men you had with you there?" The missionary explained only he and his wife were there. The chief insisted he had seen hundreds of big men with shining garments and swords circling the mission headquarters, so the natives were afraid to attack (Billy Graham in *Angels, God's Secret Agents*, page 3). That night in the New Hebrides Islands, there certainly was a "double camp."

2. (3-6) Jacob's message to Esau.

Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, "Speak thus to my lord Esau, 'Thus your servant Jacob says: "I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight."'" Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him."

a. **Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother:** Jacob, seeking to reconcile with his brother (who 20 years before swore to kill him), first began by humbling himself and sending the message, “**your servant Jacob.**”

b. **I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants:** Jacob wasn't boasting. He wanted Esau to know that he was a man of wealth and that he did not come to take anything from Esau. Jacob tried to anticipate Esau's thinking and answer Esau's concerns.

c. **He also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him:** When the messengers return, Jacob heard news that gave him great concern - Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. Because Jacob could not bring himself to think the best of Esau (for understandable reasons), he was convinced the 400 men were an army intending to destroy him and his family.

3. (7-8) Jacob's fear and carnal preparation.

So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. And he said, “If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape.”

a. **Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed:** When Laban confronted Jacob with a hostile militia Jacob boldly stood up to him and spoke his mind (Genesis 31:36-42). But with Esau, Jacob was afraid to meet him. This was because Jacob knew he was in the right with Laban, but he knew he was in the wrong with Esau.

i. Shakespeare was right when he wrote, “Conscience does make cowards of us all” (*Hamlet*, Act 3 Scene 1). As Jacob had no strength before Esau because of guilt, so many Christians today are also hindered by their past.

b. **Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed:** Before Jacob left home, after his brother swore to kill him, Rebekah told Jacob *until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there* (Genesis 27:45). Rebekah never sent for Jacob; therefore he had every reason to believe that Esau was still angry with him 20 years later.

i. But Jacob also had every reason to believe God would protect him. He seems to have forgotten God had a special camp of angels there to protect him. His great fear and distress is not appropriate for someone who is protected by God.

ii. Jacob should have said, “I don't know if Esau is coming to me in peace or in war. I hope for peace, but if it is war, I trust God will protect me.”

c. **He divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies:** In splitting his company, Jacob used man's wisdom to prepare for Esau's coming. He should have trusted God could protect all he had. Jacob forgot about God's two camps (Genesis 32:2) and was tried to make his *own* two camps.

4. (9-12) Jacob's prayer.

Then Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you’: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children. For You said, ‘I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”

a. **Then Jacob said:** After first reacting in fear and unbelief, Jacob did the right thing. He went to the LORD and prayed a good prayer, humble, full of faith, thanksgiving, and God's Word.

b. **The LORD who said to me, "Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you":** Jacob's prayer had *God's word* (what God said in Genesis 31:3). He also quoted God's promises **"I will surely treat you well"** (remembering God words in Genesis 28:13-15).

i. Many of our prayers fall short because there is none of God's Word within them. Often there is none of God's Word in them because there is little of God's Word in us. Jacob *remembered* what the LORD had said to him.

c. **I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies:** His prayer had *thanksgiving*. Jacob understood he was not worthy of what God did for him or what he was asking God to do, but he relied on what God promised and not upon his own worthiness.

d. **Deliver me, I pray:** His prayer had *faith*. He boldly asked God to do something, and gave humble grounds for why the LORD should fulfill His word.

i. George Mueller, a great man of faith and prayer, was once asked what was the most important part of prayer. He replied: "The 15 minutes after I have said, 'Amen.'" No matter how great Jacob's prayer was, his faith will be seen in what he does *after* his prayer.

5. (13-21) Jacob sends many gifts to Esau.

So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals. Then he delivered them to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves." And he commanded the first one, saying, "When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose are these in front of you?' then you shall say, 'They are your servant Jacob's. It is a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also is behind us.'" So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, "In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; and also say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us.'" For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me." So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.

a. **Took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother:** Jacob sent such an impressive gift because he wanted to make it completely clear to Esau that he did not need or want anything from him. It also could have been an attempt to *buy* his brother's good favor.

b. **I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me:** In all likelihood, Jacob is a perfect example of the principle "when all else fails, pray." As soon as he finished praying, he took up his own strategies again.

i. After all, if Jacob really trusted God, he would be at the *head* of the procession to meet Esau, not the *tail*.

ii. Jacob hoped, **"perhaps he will accept me,"** but in Jacob's mind, perhaps not. Jacob also thought, "Perhaps he will kill me just like he said he would."

c. **So the present went on over before him:** This gift is a good example of the way we trust in our ability to do things and make things happen apart from trusting God. We like to sing the song:

*All to Jesus, I surrender, all to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him, in His presence daily live.
I surrender all, I surrender all,
All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all.*

i. But we, so often like Jacob, mean, “I surrender all the goats. If that isn’t enough, I surrender all the sheep. If that isn’t enough, I surrender all the camels...” To this point, what Jacob refused to do was to surrender *himself*.

B. Jacob wrestles with God.

1. (22-23) Jacob sends all his possessions over the river.

And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had.

a. **He took them, sent them over the brook:** This was a demonstration of his faith, because Jacob left himself no retreat. If Esau wanted to attack his group, they would quickly be backed up against the river.

b. **Sent over what he had:** Jacob spent the night alone. This was his last night on the east side of the Jordan, and he probably spent the night in prayer.

i. God had to get Jacob alone before He dealt with him. While all the activity of the huge entourage surrounded Jacob, he could busy himself with a thousand different tasks. Once he was alone, God commanded his attention.

ii. Think of all Jacob had to pray about: thanking God, remembering all that the LORD did for him, wondering how God would fulfill His work in him. This was a significant turning point in Jacob’s life and he knew it.

