

ANGELS AND WRESTLING MATCHES

CONCEPT

God *is* everything we need.

GOAL

Christian students will learn that God wants us to trust Him to give us what He promises.

Non-Christian students will learn that there is nothing we can do to earn God's acceptance and there is nothing we can do to lose it. It is a gift.

PASSAGE: GENESIS 28-32

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

PLANNING AHEAD*

Lesson Supplies

Lesson:

- 11 color pictures of Jacob's life from *Bible Stories for Children*, 1 set/room

Learning Activity #1:

- 15 paper lunch bags

Optional Activity:

- Small soft ball

Craft Supplies

Activity Stations:

- "JACOB'S JOURNEYS" worksheet, 1/student
- "God's Promises to Abraham & Jacob" worksheet, 1/student
- Pencils, 1/student

* **Teachers please note:** For clarity, the shaded areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag. **Items followed by an asterisk* are to be supplied by the teaching team.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION / TEACHER HELPS

"That which is most prominent in the Divine dealings with Jacob was the matchless *grace* of God, shown to one so unworthy, the marvelous *patience* exercised toward one so slow of heart to believe, the changeless *love* which unweariedly followed him through all his varied course, the *faithfulness* which no unfaithfulness on Jacob's part could change, and the *power* of God which effectively preserved and delivered him through numerous dangers and which, in the end, caused the spirit to triumph over the flesh, transforming the worm Jacob into Israel the prince of God."¹ Jacob believed God's promises but didn't depend on God to bring them to pass. As a result, Jacob, the schemer, became Jacob the fugitive. He had gained the birthright and blessing, but was sent away to flee Esau's wrath. "We are here not so concerned with his [Jacob's] story in detail, as to trace the way in which God guided him, and fitted him for the advancement of His redeeming purpose. This purpose would have advanced more rapidly if those whom God had chosen had not delayed it by willfulness and sinfulness. The delaying passages are: Gen. 12:10-20; 16; 22; 26:6-10; 27-30; 33; 34; a sad total!

"When God appeared to Jacob at Bethel, as he was on his way to Padan-aram [Mesopotamia], the Patriarch vowed that *he would come again to his father's house in peace* (28:21); and when, after twenty years, the Lord appeared to him at Padan-aram, he said: 'Return to the land of thy fathers, *and to they kindred*; and I will be with thee' (31:3, 13; 32:9). 'To the land', meant Canaan; and 'to they kindred', meant Hebron, where Isaac was living. It is clear then, that God told Jacob to go back to Hebron, and that Jacob had promised to do so.

"Turning his back on Padan-aram, and facing Canaan, he found himself between two enemies, Laban behind him, and Esau in front of him, and from these there was neither retreat nor escape. With the enemy behind him he made a covenant in Mount Gilead (31: 25, 44-55), and he then gave his attention to the one in front of him (32).

"At a ford called *Jabbok*, about midway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, on the East of Jordan, Jacob having sent all his company forward, was '*left alone*' at night, and there '*a man wrestled with him until daybreak*'. This Wrestler, Who was the Angel of the Lord, crippled Jacob in the struggle, but the Patriarch clung to Him, refusing to let go until he received a blessing. Then occurred the second major spiritual experience of Jacob's life: his name was changed from *Jacob*, 'supplanter' [deceiver], to *Israel*, 'prince of God'; and the Patriarch named the place *Peniel*, the 'face of God' (32:24-32). *Bethel* and *Peniel* are, then, the two great landmarks in Jacob's life; the first marking his *conversion*, and the second, his *consecration*. He had lost twenty-years of spiritual opportunity and privilege, but now he is facing the goal and not fleeing from it.

"But attitude and action did not at once harmonize. After *Peniel* the returning prodigal should have obeyed God's command, and fulfilled his own vow, and have gone at once to Bethel and Hebron. But it was about ten years before he did this, after leaving Haran; years which for him, and his family, were disastrous.

"As indicating his want of faith in God, notwithstanding *Peniel*, mark Jacob's timid and fawning approach to Esau (33:1-11); his promise to follow Esau to Seir, without having any intention of doing so (33:12-17); his settlement at Succoth, east of Jordan, building a house for his family, and so preparing for a lengthened stay (33:17); and his removal into Canaan, but only 'to pitch his tent before the city of Shechem', belonging to the Hivites, one of the Canaanite nations, and to buy from them 'a parcel of ground' (33:18-20). His building an altar there could not atone for his disobedience, or save him from the consequences of his unfaithfulness (34). No Christian is clever enough to dodge the consequences of his backsliding. Chapters 33:17-34:31, need not and should never have been written.

