

JACOB FLEES FROM LABAN

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: GENESIS 31:1-24



God cares for those who are called to be a part of His plan.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

God miraculously multiplied Jacob's flocks – In this chapter we learn that Jacob first asked Laban if he could leave with his wives and children, but Laban did not want him to leave. Jacob agreed to work for Laban and suggested that every speckled and spotted sheep or goat and those newly born with specks or spots would be his wages. Laban agreed but we find out in chapter 31 that Laban changed the agreement ten times (Genesis 31:7). At times Laban changed the agreement to give only spotted, or mottled, or streaked livestock to Jacob. However, each time he changed the rules, God saw to it that the newly born livestock went to Jacob. This made Laban and his sons angry and jealous. God prospered Jacob and protected him from harm.

God called Jacob to return to the land of his father – In the midst of the strife with Laban, God told Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you." Jacob trusted the Lord in part but still feared Laban. So, while Laban was away sheering his sheep, Jacob left without saying goodbye. Three days later Laban found out that Jacob had left. Laban pursued Jacob and caught up with him in seven days.

God protected Jacob from Laban's anger – Just as God protected Jacob from Laban's changes to the wages, God protected Jacob from Laban's anger. God appeared to Laban in a dream and warned him to be careful not to say anything bad. Rather than attack Jacob (which later Laban admits he could have done, vs. 29) Laban simply said goodbye to his daughters and then made an agreement with Jacob to leave each other alone.

Note: The section following where the conflict between Jacob and Laban is described in detail also has Rachel using her monthly cycle as an excuse for why her father should not search for the household god's near her. Read the balance of chapter 31 so that you can selectively tell the remainder of the story to your students without needing to get into describing "the way of women" (verse 29).

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Where Is Jesus?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

God separated Jacob from Laban by His Word. Jacob's call was to return to the land of promise where through Jacob the generations promised to Abraham would come. God's mission would not be thwarted by Laban. Though Laban would pursue Jacob, God would warn Jacob in a dream not to harm Jacob. This is not the last time God would use a dream to keep the heir of His promise safe from harm. Jesus was protected in a similar way.

In the end, the Lord prospered Jacob and brought the Savior through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as was promised. All of history including the events of Jacob's life, moved in the direction of God's redemptive plan.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Psalm 3:7-8 (ESV)

Connecting the passage to Christ:

David is calling out to God for rescue from his rebellious son Absalom, and the people of Israel that supported him. Samuel writes that Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel, see 2 Samuel 15:6. But Psalm 3:8 says that salvation comes from the Lord. The reason God would deliver David from Absalom is because of Christ. David's throne would be an everlasting throne because the promised Savior would come through David's lineage. Salvation would come not just to David but to all nations through Christ. The salvation that is spoken of in verse 8 is the salvation of the world through Christ. So when we read "Arise, O Lord! Save me, O my God!" in verse 7 we should think of Christ upon the cross and the salvation which comes through Him.

Questions for reflection:

- What was a more valuable salvation for David: defeat of his rebellious son Absalom, or the sacrifice of Christ for David's sin which Christ purchased on the cross? (Christ's sacrifice purchases a far greater salvation.)
- What "foes" come against us in our lives today? (Help the children to think of earthly challenges like robbers and thieves as well as the challenges which come from temptations such as materialism and worldliness.)

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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

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.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

HIDE THE HOUSEHOLD GODS

Supplies

photocopy a dozen
pictures of an idol (Any
photo of Buddah or other
idol will do.)

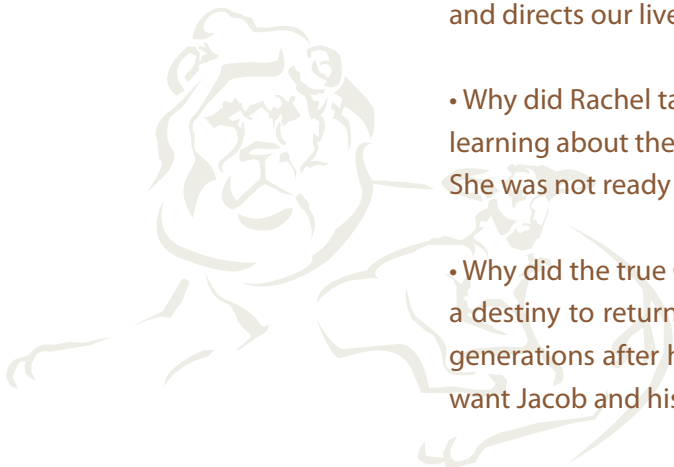
Prior to class, hide the pictures of the idol all around the classroom.

