



2

Jacob's Ladder

Key Themes

- God is faithful to His promises.
- God reconciles sinners to Himself through the gospel of Christ.

Key Passages

- Genesis 25:21–23, 28:12–13, 28:16

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Connect the meaning of the ladder seen by Jacob to the role of Jesus.
- Provide examples of God's faithfulness.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

page 5

Students will place bookmarks at Genesis 25 and Genesis 28 in their Bibles. Students will unscramble letters to discover some of God's attributes.



Studying God's Word

page 6

While the twins were still in the womb, God revealed that Jacob, not Esau, was to be the son of promise. In spite of deceit within the family, God's purposes prevailed. God confirmed His promise to Jacob in a dream of a ladder connecting heaven and earth. In the same way, Jesus is the ladder that allows us access to God in spite of the sin that separates us from Him.



Activity 1: Sons of Jacob Bookmark

page 10

Students will color the 12 Sons of Jacob bookmarks and sing the song written on the bookmark.



Activity 2: Pick a Rock Review

page 11

Teams of students will draw a numbered rock from a container and answer the corresponding question.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO



COME ON IN

- Write the references Genesis 25:21–23, Genesis 28:12–13, and Genesis 28:16 on the board.
- Cut three strips of paper for each student to use to bookmark the passages in their Bibles.
- Write on the board NEIOVSGREN, LHUIFTFA, and ITMENNCOSI.



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Write Genesis 50:19–20 on the board by phrases, alternating colors between phrases.
- Print the 12 Sons of Jacob Billfold Photo Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM. Cut the cards apart and tape them together accordion style to create a billfold-like photo-holder.
- Print the Lesson Board Work outline from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Three strips of paper for each student to mark the Bible passages
- Scratch paper for each student
- Pencils

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Board markers—two different colors
- 12 Sons of Jacob Billfold Photo display
- Lesson Board Work outline



SONS OF JACOB BOOKMARK

- Print and cut the 12 Sons of Jacob bookmarks from the Resource DVD-ROM onto cardstock for each student.
- Cut a length of yarn for each student.

- 12 Sons of Jacob bookmark for each student
- Colored pencils
- 8- to 12-inch piece of yarn for each student
- Hole punch (or several if students are to use them)



PICK A ROCK REVIEW

- Print one Pick a Rock Review Question sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Label 11 rocks with the numbers 1–11 and place them in a container.

- Pick a Rock Review Question sheet
- 11 rocks, numbered 1–11
- Container for rocks



Memory Verse

Genesis 50:19–20 Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.





Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

In order to prepare your heart and mind for this lesson, read Genesis 25:21–34; Genesis 27–33; John 1:49–51.

When mankind in Adam rebelled against God and became subject to the curse of death, decay, and separation from God, it was very clear that we needed help—a deliverer. God had barely pronounced judgment, when He proclaimed His promise of a rescuer. One day there would be one born from woman who would crush the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15). Later, God promised that through Abraham’s offspring all nations would be blessed (Genesis 22:17–18). The promise passed to his son Isaac (Genesis 17:21), and then God revealed that Isaac’s son Jacob would be the one through whom this blessing would come (Genesis 28:13–14).

The evidence that God would do all He promised has not always been obvious to man. Jacob must have felt doubt and fear when Isaac sent him away from his homeland (Genesis 28:5). But it was on that journey that God chose to reveal Himself to Jacob and confirm the covenant with him (Genesis 28:10–15). It was through a dream—a dream of a ladder spanning the great expanse between holy God high above and sinful man on earth—that the channel of blessing was opened as angels ascended and descended between heaven and earth. It was in Bethel, very near the place Abraham had once called on the name of the Lord (Genesis 12:7–8), that God showed Himself to Jacob.

In this passage we not only see God confirming the Abrahamic Covenant, but we also see Him revealing and confirming His wonderful plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. Scripture tells us that Jesus is the seed of the woman referred to in Genesis 3:15 and that He is the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the ladder—the bridge between heaven and earth. God confirms this in John 1:51 when Jesus tells His disciples that they “shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” Jesus names Himself as the ladder between heaven and earth. Jesus is the final fulfillment of the promise. His atoning sacrifice is the blessing offered to all mankind that bridges the immense gap between God and man!

Just as this truth was revealed to Jacob that night long ago, so it is to us through God’s holy, infallible Word. Just as Jacob awoke from that dream with a fear of God and a resolution to follow Him, so can

our hearts be changed today by the revelation of Jesus Christ as our Savior.

