

# Jacob's New Name

Genesis 32:1-32

## Level D | Lesson 6 | Teacher Overview



Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.... And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But Jacob said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me...." 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."

Genesis 32:24,26,28

### For Teachers

This lesson has several activity options. You may wish to choose 2-3. Reading through all of the options will help you identify the activities that are best suited to your group's size, student mix, available supplies, and the time you have to prepare. You may also want to mix and match activities from other age levels.

### Activity Options

1. Talk About It
2. Explore: Wrestling with Faith Look
3. Closer: Fear, Prayer, & Action

# Talk About It

**Reading: Genesis 32:1-32**

*Jacob sends a messenger telling Esau that he is on his way. The messenger returns and reports that Esau is coming with 400 men. Fearing Esau, Jacob prays and makes plans to protect his family. He divides them into two groups and sends Esau gifts of animals. After sending his family on ahead, Jacob spends the night alone. During the night he wrestles with a man—a spiritual being—who touches him, causing him to limp. Jacob will not let Him go, and begs for a blessing. In response, the man gives him a new name: Israel.*

1. How does it feel to see someone that you have not seen for a long time? (e.g. aunt or uncle, cousin, grandparent, friend, etc.; Concerns may include whether people will recognize each other, if they have changed, if they will remember each other or if they will have the same kind of relationship that they did before.)
2. Jacob was traveling towards home and toward Esau, the brother he angered so much that he had to run for his life. If you were Jacob, what might you be thinking?
3. Esau and Jacob embody the mental powers of the will and understanding. At first, the understanding (Jacob) seems to rule over the will (Esau). In other words, we must learn what is right before we can live rightly. This story is a turning point—the start of a reunion between these two powers.
4. Jacob sent messengers to Esau telling him how he had prospered since he left and offering gifts. What frightening news did the messengers bring back to Jacob? (Esau was already on his way with 400 men. The number 40 corresponds to temptation e.g. 40 years in the wilderness. 10 corresponds to truth e.g. 10 commandments.)
5. What did Jacob tell his servants to say to Esau when they gave him the gifts? (‘They are your servant Jacob’s. It is a present sent to my lord Esau.’ Genesis 32:18.) What does this tell you about the change in Jacob and Esau’s relationship? (That Jacob is trying to soften any anger Esau may have and perhaps buy his family’s safety.)
6. Jacob sent his family on and stayed back by himself. What happened during the night? (he wrestled with a man) What are the night times of our own lives? (temptations, when the Lord seems absent just as the sun is not visible)
7. Describe a time when you have wrestled with a difficult situation or issue and not given up. (e.g. run a long race, given a speech, completed a difficult assignment) How did you feel when you finished? Would you have felt the same about your accomplishment if you had not had to struggle?
8. Jacob receives the new name “Israel” through his struggle. (El = the Lord’s name; this name indicates a greater presence of the Lord.)
9. Who do we struggle with when we are in temptation? It may sometimes feel as if the Lord is against us. Is this true? (Struggles in temptation are never against the Lord but against evil things that the hells inspire in us.)



# Explore: Wrestling with Faith continued

3. Jacob wrestled all night. Many wrestling matches are less than six minutes long. What would it be like to wrestle as long as Jacob did?
4. Every person who wants to go to heaven experiences tests of their love and faith. These temptations prepare us for heaven.
5. Sometimes our mental “wrestling” is mild, but at other times it feels long and hard—as if it goes on “all night”. We may doubt everything we know and wonder if God even exists. We may know what is the best thing to do, but feel like it will cost us something precious. The New Church calls this kind of wrestling “temptation.” The Heavenly Doctrine explains what is happening spiritually during temptations.
6. Hand out *Wrestling with Faith* student page and read aloud with students.
7. We will make a diagram showing the spiritual forces with a person during temptation.
8. Divide students into three groups. Using the *Wrestling with Faith* student page, assign tasks. **Group 1:** copy words that are printed in bold blue letters on Post-it notes and put notes on the figure. **Group 2:** copy words printed in bold black letters on Post-it notes and put them around the word “Evil Spirits”. **Group 3:** copy words printed in bold red letters on to Post-it notes and put them around the word “Angels”.
9. What tactics do the evil spirits take to persuade us of their point of view? ( Make us feel hopeless about ourselves because of things we’ve done in the past; twist our love of good things into a love of evil and false things; attack the things we love; hide or twist our understanding of what is true including the Lord’s mercy and focus our attention on judgment; make us feel as if truth is not a good option; hold us in evil states because they enjoy them, etc.)
10. In what ways do the angels defend us against these attacks? (Help us remember relevant good and true ideas we’ve learned; inspire our love of what is true and good; help us experience the Lord’s presence; inspire us with new truths, inspire us with hope and strength to fight, etc.)
11. Why is it hard to detect the hells at work? (They act secretly and make us feel as if we are acting from our own free will.)
12. What do we experience during temptation?
13. Can a person experience spiritual temptations if they do not care about the Lord and heaven? (No.)
14. Jacob received a new name and as he finished wrestling the sun rose. In what way does the sun rise in our lives when we have overcome in temptation? What new name does the Lord give us?

