

# Authentic Spirituality

Spiritual transformation requires acknowledging the truth about ourselves and trusting God to change us.



**GOD'S STORY**  
THE TRANSFORMATION FOR ADULT LIFEGROUPS

**Genesis 32:22-32**

**March 8, 2020**

(Gen. 32:22-32) <sup>22</sup> That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. <sup>23</sup> After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. <sup>24</sup> So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. <sup>25</sup> When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. <sup>26</sup> Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." <sup>27</sup> The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. <sup>28</sup> Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." <sup>29</sup> Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. <sup>30</sup> So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared." <sup>31</sup> The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. <sup>32</sup> Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.

## COMMUNITY – CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER

- When you were a child, what pretend games did you play? Who did you pretend to be?
- Do adults in our culture still pretend to be someone they are not? How so? Who do you pretend to be?
- Why is it sometimes difficult for people to face the truth about themselves?

We all tend to think more highly of ourselves than we ought (Rom. 12:3). This is because we are sinners and are prideful at heart. We don't like to admit the truth about who we really are because facing the truth hurts. Today, however, we will see that God cannot be deceived. He knows who we really are, and through the power of the gospel, we can acknowledge the truth about ourselves and embrace Christ's power to transform us.

## CONTENT – EXPLORING GOD'S STORY

Have a volunteer read Genesis 32:22-32

Jacob spent most of his life pretending to be his twin brother, Esau. He cheated his twin out of his birthright and disguised himself as Esau in order to trick their father out of Esau's blessing. Pretending to be his brother, however, did not produce the results that Jacob had hoped. In Genesis 32, Jacob found himself on the run out of fear that Esau was coming to kill him.

- How might pretending to be someone you are not affect your relationship with others? How did this affect Jacob's relationship with those closest to him?
- Why did God engage Jacob in a wrestling match at this particular juncture in Jacob's life? Why did God injure Jacob?
- Do you really think God could not overcome Jacob? Why, then, did God allow the wrestling match to go on so long?

Jacob's encounter with God at Peniel is a picture of what God has done for us through the death and resurrection of Christ. By sending Jesus to take the punishment for our sins, God was wounded on our behalf. In a sense, God let us prevail by willingly setting aside His power and glory to become the sacrifice that would forgive us of our sins. Jacob did not deserve a relationship with God. In fact, if Jacob got what he deserved, God would have crushed him. Perhaps this is why God injured Jacob's hip with the lightest touch, to remind him that though he deserved to be destroyed, God was gracious to him. This act would forever change Jacob's relationship with God.

- **God asked Jacob for his name. What might be significant about this question? What was God really asking Jacob?**
- **How does Jacob respond to God's question (v. 27)? How was this answer different from how Jacob had previously answered that question (Gen. 27:18-19)? Why did Jacob answer differently this time?**
- **How did this encounter change Jacob's view of himself? How did it change his relationship with God?**

David once said of God, "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me . . . before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely" (Psalm 139:1-4). In the presence of God, Jacob could not go on pretending to be someone he was not. The wound that God inflicted woke Jacob up to reality and he finally, honestly admitted who he was, Jacob, "the deceiver."

- **Why is accurate self assessment a necessary first step in spiritual growth?**
- **How does Jacob's new name (v. 28) reflect both who Jacob was and who he would be in the future?**

Jacob's spiritual victory, symbolized by his name change, wasn't accomplished by overpowering God but by holding on to God until God chose to bless him. Only a meeting with God can free us from self deception. By injuring his hip and then letting Jacob prevail, God reminded Jacob that he is weak and utterly dependent on God. Jacob was broken so that he would learn to trust God and live for his glory.

- **If we face the truth about us without Jesus, it will only hurt us. How might facing the truth about ourselves cause us pain? How have you experienced this personally?**
- **If we face the truth about ourselves with Jesus, it will heal us. How did facing the truth about himself bring healing in Jacob's life? How might doing so bring healing to your life?**

It is significant that God injured Jacob's hip and gave him a limp. Jacob was most concerned with running away should he encounter Esau. Now there was no way for him to run. In essence, God has now made it where Jacob can only depend on God protecting him from Esau – which is just what God did by changing Esau's heart (Gen. 33:1-9).

Sometimes, we think we've received a wound from God that holds us back. In reality, our weakness is what makes us depend on him (Romans 12:5-10). A major theme of the Bible is God using our weaknesses and wounds to accomplish His plan. Ultimately, God took on our weak flesh in the person of Jesus so that He might be wounded for our sins.

## COMMISSION – ENGAGING IN GOD’S STORY

- Read Romans 12:3-5. What is one step you could take this week toward more honestly assessing your spiritual health? How might we as a group help each other in this regard?
- How has God allowed you to be broken or wounded in order to strengthen your faith?
- How is the current state of your relationship with God impacting your relationship with others? What will you do this week to grow in both areas?

**PRAYER:** Finish your time together in prayer. Thank God for the grace He gives us to face the truth about ourselves. Pray that we would admit our sins and look to Him for the strength necessary to grow spiritually. Thank Him for His promise to make us new.

## CONTINUE TO JOURNEY THROUGH GOD’S STORY

Bible Reading Plan:

DAY 1 – Genesis 39-40  
 DAY 2 – Genesis 41  
 DAY 3 – Genesis 42-43  
 DAY 4 – Genesis 44-45  
 DAY 5 – Genesis 46-47

KEY VERSE: Genesis 45:4-5

H.E.A.R. Method:

Highlight a verse or two.

Explain what the text means.

Apply the verse to your life.

Respond to God.

Our team has put together Bible study resources to encourage and inspire you as you engage in God’s Story. Visit [chetscreek.com/gods-story](https://chetscreek.com/gods-story) for videos, study guides, and more.

### OUR VISION

To be a church  
 for the unchurched,  
 here and around the world.

### ADULT LIFEGROUPS

Gospel-centered communities that aim to KNOW  
 GOD together and BE CHANGED by Him in a  
 way that will CHANGE THE WORLD.

## 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.