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Our culture today is faced with many difficult issues. One of those is the belief of many that they have the right to end the life of their unborn baby. This account of Jacob and Esau will clarify for the Christian what God has ordained by His example in His Word. God confirms His sovereignty over conception in this account. God heard the prayer of Isaac, and Rebekah became pregnant (Genesis 25:21–26). God also makes it very clear that He knew the sons—Jacob and Esau—long before they were born and already had a plan for each of them.

We know that God forms the inward parts of each of us in our mother’s womb. No one’s frame is hidden from Him; He sees us while we are yet unformed (Psalm 139:13–16). Our lives are fully known to God before, during, and after our journey on the earth. Yet so many disregard God’s Word when this subject is approached.

We are faced with this moral and biblical dilemma today because sinful man imagines himself the master of his fate and has eliminated the biblical God—Creator and Sustainer of the universe. To those who do not believe in God, unborn children are not image-bearers belonging to Him, but are simply stages of evolutionary development. The “fetus” is of no value and can be destroyed—killed—before birth.

This account of Jacob and Esau reminds us that God declares Himself the maker, and taker, of life. Man has been created in the image of God, and man will answer to God for every life taken (See Genesis 1:26, 4:10, 9:5–6; Exodus 21:23–25; Numbers 35:30; Job 12:10, 34:14–22; Isaiah 42:5; Acts 17:25).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Genesis 25 tells us of the birth of Jacob and Esau. While still pregnant, Rebekah inquired of the Lord about the struggle inside her, and He told her that she would bear twins, and that “the older shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23). When the time came, Esau was born before Jacob, earning Esau the birthright as the oldest son. However, according to God’s Word Esau would serve Jacob.

We know the birthright of the firstborn came with many privileges, including receiving a double portion of the father’s inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:15–17),

and inheriting any judicial authority held by the father (2 Chronicles 21:1–3). In addition, the firstborn generally received the father’s blessing, which gave him leadership in the family and placed him in a close and favored covenant relationship with God. This is what God promised to Jacob.

In spite of God’s promise (Genesis 25:23), Rebekah and Jacob felt the need to take things into their own hands through manipulation and deceit. We first encounter Jacob demanding that Esau sell his birthright for a pot of stew at a time when Esau was especially hungry and weak (Genesis 25:29–34). Next, we see Jacob’s mother Rebekah conniving to ensure that Jacob will receive Isaac’s blessing—the blessing that culturally should have fallen on Esau’s head (Genesis 27). She did this by partnering with Jacob to deceive Isaac into believing that he was Esau, and Isaac mistakenly blessed the younger son. And once the blessing was given, it was irrevocable (Genesis 27:33–37).

Jacob would now become the head of the family (Genesis 27:29)—the leadership position was not to be Esau’s. The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1–3),

including the line of the promised Messiah, would come through Isaac (Genesis 26:2–5) and then through Jacob (Genesis 28:10–17), just as God had revealed.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord, sometimes I worry, demonstrating that I don’t fully trust you to do all that you have promised; please forgive me and strengthen my faith by your Word. Let me bring your Word clearly to the students this week. May we learn together to confidently trust you and your Word for the days ahead, which seem uncertain to us but are fully known to you. Please give me discernment both in studying your Word and in ministering to the children entrusted to me. Direct me by your Spirit to faithfully represent Jesus to them.



COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will place a bookmark at Genesis 25:21–23 and Genesis 28:12–13, 28:16.

Write on the board NEIOVSGREN, LHUIFTFA, and ITMENNCOSI. They will unscramble the words to spell three of God's attributes listed on the Attributes of God poster.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.

Before we get started with our lesson today, I thought of a fun way to review our memory verse. Who remembers what our verse is?

Genesis 50:19–20. Read the verse together.

I've written the verse here on the board in two colors—red and blue. We're going to have a red team and a blue team. *The verse should be written with every other phrase a different color—red and blue. Divide the class into two teams. Teams will read the verse according to their color—red team will read the red phrases; blue team will read the blue phrases.*

I want you to read the verse as quickly as you can. Just read the parts of the verse that are in your team color. OK? *Have children start reading. You may want to have contests as they read. Which team can read the loudest? Which team can read the fastest? The slowest? The quietest?*

Now I want you to switch team colors—red team, you're now blue; blue team, you're now red. And we're going to read it again. *Begin again with the various competitions. Have the children read the verse several more times.*

That was great! Good job. Now who can say the verse without looking? Anyone? *Let some of the children try. Be willing to give them some help if they stumble. This is the way they are going to learn!*

Make sure you study this verse for next week. We'll be reviewing it again and I'd love for you all to know it perfectly!





