

YOUR NAME WILL BE ISRAEL

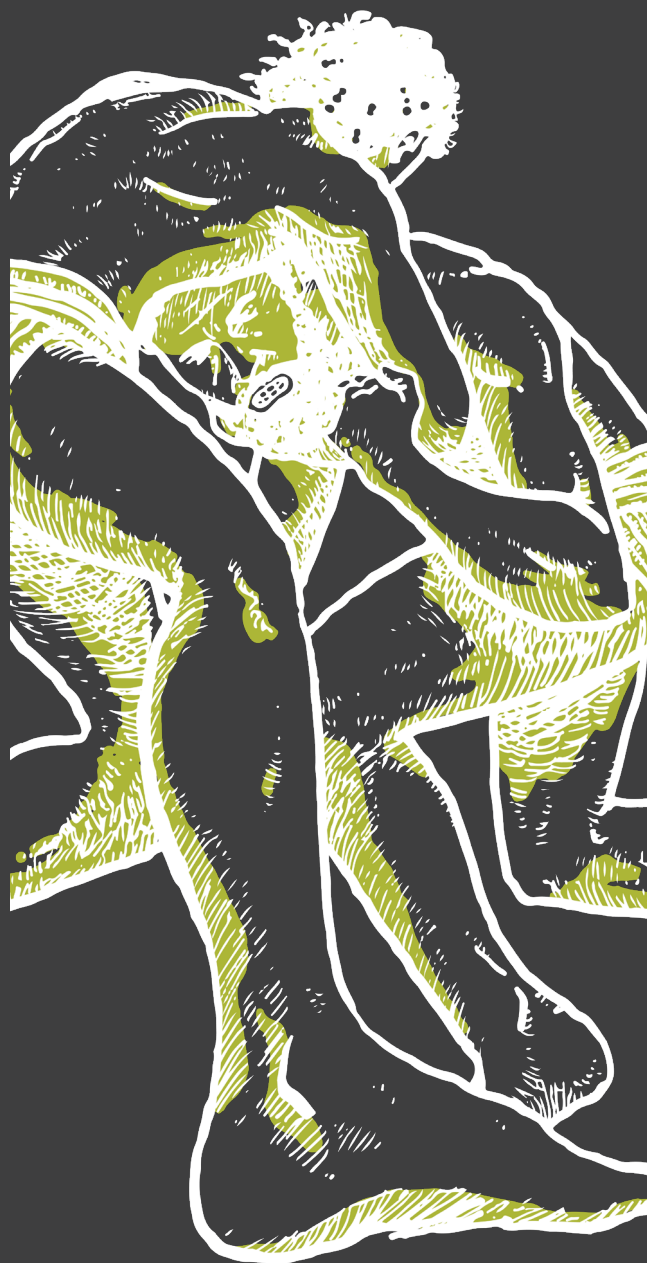
MAIN POINT.

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 Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 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. 8 "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. 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 Penuel—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.

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

1 Now Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming toward him with four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two slave women. 2 He put the slaves and their children first, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. 3 He himself went on ahead and bowed to the ground seven times until he approached his brother. 4 But Esau ran to meet him, hugged him, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. Then they wept. 5 When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he asked, "Who are these with you?" He answered, "The children God has graciously given your servant." 6 Then the slaves and their children approached him and bowed down. 7 Leah and her children also approached and bowed down, and then Joseph and Rachel approached and bowed down. 8 So Esau said, "What do you mean by this whole procession I met?"

"To find favor with you, my lord," he answered. 9 "I have enough, my brother," Esau replied. "Keep what you have." 10 But Jacob said, "No, please! If I have found favor with you, take this gift from me. For indeed, I have seen your face, and it is like seeing God's face, since you have accepted me. 11 Please take my present that was brought to you, because God has been gracious to me and I have everything I need." So Jacob urged him until he accepted.

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)."⁵

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."⁶



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

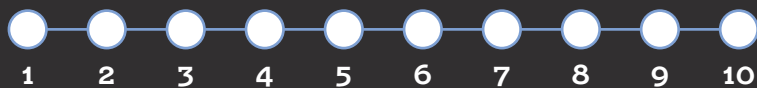
GOD, ONLY YOU CAN CHANGE US AND OUR
STUDENTS. THANK YOU FOR TRANSFORMING
US AS WE FOLLOW YOU.



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

A NEW NAME

SUPPLIES LIST: LIST OF NAMES AND MEANINGS, PAPER, WRITING UTENSILS

Create a list of names that reflect positive qualities, making sure to gather enough names for your group. Depending on the size of your group, print out the list or write it on a dry erase board at the front of the room.

Give each student a sheet of paper. Tell them to write their names at the top of the index card at their seat, then rotate seats. When they get to someone else's paper, they should write a name from the list that reflects that person to them or reflects something they want to pray over for that person. For example, the name Bennett means blessed, so you might write that name and pray for God to bless that person.

Today, we'll read about an important name change in the Bible and how God changes us and gives us a new identity even if He doesn't change our given names.

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 leave this wrestling match unaffected. God injured Jacob's hip and ended the struggle, leaving him with a limp. **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 the same.**



GOD GAVE JACOB A NEW IDENTITY. WHAT DOES THIS TELL US 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 WITH THE BROTHER HE'D DECEIVED BEFORE?

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.**

GOD CHANGED JACOB AND IMMEDIATELY GAVE HIM THE CHANCE TO LIVE OUT THAT NEW IDENTITY. HOW DOES GOD DO THIS FOR 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.