



4

God Blesses Jacob

Scripture

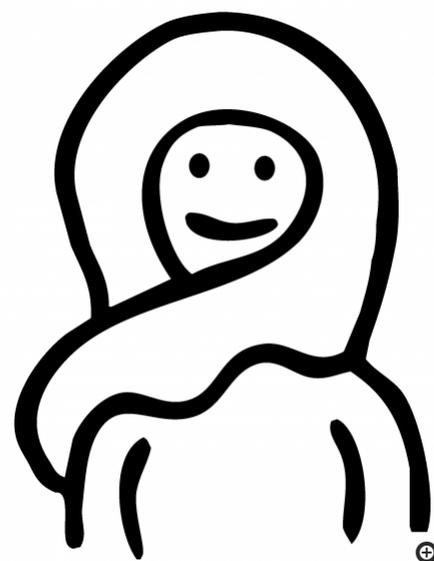
[Genesis 29:1-30; 30:25-30](#)

Focus

God was faithful to Jacob and blessed him with a family and flocks.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Imagine how Jacob felt throughout the story.
- Wonder what today's story shows us about God.
- Thank God for being faithful to Jacob and to us.



Leader Reflection

Preparing to Tell God's Story

Jacob the deceiver, the "heel-grabber" who stole the birthright and the blessing from his brother Esau and had to flee Esau's wrath, is just now arriving in his ancestral home in Paddan Aram. Like his father's servant many years before, his first meeting with his relatives is at the well for watering the sheep, a natural gathering place.

Jacob soon discovers that the shepherds there work for his uncle Laban, and while they are sharing stories, the beautiful Rachel arrives at the well with her father's sheep. It usually took several shepherds to move the stone covering the well, but Jacob leaps to the task, wrestling the stone away in a gallant show of muscle for this lovely girl. Then he kisses her and tells her the whole story of who he is.

Jacob is then welcomed into Laban's household with hugs and kisses all around. "Laban says, "You are my own flesh and blood." The long-lost relative has come home.

After a few months of working for free like a son, Laban acknowledges that Jacob is worthy of a wage. Jacob, who is deeply in love with Rachel, asks for her hand in marriage in exchange for seven years of work for his uncle. Laban agrees, and the deal is struck.

After seven years, the wedding night finally arrives. It seems that it was customary in those days that the bride would be brought to her groom in the night after the wedding festivities. Crafty Laban sneaks his older and plainer daughter Leah into Jacob's tent, and Jacob, hungry for love in the dim shadows of the tent, sleeps with her.

"When the morning came, there was Leah!" (29:25) Jacob was furious and heartbroken at the same time. "A deal is a deal!" he exclaims to Laban. Crafty Laban says, "Don't be so excited, my boy. It's not our custom to marry the younger before the elder, so it was my duty to give you Leah." All Jacob has to do is work seven more years for his uncle to earn the right to marry Rachel, and he's in love enough to do it.

To make this love story even sadder, Rachel is unable to bear children for quite a while, while Leah produces one son after another.

Watching Jacob being deceived, though painful, since we're on his side, is also gratifying. The deceitful Jacob has more than met his match in Laban. As time goes on, Jacob begins to build his own family, along with abundant flocks and herds next to his uncle Laban (which also offers Jacob the opportunity to get even---see chapter 30). Jacob grows wealthy in children and flocks and herds.

It's interesting that there's not one mention of God all the time Jacob is living with Laban and accumulating his wealth. It's only when God wants Jacob to return to the land promised to Abraham that we hear the name of God again. Yet we know it is God at work, directing and blessing Jacob's life.

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

Materials: Props: rolled-up blanket, cloth for a cloak, sandals, stick or pole for a staff

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 "God Blesses Jacob" 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.*

Re★formed

This story is just one of many examples of God's amazing faithfulness. God's promises are true—God gave the promise first to Abraham, then to Isaac, and now to Isaac's son Jacob. No matter how sinful people are, God will accomplish God's purpose! As Martin Luther once said, "God can use a crooked stick to draw a straight line."

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: God Blesses Jacob Genesis 29:1-30; 30:25-30

Open the Bible to Genesis 29. Show the kids where the story is found. Then read Genesis 29:1. Tell them this is how the story starts—Jacob is on the run!

Put on your costume, using the props you brought. As you do that, introduce yourself to the group and tell why you have the staff and the bed roll. Begin the story in a standing position or sitting on a chair.

The story follows:

My name is Jacob. You remember, don't you, how I tricked my father, Isaac, into giving me the blessing instead of my older brother, Esau? No wonder Esau wanted to kill me! My mother told me to run for my life to my Uncle Laban's house.

I bet you wonder what I was thinking as I walked through the desert in the hot sun. Remember, I was going to a place I'd never been before. I was going to meet relatives I didn't know, and my brother was after me.

