

SHALOM HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY



Bible verses for Shalom:

Genesis 27:1-26 Jacob and Esau's Conflict

Genesis 32:22-33:12 Jacob and Esau continued

(Podcast is based on Genesis 32: 23-32)

Questions to consider:

- When was a time you were angry with God?
- When was a time you realized God was there for you even if you did not notice it at the time?
- Have you wrestled with God before? Are you wrestling with God right now?
- What are things you have wrestled with God/Faith about?

Journal, draw a picture, or write a poem about a time you wrestled with God/Faith:

Podcast Transcript:

Julie: Hello, this is coffee and Cahone with the Sky Ranch Summer Staff

Anna: My name is Anna

Julie: My name is Julie

Olivia: My name is Olivia

Dani: I'm Dani

Michael: And I'm Michael

Julie: And we also have a pre-recording from Annie another wonderful Sky Ranch Staff, she's going to be in a little later.

Anna: So today we're talking a little bit about our bible study, our bible reading from our theme day Shalom. Shalom is a word used in Hebrew it means peace and wholeness, it's used as a greeting in Israel, and the reading today starts with Jacob stealing the inheritance of his older brother Esau, and then Esau becomes angry, Jacob runs away and lives a number of years apart from his brother. The part that we're going to read for you is right before Jacob and Esau reunite and Jacob is really wrestling with this idea of whether Esau is going to be really mad with him or whether he should meet up with him at all. So, Dani is going to read the section we really want to highlight and talk about with you guys today.

Dani: Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until daybreak, when the man 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." 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 the humans and with God and have prevailed. Then Jacob asked him "please tell me your name." The man said: "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So, Jacob called the place Pineal saying: "For I have seen God face to face and yet my life is preserved." The sun rose upon him as he passed Pineal limping because of his hip. Therefore, to this day

the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle.

Julie: Which reading was that?

Dani: That was Genesis 32: 23-32.

Julie: Cool.

Anna: And the entire reading along with a list of what sections are in the Shalom readings are in the PDF that we provided for you in the virtual resource library.

Julie: So, we're all going to talk about wrestling with God, or wrestling with faith and we just wanted to start it out with hearing what Annie had to say.

Annie: Hi everybody my name is Annie Lind, I'm currently a first-year counselor here at Sky Ranch and today we are talking about times that we have personally struggled in our faith. So when I was in middle school around 7th or 8th grade; and a little bit into my 9th grade year I felt very lost in my faith, I didn't like going to youth group, I didn't like going to any of our Bible studies that we seemed to be having and it kind of began to be a bit conflicting for me because at that point in my life I already felt like I needed God but for some reason I just didn't feel like he was there. And then in the summer of my 9th grade year I came up here to Sky Ranch and it was the first time in a long time I really felt grounded, and I remember being reassured that it was okay to question and it was cool to talk about things openly and that all the conversations that revolved around Bible studies and God and Jesus didn't have to be about all those things that I thought but instead it could be about my personal experiences in life and that I found out that I see God in nature and that I see God in the sun and the trees and up here. It really helped me figure that out. So that's my story and I really encourage you to question your faith and talk about it openly because that never got told to me.

Julie: Cool, thank you Annie. How about the rest of us? Are there times that you kind of wrestled with God or wrestled with faith?

Michael: For me personally I resonate a lot with Annie and what she said. My strongest connection with God is going out and sitting in nature and kind of just taking time to pray and think and really contemplate my faith. These past two school years of college I've really struggled with that because I hear from pastors and things that you should be practicing your faith every day and that's kind of hard because my life got really busy and I never really had the

time. So, coming back from COVID had been a very different time for me because I've been able to sort of get out in nature more and pray. Sometimes I see God more as like this close friend that I only see from time to time who I can come back to and sit on this pier in my local nature where I like to go hike and do things and just be like "hey thanks for all that help you gave me that one time". I see God too with like sense of humor because I'll have asked for help with something or like asked for a certain friend to help me with something and then all of a sudden I'll just be driving somewhere or I'll go and sit out in nature and I'll contemplate what has happened in my life and I'll be like "you... did that... it's funny how you snuck that in there, you did a little sneaky." Anyone else?

