

Your Name Shall Be Israel

Genesis 32:22-32

MEMORY VERSE

PSALM 145:18

“The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

As many phone handout sheets, safety pins, and scissors as the number of children in your class.

A lamp or a strong flashlight.

A broken radio or tape recorder, some broken glass in a jar, a broken pencil, a broken ruler, or other common items that are broken.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Phones

Let a paper phone remind you, you can always call upon the Lord. Just cut along the dotted line on the phone handout. Put a safety pin in the hole and pin them on your students' shirts.

Explain that God desires a relationship with us and He wants us to call out to Him; He can help us, because He's in complete control of every situation. **God wants us to depend on Him.**

LESSON TIME!

Jacob had been traveling back to the home he had left many years before and back to a brother who had threatened to kill him. On his journey, he encountered a host of angels! He named that place “Mahanaim,” meaning “two companies or groups,” possibly one going before him and one, behind him.

What a comfort to Jacob that God was with him and would keep and protect him wherever he went. However, the scheming Jacob still resorts to his own efforts to accomplish God's promises in his life. How can a man who is so strong in himself ever come to a place of leaning totally upon God? Truly, Jacob's greatest need is to become a broken man before God. He needs to trade his self-sufficiency for an attitude of dependency on God. God finds a way to work in Joseph's life—he is about to have a life-changing encounter! **God wants us to depend on Him.**

Shadows

Bring a lamp or a strong flashlight to class. Turn the lamp on and the lights off. Seat the class in a circle on the floor and ask them one at a time to try to disconnect themselves from their shadows.

Talk about how God is always with us, nearer than our shadows. He will stay with us even if our shadows will not! We can always trust in the Lord! **God wants us to depend on Him.**

GENESIS 32:22-23

And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok.

He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had.

Jacob was a man in great distress. He had sent messengers to his brother to announce his coming; but instead of the messengers coming back with good news, they informed Jacob that Esau is already on his way to meet him with four hundred men. Did this large company of men coming with Esau mean that Esau was prepared to avenge himself for Jacob's deceitful actions

years earlier? Remember, Jacob had stolen the firstborn birthright from Esau. When Esau threatened to kill him, he fled to live with his uncle, Laban. Now, years later, he will face his brother once more.

Jacob was worried. He sent his family and all his belongings over the brook "Jabbok." Jacob faced the possibility of losing everything, especially his life. Interestingly enough, Jabbok means, "to empty." Jacob was emptied of everything. His desperate situation would cause him to seek the Lord.

GENESIS 32:24a

Then Jacob was left alone...

Here we see that "Jacob was left alone." Jacob was alone with God. It was the only true way for Jacob to see himself as he really was. There was no place for scheming or conniving here; God knows the heart. It was just Jacob and God.

Such an encounter is vital for each one of us! Sometimes, we need to be "left alone" with God in order that we may see ourselves as we really are. God's presence and light reveals the weaknesses and dark places of our hearts. Our excuses and schemes fade away in the presence of His holiness.

GENESIS 32:24b-27

...and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.

Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

So He said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob."

Now we see that a man appeared to Jacob while he was alone, and the man wrestled with Jacob. It is significant that the man wrestled with Jacob, not Jacob with the man. Who was this man, and why did he wrestle with Jacob?

In Hosea 12:4, this man is called "the Angel." It may have been a time when Jesus made an appearance before being born as a baby in the manger. There appear to be several times in the Old Testament that Jesus appeared as "the Angel" or "Messenger of the Lord." In verse 30, Jacob states, "For I have seen God face to face."

Jacob was chosen by God to establish the nation of Israel, God's chosen nation. Jacob had to fully know his own weakness, but even more importantly, he must know the power and all-sufficiency of God. We see they wrestled all night. One would think that if God was wrestling with Jacob, it would not have taken all night. Was Jacob stronger than God? Of course not! What can we see in this "long" struggle?