2. (24-25) A **Man** wrestles with Jacob.

Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

a. **A Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day:** Jacob didn’t wrestle with the **Man**. Instead, **a Man wrestled with him**. Jacob didn’t start out wanting anything from God; God wanted something from him. God wanted all of Jacob’s proud self-reliance and fleshly scheming and came to take it, by force if necessary.

b. **A Man wrestled with him:** As the following verses show, this was no mere man. This is another special appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament before His incarnation in Bethlehem. This was God in human form.

c. **Until the breaking of the day:** We can only imagine what this scene looked like. Perhaps sometimes it looked like a barroom fight, and perhaps at other times it looked like an intense wrestling match.

i. “How did Jacob ever manage to keep up his struggle throughout the entire night? I do not know. But I do know that his determination to hang in there was no greater than our frequent determination to have our own way and eventually win out over God.” (Boice)

d. **He saw that He did not prevail against him:** As the fight progressed, it seemed Jacob was pretty evenly matched against the **Man**. But the match was only even in appearance. The **Man** could have won easily at any time, using supernatural power.

i. Sometimes we feel man really *can* contend with God. A man or woman in rebellion against God might seem to do pretty well. The match seems even in appearance only. God can turn the tide at any moment, and is allows the match to go own for His own purposes.

ii. It isn't hard to imagine Jacob working so hard and feeling he is getting the best of his opponent, until finally the **Man** changed the struggle in a moment. Jacob must have felt very defeated.

3. (26) Jacob's plea to the **Man**.

And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

a. **Let Me go, for the day breaks:** The **Man** let Jacob know this would not last much longer. Even though Jacob clung to him desperately, Jacob had lost. A better, greater Man defeated Jacob.

i. This is an invaluable place for everyone to come to: where God conquers us. There is something to be said for every man doing his wrestling with God, and then acknowledging God's greatness after having been defeated. We must know we serve a God who is greater than us, and we cannot conquer much of anything until He conquers us.

b. **I will not let You go unless You bless me:** This wasn't Jacob dictating terms to God as he did on previous occasions. God overcame Jacob here, and we know from Hosea 12:3-5 that Jacob sought this blessing with weeping. He knew he was defeated, yet desperately wanted a blessing from this Greater One.

i. *He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and in his strength he struggled with God. Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him in Bethel, and there He spoke to us; that is, the LORD God of hosts. The LORD is His memorable name.* (Hosea 12:3-5)

c. **Unless You bless me:** According to his past, Jacob was always clever and sneaky enough so he never felt the need to trust in God alone. Now he could *only* rely on the blessing of God.

i. Jacob was reduced to the place where all he could do was to hold on to the LORD with everything he had. Jacob could not fight anymore, but he could hold on. That is not a bad place to be.

ii. Here, God is answered Jacob's prayer in Genesis 32:9-12. Yet before Jacob could be delivered from the hand of his brother, he had to be delivered from his own self-will and self-reliance.

iii. Jacob thought the real enemy was outside of him, being Esau. The real enemy was his own carnal, fleshly nature, which had not been conquered by God.

4. (27-29) Jacob's name is changed, and he is a blessed man.

So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob." And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.

a. **What is your name?** Jacob must have felt a sense of shame, admitting his name was **Jacob**, with all its associations of deception and cheating. Yet, this was *who he was*, and Jacob had to admit to it.

i. We all want to name ourselves favorably. We say, "I am firm; you are obstinate; they are stubborn fools." God wouldn't allow Jacob to cover up his name, because in his case it reflected his true nature.

b. **Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel:** The name **Israel** is a compound of two words: *sarah* (meaning, *fight, struggle, or rule*) and *el* (meaning, *God*). Some take the name Israel to mean, *He who struggles with God* or *He who rules with God*. But in Hebrew names, sometimes God is not the object of the verb but the subject. *Daniel* means *God judges* not *he judges God*. This principle shows us **Israel** likely means, *God rules*.

i. From this point on, he will be called **Jacob** twice as often as he is called **Israel**. Apparently, there was still plenty of the old man left in Jacob.

c. **For you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed:** Jacob **prevailed** in the sense that he endured through his struggle until God thoroughly conquered him. When you battle with God, you only win by losing and by not giving up until you know you have lost. This is how Jacob **prevailed**.

d. **Why is it that you ask about My name?** The *Man* probably refused to tell Jacob His name because He figured Jacob should already know it, and it turned out that Jacob *did* know exactly who this was.

e. **And He blessed him there:** Surely, this was the blessing of being defeated by God. It was the blessing of the passing of the old (*Jacob*) life, and the coming of a new (*Israel*) life. It may also have had to do with the great idea of the blessing of Abraham, and meeting Jacob's immediate needs for security in the midst of fear. Whatever Jacob needed, God's blessing provided at the moment.

5. (30-32) Two memorials of this event.

And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.

a. **Jacob called the name of the place Peniel:** The first memorial was a name. Jacob named the place **Peniel** (*Face of God*), because he *did* know the name of the *Man* who wrestled with him. He was the same One who wrestled with Jacob all his life.

i. Jacob also understood it was only by God's grace and mercy he escaped from this episode with his life. No man should be allowed to wrestle with God and live, but God was gracious.

b. **He limped on his hip:** The second memorial was a perpetual limp. Jacob would remember his being conquered by God with every step he took for the rest of his life. This was a small price to pay for such a great gift.