



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 25:23, 28:12–13

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Connect the meaning of the ladder seen by Jacob to the role of Jesus.
- Explain how God was faithful to keep His promise of a Redeemer.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

page 5

Students will shape play dough into twin babies.



Studying God's Word

page 5

While the twins were still in the womb, God revealed that Jacob, not Esau, was to be the son through whom God would fulfill His promises. In spite of deceit within the family, God demonstrated that He would not allow man's sin to prevail against His purposes. 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: Twelve Sons of Jacob Bookmark

page 10

Students will color the Twelve Sons of Jacob bookmarks and sing the song written on them.



Activity 2: Who Review

page 10

Students answer review questions by underlining the character on the board that best fits the description.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- Buy or make enough play dough for each student to have a ball of dough. If you choose to make the dough, you can find a recipe on the page How to Make Play Dough on the DVD-ROM, Lesson 1.
- Keep the play dough on hand for future lessons.

- A ball of play dough for each student



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 (red and blue) between phrases.
- Print one Scripture Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student.
- Print and cut apart the Character Figures from the Resource DVD-ROM.
- Print the Lesson Board Work outline from the Resource DVD-ROM.

- Student Take Home Sheets
- Board markers—red and blue
- Scripture Sheet
- Character Figures
- Poster putty for attaching figures to board
- Lesson Board Work outline



TWELVE SONS OF JACOB BOOKMARK

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

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



WHO REVIEW

- Print one copy of Who Review questions from the Resource DVD-ROM for your use during this activity.
- Character Figures you put on the board during the lesson.

- Who Review questions
- Character Figures



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.”



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 told 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 babies. 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 He 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 at 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 shape play dough into twin babies.

Keep the play dough. It will be used in future lessons.



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.



Studying God's Word

- ? 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.*

Genesis 50:19–20

Let's read it together. *Read the verse from the Memory Verse poster.*

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 or quietest?*

- ? 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!*

Very good. 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!

We are going to see some amazing things about God this week—and some not so amazing things about people.

READ THE WORD

We're going to read from God's Word. First let me tell you what is going on. God promised that Isaac would have many descendants, but at this point he didn't have any children yet. He and Rebekah wanted to have a baby! Isaac prayed that she would get pregnant and she did! But Rebekah was sick. It felt like the baby was kicking, fighting, and just moving around a whole lot in her womb. Now look at your sheets and we'll try to figure out what that was all about! *Hand out Scripture Sheets and read Genesis 25:23 while the children follow along.*

Genesis 25:23



➤ Refer to the Character Figures cover sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM to see how they should be placed on the board during the lesson.

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

Refer to the Bible Study poster to remind your students how to dig deeper into God's Word by asking the right questions.

- ? First of all, who is speaking in this verse? Can you tell me? Look at your sheets. *The Lord. Put the God (cloud) character figure on the board.*
- ? Who is the Lord speaking to? Who remembers? *Rebekah. Put the Rebekah character figure on the board.*
- ? Who was Rebekah married to? *Isaac. Put the Isaac character figure on the board.*
- ? What did the Lord say to Rebekah? Who can read just the second line on the sheet for me? *Assign someone to read the second line. Two nations are in your womb.*
- ? What in the world does that mean? Does anyone know what a womb is? *Allow for answers. (Belly, tummy, stomach are some answers you may get.) It is the part of a woman's body where a baby grows.*
- ? So what does the Lord mean when he says there are two nations in her womb? Can anyone guess? *Allow children to answer.*

Well, Rebekah was going to have twins! And the Lord told her that the older baby, the one who would be born first, would serve the younger one—the baby born last.

This was not normal. It would normally be that the younger brother would serve the older one. But God changed that!

The two babies to be born were Jacob and Esau. Esau was born first; he was the big brother. Jacob was born after Esau; he was the younger brother. But remember. God said that Esau would end up serving Jacob. *Place Jacob and Esau character figures under or next to Isaac and Rebekah on the board.*

God had promised Abraham that he would have lots of descendants. Abraham waited a long time for Isaac. And then Isaac waited a long time for his two sons, Jacob and Esau. But God knew what was going on. God is faithful, and His promise to Abraham and to Isaac would come true.

Place the character figure of Abraham above Isaac and Rebekah. Allow plenty of space between the pieces to represent the amount of time between them. Throughout the remainder of the lesson, point to the appropriate figure to help children keep the characters straight in their minds.

In fact, Abraham waited 25 years for Isaac. And then Isaac waited 20 years for Jacob and Esau to be born. But God is faithful to keep His promises—even when it seems like a very long time. Write on the board, “Waited 25 years” under the Abraham character figure and write “Waited 20 years” under the Isaac character figure.

Discover the Truth

OK. Now I want to tell you something very important that I have learned 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!

- ? Who had a plan for the babies before they were even born? *God.*
- ? Who has a plan for you, and for all babies before they are born? *God.*

That’s right. God is in charge of every person, even babies before they are formed.



READ THE WORD

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.

