

ONE STORY CHURCH YEAR

Small Group Discussion Guide

Jacob is given a new name: Israel. Jacob receives this name in trust of the relationship that he has with God. In contrast, the Sadducees seek not a relationship but rules, trying to trap Jesus in them. Jesus does not play that game but goes back to the relationship and its everlasting nature.

Week Three: Named

Genesis 28-40; Mark 11-15; Psalms 11, 145, 12

The Small Group: Its Purpose

Faith matures and deepens in community. Small groups are places to develop faith-based relationships, explore questions, and find support for the journey. Discussion guides contain elements that will help group members get to know each other, reflect on the ONE readings, and pray together. The covenant of the small group is to be encouraging, confidential, and open to the wonderings and assurances that arise from reading scripture.

This Week's Readings: Some Notes

Following Jacob's shocking deception to get his father's blessing, he leaves, fearing the anger of his brother, Esau. These chapters take you on Jacob's journey and the continuation of God's story with the people of Israel, the name given to Jacob after he wrestles with God. In all of these stories, we see how God continues to work for good, in spite of the messes that human beings make. There is reason, in these chapters, to mourn the harm that human beings can inflict upon one another. Do not skip through these moments too quickly. We seek not a Pollyanna faith, but a deep one that wrestles with a world in which bad things happen. We do well to seek what God does in response to these moments.

Mark 11-15 presents us with the hard part of the Gospels, which is the crucifixion of Jesus. There are challenging teachings in this section, too, as Jesus drives toward the cross. The temple is the place where Jesus teaches and uses to talk about the things to come. When Jesus dies, he is confessed as God's Son. On the cross, there is a clarity about Jesus' identity.

Connecting: Take Time to Get to Know Each Other

Continue to get to know each other. Share your name, how you got it, and/or the meaning of it.

Praying: Entrusting All Things to God

Designate someone in your group to open in prayer. If members have joys and concerns to share, include those things, too.

Discussing and Studying: Digging In

The Bible study portion for these small group studies focuses on Sunday's preaching texts, but feel free to dig into what you have been reading. What did you read in the last week that surprised you?

What challenged you? What bothered you?

What sounded like good news? What did you find out about God? About yourself?

You could spend your whole discussion time just on these questions. If you like more structure, use the questions below. Some groups may want to go more deeply into the Bible readings; refer to the resource section for more.

Invite someone to read out loud Genesis 35:9-15 and Mark 12:18-27. Use the questions below to assist your discussion and study.

1. What are some initial reactions you have to these readings?
2. If you heard this week's sermon, with what did you resonate? What did you wonder? How did it help or hinder your understanding of these texts?
3. Of all the verses included in this week's readings, the above verses are what were chosen for preaching texts. What connections do you see in these texts? What would you have chosen if you were the preacher?
4. Jacob receives his new name, Israel, from God twice. The first time is in Genesis 32:22-32. Jacob is on his way to meet Esau after many years of separation. He does not know if Esau will receive him or try to kill him. The night before they meet, a man, whom Jacob perceives to be God, initiates a wrestling match with Jacob. Jacob holds onto his wrestling partner until he receives a blessing, which comes in the form of a new name. In Genesis 35, God declares, again, that Jacob's new name is Israel. God then goes on to declare who God is: God Almighty. Jacob's name is about his relationship with God.
 - a. Reflect on names and how they function in our relationships. Knowing someone's name, formal vs. nickname, etc.
 - b. God is revealing a value of relationships. How does this shape your understanding of God?
5. Jacob is on the move at this point in Genesis. Note what has just happened in the story: two of his sons have avenged the dishonor of their sister, Dinah, but this action has put the family at risk. God has told Jacob to go on the move again, to Bethel. Rebekah's nurse dies on the way, and God finds Jacob, assuring him of his identity. How is this like your experience of God, to appear to you in uncertain and challenging times?
6. In Mark, the Sadducees are testing Jesus, giving him a situation in which it seems like there will be no good answer. Jesus does not get caught up in rules, but, rather, goes back to God's identity and relationship with the people of Israel. I am the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. God is the God of the living. Relationship trumps rules. How do we let rules sometimes mix us up in our relationship with God? Do you think the rules matter?
7. If God is relational, what can we learn about how relationships look and work?
8. Any other thoughts on these texts? Tap into study Bibles and other resources to expand your discussion.

Wrapping up

Share closing thoughts and a prayer and/or one of the week's psalms as a benediction for your time together.

Additional Resources

The Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/>

This site has many videos and other resources that your group may find beneficial for book overviews and context. These videos are short but comprehensive. Specific videos that pertain to this week's readings are:

[Genesis 12-50](#)

[Bible Project: Mark](#)

[How the OT is arranged](#)

Luther Seminary: [Enter the Bible](#)

[Summary of Genesis](#)

[Summary of Mark](#)