Studying God's Word

We are going to see some amazing things about God this week—but first, I want to remind you that God promised Abraham that he would have many descendants one day. God promised that “all nations” would be blessed through Abraham and one of his descendants. But how could that be? Last week we were talking about Abraham’s son Isaac and Isaac’s wife Rebekah. They met and got married according to God’s plan. But Isaac did not have any children yet.

Genesis 25:21–23

READ THE WORD

Let’s read Genesis 25:21–23 together to find out whether Isaac and Rebekah had any grandchildren for Abraham. *Appoint a student to read these three verses aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? OK. Did you listen very carefully? Someone look at verse 21 and tell me what Isaac was doing. *Give the children time to read the verse again; then accept answers.*

Very good. We know that Isaac was promised children, but he didn’t have any yet. So this tells us that he went to the Lord and prayed that his wife Rebekah would get pregnant. And God answered that prayer.

Something was happening in verse 22 to Rebekah. Read that verse and tell me what you think was going on. *Allow the children time to read the verse and come up with answers—the answer should include that she was not feeling well. She felt as though the children were struggling in her womb. Maybe kicking. She, too, went to the Lord in prayer.*

? What did the Lord tell her? Read verse 23. *Allow the children to read the verse again. There were two nations—two children—in her womb. She was going to have twins!*

? What does verse 23 say about the older child and the younger child? *The older boy would serve the younger one.*

This was unusual because normally the older son would take over the family when the father died. But that is not what was going to happen. Instead God clearly said the older son, Esau, would serve the younger son Jacob. So God’s promise now continued—it started with Abraham, passed through Isaac, and now went to one of Isaac’s sons—that would be Jacob.

I’d like three people to go to the timeline and show me where Abraham, Isaac, and now Jacob appear. God is faithful to keep His promises—even when it seems like a very long time. *Choose three children to go to the Seven C’s Timeline. Emphasize how long it had been since God first promised a nation to Abraham.*



► You can attach sticky note arrows to the Attributes of God poster and the Seven C’s Timeline each week indicating the attributes and dates to be emphasized in that week’s lesson.

FAITHFUL

(Refer to Attributes poster.)

Discover the Truth

OK. Now I want to tell you something very important from this account. God knew all about Jacob and Esau long before they were born. In fact, remember that Isaac prayed that Rebekah would get pregnant? God answered that prayer and she had twins!

? So who was in charge of these children? *God.*

That's right. God was in charge of them. He knew who they were and what they were going to do even before they were born! Do you know what that tells me? God knows every single baby—long before even his mother knows him. God knew each of you before you were born. Babies are real people, special to God and created by Him—even while they are still in their mother's womb! Don't ever let anyone tell you that they are not real people or babies. They are. And just like with Jacob and Esau, God knows everyone and has a plan for them—long before they are born!



READ THE WORD

We have a lot more to cover today! I wish we could read it all right out of our Bibles, but I don't think we'll have time. I want you all to look up here while I tell you some very exciting things God did after Jacob and Esau were born. Listen very carefully. All of this comes from Genesis chapters 27 and 28.

Rebekah did have two baby boys—Esau was born first, but Jacob came out right after him, and the Bible says he was holding on to his brother's heel. As they grew up, the Bible says Esau loved to be outside and was a skillful hunter and farmer, while Jacob preferred a quieter life and stayed at home.

Once, Esau was out hunting. When he came home he must have really been hungry, because he made a crazy deal with his brother for some food. He agreed to sell his birthright to Jacob for some stew—that birthright belonged to Esau because he was the oldest son. The son who had the birthright in a family would one day become the leader of that family when the father died. But now Esau had given it away for a bowl of stew.

Jacob and Esau got older, and so did their dad, Isaac. He was an old man and he couldn't see very well. He knew he should give a special blessing to one of his sons before he died. And he called Esau—his oldest son—to get the blessing and the birthright.

? Now, someone look back at Genesis 25:23. Which son was supposed to get the special blessing according to God's Word? *Jacob, because God said that "the older shall serve the younger."*

That's right, Jacob was the younger son—but God said Jacob was to receive the blessing. And when Isaac called Esau, Rebekah decided to take things into her own hands! She planned to lie to her husband, and she got

Genesis 27–28

Jacob to lie, too! She may have worried that God's plans were not going to work out and that God just might need her help.