What would you have been thinking if you were me? (Pause for responses.)

Yes! I had a lot to think about. After I left home, I walked for many days. Once, when I decided to stop and camp for the night (*put your blanket on the floor and sit down*), I fell asleep and had a very strange but exciting dream. In my dream I saw angels walking up and down a ladder that reached right into heaven! God was standing at the top of the ladder. I heard God say, "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go." God also promised to give me many children and bring me back to Canaan.

Can you imagine that? In spite of lying and tricking my father, Isaac, and my brother, Esau, God still loved me. And God was going to bless me, just as my father, Isaac, had promised. Right then and there I promised to worship and serve the Lord!

How would you feel if you had done the bad things I did and then God blessed you with wonderful blessings? (Pause for responses.)

You got it! The next morning I rolled up my blanket (*demonstrate*) and kept walking and walking and walking (*walk in place*) until finally one day I came to the land where my Uncle Laban lived. In the distance I saw a well and some shepherds gathered around it, waiting to water their sheep.

"Do you know Laban?" I asked the shepherds.

"Yes, we do," the shepherds answered.

"How is he?" I asked. I wondered, *What if my uncle is no longer alive? What will I do then?*

But the shepherds answered, "Laban is fine. Look, here comes his daughter Rachel with her father's sheep."

Tip

Since you'll be telling this story from the perspective of Jacob, it will be especially important to read through the text a few times. This will help you tell the story as though you're recalling your own experience.

I was so happy to find my uncle's family that I ran up to Rachel and gave her a big hug and a kiss. Tears of joy ran down my cheeks.

Wow! I must have caught her by surprise. What do you think she was thinking when I—a stranger to her—came up to her and did that? *(Pause for responses.)*

I think you're probably right. So I quickly explained who I was. Rachel was happy to meet a relative, and she hurried home to get her father, Laban.

I sat down and waited by the well. *(Sit down.)* It wasn't long before I saw Uncle Laban running across the fields. We went home together *(stand and pick up blanket)*, and the next day I began taking care of sheep for Uncle Laban. *(Pretend to be herding sheep with the staff).*

One day Uncle Laban took me aside and said, "Just because you're my nephew doesn't mean that you should work for nothing! What would you like me to pay you?"

I didn't hesitate for a second. "I'll work for you for seven years if you will let me marry your daughter Rachel." You see, by then I had fallen in love with Rachel. Uncle Laban had an older daughter too. Her name was Leah. But it was Rachel I wanted to marry.

"All right," said Uncle Laban. "After you work for me for seven years, you may marry my daughter."

I was so happy I almost jumped for joy! Every day I went to work in the fields, carrying my staff and herding the sheep and doing everything Uncle Laban told me to do.

When the seven years were up, I had a talk with Uncle Laban. "My seven years of working are over," I said. "Now, please let me marry Rachel."

So Laban invited all his friends and relatives to a great wedding party. When night came, Laban brought me his daughter. Her face was covered with a veil, as was the custom in that area.

"Here is my daughter," Laban said. "Take her to be your wife." How happy I was as I brought Rachel to our tent. BUT . . . the next morning when I looked at my new wife in the light of day, I saw that she was *Leah*, not Rachel. Uncle Laban had tricked me! He had given me Leah to marry, not Rachel, whom I loved!

Oh, boy! What do you think I was feeling when that happened? *(Pause for responses.)*

What would you have done if that happened to you? *(Pause for responses.)*

I'll tell you what I did. I ran to Laban's tent and shouted at him at the top of my lungs, "What have you done to me? Why did you trick me?"

My uncle had his excuse all ready. "Oh," he said with a smile, "where we live it's the custom not to let the younger daughter get married before the older one. But don't worry—you can have Rachel as your wife too. All you have to do is work for me for another seven years!"

And that's exactly what I did. Rachel became my wife, but then I had to work for Uncle Laban another seven years. During this time, the Lord blessed me and my family. My flocks and herds grew in number, and Uncle Laban became rich too.

God was faithful to me. God never left me. God kept the promise to me. God gave me many children—the beginning of what I knew would one day become a great nation, just as God had promised my father, Isaac, and my grandfather, Abraham. God’s promises were all coming true!

Step 3 Pray

Close with prayer. Give thanks for God’s faithfulness . . . for loving Jacob in spite of his sin and blessing him besides. Thank God for loving us in spite of our sins, for blessing us, and for keeping promises to us.

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 #19 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. Joey’s Story

Materials: Joey’s Story printable page

Files: [Printable : Joey’s Story](#)

Hand out the story page and have the kids color it and take it with them. Encourage them to read it at home with their families. Or if you have time, read the story together after your group finishes coloring the picture.

2. Age-Specific Activities

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

- 2nd-3rd Grade: [God Blesses Jacob](#)
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