LIFE GROUP LEADERS GUIDE

Learning How to Face Our Fears

Genesis 32:1-21

Series:	Genesis
Date:	October 2026
Text Reference:	Genesis 32:1-21

Purpose of This Guide

This guide helps your group explore how God grows faith through fear, reassurance, testing, prayer, and gradual transformation. Jacob's story reminds us that mature faith is not the absence of fear but learning to trust God in the midst of it.

Key Text — Genesis 32:1-21 (ESV)

Leader's Big Idea to Keep in Front of You:

God grows us in faith by helping us face our fears.

Part 1: Opening Questions

Getting the Group Thinking

Leader Note

These questions are designed as warm-up questions. They are not meant to be deeply theological — they're meant to lower the guard, get people talking, and naturally lead the group toward the key themes of the text.

Spend no more than 10–12 minutes here.

You do not need to use all the questions — pick one or two that feel right for your group.

1. **What is a fear that tends to keep people awake at night?**

Leader Note

Fear is universal. The sermon began by highlighting common fears ranging from health and finances to uncertainty about the future. Help people recognize that fear is not unusual and that Genesis 32 addresses a very relatable human struggle. The goal is not to solve fear yet, but to acknowledge its reality.

2. **When you are anxious, what is usually your first response?**

Leader Note

This question prepares the group for Jacob's movement from fear to prayer. Listen for patterns such as worrying, planning, withdrawing, seeking advice, or praying. The discussion sets up the observation that prayer was not Jacob's first response, but ultimately became his best response.

Part 2: Study Questions

SECTION A: God strengthens our faith by assurance of His care. (32:1-2)

3. What assurances had God already given Jacob before he ever encountered Esau?

Leader Note

The answer stretches back to Genesis 28:13-15 and Genesis 31:3. God promised to be with Jacob, protect him, bring him home, and fulfill His covenant promises. Before the test came, God supplied assurance. This is a recurring biblical pattern. Notice how God often prepares His people before trials rather than removing the trial itself. Compare Isaiah 41:10 and Matthew 28:20.

4. Why was the appearance of the angelic camp at Mahanaim so significant?

Leader Note

Mahanaim means "two camps." Jacob saw his own camp and God's camp. The angels visibly reinforced what God had already said in His Word: ***He was present and protecting Jacob****. Help the group see that God's primary means of reassurance today is not visible angels but His promises in His Word. The key lesson is God's presence through the promises in His Word, not the angels themselves.*

SECTION B: God Tests Faith Through Difficult Encounters (32:3-8)

5. **What does Jacob's attempt to reconnect with Esau reveal about his growth and facing his fears?**

Leader Note

Jacob demonstrates a measure of maturity by initiating contact. Rather than continuing to run, he humbles himself and seeks favor. Twenty years earlier he had deceived Esau and fled under threat of death. His guilty conscience likely amplified his fear of facing Esau until now. He repeatedly refers to Esau as "my lord" and himself as "your servant." The question helps the group see that faith often involves taking difficult steps of obedience while still struggling with the fear itself.

6. **What does Jacob's reaction teach us about the relationship between faith and fear?**

Leader Note

Jacob had God's promises, God's command, and even God's angelic reassurance, yet he was still terrified. This reminds us that believers may genuinely trust God and still struggle with fear. The issue is not whether fear appears, but where we take it. Compare Matthew 8:25-26. Fear becomes spiritually productive when it drives us to a greater dependence upon God.

SECTION C: God Grows Faith Through Dependent Prayer (32:9-12)

7. What makes Jacob's prayer such a strong model for believers?

Leader Note

Jacob's prayer contains several important elements: he addresses the covenant God, recalls God's promises, acknowledges his dependence, confesses his unworthiness, clearly states his fear, and asks for help. This is not polished religious language. It is honest dependence. Help the group see that biblical prayer combines humility, honesty, and confidence in God's character.

8. Why is it important that Jacob prayed God's promises back to Him?

Leader Note

Jacob anchored his request in what God had already said. Verse 12 essentially says, "But You said." He was not trying to manipulate God; he was expressing faith in God's revealed will. Encourage the group to see Scripture as fuel for prayer. Compare Philippians 4:6-7, 1 John 5:14-15, and Psalm 56:3-4. Faith grows stronger when prayer is rooted in God's Word rather than changing circumstances.

SECTION D: God Grows Faith Gradually Over Time (32:13-21)

9. What do verses 13-21 reveal about Jacob's ongoing spiritual growth?

Leader Note

Jacob genuinely prayed, yet he immediately returned to elaborate planning. The sermon emphasized that spiritual growth is often gradual and imperfect. The sermon reflected that some commentators view the gifts as wise planning, while others see lingering self-reliance. Either way, the text reminds us that sanctification is a process. God had changed Jacob, but God was not finished with him. This should encourage believers who still battle old habits and patterns. Compare Philippians 1:6.

Part 3: Application Questions

10. Discuss how unresolved sin, damaged relationships, and painful memories can distort our view of present circumstances.

Leader Note

Recall Jacob's meeting with Esau. He had originally run from Esau on the threat of death. No doubt, that was still weighing heavily on his mind prior to this meeting. His original sin of deceiving Esau and his father was now being met face to face.

11. Is prayer functioning more like a steering wheel or a spare tire in your life right now?

Leader Note

This question comes directly from Corrie ten Boom's illustration used at the end of the sermon. Explore whether prayer is shaping decisions and dependence or only being used in emergencies. Have the group suggest some strategies to get their prayer life more towards a steering wheel than a spare tire.

12. What step of faith can you take this week that demonstrates greater trust in God?

Leader Note

Look for concrete responses. Examples might include praying daily through a specific fear, initiating a difficult conversation, trusting God with an uncertain future, or relying on Scripture rather than anxiety. Encourage people to write down and look for accountability in taking that step. Accountability may come from someone in the group, a spouse, or someone at work, depending on the situation.