

# YOUR NAME WILL BE ISRAEL

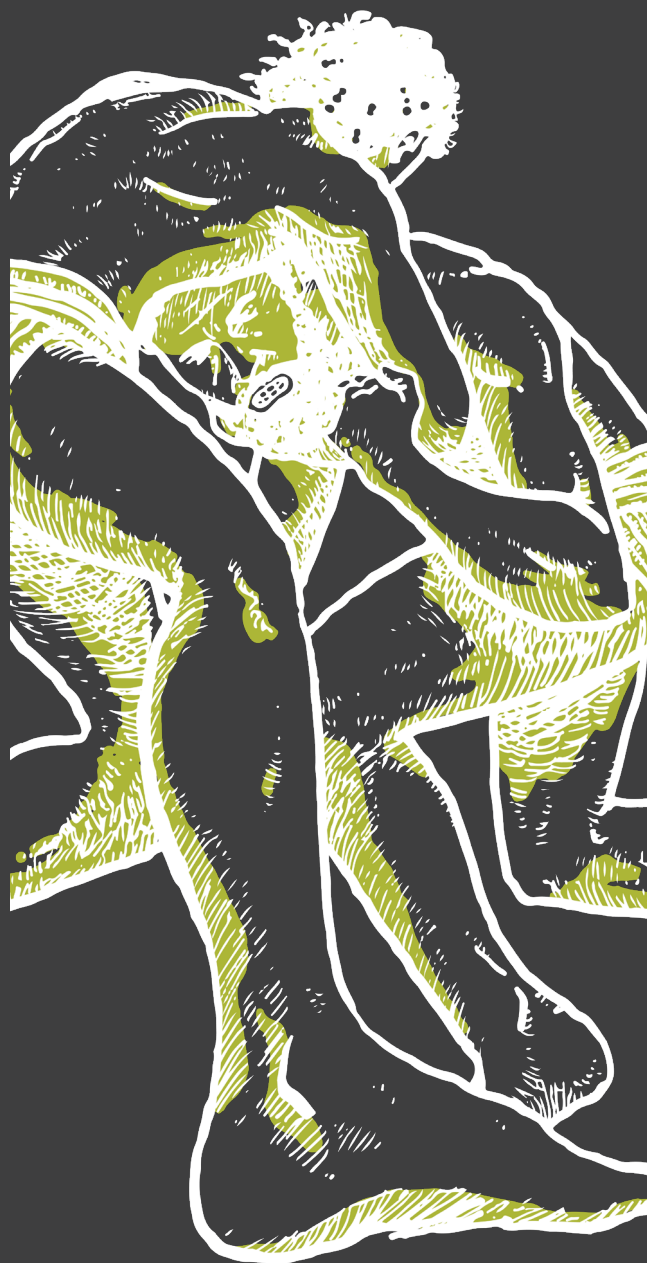
## MAIN POINT.

**Wrestling** with God helps us know Him and be changed by Him.



## CHRIST CONNECTION

Jacob was given a new name after his struggle with God, a struggle that permanently altered him physically and spiritually. Because of Christ's sacrifice, we are also given a new identity as sons and daughters—coheirs with Christ—adopted into God's family (**Rom. 8:17**). We are permanently altered in every way because of the blood of Jesus.



This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

**Genesis 32****Genesis 35****SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE CAN LEAD TO NEW IDENTITY****GENESIS 32:24-32**

24 And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. 25 When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. 26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." 27 And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." 28 Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. 30 So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered." 31 The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. 32 Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.

**GOD RESTORES BROKENNESS CAUSED BY SIN****GENESIS 33:1-11**

1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two female servants. 2 And he put the servants with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. 3 He himself went on before them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. 4 But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. 5 And when Esau lifted up his eyes and saw the women and children, he said, "Who are these with you?" Jacob said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." 6 Then the servants drew near, they and their children, and bowed down. 7 Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down. And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. 8 Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company that I met?" Jacob answered, "To find favor in the sight of my lord." 9 But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." 10 Jacob said, "No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me. 11 Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." Thus he urged him, and he took it.

# BEFORE YOU TEACH

## MAIN POINT.

Leaders: Thank you for preparing to teach God's Word. As you do, may He teach you new and wonderful truths (Ps. 119:18).