Explain to the children that Rachel, who stole her father's household gods, came into the classroom earlier and asked if she could hide them here. Tell the class that now that you have had some time to think about it, you don't think it is such a good idea that you allowed her to do this and you want their help in finding the household gods.

Release the children to try to find all twelve pictures. After they have located all the pictures, engage the children about this part of the story.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What is the difference between these household gods and the true God of the Bible? (The household gods are fake. They are simply made of wood or stone and are dead not alive. The true God depicted in the Bible relates to us. He speaks to us and directs our lives.)
- Why did Rachel take her father's gods? (Most commentators believe she was just learning about the true and living God when Jacob told her they would be leaving. She was not ready to give up what she thought these gods had to offer.)
- Why did the true God want Jacob and his family to leave Laban? (First, Jacob had a destiny to return to the Promised Land where God had promised Abraham the generations after him would multiply. Secondly, God is a jealous God and did not want Jacob and his family to be mixed in with idol worshippers.)



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A LARGE ROCK

Supplies

- white sheet,
- black paint or marker

Before class, create a rope: cut up an old white sheet into ten 18" squares. Using a thick tipped black marker or black paint, color half the squares with spots and half with streaks of black. Tie the corners of the squares together (alternate spots and stripes) to form a rope.

Play the role of Jacob retelling the story of how Laban changed his wages ten times, but how each time God made sure the newly born livestock matched Laban's changes. Wear a loose fitting shirt and a sweater or jacket over the shirt. Place the rope of sheet squares under your shirt in the small of your back. Thread the rope through your sleeve right up to the cuff. As you speak of the changes one by one, pull on the rope to reveal another square. With a little practice you should be able to mimic the act of a magician who produces a line of scarves. With each of the squares, unfold them and show the spotted or streaked pattern which match the demands of Laban.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What do we learn about God being in control of all things from this story? (Only God can ensure that an animal would be born streaked or spotted. This story shows us how God is in control of every detail of our lives.)
- What did Jacob learn about God through this story? (Jacob began to learn that God was real and that He wants us to depend on Him. We also learn that God takes the first step to come to man. Though Jacob would have wanted to leave earlier, he was afraid to stand up to Laban. Here, with the grace and courage given by God, Jacob is able to direct his family to leave.)



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WHAT IDOLS ARE YOU HIDING?

Read through the "little theology" section and lead the class in a discussion of our modern day idols. Rarely in our western culture do people actually bow down to wooden or stone figurines but we have plenty of idols in our hearts. Read Ezekiel 14:1-8.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What are the things kids your age want more than anything? (First think of objects – a skateboard, bike, etc. Then think of desires that kids want such as being popular, not wanting to have to work hard at school, etc.)
- What response do the kids your age give when they don't get what they want? (See James 4:1-4.)

PRAYER

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

IN CLASS PROJECT

Supplies

- paper
- colored pencils

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children draw spotted or striped goats. They should draw as many as they can to show how God prospered Jacob in a special way.



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FOR OLDER GRADES

Supplies

pen & paper

Have the children read Genesis 17:8 and answer the following questions in writing. (It is easy for the majority of students to remain silent and not participate with oral discussion, but by writing answers to questions, every student is required to participate.)

- In light of Genesis 17:8, why was it important for Jacob to return to the land of his father? (God had promised that he would give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants. The land of Canaan was the land of promise where God's plan would unfold. That is why it was important for Jacob to return.)
- How is this story an example of God working things according to His plans, see Ephesians 1:11? (God is moving Jacob back to the Promised Land so that Joseph (his son) will be sold and taken to Egypt where he would be used to save many from famine. All events of history are moving in agreement with God's plan of redemption. God controls all things and moves them along according to His will. Jacob's move back to Canaan is one example of God's plan unfolding.)

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Idol – An idol is a false god. Since the God of the Bible is the one and only true God, all other gods are false gods. In the Ten Commandments, there is a specific law against making an idol. In the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) God presents the definition of an idol as an image of something that a person worships (bows down to) or serves. God tells us that He is a jealous God, unwilling to share the place of worship with anyone or anything else. God alone shall be worshipped.

Idols can also be ideas or desires in our hearts that we worship. Ezekiel 14:6-7 tells us that we can actually set up idols in our hearts. When we live to fulfill our desires for anything other than God and His purposes, we are serving idols in our hearts. These sinful desires can be for a material goods like a new bike but, most often are selfish sinful desires such as peace, comfort, or the approval of our friends.