As Jacob and Esau got older, so did their dad, Isaac. When 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 to get the blessing.

- ? Now, someone look at the end of Genesis 25:23 on your sheet again. Which son would serve the other? *The older would serve the younger.*
- ? Which son is older? *Esau. Write “Older son” under Esau on the board.*
- ? Which son is younger? *Jacob. Write “Younger son” under Jacob on the board.*

That’s right, Jacob was the younger son—but even though Jacob was younger, he would be served. God had chosen him for a special blessing.

Now, let’s get back to old, blind Isaac. He planned to give the special blessing to Esau because Esau was older. But when Rebekah heard about Isaac’s plan, she decided to take things into her own hands. She had Jacob dress up like Esau and trick his dad, Isaac! So Isaac blessed Jacob instead of Esau. Show Jacob figure (dressed as Esau) near Isaac and then take it away.

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. Place the Jacob figure away from the rest of the characters.

Genesis 28:12–13

When Jacob had traveled for three days, he was likely tired and sad. The Bible tells us that Jacob took a stone and used it for a pillow. As he slept, God gave him a wonderful dream.

Turn to Genesis 28:12–13. I'll read it. Listen carefully. *After children find Genesis 28:12–13, read the text.*



EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What did Jacob see in his dream? *Genesis 28:12. A ladder with angels.*
- ? Where was the ladder set? Where was the bottom of the ladder? *Genesis 28:12. It was set up on earth.*
- ? Where was the top of the ladder? *Genesis 28:12. 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 and label it "The Lord." Draw a stick figure man at the bottom of the board.*

- ? What did Jacob see in his dream? *A ladder.*

Yes, and that ladder went between earth and heaven. In Jacob's dream, God's angels were going up and down on a 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.

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. *Refer to the cloud (God) and the man on the board.*

Jacob, like us, was sinful. He knew he was a liar who did not honor God as he should have. Jacob knew that he was not worthy of God's presence.

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

? Are we also sinful? Do you remember times that you have lied or disobeyed your parents? *Yes.*

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

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

? Listen carefully as I read Genesis 28:13 again. Who was speaking to Jacob? Who was it that stood at the top of that ladder? *The Lord.*

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. *Show Lesson Theme poster of Jacob sleeping with angels traveling up and down the ladder.*

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.

We deserve God's punishment for sin, which is hell. But you see, God sent a go-between—Jesus. *Add a horizontal line across the ladder on the board to turn it into a cross.*

? Now what does the ladder look like? *A cross.*

Yes; it is a cross. We can receive God's blessing of heaven and eternal life because Jesus became our go-between ladder by taking our sin punishment on the Cross.

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!

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, Jesus, would come through their family.

When Jacob ran away from his brother, he didn't have much. But when Jacob returned home, he not only had a large family but he also was a very wealthy man with many servants, sheep, goats, and other herds. Esau was happy to see him. The brothers hugged and cried for joy. *Move Jacob figure back to Esau.*





Twelve Sons of Jacob Bookmark

MATERIALS

- Twelve 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 Twelve Sons of Jacob bookmarks, then punch a hole at the top of the bookmarks and loop the yarn through to make a simple tassel.

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

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.

Sing the song again with the children. Help them to pronounce the names.



Who Review

MATERIALS

- Paper character figures from the Resource DVD-ROM: Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, Jacob, Jacob in Esau’s clothing, God (Cloud), Christ (Cross drawn on board)
- Who Review questions

INSTRUCTIONS

You will use the characters and the ladder illustration you placed on the board during the lesson.

Students will respond to questions by drawing a line on the board under the character described in the question.

Let’s play Who Review! We will use the eight characters we just talked about. As I read a question, I want one of you to come up and draw a line under the character who answers that question. Some of the questions might have more than one

answer. We’ll all work together to figure it out. Ask the questions from the Who Review questions on the Resource DVD-ROM.

Team Game Option: Divide the class into two teams. Assign a different marker or chalk color to each team. On their turn, each team uses their team color to underline the character in answer to the question. If an answer is wrong, erase the underline. Score points by tallying correct underlines for each team.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Every time we remember one of these real people in history, we can remember God’s loving plan to bless His people. I pray that you will come to trust and love God with your whole heart.





Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Before baby Jacob was born, God said that Jacob, not his twin, would be the son of promise—the one through whom God would continue to keep the promise made to Abraham so long ago. God showed that He is independent of man—He needs no one to help Him do what He plans.

Although Jacob was sinful, God showed 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 is the way to God in spite of the sin that separates us. God showed 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. *Show the Lesson Theme poster. Read it aloud: God is faithful to His promises. God reconciles sinners to Himself through the gospel of Christ.*

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? Jesus never sinned. His sacrifice—His life and death on the Cross—was perfect and pleasing to God. Whoever understands his sin and how it offends a holy God, repents, and turns to God for forgiveness through Jesus Christ will no longer be separated from God but can joyfully enter His presence!



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



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 to 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.
- Thank God that no evil plan of man can prevent God from doing all that He has planned.