# Wrestling with Faith

Temptation is a conflict that happens when a **true idea or a good motivation that is important to us is attacked** by the evil spirits and **defended by the angels** who are with us. In terms of a person's faith there can be no temptation unless a person **loves the truth that he or she knows**. Anyone who does not love the true ideas he knows, or is not affected by it, is not troubled about it at all, but anyone who loves the truth **worries that the truth might be harmed and lose its power to guide that person** (see *Arcana Coelestia* 4274).

People who are going through temptation **experience doubts about the end in view or goal being pursued**. That end is the love against which evil spirits **fight** and in so doing place the end in doubt. The more a person loves something, the more it is placed in doubt. Unless a person's love or purpose is placed in doubt, and **even to despair**, there would be no temptation (*Arcana Coelestia* 1820).



During temptation evil spirits **activate a person's false ideas and evil loves**. They **bring out memories** of whatever he has thought and done since early childhood. Evil spirits do this so **cleverly and wickedly** that it is impossible to describe it. But the angels who are with him **draw out good and true ideas** that he has **and** in this way **defend him**. A person experiences this as his **conscience tormenting** him.

There are two kinds of temptation, the first involves the understanding, the second involves the will. When a person's temptation involves his understanding, evil spirits **bring up evil deeds** he has done, and use these to **accuse and condemn him**. They **activate his good deeds too, but corrupt them** in a thousand ways. At the same time they **activate his thoughts**. Temptations like this are mild.

When a temptation involves what a person loves, it is not so much what he does and thinks that are activated. Instead evil spirits **inflame his evil desires** and destructive loves and direct their **attack through what the person actually desires**. They do it so **secretly** that nobody can believe it is them doing it. They **worm their way into everything** a person wants and almost instantly **twist and convert the love for what is good and true into a love for what is evil and false**. They act in such a way that people inevitably think that these things come from themselves and from their own free will. Temptations like this are very severe and are felt as **inward pain** and **burning torment** (see *Arcana Coelestia* 751).

**The Lord gives** each person **true ideas** of the understanding **and good loves** of the will. These truths and goods are **remnants**.... When a person experiences temptations, the angels with him **draw out true ideas** with which they **protect him against the evil spirits** who **activate false ideas** with him (see *Arcana Coelestia* 737).

Temptations are the means by which the **evil loves and false ideas** with a person **are exposed and removed** (*Arcana Coelestia* 5246).

So long as temptation continues, a person **thinks that the Lord is absent** because he is troubled by evil spirits so severely that he **can hardly believe that God exists**. Yet **the Lord is more closely present** than a person can ever believe. When temptation stops, the person **receives consolation** and then **believes that the Lord is present** (see *Arcana Coelestia* 840).

After temptation **new light** shines forth (see *Arcana Coelestia* 5246).

# Look Closer: Fear, Prayer & Action

## At a Glance:

Jacob was frightened at the thought of meeting his brother Esau. When they parted Esau had vowed to kill him—and with good cause. Jacob had bought his birthright and stolen the blessing that was rightfully Esau's. Jacob fearfully prepared for the reunion and as he did this, he prayed. Following this, he took action and prepared gifts for Esau. Students will look at Jacob's prayer and write a personal prayer that asks for the Lord's help with their own fears.