Julie: Thanks for sharing that. Have you felt like you've had times where you wrestled with your faith and stuff? Or not as much?

Michael: Yeah, it's kind of weird. Like I've said, I've been kind of busy, so I've never really stopped living life while I wrestle with faith. It's kind of weird, I'll go through my daily life and then I'll have moments where I stop and think about it, but I'll just multitask it out almost. It's really weird how I do that.

Julie: Yeah, that's cool because you're living. I feel like daily life is what it's all about sometimes. Sometimes when I question my faith, I go through long periods of just lying in my bed and I fall into despair sometimes... or I feel like I don't know who to talk to about it. Which I know is unhealthy but now I've also started going to therapy and stuff and that helps a lot. Just having a weekly therapy session... and I didn't want to go for a long time but then I had to, and it was really helpful. But like in High School I never really questioned my faith or had doubts about it. I was afraid about eternal life and I was like... what does that mean? But I don't think I started questioning until my senior year of high school... and it was just a really rough time for me because I didn't really know who I could talk to about it... and I didn't know that other people also had questions and thought about things like I did because I just didn't hear about it from my Family or from other people at school. So, I didn't know who to talk to about it but I realize now that if I had opened up then there would have actually have been a lot of people willing to talk to me about it.

Anna: Yeah and I think that questioning your faith is something that you have to do, it's a part of it... because if you don't it just becomes stagnant. Questioning your faith allows it to- when you find the answers- to allow it to grow and change. Like I used to be Catholic and for a long time that's just how I was raised, and I was like that's just what I believe. One of my best friends when I went to college asked me some really deep probing questions about what I believed and why I believed it and I was like: "I don't know the answers to this" and it really threw me into like "do I really believe this?" and "what do I actually believe?" It really was challenging because I had believed in this since I was a little kid, it was how I was raised, and it was born in... and everyone around me was Catholic. It allowed me to change and grow and really define my beliefs which definitely are more Lutheran than anything else. So, I don't consider myself

Catholic anymore and I think questioning my faith allowed that. It made it [my faith] a lot stronger because now I can answer those questions people ask me in a genuinely honest way and I'm stronger in my faith because of that.

Julie: Yeah!

Olivia: I think a lot of times people want faith to be this box, and there's only one way that it works, there's only one set of beliefs you can have; but, something that I've learned throughout my years struggling with my faith is that it's different for everyone... and that is okay. It's also good to have your own personal faith with the beliefs that you have, and that makes you who you are and it's good to have differences in what you believe with other people... even if you're in the same branch or Christianity. Having those differences is awesome and talking about them is awesome. That's really important to me.

Julie: Yeah, the more that I kind of go on my faith journey the more my answers to questions are just "I don't know." I wonder about this and I don't know anything. I really wish more grown-ups told me that we really don't know a lot of answers; but we're living this faith and it's helpful to have a faith, and you don't have to know everything. I really think that a lot of churches are really an interfaith place because each person has different life experiences. Maybe some similar life experiences... but I don't think anyone can really be wrong because they're just coming from their experience... and there's always more to learn.

Anna: Also, saying "I don't know" but believing in Jesus anyway... isn't that what faith is? To trust with a complete trust. That's a huge thing for me. Some of my friends aren't really religious. so, I will have a hard time when I say "oh, I'm going to go to church" and they say "well, why?" They ask me those questions that I don't know the answer to. They're like "well then why do you go?" It's like... because that's a part of what faith is. A little bit of trust. You have faith that that is going to bear out and that your trust is going to be sort of fulfilled. That isn't exactly the word I mean but you get what I'm saying.

Julie: You trust it's going to be okay.

Anna: It's going to be okay and it's okay to not have all of the answers.

Michael: That's something that bugs me about church culture... there is a forcing of this idea that you need to go to church to be solid in your faith. I go to church more to renew myself and kind of wash things off and start over and feel a bit more whole, I guess.

