

THE BIG PICTURE

Elementary
Week 3

Read: Genesis 25, 27, 32-33

Jacob was an insecure deceiver and schemer. He followed through with a plan that showed a lack in trust of God. His relationship with his earthly father, Isaac, might hint at why he didn't fully trust his perfect heavenly father, God. Jacob spent his whole life trying to seek approval from a father who not only refused to see him, but who loved his other son Esau. Isaac's favoritism cost Jacob and Esau their relationship. *For a while*. And during their time apart, God had work to do in Jacob. That night at the Jabbok River, God could've let Jacob cross untouched (Genesis 32). But an untouched Jacob would've been an unchanged Jacob. And God was not going to let Jacob continue to believe that an insecure cheater and manipulator is all he'd ever be. Jacob and God wrestled all night long, and though Jacob came out wounded, he also came out blessed. That night, God gave him a new name, Israel: one who struggles and has **overcome**.

The very next event in Jacob's life was a true test of whether or not he was a changed man (Genesis 33). He was going to meet Esau, the epitome of his insecurity. Esau was the brother he'd lied to, stolen from, and competed with his whole life. But Jacob had changed. We see a humble, bold man where we once saw only insecurity. Old Jacob would have schemed and tricked, but changed Jacob bowed down seven times before his brother and called himself a servant. Jacob expected to find his brother full of bitterness, anger, resentment, and revenge; but instead he found compassion, forgiveness, and love.

Who is telling you who you are? Your older sibling you'll never live up to? Someone else, whose expectations you'll never be able to meet? Maybe it's the number on the scale or scoreboard. Like Jacob, we have a choice. We can let go and give up, succumbing to the reputation we've always had and listening to the lies we've always believed. **Or...** Or we can hang on and fight. We can wrestle with God, our Father, who believes we are worth this fight and desires to bless us, to give us identity, to tell us who we truly are.

There is a risk in leaving behind the old us. Jacob didn't come out of his wrestling match with God unscathed, and neither will we. If we start listening to who God says we are, our life might begin to look totally different. Where we were once timid, we will be bold. Where we once believed we had no voice, we will speak. Where we once bulldozed others, we will build them up instead. Whatever the change looks like in each of our lives individually, we can hold onto the truth that we are **seen by God, no matter what our past is like. We are worth the fight. Only his words define us, and every word he speaks is true.**

May his voice be loudest and clearest as we press into the fight.

Why is it hard for you to listen to God's voice? What or who is defining you?