



ANGELS & WRESTLING MATCHES

God's Incredible Plan • U3# 2 1st-3rd Grade • August 24, 2025

Concept

God is everything we need.

Goal

Students will learn that God loves everyone no matter who they are or what they have done. He loves us and wants to give us everything we need.

Passage

Genesis 28-32

Key Verse: "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Genesis 32:26 (NIV)

Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
Lesson: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>11 color pictures of Jacob's life from Bible Stories for Children, 1 set/room</i>	Activity Stations: <ul style="list-style-type: none">"Jacob's Journeys" worksheet, 1/student"God's Promises to Abraham & Jacob" worksheet, 1/studentPencils, 1/student

*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

Background Information/Teacher Helps

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Jacob's life is a story of God's patient and sovereign grace, as He slowly molds a deceptive schemer into a surrendered, godly man. It is also a story of the consequences of choosing not to trust God to fulfill His promises. Because Jacob didn't trust God to work out His promises, he forfeited the personal blessings God intended to freely give him.

"The ancient law of primogeniture provided that, under ordinary circumstances, the younger of two sons would be subservient to the older. God's election of the younger son highlights the fact that God's people are the product not of natural or worldly development but of his sovereign intervention in the affairs of men. Part of this verse is quoted in Ro. 9:10-12 as an example of God's sovereign right to do 'whatever pleases him' (Ps. 115:3)--Not in an arbitrary way (see Ro. 9:14), but according to His own perfect will. In ancient times the birthright included the inheritance rights of the firstborn (see Heb. 12:16). Jacob was ever the schemer, seeking by any means to gain advantage over others. But it was by God's appointment and care, not Jacob's wits, that he came into the blessing. Esau in despising his birthright proved himself to be 'godless' (Heb. 12:16), since at the heart of the birthright were the covenant promises that Isaac had inherited from Abraham."¹

Jacob's life is an example of God fulfilling His plan, often in spite of our actions. In His sovereignty, God has provided a solution to all mankind's foolish choices by providing the way of salvation to all who turn to Him in faith.

And as believers, Jacob's life continues to sound familiar. All too often we set out to accomplish God's will in our way, forgetting about our blessings in Christ Jesus. The children and we can learn from Jacob's life the folly of not trusting God to accomplish what He has promised. As a result, we can experience His promised blessings as we learn to depend on Him to work out His Incredible Plan.

¹ The NIV Study Bible, Zondervan Press, 1983, notes on Gen. 25:23; 25:31; 25:34, pp. 43, 44.

Incorporation Lg. Group

Introduction Lg. Group

Transition

Lesson Lg. Group

Activity Stations:

- **Research – Jacob's Life & Journeys**
 - **Instructions:** Give each student a "God's Promises to Abraham & Jacob" worksheet and a "Jacob's Journeys" worksheet. Have them follow the instructions to complete the worksheets.
- **Hangman**
 - **Instructions:** The students can use the whiteboard or pieces of scrap paper for this game. In Hangman, a single player attempts to determine a secret word by guessing the letters, one at a time, which might be in it. In the beginning, one underline character is displayed for each letter in the word. For each letter guessed that is contained in the word, the number and positions of all occurrences of the letter are revealed. For each letter guessed that is not contained in the word, a body part is drawn on a scaffold. If all letters in the word are guessed before a complete body is drawn, you win the game. If not, you lose, and the word will be revealed. Use the words Laban, Isaac, birthright, Israel, angel, sheep.
- **Missions Prayer**
 - **Instructions:** Talk about and pray for the Oasis Giving campaign.

Last week we talked about Abraham's twin grandsons and Isaac's sons, Esau and Jacob. Jacob was a schemer, always trying to figure out how to get his way. Who remembers what Jacob did to his brother? (He tricked Esau into selling him the birthright for a pot of soup!) Who remembers what a birthright is? (It is a father's inheritance.) Does anyone know why all of this is important for us to know? God's plan was that Jacob would receive his father's inheritance. And through Jacob's descendants God would keep His promise to Abraham. What was that promise? (It was to make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, to make Abraham's name great and through Abraham to bless all the nations of the world.) Esau was the first born so he should have received these promises. But God told Rebekah that Jacob would get the birthright. So instead of waiting to see how God would work this out, Jacob and Rebekah made a plan to make sure that Jacob would receive his father's blessing. Jacob tricked Isaac into thinking he was Esau. Esau was so angry that he planned to kill Jacob. So Jacob ran away to save his life. Today we're going to continue with the life of Jacob.

