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GENESIS 32:22-32

WRESTLING WITH GOD

THIS WEEK'S **focus**

If you've ever had a serious injury, you may have had the experience of lingering pain, even if the injury has been healed for a long time. It might simply come when you remember the injury, or it might be from a physical reminder such as a scar or implant. Whether the injury was minor or severe, one thing is certain: you probably weren't feeling all that blessed in the moment. We typically don't associate blessings with casts and crutches. In today's teaching, Jacob will experience an injury of his own. However, despite the pain of a dislocated hip (yes, ouch!), Jacob would limp away having encountered God in a transformative way. We'll learn that when we encounter God, He changes us.



CENTRAL **truth**

When we encounter God, He changes us.



EXPLORE

scripture

GENESIS 32:22-32

GENESIS 32:22-24

22 During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two slave women, and his eleven sons, and crossed the ford of Jabbok. **23** He took them and sent

them across the stream, along with all his possessions. **24** Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.

GENESIS 32:25-29

25 When the man saw that he could not defeat him, he struck Jacob's hip socket as they wrestled and dislocated his hip. **26** Then he said to Jacob, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." **27** "What is your name?" the man asked. "Jacob," he

replied. **28** "Your name will no longer be Jacob," he said. "It will be Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed." **29** Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he answered, "Why do you ask my name?" And he blessed him there.

GENESIS 32:30-32

30 Jacob then named the place Peniel, "For I have seen God face to face," he said, "yet my life has been spared." **31** The sun shone on him as he passed by Peniel — limping because of his hip. **32** That is

why, still today, the Israelites don't eat the thigh muscle that is at the hip socket: because he struck Jacob's hip socket at the thigh muscle.

07

GENESIS 32:22-32
CONVERSATION

questions

▶ READ GENESIS 32:22-24.

.01 When has the Lord been a source of comfort to you during an anxious time or scary situation?

.02 Look back at verses 9-12. Why is prayer an important practice?

.03 What can we learn from Jacob's confidence in God? What keeps us from being confident in God?



CONTEXT

Verse 24 indicates that Jacob's wrestling opponent was a "man." If that's the case, how do we know that the man was indeed God? Some have suggested that Jacob's opponent was an angel or a messenger of God. However, Jacob himself believed that the "man" he had fought was in fact God: "I have seen God face to face" (v. 30). Other clues that this was indeed God are in the two names "Israel" and "Peniel" (see vv. 28,30). Both names include "El," which is always used as a direct reference to God and is a part of many of the names of God that are used in the Old Testament, including *El Shaddai* ("God Almighty") and *El Roi* ("the God who sees"). Israel means "strives against God"¹ and Peniel means "the face of God."²

¹ Chad Brand et al., eds., "Israel," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), Logos Bible Software edition, 834.

² Brand, "Penuel," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1273.

▶ READ GENESIS 32:25-29.

.04 Who do you think this man was, and why did he rename Jacob? How might this have changed Jacob's life and outlook?

.05 Jacob was both injured and blessed. What does this say about his encounter with his opponent?

.06 What can we learn from Jacob's refusal to let go of his opponent?

▶ READ GENESIS 32:30-32.

.07 Have you ever wrestled with God spiritually? What difficulty or question initiated this experience?

.08 If God is always at work in our lives, why don't we always notice? How can we be more aware of His presence?



THEOLOGY

The wrestling match between Jacob and God ultimately isn't a story about a physical struggle but a life-changing spiritual struggle. Certainly, Jacob was no physical match in a wrestling contest with all-powerful God. But Jacob's entire life had been characterized by fighting, struggling, grasping, and deceiving. From tricking his brother and father, to struggling while working for Laban, then ultimately out-witting Laban to grow his own flock, grasping and deceiving was embedded in how Jacob operated. When God changed Jacob's name to Israel, the meaning of his name changed from "one who cheats" to "he who strives against God," "God rules," or "God heals."³ This was a significant spiritual moment. He was transformed from one with impressive physical strength to one who displayed great moral strength in the later part of his life.⁴

³ Brand, "Israel" and "Jacob" in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 834, 860-61.

⁴ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27-50:26*, vol. 1B, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), Logos Bible Software edition, 538, 557.

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GENESIS 32:22-32

NOW what?



CENTRAL truth

When we encounter God, He changes us.

.09 Why is it necessary for God to transform us?

.10 What is the significance of spiritual markers today? What are some examples?

