



3

Jacob Steals the Blessing

Scripture

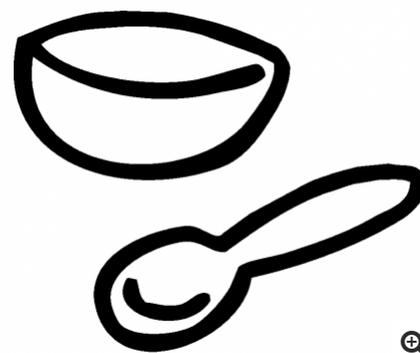
[Genesis 27; 28:15](#)

Focus

God was faithful to Jacob even though Jacob lied to his father and stole the blessing.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Wonder at God's patience with Jacob and with us.
- Sense that God continues to love us, even when we forget God.



Leader Reflection

Preparing to Tell God's Story

If the last story seemed challenging for children this age, this one may seem even more so. But it is filled with the kind of intrigue, danger, and sheer adventure that children this age love. It's important for you, the leader, to be familiar with what leads up to the tale, especially by reading Genesis 25:21-34.

Jacob wants the birthright, and Esau is careless about it. While Jacob doesn't know it, God has already secretly informed Rebekah that Jacob will bear the covenant promise. Yet they all in their own way use their wiles to get for themselves what God has already given. Jacob and Rebekah want the right thing (the covenant promise) but go about getting it in the wrong way.

What complicates the story is that God's promise is tied in with the parental blessing. It might be best to think of this blessing as a sort of prophetic vision that God is offering through the words of this dying parent. Notice how the words that Isaac spoke to Jacob echo the words of blessing that God spoke earlier to Abraham (Genesis 12:3). Jacob's words also mirror what God had said to Rebekah (25:23). The blessing was more than just the father's good wishes for his sons; it embodied the expression of God's promises given to Abraham and now passed on to the next generation.

At its heart this is a tale of trickery and deception. Encouraged by his mother, Jacob steals the birthright that he already swindled out of Esau. What a daring thing to impersonate his own brother's voice and smell and feel! But when Jacob gets scared, Rebekah pushes him on. She is ready to take on herself any curse that might come from old Isaac's lips.

If there's a villain in the story, it seems to be Rebekah: she pulls the strings and makes the plans while Jacob goes along with her plot. Isaac seems weak and gullible. If anyone in the story evokes sympathy, it's Esau, who remains obedient and faithful to his father and becomes a victim of Jacob's deception. It all ends in hatred, disgrace, and revenge. Talk about a dysfunctional family!

The Bible is much more realistic about human life than most TV dramas, with their clearly delineated good guys and bad guys. The Bible is about a God who shapes and bends sinful human beings and circumstances to accomplish his purposes.

Nothing human beings can or will do can deflect God from his ultimate loving purposes. Not only does God love us despite our misdeeds, he will even use our misdeeds to accomplish his will. Notice too that lying and deception do not go unpunished. They permanently fracture this family and set up tensions that continue for generations.

Steps

Step 1 Breathe

Use this time to focus your attention on God.

Do this with me: calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out. (*Demonstrate a few deep "in and out breaths" with eyes closed.*)

Step 2 Tell and Wonder

Files: [Story Symbols \(full unit\): Year 2 Unit 2](#)

Let's enter God's story together. Here's the story symbol for the part of God's story that we'll be spending time in today. I wonder what clues it gives us about the story we're about to hear? (*Show the story symbol. Accept any answers without giving away whether or not the kids have guessed correctly.*)

Listen closely as we read the story together to see which story our symbol represents.

Read "Jacob Steals the Blessing" aloud, pausing throughout to allow children to answer the wondering questions. NOTE: It's always a good idea to read through the story beforehand so you'll be able to tell it well.

You can also read the story from a children's Bible or a simplified translation of Scripture like the New International Reader's Version (NIRV). Remember to pause throughout to allow time to wonder.

