



# CORE STUDY #6

God Renamed Jacob

**Passage: Genesis 32:1-32**

**Themes:** God's Presence; Perseverance and Prayer; Identity; God's Covenant

**Summary:** Until this part of the story, Jacob has been ambitiously trying to fulfill God's promises and blessing by his own initiatives, sometimes unethically. The man who has prevailed through decisive and prudent action in his own strength, will now be taught to prevail through prayer in weakness. Prior to this encounter with the God-man Jacob prays to God on the basis of God's promises, but he does not yet prevail because he has not been humbled. Only when he is broken does he prevail with God and others. Jacob does not quit even when his physical strength is gone. When broken in God's severe mercy, he persevered in prayer. If Abraham is a study in faith, Jacob is a study in spiritual strength through prayer. The man who was prayerless and caused so much trouble, sorrow, and anguish is now transformed and giving a new identity as he commits himself to God in prayer.

**Introduction Question:**

- Have you ever had a nickname that stuck? Did you like it or dislike it? Why?

**Discussion Questions (selection to choose from):**

1. At the start of this chapter we find Jacob on the run. Why? (*Leader: this question is intended for you to allow your members to remember the context of this chapter. If they haven't read the previous chapters, you will need to provide a short summary of the story*).
2. Notice how Jacob is brought to the place of prayer when he comes to his wits end (v. 9). Can you recall a time in your life when you were driven to desperate prayer?
3. What do we know about the character of Jacob, especially before this part of his story? (See: 27:36) (*Leader: summarize chapter 27*).
4. Early in this story we discover Jacob is a schemer. In fact, his name in Hebrew means "he deceives." But in his fear and distress we begin to see a change in Jacob. With Jacob's changed character in mind, what do you think about the content of his prayer? How does this inform your prayer life? Is there something to model from his prayer?
5. In v. 23-24 we read that Jacob separates himself from all his possessions, his family, and even his wives. He is alone. In that moment, God makes himself present to him. In v. 30 the author even uses the language of seeing God "face to face." What is your experience of God in your alone times? Does context, timing, or setting ever affect those meetings?
6. Early in this story Jacob is asked by his father, who are you? And Jacob answers, Esau. Jacob is trying to be somebody else. Jacob has identity issues. But after wrestling with God, he is asked the same question again, who are you? But this time he answers, Jacob. What change has occurred in Jacob? What significance is it that God renames Jacob? (*Hint: By renaming Jacob, God is giving Jacob a new identity in Him*).



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7. Jacob encounters God in a real and present experience. Yet, like a cowboy in an old western, we read that Jacob limps off in the sunrise. What conclusion does this picture bring to the story?

**Response:**

- In the Ancient Near East, your name wasn't just a name, but it told you who you are. Here we read about Jacob receiving a new name. A new identity. This passage speaks deeply to the inward journey we are all on. Has God been speaking to you about an aspect of your identity that he wants you to let go of? Or maybe an aspect of your identity in Christ that you need to step further into? Can we pray for you in light of this?

Leader Note: At this stage in the life of your Core, it might be very appropriate to guard a significant amount of time for prayer for one another. Perhaps shorten the bible study portion of Core, or the fellowship time, so that you can leave significant time for prayer. You could break into 2's or 3's and pray for one another, or you could spend time laying on hands for each individual in your group.