

LESSON 21

Jacob's Wrestling Match

GENESIS 32:1-32



BIBLE TRUTH

GOD PROTECTS, DISCIPLINES, AND BLESSES HIS CHOSEN ONES

LESSON SNAPSHOT

- 1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN**
Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.
- 2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN**
Read Genesis 32:1–32 from the Scriptures or read story 21, “Jacob’s Wrestling Match,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
- 3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN**
Taking a New Name
- 4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN**
- 5. OBJECT LESSON 2 20 MIN**
Acting It Out
- 6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN**
- 7. ACTIVITY TIME 15 MIN**
Appeasing Esau
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ paper
 - ✓ colored pencils
- 8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN**
- 9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN**
Droves and Doves
SUPPLIES:
 - ✓ one card with the following line written on it for Esau to say: “To whom do you belong? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?”
 - ✓ seven cards with the following line written on them for the servants to say: “They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a present sent to my lord Esau. And moreover, he is behind us.”

TOTAL 90 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Jacob is reminded of God's faithfulness—This is an important time in Jacob's life. He has just been through a difficult experience with Laban. He is now on his way back home where he will see his brother, Esau. That could be cause for even more fear, after all Jacob had left home because Esau had wanted to kill him. God promises to be with Jacob as he returns home (Genesis 31:3), and God keeps that promise by sending angels to Jacob as an encouragement and a reminder of his faithfulness.

Jacob fears man more than God—On his journey back to Canaan, Jacob meets the angels of God. This confirms God's promise that he will be with Jacob on the journey. Even though God sends angels to Jacob, he is still afraid of Esau. Jacob's fear of his brother is greater than his trust in God.

Jacob wrestles with God and learns the fear of the Lord—In the middle of the night, when Jacob is all by himself, a stranger appears and begins to wrestle with him! Jacob must have thought it was a robber or one of Esau's men. So he grabs hold of the stranger and the two wrestle all night.

Toward morning, Jacob's opponent, with one touch, puts Jacob's hip out of joint. Despite the pain, Jacob holds on to his opponent and refuses to let go until he receives a blessing for he realizes he is not wrestling with an ordinary man.

In Genesis 32:30, we discover that Jacob wasn't wrestling with a man but with God! God had appeared to him as a man—and one day God would do this again when he sends Jesus.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Fear of Man

Fear of man is the desire for the approval and acceptance of others with the associated fear of how they might treat you if you fail to win their approval and acceptance. The Bible directs us to fear God and obey him. When we crave the approval of others and listen to what they say instead of to what God says in his Word, we fall into sin.

Proverbs speaks to the fear of man this way: "The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe" (Proverbs 29:25).

In the New Testament, Paul contrasts seeking the approval of man with seeking the approval of God: “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10).

The fear of man is a snare that snatches our affections away from Christ and what he has done on the cross. It snatches our attention away from the holiness of God and the sinfulness of our actions and focuses our attention on attracting the affections of man. When we fear man we trade love for God with love for man. God ceases to be our God, and man becomes our god.

WHERE IS JESUS? _____

How does today’s Bible story fit into God’s greater plan of redemption?

Read John 12:13.

Can you imagine what Jacob must have thought when in the middle of the night a stranger appeared and began to wrestle with him? Jacob may have thought it was a robber or one of Esau’s men. They wrestled all night, but Jacob did not give in. Then, toward morning, the man put Jacob’s hip out of joint with one small touch. Suddenly Jacob realized he had been wrestling with God.

Despite the pain, Jacob held on and refused to let go until God blessed him. So God blessed Jacob and gave him a very special name: Israel. From that time on, God’s people would be known as the people of Israel.

When Jesus came riding into Jerusalem just before going to the cross, the crowds waved palm branches and shouted, “Blessed is ... the King of Israel.”

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Genesis 32:1–32 from the Scriptures or read story 21, “Jacob’s Wrestling Match,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Taking a New Name

Jacob’s name means “heel catcher.” He was given the name because he was grabbing the heel of his brother when born, seemingly trying to overtake him and be born first. God gives him a new name, Israel, which means, “he will rule as God.” These names had significance. Ask the children to come up with a name that might reflect their own qualities: things they do, things they like, things they enjoy. For instance,

- A girl who loves soccer might be called Soccergirl.
- A boy with red hair might be called Red.
- A boy or girl who is good at math might be called Addaway.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- **Why do you think God renamed Jacob?**
(God renamed Jacob because he wanted there to be an outward expression of inward change and of a promised identity and work of God.)
- **Why do you think God called Jacob Israel, one who will rule as God?**
(Even though Jacob had taken his place unlawfully from his brother, with this name change, God affirms Jacob’s position as ruler and identifies Jacob as his own. Jacob will no longer do as he pleases but will now stand as the ruler of the people of God. In fact, the name Israel would be given to all God’s people and become their name corporately.)

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESSON 2 **20 MIN**

Acting It Out

Divide the class into four groups. Have each group act out one of the following skits that demonstrates fearing man more than fearing God.

Name of Skit	Plot	Discussion points:
Jacob and Esau	Jacob sends groups of animals ahead to pacify his brother. Use the story as it is outlined in Genesis to guide the drama. Jacob craves his safety and is willing to give up most of his possessions in order to satisfy his brother.	how the fear of man causes us to be opposed to God Rather than fear the Lord and trust that God could deliver him, Jacob tries to save himself by sending gifts to his brother.
Acting silly in class	One student throws crumpled paper balls while the teacher is trying to teach. He does this because he wants the attention of the other children in the class. He craves the attention of his fellow students and is willing to do anything, even act silly in class.	The desire to please fellow classmates causes this young person to disrespect the teacher and so disrespect God.
Lying about a new bike	Several students are bragging about how they are going to get new bikes for their birthdays. One student, wanting to fit in, lies and says that his mother told him that he is going to get a new bike, and it is going to cost \$500. His brother overhears it and refutes the lie. The student craves the acceptance of his fellow classmates so much that he chose to lie.	The desire to be accepted by others tempts this young person to reject God's law to be truthful. If the young man in the skit feared God more than other people, he would not have lied.
Getting the right shoes	A student goes with his brother and mom to get a new pair of shoes. He wants to get a certain type of expensive shoe that "everyone else has." When his mother explains that the price is too high, the student gets upset and complains that everyone will think he is weird.	A student's desire to please his friends overshadows his desire to obey and fear God who said, "Honor your father and mother."

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 15 MIN

Appeasing Esau

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ colored pencils

Have the children draw a picture of Jacob sending group after group of gifts ahead to his brother.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

Droves and Drovers

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ one card with the following line written on it for Esau to say: "To whom do you belong? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?"
- ✓ seven cards with the following line written on them for the servants to say: "They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a present sent to my lord Esau. And moreover, he is behind us."

Act out the scene where Jacob's servants bring groups of animals to Esau as presents from his brother Jacob. Choose seven volunteers to play the role of the servants, each driving a group of animals to Esau. Have them come one at a time. Have Esau at one end of the classroom and the servants at the other. One by one have them cross the classroom pretending to drive their animals. When they get close, Esau should speak his line and each servant reply theirs.

Assign a servant for each of the following groups: two hundred female goats, twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milking camels and their calves, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys, and ten male donkeys.

Use this drama to help the children understand how the gifts separated would have worked to soften Esau toward his brother Jacob.