Rebekah thought she needed to help God. Isaac was old and blind, and he was planning on blessing Esau as the son of promise. But Jacob dressed up like Esau and tricked his dad, Isaac. So Isaac blessed Jacob instead of Esau. Now this made Esau really upset—so upset that he wanted to kill his brother Jacob. Jacob had to leave his family and run for his life.

Jacob had traveled for three days, and was likely tired and hungry. I wonder if he doubted God's promise—His promise to bless him and make a great nation from his family, and the promise to send a deliverer. He may have wondered, as people still do today, "With all the bad things that are happening, is God real? Does He really care about sinful people on earth like me?"

The Bible tells us that Jacob took a stone and used it for a pillow. As he slept God gave him a wonderful dream.

Let's read Genesis 28:12–13 together. *Choose a student to read these two verses aloud.*

Genesis 28:12–13

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What did Jacob see in his dream? *Genesis 28:12. A ladder reaching from earth to heaven.*
- ? Where was the ladder set? Where was the bottom of the ladder? *It was set up on earth.*
- ? Where was the top of the ladder? *It reached to heaven.*
- ? Who was going up and down the ladder? *The angels of God.*

Discover the Truth

- ? So the ladder connected two places. Which two places did the ladder connect? *Heaven and earth.*

Yes. God is in heaven while people like us are on earth. *Draw a cloud at a high point on the board to represent God. Draw a stick figure man at the bottom of the board.*

Without a ladder there is no way to get between the two places. But in Jacob's dream, God's angels were going up and down on the ladder between heaven and earth. The Bible tells us that when Jacob awoke he was afraid. He was afraid of God.

- ? Should people be afraid of God? *Yes.*
- ? Do you know why we should fear God? *Allow the children to answer for a moment. Some may think it is odd to say we should fear God. You'll need to explain this concept.*

Some people don't think we need to fear God. But we do. God is holy, but man is sinful. Our sin separates us from our Creator. And because God is holy, He has to punish sin.



► Print the Lesson Board Work outline from the Resource DVD-ROM for easier planning.

Jacob's dream helps us picture mankind's problem. Our loving Creator God is in heaven far, far above us. The gap between heaven and earth is huge. We want to be with God because He is all that is good—but we can't because, like in the dream, we are far below.

Jacob knew that he was sinful. He was a liar who did not honor God as he should have. Jacob knew that he was not worthy of God's presence. We are also sinful. You remember times that you have lied or disobeyed your parents. That is sin against God.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve used to walk and talk with God. There was no barrier between them. It was very good. *Point to Creation on the Seven C's Timeline or show the appropriate Lesson Theme posters from Quarter 2.*

But when our great-grandfather Adam sinned, everything changed. They had to leave the garden. *Point to Corruption on the Seven C's Timeline or an appropriate Lesson Theme poster from Quarter 2.*

Every single person since Adam, except one, has been born sinful.

? Who is that one person who never sinned? *Jesus Christ.*

That's right. And because of our sin there is a great gap between God and us.

? And what did Jacob see in his dream that was between heaven and earth?
A ladder. Draw a ladder between the cloud and the man.

? Someone read verse 13 again. Tell me, who was speaking to Jacob? Who was it that stood at the top of that ladder? *The Lord. Write "The Lord" at the top of the ladder in the cloud.*

That's right. Do you see it? There was a ladder between the Lord in heaven and man on earth. And even though Jacob knew he was a sinner and feared God, this dream from God gave him hope. This dream promised him the blessings that the Lord had for him. This dream filled him with wonder.

? Someone read Genesis 28:16 and tell me what Jacob said when he woke up from this amazing dream. You should have that marked in your Bible. *"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."*

God blessed Jacob with this dream. And God has blessed us with something very much like it. You see, because we are sinners, we need a go-between like that, too—something or someone who will bring God's blessings to us.

? Does anyone know what God has done for us? Who is our go-between?
Jesus Christ.

That's right—Jesus, God's Son. Jesus is our ladder connecting heaven and earth. He is the One who brings God's blessings to us.

