



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Session 8: Renewed

Suggested Week of Use: April 21, 2024

Core Passage: Genesis 35:1-15

News Story Summary

While stories of unexpected discoveries related to DNA tests abound, a court case involving stolen identity and a DNA test made recent headlines. It all began in 1988 when Matthew Keirans and William Woods worked together at a hot dog stand. At some point, Keirans assumed Woods's identity and used a genealogy website to secure a copy of Woods's birth certificate. Over the next several years, Keirans amassed debt, got married, fathered a child, and forged a career—all under the guise of William Woods.

Several years later, the real Woods realized that someone had stolen his identity. When Woods alerted one bank, Keirans accused Woods of stealing *his* identity. Woods was arrested for identity theft and false impersonation. Being found incompetent to stand trial, Woods spent time in a mental institution. He eventually pleaded no contest and was sentenced to two years in prison and a fine; but he was released for time served in the county jail and mental hospital.

Following his release, Woods kept working to clear his name. He alerted the University of Iowa Hospital, where Keirans worked, to the situation. A detective tracked down Woods's biological father and matched their DNA to solve the case. In July 2023, Keirans was taken into custody, and he pleaded guilty in federal court earlier this month.

For more about this story, search “Identity thief University of Iowa Hospital employee.”

Engage

To supplement Engage, encourage adults to share if they've ever had their DNA tested. Note that many people make unexpected discoveries about their identity through such tests. Summarize the story of William Woods and how a DNA test helped solve his problem. Encourage the group to analyze factors that make up a person's identity. Note that while we all have physical characteristics that identify us, our true identity is found only in God. Share that this session focuses on how Jacob realized his God-given identity after years of wrestling with the Lord.

Challenge

To supplement Challenge, encourage the group to make a list of personal identifiers they want God and others to use when describing them. Say: **God may not have changed your name, but consider how He has changed your identity.** Lead the group to pinpoint any idols they may be holding that conflict with their God-given identities and urge them to trust in God.