

# TURNING POINTS

Part 6 of Foundations 260 - OT. Genesis 32:22-32.

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. February 15, 2026.

## DO NOT Dismiss the Middle School

### DWIGHT MOODY'S TURNING POINT

*Dwight Moody was a 19<sup>th</sup>-century American Evangelist. In the fall of 1871, he was in New York City when he had a life-changing encounter with God. God flooded his soul with such a sense of divine love that he had to ask the Lord to “stay His hand.” Moody later said that he did not have words to describe what happened.*

*That encounter with God and his love was a turning point. Moody reported that his evangelistic sermons were outwardly the same, but the spiritual impact was much greater as hundreds of people came to faith in Jesus. Moody's ministry expanded worldwide.*

*Today, the Moody Church and Moody Bible Institute continue his focus of living on mission for Christ.*

**Moody experienced a Turning Point, an experience with God** that changed his life and expanded his ministry impact. Turning points are relatively rare, but just one experience can change the entire direction of our lives.

**Today's teaching passage in Genesis 32 is about a turning point in Jacob's life.** We read about it in last week's Foundations 260 readings.

**While we cannot create a turning point in our lives, we can prepare for one.**

## GENESIS 32:22-32 (CSB)

During the night, Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two slave women, and his eleven sons, and crossed the ford of Jabbok. 23 He took them and sent them across the stream, along with all his possessions.

24 Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not defeat him, he struck Jacob's hip socket as they wrestled and dislocated his hip. 26 Then he said to Jacob, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

27 "What is your name?" the man asked.

"Jacob," he replied.

28 "Your name will no longer be Jacob," he said. "It will be Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed."

29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name."

But he answered, "Why do you ask my name?" And he blessed him there.

30 Jacob then named the place Peniel, "For I have seen God face to face," he said, "yet my life has been spared."

31 The sun shone on him as he passed by Peniel, limping because of his hip.

32 That is why, still today, the Israelites don't eat the thigh muscle that is at the hip socket, because he struck Jacob's hip socket at the thigh muscle.

**Let's explore the anatomy of a turning point to discover what it looks like. Then, we'll finish with a question: how can we prepare for a turning point?**

# THE ANATOMY OF A TURNING POINT

**What does a turning point look like?** We see a good example in this story of Jacob.

Jacob brought his family and flocks to the borders of Canaan by the Jabbok River, where he learned that his brother Esau was coming to meet him. With 400 soldiers.

Remember, Jacob had cheated Esau out of his inheritance and God's blessing. Esau had every reason to be mad and thirsty for revenge.

**So Jacob tried to scheme his way out of trouble.** He sent his family and flocks over the river to create a buffer between him and Esau.

Then, he sat alone in the dark and waited.

Jacob was terrified.

**And that set him up for an encounter with God,** a turning point that redirected and redefined the rest of his life.

**So what did that look like? Jacob's experience tells us that there are two stages in a turning point:**

## STAGE ONE: THERE IS A BREAKING

**Reality hit Jacob in his face.** He had cheated, schemed, and deceived his way through life, and now it was time for a reckoning.

The key to understanding the story is in verse 26:

*Genesis 32:26 (CSB) But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."*

Jacob was already in the blessing (check out last week's teaching), but because he had cheated his way into it, he lacked assurance. Now, in the face of his brother's army, Jacob needed to **know for certain** that God was for him.

**Jacob hit the wall.** The same wall that every self-sufficient person faces. The Lord allows us to go through times when we cannot find the strength, money, skill, or whatever to get through what we're going through.

- A mom with a sick baby.
- A breadwinner who loses their job.
- Hearing the doctor say we have a serious illness.
- Divorce papers are being served at the front door.

**In times like those, we may feel alone and desperate.**

- For Dwight Moody, it was a feeling that he was spiritually dried up. Yes, he was still preaching, but his ministry lacked spiritual anointing and power.
- Think of Moses. He was a failed leader hiding in what one Bible translation calls "*the backside of the desert*" (Exodus 3:1). It was humiliating. He was broken. But then God met him.

- Then, remember Isaiah's situation. He became aware of his lack of holiness in the presence of God, and cried out, "Woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips..." (Isaiah 6:5). He was broken. But with one touch from God, everything changed.