"After all this loss of power and waste of time Jacob had to do what God had commanded, and what he had vowed to do; he had to go back to Bethel. For years after re-entering the land Jacob had been within thirty miles of Bethel, yet did not go to it. The 'prince of God' had been most unprincely; but God came to him again, and said: 'Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there'. This he did; and again God appeared to him confirming his new name *Israel*, and reaffirming the covenant which He had made with Abraham and Isaac (35:1-15). And here again, after thirty years, Jacob 'set up a pillar' (35:14; cf. 28:22), and offered upon it the first drink offering of which we read in Scripture.

¹ *Gleanings in Genesis*, Arthur W. Pink, ©1922, 1950 by The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, p. 250.

"But Bethel was not the goal. Isaac was at Hebron, the home of his father (13:18), and thither Jacob and his family went (35:27-29). The journey from Shechem to Hebron had been a sorrowful one, marked by two deaths, Deborah's, and Rachel's, and by the sin of his son Reuben; but it was the right road for Jacob, for now he was in the will of God for him."²

Jacob had a lot to learn, and God is a patient teacher. He made Himself known to Jacob and assured Jacob that He would be with him, and bring him back to Caanan again (Gen. 28:12-15). And over the next decade that is exactly what God did.

Surrender to God isn't easy for any of us. We, as believers, know that a life of complete surrender is the only way of true effectiveness. However, because we don't fully trust God, our actions often reveal that we want to be the "captain of our own ship" and "master of our destiny." Thus, we set out to accomplish His will in our way.

So, as with Jacob, God's goal for us is complete surrender to Him. This often requires Gods' discipline to bring us to the point of realization that all we have is Him and that He is all-sufficient. "'I will not let you go, unless you bless me'. That is what God wanted--Jacob's complete surrender to His will. At that point God changed Jacob's name to Israel, which means 'prince of God.'"³

All of us have the willingness to be used by God to influence children for Him. But how often do we depend on our own abilities to accomplish the task rather than surrender to God's provision? Isn't it true that our areas of self-confidence realize little need for dependence on God? For greater effectiveness in your ministry, pray for conviction of these areas in your life.

ADDITIONAL STUDY: PSALM 144:15; PSALM 51:17; 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10

² *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*, W.G. Scroggie, Kregel Publications, 1994, p. 123-125.

³ *God's Incredible Plan*, McCallum, Hamblin, p. 39.

LESSON PLAN

SET UP/ INCORPORATION 15-20 MIN	Activity Stations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Oasis Giving campaign and adopted missionary child.
INTRODUCTION/ INSTRUCTION -- LG GROUP 2 MIN	<p>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.</p>
TRANSITION – 2 MIN	<p>Listen while I read a summary of all of these events. <<Another teacher>> will put illustrations up as I read.</p>
LESSON PART 1 -- LG GROUP 15 MIN	<p>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.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jacob's Story⁴</p> <p>Picture #1 – Jacob was in a lot of trouble. He had tricked his father, Isaac, and cheated his brother, Esau.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>

⁴ Adapted from *Bible Stories for Children*, pp. 53-66.

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. He named the place Bethel, which means house of God and said, "This place must be the doorway to heaven!" Then Jacob 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.

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? How could he keep his family safe? How was he going to get safely back to the land as God promised? Jacob divided his family and belonging into two camps, hoping that if Esau attacked one camp that the other could get away. Then he prayed to God, "God of my father Abraham! God of my father Isaac! LORD, you told me to return to my country and my family. You said that you would treat me well. I am not worthy of the kindness and continual goodness you have shown me. The first time I traveled across the Jordan River, I had only my walking stick, but now I own enough to have two camps. Please save me from my brother Esau. I am afraid he will come and

	<p>kill all of us, even the mothers with the children. You said to me, 'I will treat you well and will make your children as many as the sand of the seashore.</p> <p>There will be too many to count.'"</p> <p>Then he 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!</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The stranger stood still. "What is your name?" he asked.</p> <p>"Jacob," Jacob replied.</p> <p>The stranger smiled at Jacob. "Your name will be Israel now. For you have wrestled with God and with man and you have won."</p> <p>"What is your name?" Jacob asked the stranger, in awe.</p> <p>"Why do you ask?" the man replied. Then he blessed Jacob and left.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Then Jacob went to Shechem in the promised land, Canaan. He did return safely to the land just as God had promised.</p>
<p>TRANSITION – 2 MIN</p>	<p>Jacob spent many years scheming to get God's blessing until the angel wrestled and finally immobilized him. It was then that he knew that only God could bless him. Let's try two games to illustrate the contrast between wrestling and dependence.</p>
<p>LEARNING ACTIVITY #1 – LG GROUP 10 MIN Rationale: To experience the contrast between self-sufficiency and dependence</p>	<p>Game #1 – Arm Wrestling</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Game #2 – Self-Dependence or God-Dependence?</p>