.11 How does the story of Jacob wrestling with God demonstrate that God is personal and active in our lives?

.12 How can our group continually pray for one another when difficult situations arise?

DAILY devotions

MEMORIZE GENESIS 32:10a

7 ARROWS FOR BIBLE READING



What does this passage say?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage tell us about humans?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?



What does this passage demand of me?

day 1

GENESIS 32:17-20

DWELL

Jacob was preparing himself to meet his brother Esau for the first time in over twenty years. The last time they were together, Jacob had tricked his father to receive the greater blessing—after already having tricked Esau for the birthright. Jacob had plenty of reasons to be afraid—His brother said he wanted to kill him. Jacob sent a generous gift of livestock ahead to Esau in attempt to appease him, just in case he was still mad. Sometimes we can make more of a situation in our mind than is actually there. But he would soon discover that this wasn't the reality. Relationships can get messy, but God can help restore them.



What do Jacob's actions reveal about how he thought Esau felt about him?



What is a better way to deal with conflict than trying to buy your way out of it?

MEMORIZE

Write Genesis 32:10a on an index card or sticky note and attach it to your bathroom mirror. Say the verse aloud each day, emphasizing a few different words each time.

PRAY

Talk to God about any relationship difficulty you are facing right now and ask Him to work in the situation to restore your relationship.

day 2

GENESIS 32:22-24

DWELL

The night before Jacob was set to meet Esau, he sent his wives and children across the river. He divided his entire camp into two groups, just in case something happened. Jacob was afraid to meet Esau, even after so many years, and he stayed behind to think about the situation. What Jacob wasn't prepared for was a wrestling competition during the night. God used this night to really get Jacob's attention.

→ When has God used unexpected events to get your attention?

↪ What does it look like to demonstrate trust in God?

MEMORIZE

Save Genesis 32:10a as a wallpaper or screensaver on your phone or computer. Read it aloud each time you see it.

PRAY

Tell God how much you trust Him and ask Him to guide you in your relationships with others.

day 3

GENESIS 32:25-29

DWELL

Jacob wrestled with God all night and came out on top. God even dislocated Jacob's hip, but he still wouldn't quit. In pain, Jacob said he wouldn't let go until God blessed him. That's when God changed his name to Israel—which means “one who struggles with God.” That's also where we get the name for the nation of Israel. Jacob had a powerful encounter that changed him as well as the course of his life. You can have a life-changing encounter with God, too—you just need to be willing to accept His correction and blessing.

↻ How would you describe what happened to Jacob in these verses?

→ What are you wrestling with right now? How could you let God help you?

MEMORIZE

Say the book, chapter, and verse number for Genesis 32:10a out loud several times. Then read aloud just the first few words of the verse. Do this a few times a day and see if you can memorize more each time.

PRAY

Thank God that He loves you enough to have a personal encounter and relationship with you.

day 4

GENESIS 32:30-32

DWELL

Jacob ended up with a limp as a result of his encounter with God. It was a personal reminder of what had happened. These types of reminders can be powerful! Jacob also named the place where it happened as a reminder for him or any others who might pass by there in the future. For many believers today, jewelry, journals, and other spiritual markers can be reminders of something God has done in our lives. It's important to remember when God moves in your life.

← What impact did this event have on the Israelites and their history?

↪ When have you had a deeply personal experience with God?

MEMORIZE

Write out Genesis 32:10a on a piece of paper. Circle three to five key words in the verse and consider their importance. Focus on those words and see how much of the verse you can speak from memory.

PRAY

Pray that God would reveal Himself to you in a very personal way.

day 5

EZEKIEL 36:26-27

DWELL

These verses were a prophecy for the restoration of the nation of Israel. Don't miss God's work in these verses! God promised to give the people a new heart and fill them with a new spirit. The change from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh indicates a heart that would be responsive to God. The new spirit is the Holy Spirit from God—our comforter, guide, teacher, and companion. This is a complete spiritual change that comes only from God.

↑ What do you learn in these verses about God and the impact He wants to make in your life?

↪ How have you experienced the heart of flesh and the new spirit that these verses describe?

MEMORIZE

Read Genesis 32:10a several times. Then start by trying to memorize the first two or three words. Once you have those words memorized, add a few more words at a time until you can say the whole verse.

PRAY

Pray that God would make your heart even more sensitive to the Holy Spirit and His leading.