Listen while I read a summary of all of these events. <<Another teacher>> will put illustrations up as I read.

Instructions: One teacher should read the summary below while another teacher puts up the appropriate picture. The bolded words, with the exception of the key verse, indicate a picture change.

Jacob's Story [1]

Picture #1 – Jacob was in a lot of trouble. He had tricked his father, Isaac, and cheated his brother, Esau.

Picture #2 – Esau was so angry at Jacob that he wanted to kill him! So Jacob was sent away all alone from their camp to his Uncle Laban who lived very far away.

Picture #3 – Jacob was probably very lonely all by himself. One night Jacob lay down on the hard ground with a big rock as a pillow, and he fell asleep.

Picture #4 – As he slept he had a dream. He saw the skies open up above him and a huge stairway stretching up into the skies! God's angels were going up and down the stairway! Then Jacob blinked and gasped. God Himself was standing at the top of the ladder looking down at him.

God made the same covenant or promise with Jacob that He made with Abraham. He said, "I am the God of Abraham and your father Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land you are sleeping on. You won't be able to count all of your children's children, they will be so many. And through your family I will bless you and protect you wherever you go. I will bring you back home safely. And I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised."

Then Jacob woke up and made a covenant or promise, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear, and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God." Then he continued his journey.

Picture #5 – Jacob finally reached Haran and was welcomed by his Uncle Laban. He also met his beautiful cousin Rachel. After Jacob helped Laban for a month, Laban told him he wanted to pay him for his work. He asked what kind of pay Jacob would like. Jacob remembered his beautiful cousin. "If you let Rachel be my wife I will work for you for 7 years," Jacob told Laban. Laban agreed. The 7 years passed quickly for Jacob because he so loved Rachel. Finally he said, "The seven years are over, Uncle Laban. Let Rachel become my wife."

Laban had a big party for Jacob and his bride. But Jacob didn't know that his uncle was just as much of a schemer as he was. Instead of Rachel, Laban gave his older daughter Leah to Jacob as his wife.

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[1] Adapted from Bible Stories for Children, pp. 53-66.

Picture #6 – When he woke up the next morning Jacob found Leah beside him instead of Rachel! He was very angry and complained to Laban. But Leah was already his wife. Laban told him that the oldest daughter had to be married first. Then he told Jacob to celebrate with Leah for a week and then he could have Rachel as his second wife—if he would work for Laban for another seven years.

Jacob was stuck. He loved Rachel so much that he agreed. So Jacob had two wives. But he loved Rachel the most. The seven years passed and Jacob wanted to go back to Canaan. But he knew Laban didn't want Jacob to leave because God had blessed the flocks that Jacob tended. As a result, Laban was a wealthy man.

Picture #7 – Jacob and his family packed up everything and headed back to Canaan without telling Laban. When Laban found out, he gathered his relatives and chased Jacob. But God warned Laban in a dream not to do any harm.

Picture #8 – Jacob and Laban made a promise never to hurt each other. Then they went their ways in peace.

But as Jacob got closer to Canaan he remembered Esau's anger. Would he still be angry after twenty years? Jacob sent messengers ahead to greet Esau and find out.

"Esau is coming to meet you—with four hundred men!" the messenger told Jacob. Oh no! It sounded very bad. Jacob was more frightened than he had ever been. What was he going to do? Then he prayed to God and after that sent servants ahead with some of his animals as a present to Esau. And he sent his family across the Jabbok River. While he was there alone a man came to him and wrestled with him all night!

Picture #9 – Jacob wrestled and wrestled. He couldn't win, but he wouldn't give up either. The man touched Jacob's hip and instantly his leg was hurt. Then Jacob knew the man was really an angel of God.

The man said, "Let me go," but Jacob held on tightly. "I will not let you go unless you bless me," Jacob cried. The stranger stood still. "What is your name?" he asked.

"Jacob," Jacob replied.

The stranger smiled at Jacob. "Your name will be Israel now. For you have wrestled with God and with man and you have won."

"What is your name?" Jacob asked the stranger, in awe.

"Why do you ask?" the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob and left.