Story: Jacob Steals the Blessing [Genesis 27; 28:15](#)

Tell your group that today we will hear a story about two brothers, Jacob and Esau. They are the children of Isaac and Rebekah, the people who met and were married in our last story. (If you aren't moving through the stories in order, omit that last phrase.) In today's story, many years have passed since Isaac married Rebekah, and Isaac is very old.

Re★formed

God's calling and God's purposes do not depend on human goodness. Very flawed people, like this family, can be instruments of God's purpose.

Open the Bible to Genesis 27. Point out the name of the book and chapter heading. Read Genesis 27:1 aloud. Tell the kids that this is how today's part of God's Big Story begins.

The story follows:

As Isaac and Rebekah's sons grew up, Esau became a man who loved the outdoors. He especially loved to hunt. Jacob was content to stay at home with his mother.

Because Isaac liked the wild meat that Esau brought home, Isaac loved his son Esau more than he loved Jacob. While Rebekah loved Jacob more.

How do you think the boys felt knowing that one parent loved them more than the other? *(Pause for responses.)* **What kinds of problems do you think that might have caused between the two boys?** *(Pause for responses.)*

When Isaac was really old, so old that he could hardly see any more, he called Esau to him and said, "Son, I'm really hungry for some of that great stew you make. I'd sure appreciate it if you would go out hunting and then make a big bowl of that wild meat stew for me. After I eat, I will give you a blessing."

So Esau hurried off with his bow and arrows. He was excited because he knew that when he returned, he would receive his father's blessing. His father would say some wonderful things to him, and God would make these things come true! Esau would receive this blessing because he was the oldest son.

But Rebekah listened as Isaac was talking to Esau. She wanted Jacob, not Esau, to have the blessing. So she thought of a mean trick. She called Jacob to her. "Quick!" she said. "Go out to our flock and bring me two of the best young goats. I'll fix them just the way your father likes them. Then you can take the stew to him and pretend to be Esau. Your father won't know the difference because he can hardly see. Then he'll give you the blessing instead of Esau!"

Jacob was surprised. He said, "Mother, that won't work. Esau is a hairy man and I have smooth skin. What if my father Isaac touches me and finds out that I am not Esau?"

Rebekah just said, "Don't worry about it. Just do as I say."

Jacob obeyed his mother. He ran out and got the goats. Rebekah cooked them into a tasty dish, just the way Isaac liked it. Then Rebekah carefully took the goats' skins and wrapped them around Jacob's arms and neck so his skin would feel very hairy like Esau's. And just to be sure her scheming plan worked, she brought some of Esau's clothes for Jacob to wear so he would smell like the outdoors—just like Esau.

Then Jacob carried the delicious stew to his father Isaac. Isaac smelled the food and asked, "Who's there?"

Hmm. Since Isaac smelled the stew and he had asked Esau to make it, I wonder why he asked who was there. What do you think? *(Pause for responses.)*

Jacob responded to the question with a lie. "I am Esau. I have done what you asked me to do. Now please eat my stew and give me your blessing."

But Isaac suspected that something wasn't right. He asked, "How did you get back from hunting so soon?"

Again, Jacob lied. "The Lord your God helped me," he said.

I wonder how Jacob felt about telling these lies to his own father. What do you imagine he was feeling? *(Pause for responses.)*

Isaac was still very suspicious. "Come closer, my son, so I can touch you. Then I will know if you are really my son Esau."

Jacob stepped closer to Isaac. Isaac reached out his wrinkled hand and touched Jacob's hand. He said, "You sound like Jacob. But your hands feel like Esau's. And—you do smell like the woods. Are you *really* Esau?"

Jacob said, "I am."

Then Isaac ate the food that Rebekah had fixed. He kissed Jacob and put his hands on his head. And then he gave Jacob the very special blessing that actually belonged to Esau.

This is the blessing Isaac gave to Jacob: "Ah! This is my son who smells of the fields. May God bless you. May God give you rain from heaven and food from the earth. May nations serve you, and may people bow down to you. May you be the ruler of your brother."