There will be days when we find ourselves alone, out of answers, out of excuses, or out of ideas. We are broken.

**But that's not the end of the story.** That's the beginning of a turning point.

Look what happened next in Jacob's story. God came to him and wrestled with him, which is an image of Jacob's need to surrender control of his life; the broken hip became a daily reminder of his need for God.

Jacob grabbed hold of God like a drowning man grasping a hand, and refused to let go. ***"I will not let go until you bless me" (verse 26)*** - not until you confirm that I possess the Abrahamic blessing, because without that, I know Esau will destroy me.

**When we're out of resources,** when we come to the end of ourselves, when God is all we need because he is all we have, when ALL we can do is **grab hold of God in prayer,** that's when we're prepared for a turning point. That's when God comes to us.

**We're broken in preparation for blessing,** and blessing is the second stage of a turning point.

## **STAGE TWO: THERE IS A BLESSING**

**The blessing was confirmed when God changed Jacob's name (vv. 26-27).**

Jacob means *"heel grasper,"* referring to his deceptive nature, so God asked him to speak that name (v. 27) to humble him and get him to admit, *"Yes, this is my true nature. That's what I'm like."* He broke him to bless him.

**Then, he gave Jacob a new name.** Israel means "one who struggles with God," a reminder of his brokenness and God's blessing.

*Genesis 32:28 (CSB) Your name will no longer be Jacob," he said. "It will be Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed.*

He **"prevailed,"** in the sense that God answered his prayers and assured him of the blessing. He truly was Abraham's spiritual heir; the covenant promises were his. Jacob's turning point was complete.

**The wrestling represents Jacob's desperate pleading** to the Lord in prayer. The prophet Hosea seems to agree with me:

*Hosea 12:3-4 (CSB) In the womb, he grasped his brother's heel, and as an adult, he wrestled with God. 4 Jacob struggled with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favor (blessing).*

**While he prayed with tears, Jacob "saw God face to face and lived" (v. 30).** And it will most likely be when we're pleading in desperate, humble, broken, pleading, tear-filled prayer that we experience a turning point - a moment when the Lord feels more real and more present than ever.

# TURNING POINTS COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

**The first turning point we need is conversion to Christ;** that's when we experience spiritual life for the first time.

*John Newton's story shows how God can turn even the darkest life into a trophy of grace. He began as a foul-mouthed sailor and slave trader, hardened to God and comfortable with evil. Then came a terrifying North Atlantic storm in 1748, when his ship was close to sinking and a crewmate was swept overboard, and Newton cried out in desperation, "Lord, have mercy upon us."*

*Newton later identified that night as the beginning of his conversion, the moment when God pulled him "out of the deep waters" and set him on a lifelong path of repentance and faith.*

*Newton's turning point led him from the slave trade to the pastorate, from exploiting people to writing "Amazing Grace" and advocating for abolition.*

**Conversion is where turning points begin, but it's not where they end.** We all need lifelong renewal, which comes in all shapes and sizes. For example:

- Renewed love for God and people,
- Deeper strength and joy in our "weak" situations,
- Fresh anointing for ministry impact,
- Sacrificial living,
- Healing from life's hurts,
- Greater faith to attempt great things for God,
- Unleashed generosity,
- Calling into vocational ministry.

**How can we prepare for this?** Desperation & brokenness. Cry out in prayer. Make room for God and his amazing grace. Breaking point = turning point

# SMALL GROUP GUIDE

## Review

- Review Peter's February 15<sup>th</sup> teaching and study guide.
- What were the main insights of Peter's teaching?
- What questions do you have about the passage or Peter's teaching?
- What were the main applications or takeaways for your life?

## Discuss

During his teaching, Peter said, "We all need lifelong renewal (turning point), which comes in all shapes and sizes. For example:

- Renewed love for God and people,
- Deeper strength and joy in our "weak" situations,
- Fresh anointing for ministry impact,
- Healing from life's hurts,
- Greater faith to attempt great things for God,
- Unleashed generosity,
- Calling into vocational ministry."

Discuss those examples. What might be the context for each one? What would the experience be like? What would the impact be? What extra examples can you imagine? How would one prepare for turning points like these?

## Prayer Focus

- 247: "Lord, please add daily to the Cornerstone those who are being saved."
- Pray for brokenness that leads to blessing.