**Wrestling** with God helps us know Him and be changed by Him.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

### SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE CAN LEAD TO NEW IDENTITY

#### GENESIS 32:24-32

"The significance of the passage lies primarily in Jacob's discovering the freedom and enduring grace of God. The passage shows that God is free to bless whom he pleases. The blessing Jacob so desires is not an automatic bestowal based on God's promises to his fathers, Abraham and Isaac. Nor is it a promise Jacob can achieve through his own strength or wit. Through the transforming grace of the Lord, this man undergoes a moral conversion that will render him an appropriate vessel of divine blessing. A. Ross comments, 'Now crippled in his [Jacob's] natural strength he became bold in faith.' . . . The ambiguity of the 'man's' identity contributes to the author's theology of God's hiddenness. He confronts Jacob in a personal way, but he resists full disclosure. As long as God maintains this veil, Jacob cannot truly rival God's power and position. And for the Christian interpreter, an even more remarkable exhibit of God's grace is the fuller disclosure in the condescension and incarnation of Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 18; 2 Cor. 3:13-18; Heb. 1:3)."<sup>5</sup>

#### GENESIS 32:29-32

"Jacob held on until he received a blessing, probably after realizing that his opponent was no common mortal. Remember that when Jacob answered the question about his name he was forced to say deceiver. Then a most unexpected thing happened as Jacob received a new name—Israel—literally meaning 'he struggles with God.' The transformation pertained to the way in which Jacob prevailed. Always before he had prevailed over people through trickery. Now he prevailed with God, and so with humans, by his words, not by the physical gifts conferred on him at birth or acquired through human effort."<sup>6</sup>



## CONTEXT

God did a transforming work in Jacob and graciously included him as a patriarch of the Hebrew nation. After deceiving his brother, Esau, Jacob lived with his relatives and experienced what it was like to be deceived. Laban, his uncle, tricked Jacob into working for him for seven years in exchange for marrying his daughter, Rachel; instead, Laban sneakily gave him Leah and required another seven years of labor for Jacob to earn Rachel as his bride. During this time, Jacob was slowly being **refined and transformed in preparation for a new identity**, which would come directly from God. Israel, which means, “one who struggles with God,” would be Jacob’s new name and the name of God’s chosen people.

## THEOLOGY CONNECTION



### repentance

Repentance is a **response** to God’s gracious call to salvation. It includes **genuine sorrow** for one’s sin (Luke 5:1-11), **turning away from one’s sin** toward Christ (Acts 26:15-20), and a life that reflects **lasting change and transformation** (Ps. 119:57-60). Repentance is the human counterpart to God’s work of regeneration; in other words, it is the human side of our conversion.

## LEADER’S PRAYER

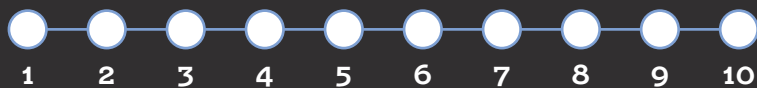
GOD, ONLY YOU CAN CHANGE US AND OUR  
STUDENTS. THANK YOU FOR TRANSFORMING  
US AS WE FOLLOW YOU.



## KICK STARTER

### RATE IT!

On a scale of 1-10, how easily do you forgive others?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

# 1

## REAL CHANGE

### SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses.

- **HAVE YOUR LIKES AND DISLIKES CHANGED SINCE YOU WERE YOUNGER? YOUR BEHAVIORS? HOW?**
- **WHEN HAVE YOU TRIED TO CHANGE SOMETHING NEGATIVE ABOUT YOURSELF AND FAILED (A BAD ATTITUDE, A BAD HABIT, ETC.)?**
- **HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN SOMEONE HAS REALLY CHANGED?**

We naturally change over time. Our likes and dislikes rarely ever stay the same. We even try to force change in our lives sometimes as we try to be better people. But God is the only One powerful enough to produce real change in our lives.

# 2

## CULTURAL CONNECTION

Can people really change? Can you? Maybe you've tried to change before and failed. Maybe you tried to walk away from certain sins and addictions, or you've tried to truly forgive someone. Maybe you tried to stop worry from dominating your thoughts. Maybe you tried to live with more joy and gratitude. Maybe you tried to be kinder to your family, but it didn't last. We can't manufacture change; God is the only One who has the power to transform us into something better. We need Him to continue changing us too. Sometimes, change isn't instant but progressive and continuous, and we can celebrate small victories along the way. God shows us grace when we mess up, and He works the change in us as we continue to walk with Him.

