

# Gathering Guide

for Communities and Friends

*Jacob and the Stranger*

*The God who turns up and picks a fight.*

5/12/2019

## Where We Are In The Bible

This week we are looking at the improbable story of God showing up and picking a fight with Jacob, one of the patriarchs of Israel. The account of this divine wrestling match is found in Genesis 32:22-32. In addition, reading Chapters 25 through 28 will help us understand the background and to appreciate the magnitude of what is happening here in Chapter 32.

## Lean In

- We see in these chapters 25 through 32 of Genesis that even though Jacob is considered one of the patriarchs of Israel, he is no saint! Jacob appears to be what we would refer to as a classic con man, yet God specifically appears to him on several occasions (28:10-22; 32:1-2 and 32:22-32). What does this tell you about God?
- In Chapter 32, Jacob is preparing to meet the brother he had swindled and stolen from and who had threatened to kill him. What emotions do you think he was feeling as he prepared for the coming confrontation? Have you ever been in a situation where you knew you must face a confrontation you were dreading? How did you feel as you prepared for the moment of confrontation? Was the actual meeting worse or better than you had anticipated?
- God clearly initiates this struggle, but it is Jacob who refuses to give in. This was both a physical and a spiritual battle. In what ways do we wrestle with God today? Can you give any personal examples of your battles?

## The Big Idea

In this account, Jacob, homeless and outcast, engages in an intense all-night wrestling match with a stranger. Jacob wins the fight but loses his name, and we learn how being wounded may bring healing. Like Jacob, we may need to wrestle with God as we struggle to acknowledge our sin and surrender our will to God's plan for us. If we are wounded or experience suffering in the process, we can be confident it is an important element in God's providential blessing on our lives.

## Where To?

- In Genesis 32:28 the man told Jacob he had "*struggled with God and with men and had overcome.*" This may seem odd in the fact that Jacob apparently lost the fight when his hip was injured. In what ways did Jacob prevail over the angel of the Lord? What does victory look like in our struggles with God? How might Matthew 6:33 apply here?
- When the angel asks Jacob his name - he immediately announced that Jacob would be given a new name. What was the significance of that change? Thinking back to before you surrendered your life to Christ, what "name" (a word that described you) would have been appropriate for you? How about now? What "name" would be given to you? What "name" would you like to be known by?
- In the end, Jacob receives a blessing and an injury to his hip that would leave him with a permanent limp. Author Dan Allender says "*Jacob's limp is a reminder that when God renames us, he also makes each one of us a new person through a redemption that requires brokenness.*" Why do you think it is necessary to be broken before being made new? How might the Apostle Paul answer that question (consult 2 Corinthians 1:8-10)?

## Prayer Focus

Father, your power and majesty are unequalled. It is only because of your mercy that we are not destroyed. Thank you for your blessings you pour out on us on a daily basis and for those special personal blessings that not only reveal yourself to us but empower us to serve you and to share your love with others. May you be glorified in our weaknesses. Amen.