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Lesson Continued

Transition

Learning Activity#1 Lg. Group

Transition

Lesson Pt.2

Picture #10 – Jacob named that place Peniel, which means “face of God,” saying, “I have seen God face to face and yet I’m still alive.” He limped across the river knowing that all his blessings were given by God not a result of all his scheming and cleverness. He loved God with all his heart. He was now Israel, who would rule with God by God's power rather than by his own scheming and lying.

Picture #11 – Jacob was still afraid of Esau. But Esau had forgiven him. When he saw Jacob he ran to him and hugged him and they both cried. Then Jacob went to Shechem in the promised land, Canaan. He did return safely to the land just as God had promised.

Let's try a game to illustrate the contrast between wrestling & dependence.

Game #1 – Arm Wrestling

- **Instructions:** Have students pair up. Boys wrestle boys and girls wrestle girls. The pairs sit at a table across from each other. They each put their right (or left) elbow on the table and clasp hands. At the signal, they each try to force the other's hand down on the table. The one who is first to get the other's hand down is the winner.
 - **Debrief:** Wrestling is hard work. Some of us can win at it and some of us can't. Some are stronger than others and can persevere longer. But win or lose, it is hard work. God doesn't intend for us to wrestle to get the blessings He promises us. God wants us to trust Him to give us what He promises. God promised Jacob that He would bless him with the promises He had made to Abraham and Isaac. He made the additional promise that God would be with him wherever he went and eventually would bring him back to the land. But rather than trust God to keep His promises, Jacob wrestled with God and people by lying and scheming to get the blessings.
 - God patiently waited, taking increasingly more drastic steps to break Jacob of his self-sufficiency. Let's play a game that shows us the contrast between self-sufficiency and dependence.

Let's review Jacob's life and how he learned to depend on God.

Application

Instructions: Using the 4 pictures, go through the story of Jacob's life to make application to the student's lives. Begin by asking the students to tell you what each picture is about.

**Lesson
Pt.2
Continued**

Picture	Lesson
<p>"Jacob's Dream" In a dream, God told Jacob that he was the descendant of Abraham and Isaac who would continue the covenant or promise God made with Abraham. God promised to be with Jacob and take him back to the promised land.</p>	<p>Even though Jacob had schemed and lied to his brother and father, God made a promise to stay with Jacob until He did what He promised. God's promise didn't have anything to do with whether Jacob was good or bad. That's pretty awesome—God loves us and wants to bless us whether we are good or bad.</p>
<p>"Laban Tricks & Jacob Marries Leah" Laban gave Leah rather than Rachel to be Jacob's wife. Jacob had to work another 7 years for Rachel to be his wife.</p>	<p>The schemer, Jacob, learned what it's like to be tricked, cheated and lied to. Sometimes we learn how much our sin hurts others when others commit the same sin against us.</p>
<p>"Jacob Wrestles & Wrestles" An angel of God wrestled with Jacob. In an instant the angel disabled Jacob so he couldn't wrestle any more.</p>	<p>Jacob learned that only God can bless us. Jacob decided to depend on God and let God bless him.</p>
<p>"Esau Forgives Jacob" Esau forgave Jacob.</p>	<p>Jacob learned what it was like to be forgiven. Jacob saw how God always keeps His promises—he was back in Canaan just as God had promised.</p>

**Lesson
Pt.2
Continued**

What happens when you feel guilty? Maybe you're afraid and you try hard to do good things so you will be forgiven. Esau forgave Jacob even though Jacob did nothing to deserve it. This is like God's forgiveness, His grace towards us. We are all guilty. We have all sinned against God, but God wants to forgive. Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment we should get for our sins. When we tell God that we want Jesus' death to count for us, we begin a friendship with Him and we are completely accepted by Him. We don't deserve His forgiveness. There is nothing we can do to earn that acceptance and there is nothing we can do to lose it. It is a gift, paid for and given by God.

Transition

Learning Activity #3 Sm. Groups

Let's get into our small groups.

- Have you ever been tricked, cheated or lied to? How did you feel? What did you do?
- After learning about Jacob's life, what might you decide to do differently?
- Have any of you made a choice not to depend on God and have been sorry? Has anyone made a choice to depend on God and seen him work? (Allow the students to share their experiences.)

When we have Jesus in our lives we can choose to wrestle like Jacob and depend on ourselves or to depend on God and let Him decide how He will use us in His Incredible Plan. The choice is up to us—wrestling or dependence. Let's pray that God will teach us to depend on Him. Let's pray.