

# *Know the God of Scripture*

*Volume 1*

## **Week 2: Wrestling with God - Answer Guide**

*Below is the answer guide for this week's lesson. By no means are the answers complete or the only possible responses to each question. They are a guide to fully understanding the intent of the questions posed.*

**1.** In Genesis 28:10-15 we are introduced to Jacob's ladder, the seemingly divine portal between earth and heaven where angels trek. The promise from God is the Abrahamic Covenant, a reiteration of the promise to Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, first postulated back in Genesis 12:1-3. The Abrahamic Covenant, like the Adamic and Noahic Covenants, are promises God made to His people. In these and other covenants (i.e., Mosaic, Davidic, Peace and New Covenants) God is faithful to fulfill His promises. Unfortunately, fallen man is unfaithful to adhere to God's demands and thus falls short of meeting their end of the covenants. This is a testament to God's patience and loving kindness. As you complete this study, watch for this theme of covenant adherence. God's faithfulness and man's fallen nature occurs throughout the Bible.

**2.** In Job 1:6 and 2:1, spiritual beings (sons of God and/or angels) traverse between earth and the divine council of God in heaven much like those in Jacob's dream. Both scenes allude to the fact that there is a real spiritual realm where angels are carrying out the commands of God. Jacob sees a ladder where no ladder is mentioned in the Job account. In John 1:51, Jesus confirms what Jacob saw, the angels ascending and descending from heaven to earth.

**3.** Jacob named the place Bethel. (Hebrew) Beth → House + (Hebrew) El → God, House of God. Jacob proclaims it to be the gate to heaven. The original name (28:19) was (Hebrew) Luz → Hazel Nut, a nut that is round and hard to crack, something that could allude to situations in life which are hard to overcome, but not when God shows up! Name changes in the Bible occur when significant events happen. Genesis 28 and 35 are literary bookends beginning with Jacob's quest for a wife (chapter 28) to his return (chapter 35). Jacob is now a changed man.

**4.** There are three if statements: 1) If God would be with Jacob on his journey, 2) If God will provide food and garments, and 3) If God will protect him on his return. God met all of Jacob's demands. He never left Jacob, He provided food and clothing and He allowed Jacob to return to his father's house safely. Note that God did not have to meet Jacob's demands but did so to demonstrate His eternal lovingkindness and faithfulness (Genesis 32:10) for Jacob.

**5.** He acknowledged the angels as sent by God. After receiving the report from his messengers, he was afraid so he divided into two camps ((Hebrew) Mahanaim → two camps) and prayed (32:9-12) humbly to God to maintain His promise of protection and multiplication. Although Jacob is growing in his faith, he still wants to divide his camp into two sections, a human response. However, God continued to demonstrate His lovingkindness and faithfulness toward Jacob.

**6.** All we know is that a physical man wrestled with Jacob and later Jacob proclaims that he has seen the face of God. The prophet Hosea (12:4) points to an angelic being. Some believe it was a theophany, an encounter with God Himself (Genesis 32:30). Others believe it may have been Jesus in the form of a man. In either case it was God's words that were pronounced to Jacob, words he finally recognized. This whole encounter of wrestling with God is a picture of Jacob's journey to faith in God, from being a deceiver (see the answer guide for question #7) to one who trusts in God.

7. Jacob struggled with God all his life culminating in this final encounter. (Hebrew) Jacob → deceiver, (Hebrew) Israel → He who struggles with God. Prior to this event Jacob lived most of his life in deception to those close to him. He struggled with acknowledging the God of his father, Isaac. However, upon encountering God and His angels, Jacob began his faith journey, gradually demonstrating his faith in God.

8. Notice the references to daybreak and light. The man wrestled with Jacob until daybreak, meaning they struggled in the darkness of night. Verse 31 highlights that when the light shone on Jacob, he finally saw the face of God. In other words, the lightbulb finally came on in Jacob's heart that God is real and is not only the God of Abraham and Isaac, but of himself also. God was illuminating Jacob's heart.

9. God's patience is endless, His mercy is eternal and His forgiveness extends to everyone willing to acknowledge Him as who He is, the God of creation. Just like the younger brother in the prodigal son story (Luke 15:11-32), even when he turned away from his father, his father continued to love him. God's love is not conditional upon our behavior.

### **Additional Questions:**

1. Every person born of flesh struggles with his spirit (Matthew 26:41). Jacob struggled with seeing God's presence in his life. Like Paul's flesh/spirit inner struggle, Jacob had to "experience" God on his journey to get a wife in order to know God. Newborn Christians will struggle with the various temptations of the flesh, but as God sanctifies them (sets them apart), they will become more obedient to the Spirit's calling and turn from sin, much like Jacob.

2. Answers will vary depending on individual life experiences.

3. It is difficult to praise God during the "hard times" because our flesh is often full of feelings of anger, hate, depression, etc. that hinder a praise response. However, as we grow in Christ, we gradually realize that we are temporary servants of Christ in this world and that our feelings soon begin to wane in retrospect to our relationship with Christ. Loving Christ more than our circumstances becomes more of a reality.

4. Answers will vary depending on individual life experiences.