Just after Isaac blessed Jacob, only moments after Jacob had left his father's side, Esau returned from hunting. He made some of his great stew with wild meat—the stew that his father always enjoyed. Esau brought it to Isaac. "Father," he said, "sit up and eat my stew, so you may give me your blessing."

Isaac was surprised. He managed to ask, "Who are you?"

Esau responded, "I am your son, Esau."

Oh, my! I wonder what Isaac will do? What kind of thoughts might be racing through Isaac's mind when he hears this? *(Pause for responses.)*

Isaac was so upset that he began to tremble. In a shaky voice he asked, "Then who was it that just left? I ate his food and blessed him. I cannot take the blessing back!"

Esau cried out in a booming voice, "My brother, Jacob, has tricked me! Oh, Father! Please bless me too! Please! Have you no blessing for me?" When he realized that Isaac could give only one blessing, Esau broke down and cried out loud.

Esau was so angry. He wanted to get his hands on his brother and kill him for lying and stealing the blessing that belonged to him. He said, "When I get my hands on my brother, I will kill him!"

Perhaps the servants heard him say that, because someone told Rebekah what Esau had said. She quickly called Jacob and said, "Hurry! You must leave right now because Esau wants to kill you. Go to a faraway country and live with your Uncle Laban. I'll let you know when it's safe to come home again."

Jacob believed what he heard from his mother. He ran away as fast as he could and as far away as he could.

The first night, Jacob stopped to rest.

I wonder how Jacob felt, all alone in the desert? I wonder if he started to think about what he did to Esau? I wonder how it felt knowing he couldn't go back home? Do you think God forgave Jacob for what he did?

God was with Jacob, just like God's with us. God did not stop loving Jacob, even after what Jacob had done. In the desert God said to him, "I am with you and I will watch over you wherever you go." That was the promise God gave Jacob that night.

Jacob would suffer in his life because he had cheated and lied, but our faithful God kept all the promises Isaac gave Jacob in the blessing.

Step 3 Pray

Ask the kids to join you in thanking God for being faithful and for forgiving all their sins. Pray aloud or invite kids to bow their heads and fold their hands and silently thank God for taking away all their sins and for always being faithful.

See [5 Ways to Pray with Kids](#) for other ways to pray.

Step 4 Respond

Select and do one or more of the response activities from God's Big Story card #17 or check out [5 Ways to Retell a Bible Story with Kids](#) for some fun ways to retell this story. Include older kids in the retelling by having them read the story aloud while the younger children act it out.

**God's Big Story cards can be ordered from FaithAliveResources.org.*

Easy Extras

1. The Blessing

Materials: Personal Blessing Form printable page, one per child • yarn or ribbon

Files: [Printable : Personal Blessing Form](#)

Ask the kids to think about someone in their families to whom they would like to give a special blessing. Maybe Dad has been really busy lately and would appreciate a blessing. Or maybe someone has a sibling away at college. Or a brother or sister who is worried about making a team or wants to have more friends or is just a little sad. Or maybe there is someone who does extra special things for you and you'd like to cheer them with a special blessing.

The written blessing should say something about that person and God's care for them. Hand out copies of the blessing forms. As the kids look at it, read yours to them to help them get an idea for themselves.

Tip

Write out a blessing in advance (using the printable page) for someone in your family so you'll have an example to share with your group before they begin. For example, "May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord be with you and comfort you as you go to the doctor this week. May the Lord wrap his arms around you in love and give you peace in your heart."

Then encourage the group to settle into thinking and writing. Pair older children with younger children to help them write. Consider playing some background music. When finished, have the kids roll up the blessings and tie strings around them. Remind them to deliver the blessing to the special person they have chosen.

If you're leading this session online, make sure you send the printable page to parents ahead of time so they can have it ready for their child to fill out.

2. Age-Specific Activities

Click below to access the full age-specific *Dwell* session for this story:

- Kindergarten-1st Grade: [Jacob and Esau](#)
 - 2nd-3rd Grade: [Jacob Steals the Blessing](#)
-