



# Everyone Needs Community

August 10-16, 2025

---

## **MAIN POINT**

Living in authentic community wakes us up to the presence of God in our lives.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Do you think most people in our culture live authentic lives? Why or why not?

What evidence do you see around you that most of us don't live authentically?

What do you think are the biggest challenges for an authentic life among Christians?

"Authenticity" is a cultural buzz word right now. But it seems that while authenticity is the cry of all, it is the game of few. For the Christian, an authentic community is necessary. It is an environment where we can not only acknowledge our sin, but also experience the grace and mercy of Jesus.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

**READ [GENESIS 32:22-28](#).**

Have you ever felt like Jacob? Have you ever had a moment when you had to confront the truth about yourself? What were the circumstances?

Why do you think God brings us to points like that?

What was the result of that self-confrontation for you?

God won't allow us to live in self-deception. It's uncomfortable to confront the truth about ourselves, but doing so moves us into a place where we are more honest with others and with God.

How might being honest about ourselves—with ourselves and with God—help us to live a life more wide awake to God's presence?

Conversely, how might living dishonestly keep us from experiencing the presence of God in our everyday lives?

Admitting our failures is only half the battle. God has given us the gift of each other. When we are honest in community with each other, we begin to experience the true healing God wants to bring into our lives.

**READ [GALATIANS 6:1-5](#).**

How do you think carrying one another's burdens as Paul describes it in [verses 1-2](#) leads to fulfilling the law of Christ?

When we are willing to step under the burden of another, we are living the life of love for our

neighbor that Jesus said all the law and the prophets point to.

**Does carrying one another's burdens mean solving one another's problems? Why or why not?**

**If not, what does it look like to truly carry another's burdens?**

**Which do you think is more difficult—to carry someone else's burdens or to allow someone else to carry yours? Why?**

Pride is what will keep us from living authentically. We might be too proud to step under the burdens of another, or we might be too proud to open up and allow someone else to know us well enough to carry ours. In either case, pride prevents us from living wide awake to the grace and mercy of God in our lives.

**READ [JAMES 5:16](#).**

**How does this verse relate to carrying one another's burdens?**

**Why do you think confession leads to healing?**

When we are honest with each other, we can be the voice of Jesus to each other. We can remind each other of the grace freely given in Jesus Christ, and we can experience that grace through the Christian community.

## **APPLICATION**

**Based on the discussion today, what do you think are the main obstacles to a deeper sense of authentic community at our church?**

**How might you personally pursue that community?**

**How might we reach out to those who are pulling away from the faith community at our church? How might we reach out to them with the love of Christ?**

## **PRAYER**

Allow your group to share particular burdens they are carrying this week. Then pray for each person by name.

## COMMENTARY

### GENESIS 32:22-32

**32:22-23.** The phrase “that night” alludes to the previous verse, suggesting that Jacob improvised on his strategy of sending ahead gifts. He arose in the same night, sending ahead his family and presumably any servants who would accompany his remaining possessions.

**32:24-25.** Why Jacob chose to stay behind by himself is unclear. This reality contributes to the mystery of the unidentified person who inexplicably assails him. Mention of the “dawn” shows that Jacob and the “man” possessed remarkable strength and endurance. This mention also infuses the narrative with mystery, since the unidentified “man” wishes to remain anonymous. When one reflects on Jacob’s life throughout the book of Genesis, references to his physical strength stand out. He was grasping his brother’s heel at birth (Genesis 25:26). He moved a stone to water Rachel’s sheep (Genesis 29:10). He worked Laban’s herds for twenty years in difficult conditions (Genesis 31:38-40). Here he vigorously clinches the “man,” who, in what appears to be desperation, injures the patriarch in a failed attempt to free himself. The irony is that Jacob’s physical weakness will later help him recall the transformation of his moral strength.

**32:26.** Jacob held fast, despite the “man’s” trickery, who resorted to pleading for release. The light of dawn would reveal the identity of the stranger, evidently giving Jacob an advantage over the “man.” Jacob seized his chance, knowing that the figure he encountered was his superior. That Jacob believes the “man” can render him a blessing indicates that Jacob knows his identity. Since this is God’s messenger, Jacob has his opportunity to obtain the blessing from God that had escaped him until now, for he had only received his father’s blessing and that was given unwittingly. The precise nature of this blessing is unstated. We may surmise that Jacob sought the power only God could provide him to overcome his enemies. The difficulty with this understanding, however, is that Jacob had already overpowered the “man,” leaving the impression that the blessing Jacob sought transcended the circumstances. He seeks from the Lord the assurance that his descendants will endure, creating the nation God had promised.

**32:27-29.** By asking Jacob’s name, the “man” indicated his superior position to Jacob. The change in name signaled God’s favor toward him. The dubious meaning of the name “Jacob” was suspicious at best. Historically, the name “Jacob,” meaning “one who supplants” (“grabs the heel of”), was given for the seizure of his twin brother’s heel at birth. If there were any ambiguity about the disrepute of the name “Jacob,” Esau rendered his verdict in no uncertain terms: “Isn’t he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times” (27:36). By the change in name to “Israel,” the passage announces that Jacob’s moral character is about to undergo a metamorphosis.

**32:30-32.** “Peniel” means “face of God,” and it is a name originated by Jacob because of his face-to-face meeting with God. By this the reader learns from Jacob that the “man” was indeed deity, as we had come to expect from earlier hints. Jacob now limps: a physical and visual reminder of his costly victory. Jacob is now a new man, Israel, and he heads across the river a changed man.