## Supplies Needed for Each Student:

- *Jacobs Prayer Model* chart
- *Praying in Fear* page
- pen or pencil

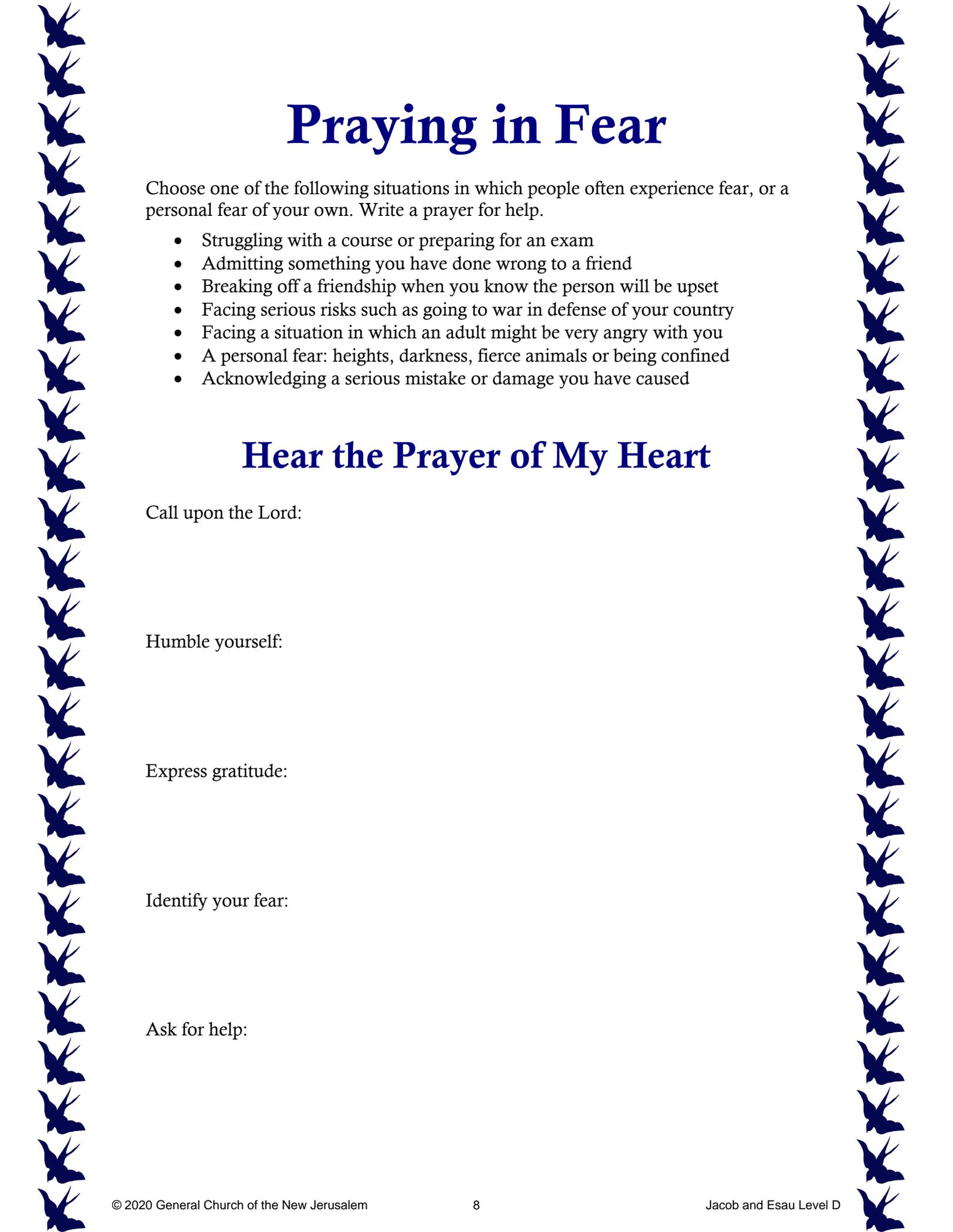
## Directions:

1. What words does the word “fear” bring to mind? Write brainstormed words up on board or large paper if you have one (e.g. frozen, sweat, withdraw, etc.).
2. How many different kinds of fear can you think of? (e.g. looking stupid in front of others, failing a test, heights, performance, etc.)
3. What does “fear of the Lord” mean? Why should we fear His name? (Holy fear is the fear of hurting the Lord. It is similar to the way we fear hurting or disappointing people we love, such as our parents or friends (see *Apocalypse Explained* 696).)
4. What did Jacob do when he was afraid? (First, he prayed to the Lord (Genesis 32:9-12), then he prepared gifts for Esau.)
5. Have you prayed when you were afraid? How does prayer help?
6. What “gifts” might you prepare for others? (apologize, send cards or flowers, etc.)
7. Hand out a copy of *Jacob's Prayer Model* and *Praying in Fear* to each student.
8. Each person will choose a “fear” situation from *Praying in Fear* or think of a personal fear and write a prayer that is modeled after Jacob's prayer.
9. Invite students who wish to share their prayers.
10. How can prayer help you with fear?
11. What is the next step after prayer? (action)



# Jacob's Prayer Model

Part of Prayer	Jacob's Prayer	Personal Prayer Ideas
<p><b>Direct your prayer to the Lord.</b></p>	<p>O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you' (Genesis 32: 9).</p>	<p>Call on the Lord, by addressing the Lord's qualities that you need. E.g. if you need courage, you might say, "Mighty God, Jehovah"; if you need comfort, you might say, "Heavenly Shepherd."</p>
<p><b>Humble yourself.</b></p>	<p>I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant;</p>	<p>Acknowledge your own inadequacy.</p>
<p><b>Express gratitude for what the Lord has already done for you.</b></p>	<p>For I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies (Genesis 32: 10).</p>	<p>Acknowledge what the Lord has done for you that relates to your current struggle. E.g. You created me and gave me the ability to think things through. You gave me a loving family that gives me strength. Thank you for my friends.</p>
<p><b>Identify your problem. Ask for help.</b></p>	<p>Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children. For You said, 'I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.' (Genesis 32: 11,12)</p>	<p>Ask for what you need—courage, hope, vision of a way forward—in order to achieve the goal you seek e.g. apologizing to someone, overcoming a bad habit, finishing a difficult job, etc.</p>



# Praying in Fear

Choose one of the following situations in which people often experience fear, or a personal fear of your own. Write a prayer for help.

- Struggling with a course or preparing for an exam
- Admitting something you have done wrong to a friend
- Breaking off a friendship when you know the person will be upset
- Facing serious risks such as going to war in defense of your country
- Facing a situation in which an adult might be very angry with you
- A personal fear: heights, darkness, fierce animals or being confined
- Acknowledging a serious mistake or damage you have caused

## Hear the Prayer of My Heart

Call upon the Lord:

Humble yourself:

Express gratitude:

Identify your fear:

Ask for help: