

JACOB'S WRESTLING MATCH

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: GENESIS 32:1-32

*God protects, disciplines, and blesses his chosen ones.***The STORY**

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Jacob met the angels of God on his journey – Genesis 32:1 informs us that on his journey Jacob met the angels of God. When Jacob saw them he said, “This is God’s camp.” He would have been taught about his grandfather’s encounter with the angels who were sent by God to destroy Sodom and so was able to recognize them.

Jacob gives in to the fear of man - Genesis 32:1 informs us that on his journey Jacob met the angels of God. When Jacob saw them he declared, “This is God’s camp.” Certainly he would have been taught about his grandfather’s encounter with the angels who were sent by God to destroy Sodom. But, in spite of the presence of angels, Jacob feared man more than God. He assumed Esau is about to attack him in spite of the way God protected him from Laban. When Jacob heard the report of his brother’s approach with 400 men he was afraid. He assumed that Esau was about to attack him in spite of the way God protected him from Laban. Rather than place his trust in the Lord, Jacob created a plan to pacify his brother with a series of gifts which he sent ahead. In the night, he moved his family and remaining possessions across the stream and then returned alone to wait through the night.

Jacob wrestled with God and learned the fear of the Lord – In the middle of the night the angel of the Lord grabbed hold of Jacob and began to wrestle with him. This must have scared Jacob, who already feared his brother’s revenge. Jacob may have wondered if it was a robber or perhaps one of Esau’s men. He wrestled the entire night, but would not give in to this stranger. After the long struggle, the man reached for Jacob’s hip and with one touch put it out of socket. Jacob reacted by grabbing the man, who asked Jacob to release him. Jacob realized this was not a man, but God Himself, and demanded a blessing.

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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.

Jacob received a new name, Israel. Under the banner of this name that God would address His people. He would call them, "His people Israel." Jesus would be the one God chooses out of Israel to shepherd His people Israel. In the end all those who are in Christ will be called Israel. (Romans 9:25)

Christ is the one who appears as the Lord wrestling with Jacob. His appearance here as the Angel of the Lord anticipates the day when He would walk among us as a man.

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 7:1a

Connecting the passage to Christ:

David understood that his salvation and his deliverance from difficulty came from the Lord. When we look at Psalm 7, we now know that the greatest salvation and the greatest deliverance God provides are from death and sin. This salvation is by the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Questions for reflection:

- What does it mean to take refuge in the Lord? (A refuge provides protection for us in difficult circumstances. We might take refuge from a sudden rain storm under the overhanging roof of a store. So, to take refuge in the Lord means that we can trust Him to protect us in the midst of a storm.)
- What is our greatest need? (Our greatest enemies are sin and death. We all deserve punishment for our sins and the sentence given to us is one of death. Just as the angel of death passed over the homes which placed the blood on the door frames, so will death pass by those who have trusted in Jesus' death on the cross. Our greatest need is salvation from the punishment we deserve for our sin against a holy God.)

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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?

WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

Supplies

White Board

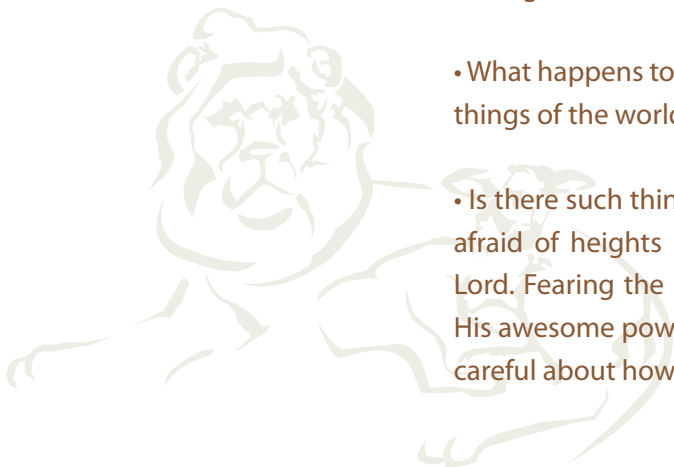
Ask the class to think for a minute and consider what they are most afraid of. Don't have them shout out their answer, but instead just think of it.

Then ask the children to one by one give you their answer. As they do, put their answers on the board up front. If more than one person mentions the same thing, strike a tally mark next to the answer already listed. Don't take silly answers; force the class to give real answers.