Dani: Yeah, that's also something that bugs me a bit about churches. You know, a lot of times in a lot of parishes it's all 'you have to do it exactly this way', and 'this is the right way to do it' and everyone is different and how you experience things are different, and how you worship, and have faith and trust is different for everyone. I'm a strong believer in knowing yourself, and finding yourself, and finding your faith through that... and that might look different from other people... and that's okay. You don't have to necessarily conform to what someone else's vision of what they think things should look like. You can find what works for you and really follow through with that.

Julie: In your experience has that been difficult... to go your own path and trust yourself and stuff?

Dani: Yeah part of it has. I was also raised Catholic. My parents weren't necessarily religious but that was how they were raised so they thought it was a good foundation to give to my brothers and myself... so we were raised Catholic for a while. But I really started questioning my faith as I was developing my own moral compass and starting to learn more about who I am and what I need spiritually. I was moving further and further away from the Catholic church and my parents were very supportive in that, which I was very lucky to have them. They weren't the parents who continued to force me to go to church when I was really adamant that I didn't believe some of the things that they were preaching. For me personally I don't really consider myself religious, I'm more of a spiritual person because I feel very strongly in my own morals and my own moral compass and I don't want to confine myself necessarily to one particular religion or one sect of religion because I have my beliefs and I know what they are and I don't think I could commit myself to something and then not fully believe. Or even, you know, if there's a lot of people in a certain religion who believe one thing even if it's not specifically in the Bible or specifically taught... then I wouldn't really align myself with that when it conflicts with my own moral compass if that makes sense.

Julie: Yeah. A lot of times I feel in a similar way and I'm a very spiritual person... and the more that I grow and learn in seminary I think that church is really about being a beloved community of people who can wrestle with faith and people who can wrestle with themselves and find out what we're doing here. I just want church to be a place of honesty and caring because I think that there is truth in so many different faiths and I think that churches are a place for people to be together and that's what I would like a church to be, a place where people can really bring their full honest self and not just a facade of "I'm being good" or something like that. I don't know if there is such a thing as good and bad but I think... it just makes me cry, like every person is a divine and holy person... and I want there to be a fullness of life. I just want everyone to get to be themselves and their FULL selves.

Dani: That's why I love the Sky Ranch community so much because this is the first place where I've started to feel that. Where people don't judge me for not going to church every Sunday and we're all here to figure out how to be our best selves through God.

Anna: Yeah. I was going to say I think that's a huge reason why camp is so successful. It allows people to be up here or at any camp really and like be- I think especially at Sky Ranch because you're not distracted by your phone so you're not partially down the mountain. You don't have a foot down the mountain and a foot at camp. You're fully in camp and you're allowed to be yourself for a full week and no one is going to judge you. That's why camp is so different than church for me. Especially in the church that I was raised in... you went to show other people that you were going to church. When I'm at camp I go because I want to celebrate my faith and be myself around other people. I think that's a huge reason why it's so successful and why people have all of these life-changing experiences up at camp; because, they're allowed to be themselves and they're allowed to question their faith without being judged for it. I often tell my campers: "if you have any questions about your faith, that's okay, let me know, we can talk about it." I'm a full believer in questioning your faith. I think it makes it better, and I've dealt a lot with that, with kids being able to come up and question it and I think that's a really good thing. I think that's why lives change when you come to camp whether you're a counselor, a camper, a volunteer, or whatever.

Michael: Yeah, and along with that I think not just accept it; but, celebrate it. Camp was the first place where I really felt like I was allowed to be who I want to be as a person. I remember last year another staff member just encouraged me to be who I am and let it all show. It became so great, for the first time in my life almost I was accepted for being the person I want to be and I was weird, but it was called cool... and that continued down the mountain because I became more comfortable in who I am as a person and how I want to act and treat other people. The fact that it continued down the mountain and other people in my home communities started to show me that same level of love and appreciation honestly made a difference in how I live my daily life.

Anna: I think that links back to Shalom and the idea of wholeness. You're allowed to be your whole self. I just wanted to link it back to the theme for Shalom. I love the way that it's used as a greeting. You're greeted as: "peace to you." It's such a beautiful word to me.

Julie: I love how it sounds like "Shalom", you know? It just feels like a river or an ocean with the "sh" sound and then the "om" at the end just feels kind of like a circle.

