



Genesis #10

Jacob: Transformation

w/c 19 July 2026

"Most of us were taught that God would love us if and when we change. In fact, God loves you so that you can change. What empowers change, what makes you desirous of change is the experience of love. It is that inherent experience of love that becomes the engine of change."
(Richard Rohr)

Read Genesis 32:22-32 and Ephesians 4:22-32

Jacob is a difficult character to analyse. Is he an example for us, or a warning? A saint or a scoundrel? **Are what we see as his deceptions actually a part of God's plan or does God achieve his aim despite Jacob's interventions?**

And so to our passage; one of the most famous (and also most mysterious) in scripture. Through the effect of this episode, Jacob moves from (essentially) being the manipulator and deceiver to one who may himself be deceived – consider his sons' story about the fate of Joseph.

Man, angel or God. It is not made clear exactly who Jacob encounters. **Why is the level of ambiguity important? Perhaps most importantly, why did they fight with Jacob at all?**

American theologian Beth Tanner reflects that, *"The Christian life is sometimes difficult. Jacob was far from perfect, but he was faithful. In this text, he does become a role model, not of moral perfection, but as the one who wrestled in the night and did not surrender. His new name "Israel" is a lesson worth learning."* **When and how should we wrestle with God?**

The scene here acts a parallel (or mirror perhaps) to Jacob's vision at Bethel on his way north twenty years or more earlier (28:10-17). **In what ways do we need both vision and struggle as part of our Christian life?**

Jacob was very fearful, full of dread even, as he approached his meeting with Esau, yet his brother's response (Genesis 33:4) could not be more different. **Have you ever experienced a similar turning the world upside-down moment?**

In Ephesians, Paul reminds us that the ways of the world bear many similarities to the younger Jacob. Equally, his words about 'putting off' and 'being made new' remind me of the struggles which we see insects, such as butterflies or dragonflies, undertake as they seek to emerge from their juvenile form and take on the adult nature. **In what ways do you think Jacob's struggle here reflects such a change?**

Looking at verse 23 of our Ephesians reading it is clear that we are expected to think about and through our faith. We are to consider its implications for our words and actions. Paul presents similar ideas when writing to the church in Rome saying that (Romans 8:6) that *"the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace."* **Moving on a few chapters (Romans 12:2), what do you think it means for us to have a 'renewed mind'?**

"Your real, new self (which is Christ's and also yours, and yours just because it is his) will not come as long as you are looking for it. It will come when you are looking for him."
(CS Lewis)