	<p>Instructions: Have students pair up. Have one student of the pair stand with his partner behind him. Stand an open bag on the floor in front of the pair. Instruct the student in the front to pick up the paper bag without using his hands. After all the bags have been picked up, stand them back on the floor in front of the front student again. This time instruct the student in front to put his hands on his hips and the student in back to put his arms through the opening between the front student's arms and sides. Instruct the students to bend together and the student in back to pick up the bag with his hands.</p> <p>Debrief: Which way was easiest to pick up the bag? It was a struggle for the front person because he couldn't use his arms. It was easier when you depended on the back person, wasn't it? This is a picture of dependence. Jacob was self-sufficient and struggled almost his whole life to accomplish God's plan, but God wanted Jacob to depend on Him to work through Jacob to keep His promises and work His plan out.</p>										
TRANSITION – 2 MIN	Let's review Jacob's life and how he learned to depend on God.										
LESSON PART 2 -- LG GROUP 10 MIN	<p>APPLICATION</p> <p>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.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="394 726 1537 1465"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="394 726 881 764"><u>Picture</u></th> <th data-bbox="881 726 1537 764"><u>Lesson</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="394 764 881 1020"> <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> </td> <td data-bbox="881 764 1537 1020"> <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> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="394 1020 881 1205"> <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> </td> <td data-bbox="881 1020 1537 1205"> <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> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="394 1205 881 1352"> <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> </td> <td data-bbox="881 1205 1537 1352"> <p>Jacob learned that only God can bless us. Jacob decided to depend on God and let God bless him.</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="394 1352 881 1465"> <p>Esau Forgives Jacob Esau forgave Jacob</p> </td> <td data-bbox="881 1352 1537 1465"> <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> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>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 finally know that we can't do anything on our own to be a friend with God, then we are ready to accept the death of Jesus on the cross 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.</p>	<u>Picture</u>	<u>Lesson</u>	<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>
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TRANSITION – 2 MIN	Let's get into our small groups.										
LEARNING ACTIVITY #3 – SM GROUPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever been tricked, cheated or lied to? How did you feel? What did you do? 										

<p>5 MIN Rationale: to apply scripture to real life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.) <p>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. Which one will <u>you</u> choose? Let's pray that God will teach us to depend on Him. The choice is up to us—wrestling or dependence. Which one will <u>you</u> choose? Let's pray.</p>
<p>OPTIONAL ACTIVITY</p>	<p>Game – "Do You Remember?" Instructions: Sit in a circle. Throw the ball to a student and ask for a question from the lesson. If the student gets the answer correct, he/she will throw the ball to another student. If the throwing student wishes, he/she can ask a question from the lesson. Some sample questions: What was Jacob's father's name? What was Jacob's mother's name? What was Jacob's brother's name? How did Jacob fool his brother, Esau? How did Jacob deceive his father? What was Jacob's first wife's name/second wife's name? Who was Jacob's uncle? How did Jacob's uncle, Laban, deceive Jacob? What did God tell Jacob in the dream with the ladder? How did the angel of God disable Jacob in the wrestling match?</p>

To Abraham:

Genesis 12:2-4 (NIV)

I will make you into a great nation (a o n t i n).

I will make your name (m n e a) great.

I will bless those who bless you and curse (r s u c e) those who curse (s r u c e) you.

All peoples on earth (t r e a h) will be blessed through you.

Genesis 15:5 (NIV)

Look up at the heavens and count the stars (t r a s s)—if indeed you can count them... So shall your offspring (f r f o p i n g s) be.

To Jacob:

Genesis 28:13-15 (NIV)

I am the LORD, the God of your father (t a h f e r) Abraham and the God of Isaac.

I will give you and your descendants (c e n a t s d d e n s) the land on which you are lying.

All peoples on earth will be blessed (s l e d b e s) through you and your offspring.

I am with you and will watch over you wherever (v e r h e w e r) you go and I will bring you back to this land (n a l d)

I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised (m s p r o d i e) you