Jacob had a lot of "self" left in him. As we saw earlier, Jacob was a strong, self-reliant man. He would not give up easily. Yet, we also see a beautiful picture of God's long-suffering and forbearance with us. God is patient and full of compassion for His children. He bears with us, though we are flawed, stubborn, and often rebellious. He accomplishes His purposes in our lives through His unrelenting love and unending grace. Philippians 1:6 states, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ...."

In verse 25, we see that the Lord "touched the socket of his (Jacob's) hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as he wrestled with him." God could have ended the struggle in two seconds if He had chosen to do so. With just one touch, Jacob became powerless. When the thighbone is thrown out of joint, a man is utterly disabled. Jacob, by one touch from his wrestling opponent, could no longer stand alone; instead, he clung to the One who conquered him, relying on the One who was mightier than he.

God desires that each of us understand our own powerlessness apart from Him. He desires to be our strength in weakness. He desires that we not be "self" confident or "self" reliant, but rather that our confidence be in Him. **God wants us to depend on Him.**

In verse 26, we read that the "visitor" wants Jacob to let him go. Jacob refuses until the Lord blesses him. It is at this point, when his thigh has been disabled, that Jacob cries out "I will not let you go" and Jacob adds "unless you bless me."

Then the Lord asked Jacob his name. Did the Lord not know his name? God knows everything, but as Jacob told God who he was, he must have been reminded what his name meant: "heel catcher" or "deceiver." Jacob was well named, for he had a history of deception and manipulation. However, now, he was disabled, dependent upon another, and seeking a blessing. God was about to make big changes in the life and character of Jacob.

GENESIS 32:28-29

And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

Then Jacob asked Him, saying, "Tell me Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it that you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.

Here a wonderful thing happened to Jacob. God now calls him, "Israel." He is no longer to be the "deceiver"; instead, he would be called "ruled by God." The name Israel means "governed by God." Jacob would go from being a person who tried to manipulate things through deceit, to a man who was in submission to God's will and purposes. God would now be "in control," not Jacob. Sometimes we need to be brought to the end of ourselves—our own abilities and sufficiency--before we realize we need God to be in control of our lives

Jacob then asked the "Man" his name, and the "Man" asked him a question, "Why is it that you ask about my name?" Then the "Man" "blessed him there." As we acknowledge our need and dependency on God and submit ourselves to His control, He will bless us. **God wants us to depend on Him.**

GENESIS 32:30-32

And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.

Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.

Jacob named the place of this occurrence “Peniel”; the face of God. Jacob had been allowed to see and touch God and was still alive to share the experience. For this to be possible, God veiled Himself in human form (Exodus 33:20; 1 Timothy 6:16). The name of the place was not forgotten, though changed to Penuel. It was known as Penuel at least until the days of the divided kingdom (1 Kings 12:25).

Jacob was left with a permanent reminder of his encounter with God--his limp, reminding him that God had prevailed in Jacob's life. When we see Jesus, the scars in His hands and feet will remind us, throughout all eternity, that He has overcome sin and death for each of us.

May we not be stubborn as Jacob was for so many years. A life ruled by self is a miserable life. Romans 12:1 states, “...present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” May we realize our helplessness and hopelessness apart from our Creator. **God wants us to depend on Him.**

Crutch Friends

“Broken” can mean many things. Bring a broken radio or tape recorder, some broken glass in a jar, a broken pencil, a broken ruler, or other common item that is broken. Have the children examine the broken items.

Explain that it is usually more difficult to tell when people are broken. Talk about being broken before the Lord. Explain that brokenness before God, no matter what the actual infirmity, will cause us to be dependent on Him.

Have your children form pairs. Have each take turns pretending to have a broken leg. Have the other partner help the one with the “broken leg” around. Have them switch. Explain how this illustrates the connection between brokenness and dependency.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for God’s perfect and consistent love. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity to do so.

