



Transcript for Audio Teaching: [Module 1: You Are Here](#)

Hi! This is Stacey. I want to welcome you to the audio lesson for Module 1 from my study journal called Deconstruction: Your Journey in Faith. If you have not yet purchased your copy, you can find it on Amazon. Each section has an accompanying audio file on my website, which is ClarityUnleashed.com. There you will also find opportunities to connect with me for personal coaching. I am also offering an online “small group style” coaching program utilizing the study journal. Without further delay, let’s explore Module 1, You Are Here.

Module 1 is centered around Jacob’s wrestling match with God, found in Genesis 32. As we explore Jacob’s experience, imagine you are getting into your time machine and being transported through barriers including time, culture, and complexities of language.

Those of us who are in deconstruction often use the word “wrestling” to describe how we are processing our thoughts on Scripture, beliefs, and traditions. As you continue to incorporate books, podcasts, blog posts, and other sources into your faith deconstruction, listen for that word and I think you will see it is very common and very appropriate.

It is no surprise that today’s lesson is from Genesis chapters 29-32, which captures a story of betrayal, a journey and a wrestling match. On these pages, we see Jacob’s tumultuous relationship with his father-in-law, Laban. Ultimately God calls Jacob to leave his father-in-law’s homeland in order to return to his own ancestral home. Jacob’s journey home begins with a promise from God. “Then the LORD said to Jacob, ‘Return to the land of your ancestors and to your kindred, and I will be with you’” (Genesis 31:3).¹

¹Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).



As I mentioned in the Introduction to these Audio Messages, it is not uncommon for deconstruction to begin with a traumatic experience, or with loss, grief, or betrayal. For some of us it isn't one big event, but instead it is many small events that happen over time until one day we recognize a pattern. Perhaps that is what Jacob experiences during the twenty years that he works for Laban. According to the account in Genesis, Jacob initially works seven years for Rachel's hand in marriage (29:20). You may recall that Laban pulls a "bait and switch" and gives his eldest daughter Leah to Jacob instead of Rachel (29:23-26). Jacob works another seven years for Rachel (29:26-27), and six more years to build his flock. Jacob's frustration comes to the surface as he confronts his manipulative father-in-law, saying: "These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times" (Gen 31:41).

God calls out to Jacob in a dream, acknowledges Laban's behavior, and tells Jacob to leave Laban's land and head back to his homeland. But Jacob's homeland is potentially as unhealthy and unwelcoming as Laban's household. Recall that as a young man, Jacob took great lengths to deceive his father, Isaac. Jacob's deception resulted in Isaac pronouncing a blessing over Jacob instead of Esau (Genesis 27). Jacob left his father's household because his life was in danger from his brother, Esau.

Even though he may leave one dangerous home for another, Jacob follows the Lord's instruction and leaves Laban's household taking his wives, his flocks, and his belongings. Laban chases after Jacob and after a confrontation and truce, they create a boundary line between



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them, each swearing they will never cross to the other side (Genesis 31:52). This is a lot of baggage for Jacob to carry and I imagine he is weighing all of these things as he journeys toward his homeland.

Afraid that Esau may still want to kill him, Jacob sends men ahead of him with gifts for Esau, hoping these gifts will soften Esau's anger (Genesis 32:3-5). Jacob sends his men and his family out ahead of him and stays behind, alone, for the night. Put yourselves in Jacob's shoes for a moment. His path behind him is closed and his path ahead is unknown and potentially leads to death at the hands of his brother. Yet God is clearly calling him to move forward. Let me ask you a question. Do you think that Jacob has a lot to wrestle with?

You know what happens next. After sending his family ahead, Jacob chooses to stay behind to spend the night alone. We read, "Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak" (Genesis 32:24). As much as verse implies a physical wrestling match, I also imagine it is a fitting metaphor for the emotional turmoil that Jacob feels. Perhaps he is fearful, anxious, regretful, and uncertain of God's call. What about you? What would you wrestle with in regard to your past and your future?

The wrestling match lasts until dawn and Jacob does not escape unscathed. He receives an injury to his hip that changes his gait from that moment forward. Jacob never walks the same again. "When the man (God) saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, 'Let me go, for the day is breaking.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me'" (Genesis 32:25-26). Jacob asks God to bless him. After wrestling and receiving an injury, Jacob holds this man down and refuses to let him go without a blessing.



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“So he said to him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Jacob.’ Then the man said, ‘You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.’ Then Jacob asked him, ‘Please tell me your name.’ But he said, ‘Why is it that you ask my name?’ And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.’ The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip” (Genesis 32:27-31).

What a poignant interaction. Jacob’s blessing is the name Israel. Sit in that moment and recognize that God rewards Jacob for prevailing in his struggle with God and humans. Not only does Jacob leave that camp with a new name, but our own faith roots lead back to that wrestling match with God. What can we learn from this interaction between Jacob and God? I am going to propose some take-aways and look forward to hearing yours too.

First, how are you wrestling with God over your known and unknown circumstances? Is this a new concept for you. Maybe you have been told that it is wrong to question God. Deconstruction is an isolating process, partly because we feel guilt or shame for struggling with our faith, our traditions, our doubts, and our relationship with God and the church. It seems to me that Jacob felt that tension too. He sent his family ahead and, in solitude, considered all of the stressful factors in his life. I hope that Jacob’s experience gives you confidence that not only is wrestling okay with God, but it will lead to transformation and blessing.

Second, wrestling occurs in solitude, just as Jacob’s story describes. You may not feel confident in this deconstruction practice at first, but you will gain confidence as you experience God’s presence in your life. It is not uncommon to want to be guided by others, but your deconstruction is unique, and you are in charge. You are your own spiritual leader, and you are



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empowered and accompanied by the Holy Spirit. Know that in many cases, your church or community may not be a safe place for openly wrestling. It seems counter-intuitive that Christians are alienated because they ask questions. After all, we read that the name Israel means, “for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed” (v. 28). I encourage you to step into your faith journey with increased confidence each day, acknowledging that you may find yourself secluded, between where you worshipped in the past, and where you will worship in the future. Know that God will meet you there, in your seclusion and introspection.

Third, Jacob receives an injury during the wrestling match. I believe that Jacob’s injury is a transformative moment for him. It changes how he walks through the rest of his life, and will be obvious to those who encounter him. What is one transformation that you expect as a result of your faith journey? How will others visually recognize your transformation?

This concludes Audio Message for Module 1. I want to encourage you to use the study journal to capture your thoughts, questions, doubts, and experiences. Begin your wrestling match and boldly ask God to not only meet you on the mat, but to bless your life through His transformative touch.