

Leader Guide

What could be written about you?

Part 1

Winter 2026 | Week 2

Message Date 1/18/2026

THE GOAL

Over the next two weeks, we will be reading through the story of Jacob, we will trace the movement from self-reliance to surrendered faith, and how faith in God opens the door to forgiveness and obedience. By the end of the next two weeks, group members should be able to identify where their faith is currently placed, recognize areas where guilt or control may be blocking obedience, and be challenged to place themselves fully in God's hands. This week specifically we will see that wrestling with God changed Jacob's identity. Now in the story it's literal, he wrestled with God, but for us it's very figurative. It's not a bad thing to wrestle with God. Wrestling with God means self-reflection, and trying to align our hearts to God's heart.

MY STORY

- 1) If someone wrote a headline about your life this week, what would it say?
- 2) What's one thing you were oddly proud of accomplishing this year so far?

QUICK REVIEW

- 3) What caught your attention from Sunday's message?

DIGGING DEEPER / TAKING IT HOME

Genesis 28:12–17, 20–22 (NLT)

12 As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven, and he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway. **13** At the top of the stairway stood the LORD, and he said, “I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. **14** Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. **15** What's more, I am with you, and I will protect you wherever you

go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you.”¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn’t even aware of it!”¹⁷ But he was also afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!”

20 Then Jacob made this vow: “If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing,²¹ and if I return safely to my father’s home, then the LORD will certainly be my God.²² And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshiping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me.”

- 4) What do you notice about God’s promises to Jacob compared to Jacob’s response?

God’s promises are unconditional and gracious, while Jacob’s response is conditional. Jacob is still trying to bargain with God, showing that his faith is not yet fully surrendered.

- 5) What does Jacob’s conditional vow reveal about where his faith still rests? Have you ever done something similar? For example, made God a promise to do something based on an outcome. How did it work out? Why is this a poor way to live in relationship with God?

Jacob believes in God, but still believes he must manage the outcome. Jacob also uses this as “if God does this for me I’ll do this for Him.” He’s making a promise to God based on God’s reaction. God is not a genie to move to our whims nor is He in need of anything we have. He is God and we are not trying to bargain with God. It is not a biblical way to follow Him

Genesis 32:1–2, 9–12, 22–31 (NLT)

1 As Jacob started on his way again, angels of God came to meet him.² When Jacob saw them, he exclaimed, “This is God’s camp!” So he named the place Mahanaim.

9 Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my grandfather Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac—O LORD, you told me, ‘Return to your own land and to your relatives.’ And you promised me, ‘I will treat you kindly.’¹⁰ I am not worthy of all the unfailing love and faithfulness you have shown to me, your servant. When I left home and crossed the Jordan River, I owned nothing except a walking stick. Now my household fills two large camps!¹¹ O LORD, please rescue me from the hand of my brother, Esau. I am afraid that he is coming to attack me, along with my wives and children.¹² But you promised me, ‘I will surely treat you kindly, and I will multiply your descendants until they become as numerous as the sands along the seashore—too many to count.’

22 During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two servant wives, and his eleven sons and crossed the Jabbok River with them.²³ After taking them to the other side, he sent over all his possessions.²⁴ This left Jacob all alone in the camp, and a

man came and wrestled with him until the dawn began to break.²⁵ When the man saw that he would not win the match, he touched Jacob's hip and wrenched it out of its socket.²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking!" But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."²⁷ "What is your name?" the man asked. "Jacob," he replied.²⁸ "Your name will no longer be Jacob," the man told him. "From now on you will be called Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have won."²⁹ Then Jacob asked, "Please tell me your name." "Why do you want to know my name?" the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob there.³⁰ Jacob named the place Peniel—for he said, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared."³¹ The sun was rising as Jacob left Peniel, and he was limping because of the injury to his hip.

- 6) What shifts in Jacob's posture toward God during the wrestling? And how can wrestling with God shift our hearts as well?

Jacob moves from planning and fear to dependence and persistence. Wrestling with God is more about shifting my heart to get into alignment with God. sometimes wrestling with God is about pain and learning to trust that He is good in spite of my circumstances.

- 7) Why is Jacob's name change significant?

The name change marks a heart change. Jacob's identity is no longer rooted in manipulation but in surrender to God.

Hebrews 5:11–14 (NLT)

11 There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don't seem to listen.¹² You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food.¹³ For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right.¹⁴ Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

- 8) According to Hebrews, what keeps believers spiritually immature?

According to the passage, it's because the Hebrew believers are dull and don't seem to listen. They're not putting what they learned into practice. To learn well we must do things over and over again. It's repetition. It's training. The difference between spiritual solid food and milk is also trusting in a simple truth of salvation, that you're saved by grace but will have struggles along the way. We let the struggles and the failures cloud the restorative work and freedom that we find in Jesus.

- 9) How do guilt and shame interfere with obedience? Where might God be calling you to step into obedience right now?

Guilt and shame can overwhelm our ability to hear God clearly, making obedience feel confusing or impossible. This answer will be personal for everyone. I would keep the

tone light and encouraging and if you need to this may be a place that we go first as leaders.

CHAIR TIME TOOLS



Reflection Questions for Chair Time: think about the following questions and pray through them with Jesus.

- 1) God, show me where You are working in and around my life.
- 2) Who or what is my faith truly placed in right now?
- 3) Is there an act of obedience You are calling me to take?