# DISCUSSION

## MAIN POINT.

**Wrestling** with God helps us know Him and be changed by Him.

## SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE CAN LEAD TO NEW IDENTITY

READ GENESIS 32:24-32



### WHY DID GOD ALLOW JACOB TO WRESTLE WITH HIM?

God didn't have to meet Jacob privately, but God had chosen that moment to change Jacob in the best way. While it appeared to Jacob that he was winning, God could've overpowered him at any moment. God allowed the struggle to continue more as a mercy for Jacob. **Jacob came to the end of himself—to the end of his old identity. The wrestling was part of drawing Jacob to repentance and a new way of life.**

### WHY DO YOU THINK GOD LEFT JACOB WITH A LIMP?

Jacob didn't escape from wrestling with God unscathed. God injured Jacob's hip and ended the struggle, leaving him with a limp. The writer, Moses, even reminded the Hebrew people that this is the reason they didn't eat meat from the hip area. **This injury served as a constant reminder of the exhausting struggle with God, which forever marked Jacob with a new identity. Struggling with God never leaves us in the same condition.**



### WHAT DOES JACOB RECEIVING A NEW IDENTITY REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER?

Jacob was born with a name that basically marked him as a deceiver, and many of his life choices reflected this. Sometimes we live up to the expectations placed on us because of our family, our culture, and our circumstances. But these things don't actually define us—God does. Jacob didn't ask for a new name; he asked for a blessing. In essence, Jacob recognized this “man” as supernatural, and he seemed desperate for a new story. God kindly proclaimed that Jacob the deceiver would now be Israel, one who wrestled with God. In this wrestling Jacob found restoration and a new beginning. He got to start a new phase of his story. **God is kind to restore all of us when we spiritually wrestle with Him about our lives, our identity, our choices, and our sins. God draws us to repentance and answers our cry for salvation, giving us new names as His sons and daughters.**

## GOD RESTORES BROKENNESS CAUSED BY SIN

READ GENESIS 33:1-11

### HOW DID WRESTLING WITH GOD PREPARE JACOB TO MEET ESAU AFTER DECEIVING HIM YEARS AGO?

Jacob was terrified to meet Esau after twenty years of separation. Had Jacob confronted Esau with his old identity—as a selfish, unrepentant deceiver—the outcome could’ve been very different. But **Jacob had been humbled and transformed**. He was ready to apologize and ask for forgiveness.

### WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE THAT BOTH BROTHERS HAD CHANGED? WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THIS?

Both men had changed over the course of time. Jacob walked ahead of the group instead of putting others in front of himself. He was willing to put himself on the line of danger. He also bowed down seven times in front of Esau, which symbolized complete submission and humility. Esau ran to embrace his brother, indicating he had already forgiven him. Esau flourished even without the birthright and was content with what he had. **God can and will change us. He can redeem even our past mistakes and restore broken relationships.**

### IMMEDIATELY AFTER JACOB’S TRANSFORMATION, HE WAS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WALK IN NEW LIFE. HOW DOES GOD DO THIS WITH US TOO?

When God changes us, He usually gives us the opportunity to walk out that change. **We’ll face situations that will test our ability to lean on God in our new identity.** This may mean He gives us the chance to tell others about Him, to walk away from gossip, to stop scrolling social media as much, or to love our enemies. It’s a gift to live out our identity as sons and daughters in God’s kingdom.

## WRAP-UP

### WHY IS IT HEALTHY TO SPIRITUALLY WRESTLE WITH GOD? IN WHAT AREA OF YOUR LIFE ARE YOU WRESTLING WITH GOD?

We often don’t know where we stand on certain issues until we’ve wrestled with them. Spiritually, wrestling is important because it helps us truly know God’s character and Word; it produces growth. **Wrestling doesn’t mean we doubt; it’s a healthy way to ask questions and search for God’s answers.** It can look like taking questions to God in prayer, searching God’s Word, and even waiting until God reveals truth through the Holy Spirit (which will always align with what He has already revealed in Scripture). Maybe you’re wrestling with who you want to be, past mistakes, relationships, or whether or not your actions are sinful. **It’s okay to approach God and ask Him to show you the truth. It’s okay to dig and find truth.** Only in this wrestling will you develop a faith of your own that’s grounded in God’s Word.