

## Praying Genesis 32

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(This week's readings from Sunday to Saturday: Genesis 31–35, 2 Corinthians 1–3)

### Genesis 32:1–12 (ESV)

**1** Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. **2** And when Jacob saw them he said, “This is God's camp!” So he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

**3** And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, **4** instructing them, “Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, ‘I have sojourned with Laban and stayed until now. **5** I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male servants, and female servants. I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight.’”

**6** And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and there are four hundred men with him.”

**7** Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps, **8** thinking, “If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape.”

**9** And Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,’ **10** I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.

**11** Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. **12** But you said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”

### Adoration

In Genesis 32, verse 7, Jacob is “greatly afraid and distressed” by the circumstances he finds himself in. He believes that he and his family are in great danger. He thinks Esau is seeking retribution for how he tricked their father into giving him the family inheritance. Jacob comes to God in prayer in verse 9, but he doesn't begin with a request for help. Instead, he opens with a declaration of God's faithfulness! The same God who led his grandfather Abraham and guided his father Isaac is now the same God who walks with Jacob in his own time of need. Like Jacob, open your time of prayer by praising God for His faithfulness in your life, for the times past when He provided guidance, protection, and provision.

[Pray for 15 seconds.]

Praise the Lord, that He remains the same from one generation to the next (Ps 145:4). Give God glory for His steadfast love and the goodness of His character that never changes.

[Pray for 15 seconds.]

Before asking God for what He can do for you, declare that He is worthy of your full attention—your heart, soul, mind, and strength—because of who He is.

[Pray for 15 seconds.]

In verse 9, Jacob declares God to be both personal and eternal; a God who speaks promises to him and a God who spoke all of creation into being. Verse 9 also records Jacob using the covenant, relational name of God. “Yahweh,” translated as “the Lord” in most Bibles, is primarily used to remind God’s people of His faithful commitment to them. Praise God for being all-powerful and yet remaining lovingly relational in His care for you. Adore Him for remaining faithful to you with every word He has spoken.

[Pray for 15 seconds.]

Oh God, You are steadfast and unchanging, the author of creation and the God who knows me and has chosen to love me. “Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You have established the earth, and it stands fast.”<sup>1</sup> I praise You for Your faithfulness in my life and in the lives of Your people. I am amazed that you guide both the course of the universe and the course of my life. I am in awe at your great power and equally astonished by your lovingkindness. “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.”<sup>2</sup> You alone are the God before whom we humbly bow in prayer.

## Confession

In Genesis 32, verse 10, Jacob confesses his unworthiness of God’s work in his life. God has shown Himself to be loving and faithful throughout all the ups and downs of Jacob’s sin-scattered life, and Jacob is well aware that he does not deserve God’s mercy or forgiveness.

Like Jacob, speak plainly to God about your need for His mercy and forgiveness. Admit that you are unable to keep yourself walking in His ways and confess how often sin keeps your heart from being blameless.<sup>3</sup> Recount the times in the past week that you are guilty of pursuing your own will and ask God to forgive you.

[Pray for 30 seconds.]

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<sup>1</sup> Ps 119:90.

<sup>2</sup> Ps 139:14.

<sup>3</sup> Ps 119:1.

In verse 9, Jacob also remembers how God has multiplied fruitfulness in his life, beyond anything he could have accomplished on his own. Ask God to reveal any way in which you have taken pride in your accomplishments. Ask Him to remind you that every good and perfect gift comes from God alone and not as a result of your own efforts. Confess how easy it is for you to forget His provision in your life or take credit for what He has done for you. Confess your dependence on Him for all things, at all times.

[Pray for 30 seconds.]

God, You are perfect and You are holy in ways we can never be. We confess how easy it is for us to ignore the conviction of the Holy Spirit when He wants to reveal our sin. We often try to ignore the instructions of Your Word when it seems more desirable to continue pursuing what we want. We admit how unwilling we can be to repent and ask for forgiveness when confronted with our own wrongdoing. We repent for the ways we have sought to build a life in our own strength instead of submitting to Your plans. Please renew our hearts and give us a willingness to obey You. Please keep us from becoming prideful about the good things you have given us. Help us to remember how indebted we are to Your mercy, Your faithfulness, and Your provision.

## Thanksgiving

In Genesis 32, verse 10, Jacob's confession serves also as his declaration of thankfulness. God has done for Jacob what he does not deserve and has provided for him all that he could not supply for himself.

Consider God's work in your life. Thank Him for the ways He has forgiven you of sin and repaired relationships. Thank Him for the ways He provided guidance and protection during a difficult season. Thank Him for the fruit He has multiplied in your life, whether it is spiritual growth or material provision. Thank Him that He "is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us" (Eph 3:20). Most importantly, thank Him for giving you the gift of His Son Jesus.

[Pray for 45 seconds.]

## Supplication

In Genesis 32, verse 11, Jacob finally voices his requests after first voicing his adoration, confession, and thanksgiving. With a humble and dependent heart, he brings his needs before the God who has faithfully demonstrated His ability to save. Consider what your prayer habits look like—do you immediately ask God for what you want? Or do you follow Jacob's example and begin by focusing on God?

[Reflect for 5 seconds.]

In verse 11, Jacob pleads for protection from Esau, whom he is convinced will arrive on a mission of vengeance to repay him for a history of deceit and broken relationships. Knowing that only God can forgive and deliver, he prays also for the safety of his family. His request is simple and selfless, not pretentious or demanding.

What needs can you bring before God in prayer? How can you give voice to them in a way that honors Him? Rather than striving to convince God with excellent language, make your request known to Him with simplicity and trust.<sup>4</sup> Like Jacob, ask God for His protection. Voice your worries to Him. Pray for boldness and confidence in His ability to deliver. Ask God to be your refuge in your time of fear and anxiety.

Considering all of this, spend time now in supplication.

[Pray for 45 seconds.]

In Genesis 32, verse 12, Jacob speaks of a promise that God made to his family from Genesis 28:14, also referenced in Genesis 22:17 and 26:4. As part of his prayer in Genesis 32, Jacob places his confidence in God's faithfulness to keep His word. He repeats back to God the promises he believes to be true and uses them as the foundation for his requests. Spend time in prayer again, asking God to fulfill His promises to you. What has He spoken through His Word? Place your confidence in His faithfulness and ask boldly in your time of need.<sup>5</sup> In Genesis 32:12, God promises that "I will surely do you good." Pray that promise back to Him!

[Pray for 25 seconds.]

## Benediction

Now, let us pray together the words of Psalm 61 as we move into the rest of our day.

1 Hear my cry, O God,  
listen to my prayer;  
2 from the end of the earth I call to you  
when my heart is faint.  
Lead me to the rock  
that is higher than I,  
3 for you have been my refuge,  
a strong tower against the enemy.

4 Let me dwell in your tent forever!  
Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings! Selah

5 For you, O God, have heard my vows;

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<sup>4</sup> Matt 6:5-8.

<sup>5</sup> Heb 4:16.

you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.

6 Prolong the life of the king;

may his years endure to all generations!

7 May he be enthroned forever before God;

appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him!

8 So will I ever sing praises to your name,

as I perform my vows day after day.

AMEN.

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Produced by Jonathan Welch and Luke Brown

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Written by Jeremy Doran

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