Anna: It feels kind of whole, like the shape of your mouth.

Olivia: It sounds like the meditation sound like "om"

Anna: If you're talking about the way the word is formed it actually does form from the back to the front of your mouth.

Julie: Ooh that's cool too, kind of like inward and out like bringing your soul out.

Michael: Let's get a full linguistics lesson.

Anna: The "s" is at your palate and the "lom" is at the teeth. So that forms from your palate to your teeth and then the "om" is at your lips.

Julie: Shalom...

Olivia: I want to go back a little bit and talk about the reasoning of doing things because I think a lot of the time when I'm questioned about what I'm doing I don't have a profound answer like: "Oh well this is why I go to church", it's more like "well, I feel happy when I go to church, so I want to" and I think that's perfectly okay because if that's a place that you feel like you belong then go, and go do it. If it's not a place that you feel like you belong then don't go, find somewhere else to go, find a different community where you feel like you belong. That can be really hard sometimes, but it's kind of on you to ask that question: "do I feel comfortable here?" If the answer is no you need to find a new place where you do feel comfortable and ask people where they feel comfortable and see where you can find that.

Julie: Yeah, and also on that note, it's good to be in a place where you're challenged and where you can be uncomfortable and grow... but not if it's in a way where it's really hurting your soul. You have to take care of you and go somewhere that challenges you maybe to be more open but not a place that hurts you.

Dani: I think that's a really special balance... finding somewhere where you're comfortable enough to be uncomfortable... and that's where the growth happens.

Michael: I'm kind of grateful for that in my home church because I found people there who I consider to be as close as family almost who treated my family with the same open love and respect but who have also made me question my own faith and helped my spiritual formation grow as a person too. I met some of my best friends there and I'm glad for that, so that's pretty cool.

Julie: Yeah that is cool.

Anna: We talked a little bit about how camp is such a good place for this and it's hard because you guys can't be up here right now, and we want you to, like really bad we want you to be up here.

Michael: It's weird without you guys.

Dani: Yeah, it's really empty.

Julie: That's why we did a podcast because we felt like it could be like a conversation... I think we have one more story.

Olivia: Oh yeah! So... when I was transitioning from middle school to high school time my youth director had decided to leave our church and during my middle school years I had gotten super close to her and trusted her with pretty much everything... and her decision to leave was actually made after my church decided unanimously from the board that we would approve and celebrate gay marriage in our church whole heartedly. She felt like she couldn't accept that and felt a really strong call to leave. It was really heartbreaking because that was someone who I had trusted so much and found so much comfort in, so I felt so much anger. I really wrestled with God about that because I didn't understand how someone who had brought me so much joy and love and comfort could then immediately bring me so much hurt and distaste. I just couldn't understand why that was her reason to leave because I was raised with the belief that God loves you no matter what, no matter who you are. Whether you're someone who is gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender... God made you that way and God wants you to celebrate that part of yourself. To have that happen to me, someone I was so close to just leave because of that it really broke my heart. It was a hard time for me, I didn't want to go to youth group because I didn't know who was going to be there and I didn't know how I was going to feel or if people agreed with my old youth director or what happened there. During that time I had a friend who was out to me as gay and he and I were the only two people who openly identified with the LGBTQ+ community and so we really struggled with it, especially since we were both really close to her. We found each other and talked a lot about it, on her last day she had a goodbye day and we met with her beforehand and talked to her about how hurt we were and she didn't have much to say but we could still love her and could still feel sad that she was leaving even though we just weren't happy about it and then we got this new youth director who we both actually interviewed and it was a total shift in what our youth group was ever meant to be. It was amazing because our new youth director was so whole heartedly accepting of everyone no matter where they were and who they were as a person or where they were in regards to their faith unlike our old youth director who had left. It was really eye opening to have that person be so accepting and provide a change of pace for everybody. Everyone was super excited about it because we had never had that before. It was super healing for me and my

friend. It was almost like she was sent to us to heal that community that was so broken from this bad thing that happened to all of us, we were all pretty hurt about it. So I guess I got this total shift in my faith after that because I was so challenged by what had happened, I felt like "why is this happening to me?" and then I had now the room to have a new perspective and have a new person show me the way that faith could be celebrated.