Jacob, like us, was separated from God; but God has provided Jesus Christ as the go-between. He is the only one born without sin and who lived a **sinless life**. *Point to Christ on the Seven C's Timeline.*

Genesis 28:16

We deserve God’s punishment for our own lies and other sins. Because God is holy, He hates our sin. The punishment for sin—any sin—is hell. But you see, God sent a go-between—Jesus. *Point to Christ and Cross on the Seven C’s Timeline and then draw a horizontal line across the ladder on the board to turn it into a cross.*

God’s promise to us is this. If we are sorry for our sins, if we trust Jesus for forgiveness, if we call on His name only, and if we believe that He died on the Cross and rose again, then Jesus will forgive our sins and become our “ladder”—the way provided by God to get to heaven one day.

So, you may wonder what happened to Jacob after all of this. Well, he took the stone he used as a pillow and made a special pillar to God. He kept following the Lord. And God protected him throughout his journey. He found a wife and God blessed him with many children. In fact, by the time he returned to Canaan 20 years later, he had 12 sons! *With the flare of a proud parent, show the 12 Sons of Jacob Billfold “Photo” Cards which you prepared. Stick this list of sons on the wall for easy reference for the Activity 2 review game and future lessons.*

Giving Jacob these sons was God’s way of keeping His promises. One day they would inherit land in Canaan, and better yet, one day the promised Redeemer would come through their family.



Sons of Jacob Bookmark

MATERIALS

- 12 Sons of Jacob bookmark for each student
- 8–12 inches of yarn for each student
- Hole punch (or several to be shared by students)
- Colored pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Students color the 12 Sons of Jacob bookmark, then punch a hole at the top of the bookmark and loop the yarn through to make a simple tassel.

Lead students in singing these names to the familiar old tune of “Skip, Skip, Skip to My Lou.”

Reuben ----- `rū-bən	Gad ----- `gad
Simeon ----- `si-mē-ən	Asher----- `a-shər
Levi----- `lē-` `vī	Issachar ----- `i-sə-`kār
Judah ----- `jū-də	Zebulun ----- `ze-byə-lən
Dan ----- `dan	Joseph ----- `jō-zəf
Naphtali----- `naf-tə-`li	Benjamin --- `ben-jə-mən

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

God promised to bless Jacob with many children, and He kept His promise. God gave him 12 sons! Through one of these sons God would send the promised Redeemer. God can be trusted to keep His promises. This bookmark will give you an easy reference for learning the names of the 12 sons of Jacob, who are mentioned frequently in the Bible.





Pick a Rock Review

MATERIALS

- Pick a Rock Review questions and answers
- 11 rocks, numbered 1–11
- Container for rocks

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide the class into two teams. Students pick a rock from the container and read the number aloud. (If your class has more than 11 students, let students pick and answer with a partner.) The teacher reads the question of the same number from the Pick a Rock review questions. If the student answers correctly, his team gets a point. Keep score with the

rocks. Continue playing until all the rocks are gone or until the time chosen by the teacher is over. (Remind students to look to the classroom posters for answers. All answers, except the bonus number 11, can be found on one of the posters, the board, or the bookmark.)

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Jacob set up a rock to remind him of God's good promises. These rocks reminded us of God's truths. I pray that as you learn more about God's truth, you will come to trust Him, love His Word, and fully accept His truth.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

While Jacob was still in the womb, God revealed that Jacob, not his twin Esau, would be the son of promise—the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham so long ago. God demonstrated that He will fulfill His purposes according to His will.

Although Jacob was sinful, God revealed His promise of blessing to him in a dream of a ladder spanning the gap between earth and heaven. In the same way, our sin keeps us from God's blessing, but God sent Jesus to be the "ladder" that allows us access to God in spite of the sin that separates us. God demonstrated that He is faithful by keeping His promises to Jacob. He brought him safely home, gave him 12 sons to live in the land of Canaan, and most importantly sent Jesus through his family to be a blessing to all people.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Have you ever realized that it is your own lies and other sins that keep you from God? Do you know that there is only one person who can take away your sin and guilt? God will not allow sin in His presence. He is holy and will not tolerate sin; He is just and must punish sin. But He has provided a "ladder" between heaven and earth. He sent His Son Jesus, who is fully

► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.

God and fully man, to die on the Cross and to rise from the dead. Jesus lived the perfect life that we could not.

Jesus never sinned. His sacrifice was perfect and pleasing to God. Everyone who repents of his sin and turns to God for forgiveness through Jesus Christ will no longer be separated from God but can joyfully enter His presence. Only Jesus can take away our sin and guilt. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him.



MEMORY VERSE

Genesis 50:19–20 Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your students before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for making a way for people to be forgiven.
- Ask God to remind you of His promises when you are fearful.
- Thank God that no evil plan of man can prevent God from doing all that He has planned.