



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC	From Place to Face	SPEAKER	Dr John Andrews
THEME	Critical Concerns Beyond the Souls of Man	DATE	10 & 11 Aug 2024

MESSAGE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In this sermon, Dr. John Andrews leads us through the transformation of Jacob. He directs our attention to Genesis 28 and Genesis 32, where we observe a striking connection: in both chapters, Jacob renames the places where he interacts with the Lord. While these stories are clearly linked and share similarities, they also exhibit profound differences.

THE COMMITMENT TO BLESS THE NEW GENERATION

#1 Jacob moved from an Experience to an Encounter

In Genesis 28, God breaks into Jacob's world in a dramatic way, marking the first conversation between them. Jacob dreams of a stairway and receives an incredible promise from God: He vows to bless Jacob, protect him, and make his offspring a world-changing force. When Jacob awakens, he exclaims, "How awesome is this place!" (v. 17). Yet, it is important to note that the place itself is not what is awesome—it is the Lord who makes it so.

By Genesis 32, Jacob finally recognizes that he has seen the face of God. This marks a significant shift in Jacob's understanding. In chapter 32, after wrestling with the Lord, Jacob's response becomes intimate and direct. This transformation highlights the difference between simply experiencing God and truly encountering Him. If we are not careful, we might settle for just an experience of God—being in an awesome place with awesome people—rather than pressing in for a deeper encounter.

Likewise, in worship, there is a danger in worshipping the experience itself, rather than the God we are worshipping. Even on social media, there is often more emphasis on who is leading worship, the ambience and location of where it is happening, rather than on the One we are worshipping. True worship should be possible regardless of who is leading us because it is not about the chills and thrills, but about moving towards the awesomeness of God's face. Our services are not about entertainment; they are designed to help us, even if just for a few moments, shift our focus away from ourselves and onto God. The role of the worship leader and the preacher is to guide us towards encountering the face of God—the face that transforms our lives.

#2 Jacob moved from Transactional to Relational

Jacob, known for his deceit, even called on God to endorse his lies. When God gives him a wonderful promise in Genesis 28, instead of responding with awe and submission, Jacob sets his own terms, trying to negotiate with God. This shows that Jacob, at this point, is still the same old Jacob—transactional and self-serving.

However, in Genesis 32 at Peniel, Jacob realizes that he is wrestling with the Lord and that, instead of dying, he is given a new identity. There are no bargains this time, only obedience. This transformation highlights an important lesson: is our relationship with God about what we can get from Him, or about what He desires from us?

As children, we often ask, "Can I have...? When can I have...?" If this remains our only narrative with our parents into adulthood, it is a sad relationship. Parents want their children to be their friends, to enjoy giving, serving, and loving together—not just to be there constantly asking and receiving. Similarly, God is a relational Father, not just a transactional one. Our focus should be, "Father, what do You want?" rather than "Father, what can I get?" Even when we do not get what we want, when we want it, or how we want it, we should not be disappointed because our relationship with God is grounded in love, not in transactions. We show up because we love Him, not because we see Him as a "glorified ATM".

#3 Jacob moved from 'your God' to 'my God'

Up until Genesis 32:9, Jacob consistently refers to God as "your God". However, after his face-to-face encounter with the Lord, everything changes. His walk is transformed — both physically and spiritually, and he begins to fully invest in God's promise. Jacob builds his first altar, an act that requires time and effort, signifying his deep commitment. He names the place "El Elohe Israel," meaning "The Lord is the God of Israel." Israel is not a nation but a person—Jacob himself. By this act, Jacob confesses that the Lord is now his God.

This moment marks a profound shift in Jacob's relationship with God, moving from distant acknowledgment to personal relationship. It is a powerful reminder that each generation must see and encounter the Lord for themselves. When we truly see Him, everything changes. Having your own personal conviction that Jesus is Lord empowers you to face each day with confidence, rooted in the knowledge that you have encountered the living God.

CONCLUSION

Today, let us move beyond simply going through the motions. Let us press into a real encounter with God, letting Him transform our lives as He did for Jacob. Make God your God, and let your life be a testimony of His presence and power.

QUESTIONS

1. How have you personally moved from experiencing to encountering God? How has that impacted you?

2. In what ways could we be approaching our relationship with God with a transactional mindset? List some practical steps we can take to shift towards a more relational approach.

3. What does it mean for you to personally claim God as “my God”, and how does this shift in perspective affect your faith and daily decisions?