Then ask the class to rate them from most fearful to the least fearful. Come up with what the class thinks is the most fearful object or thing.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- What was Jacob afraid of? (Jacob was afraid that his brother Esau might try to take revenge for Jacob stealing his birthright.)
- What happens to our relationship with God when we fear? (Fearing people or the things of the world takes our focus off of God.)
- Is there such thing as a good, healthy fear? (Yes, some fear is wise, such as being afraid of heights protects us from falling. The most healthy fear is fearing the Lord. Fearing the Lord helps keep us from sin and produces faith as we consider His awesome power. When we understand how powerful God is we become more careful about how we live.)



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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, "rule as God." These names had significance. Ask the children to come up with a name that might reflect their own qualities.

For instance:

A boy who loves soccer might be called Soccerboy

A girl with red hair might be called Sunset

A boy who is good at math might be called Addaway

Ask the children to come up with a new name to describe themselves based on what they do, what they look like, or what they enjoy.

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.)



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TUG OF WAR

Supplies

- thick rope for a tug of war
- masking tape

The object is to show how God allowed Jacob to wrestle with Him for a while and then in the end overwhelmed him with a touch to his hip.

Place three masking tape lines on the floor parallel to each other and four feet apart. Wrap a piece of tape around the center of the rope to mark the exact middle. Ask for volunteers. Explain to the volunteers that you are going to challenge them to a tug of war. (Depending on your strength pick, 1-3 volunteers. Remember, you need to win!)

Start with the center of the rope above the middle line, explaining that the object of the game is to get the tape from the center line over your boundary line. The first team to pull the rope and their opponent 4 feet is the winner.

Place the students on one end; you are on the other. Allow the fight to go back and forth for some time. When the student team seems to be tiring, allow them to begin to pull the rope in their direction. Just before they get to the place where they think they are going to win, use your full strength and pull them to a loss.

Then ask the class the following questions:

- How was our tug of war like Jacob's wrestling match with God? (Like God, the teacher was in control the whole time, reserving their strength until they decided to win. God was totally in control and winning the wrestling match was never in doubt.)
- Why would God wrestle with Jacob, seem to allow him to win, then at the last minute, afflict his hip? (God wanted to show Jacob that he needed to be dependent on God and not his own strength. Jacob was a self-confident man. After his match with God he was more aware of God's power and control. Though Jacob had been introduced to God and obeyed His command to leave Laban and return home, Jacob began to fear his brother Esau and abandon trust in the Lord.)



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PRAYER

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

IN CLASS PROJECT

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children draw a picture of Jacob sending his gifts ahead to his brother in small groups.



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FOR OLDER GRADES

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

Jacob and Esau – Have one group act out a skit where Jacob sends groups of animals ahead to pacify his brother. They can use the story as it is outlined in Genesis to guide their drama. Jacob craves his safety and is willing to give up most of his possessions in order to satisfy his brother.

Acting Silly in Class – One student throws crumpled up 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.

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 craved the acceptance of his fellow classmates so much that he chose to lie.

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.

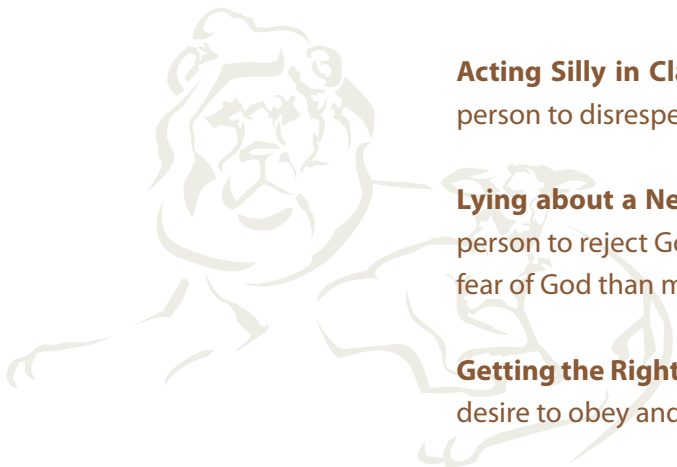
Take time to talk about the fear of man in these situations and how it causes us to be opposed to God.

Jacob and Esau – Rather than fear the Lord and trust that God could deliver him, Jacob tried to save himself by sending gifts to his brother.

Acting 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 – The desire to be accepted by man tempts this young person to reject God's law to be truthful. If the young man in the skit had a greater fear of God than man, he would not have lied.

Getting the Right Shoes – A student's desire to please his friends overshadows his desire to obey and fear God who said, “Honor your father and mother.”



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A LITTLE BIT MORE

Fear of Man – Fear of man is the desire to seek the approval, or acceptance of man with the corresponding fear of how they might treat you if you fail to win their acceptance or approval. It is good to want to please God and those

He places in authority over us, but when we crave the approval of others, 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. In the fear of man we are trading love for God with love for man. God ceases to be our God and man becomes our god.