Julie: Thanks for sharing that story. I'm really curious about anyone who is listening, what your stories are... and I don't know if we have a great way to share and talk with each other right now but I'm really curious.

Olivia: And you might be in the middle of your story and that's okay.

Julie: Yeah, I think I'm in the middle of my story. Sometimes I feel like I'm not full butterfly yet but I'm just a little bit of mush inside a cocoon just waiting... er a chrysalis? Is that the last stage before butterfly? Yeah...

Anna: Is it cocoon for moth and chrysalis for butterfly?

Julie: Yeah, what's cocoon for?

Michael: Cocoon is for butterflies, yeah.

Julie: Is it different from a chrysalis?

Michael: We'll have to look it up. The way I like to look at it though is that you're never done with your journey, you just hit peaks and valleys. Sometimes you're in the valley and feel kind of low, and then you start climbing again, and going up the mountain. That sucks, but it's a fun time because you go for the journey and the view. The journey is just as fun as you find people along the way who help you out... someone to kind of be off in the distance looking out, to look up to. Someone there to help you along, someone to keep pushing you. That's always nice to have and even if you don't have someone or you don't feel like you have someone... you probably do.

Julie: And just know that we are here and we are thinking about you and praying for you and caring for you and Sky Ranch is a place where you will be welcomed fully... and there is always a place that is going to welcome you. Always out there somewhere there is a place that will welcome you if you're not feeling it.

Olivia: Would someone like to pray?

Michael: Olivia lost the nose goes...

Olivia: I'm the one who asked the question and I have to pray...alright. So, if you at home would like to assume a personal prayer position or just listen along while you're cleaning your room or doing the dishes or driving your car... pray with me. Hey God, thank you so much for this opportunity to reach people with your love... even if it's weird, even if it's uncomfortable and not what we're used to... even if it's not exactly what we want. Please continue to give us the strength that we need to get through these crazy times. Please help us remember that it's okay to question, it's okay to challenge ourselves, and to challenge you, and that we can always grow deeper and further in our faith and our beliefs and in our spirituality. We love you so much and please continue to bless our homes, our families, and ourselves as we go through these journeys in our lives. In your name we pray, Amen.

Julie: Thank you listeners, we love you.

All: We miss you!

Anna: Just a quick addition... I think it's important to know. Sometimes when I'm questioning my faith, I struggle with this idea that God is disappointed in me because I'm questioning him. You're not questioning God exactly; I mean you're questioning your faith, but God knows that you're not... I don't think that he

Julie: Or she! Or they! However.

Anna: God is not disappointed in you for questioning your faith, I think God would be proud of you for trying to get answers and trying to deepen your faith and trying to understand where you really belong. I think that's what God wants, God wants you to truly belong somewhere and be comfortable but challenged in your faith. I don't think God wants your faith to be stagnant.

Julie: Yeah, so something that I thought of in college, I thought "sorry God, I don't know if I can say I love you right now" because I used to always say I love you right before my prayers ended. I felt like maybe God might be sad at me questioning, or mad at me but then I thought... well why do I have a brain then? Why was I created with a brain if I wasn't supposed to use it, you know? Then I felt better about it and I was like, yeah, so I'm okay with that.

Michael: Be bold!

Julie: Yes, be bold! Thanks for adding that in Anna because that's something I struggled with a lot.

Anna: Yeah that's something I struggled with to, like letting God down. I think God would be like "I love the fact that you're questioning everything."

Julie: Yeah like you do you! You're a beautiful creation.

Anna: Yeah, he gave me the capacity to question.

Julie: Yeah, so it's a good thing to do, even if it puts your hip out of its socket. Like Jacob. It really feels like that sometimes, like your support is gone, like you don't know what to do. But you know what? If your hip goes out of socket, go to doctor, and have it put back in. And keep then keep going.

Anna: And know that all of your descendants will no longer eat the thigh muscle from the hip socket.

Julie: Woo! History added in. Okay, thank you!