

Use Week of:

Unit 3 • Session 3 Jacob's New Name

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Genesis 32–33

STORY POINT:

God changed Jacob's name to Israel, the name of God's covenant people.

KEY PASSAGE:

Genesis 28:15

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Does God keep His promises? God always keeps His promises because He is faithful.

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Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

Jacob found himself stuck between a rock and a hard place. After stealing his older brother's blessing, he fled his home to escape Esau's anger. He spent time with his uncle Laban, got married, and fathered many children. Overall, Jacob prospered. God blessed him, but Jacob's time with his uncle Laban did not end well. Laban's sons accused Jacob of taking their father's wealth.

God was with Jacob and when He told Jacob to leave, Jacob did not hesitate. He gathered his family and all of his possessions and headed home to Canaan with Laban in pursuit. But uncertainty awaited Jacob in his homeland. His brother Esau was there. The last time Jacob saw Esau, Esau wanted to kill him.

God had reaffirmed to Jacob the promise He gave Abraham and Isaac, and He had promised to be with Jacob. But with Laban behind him and Esau before him, how could Jacob possibly survive?

Jacob tried to prepare for his meeting with Esau. He strategically divided his family into separate groups. He sent gifts ahead of them to appease Esau. That night, Jacob anxiously awaited word from Esau, and that is when he encountered the Lord.

Did Jacob win the wrestling match? Was he stronger than the Lord? The victory was ironic; Jacob did not win by strength (God proved His power by crippling Jacob with just a touch) but by confessing his dependence on God's blessing.

Jacob had nowhere else to turn. He could not succeed by his own strength. Jacob held onto God and would not let go. God poured out His grace on Jacob. He blessed Jacob and gave him a new name, Israel. From Jacob's descendants—from the nation of Israel—God would bring into the world His Son, Jesus.

The BIBLE Story

Jacob's New Name

Bible Passage: Genesis 32–33

Jacob took his family and all his possessions, left the land of his uncle Laban, and headed home to Canaan. Going home meant that Jacob would see his brother Esau again. **Jacob was afraid that Esau would still be angry with him for stealing his blessing.**

So Jacob sent messengers to tell Esau that he was coming. When the messengers came back, they told Jacob that Esau was coming to meet Jacob, and he had 400 men with him.

Jacob was very afraid! God had promised that his family would be as numerous as the stars, but how could that happen if Esau was going to kill them all? **Jacob made a plan. He divided his family into two groups. If Esau attacked one group, maybe the other group could escape.**

Then Jacob asked God to keep His promise. Jacob prayed, **"Please rescue me from my brother Esau."**

Jacob sent a large gift of animals—goats, sheep, camels, cows, bulls, and donkeys—to try to make Esau happy. Maybe then

Esau would forgive him.

That night, Jacob moved his family across the stream where they might be safer, but Jacob stayed behind. **A man appeared.** (The man

was actually God Himself!) The man wrestled with Jacob all night. Jacob refused to give up, so the man injured Jacob's hip.

"Let Me go. The sun is coming up," the man said.

But Jacob would not let Him go. **"I will not let You go unless You bless me,"** Jacob said.

"Your name will no longer be Jacob," said the man.

"Your name will be Israel because you wrestled with God and men, and you have won." The man blessed Jacob.

The sun came up, and Jacob limped because of his hip.

Now Jacob looked and saw Esau and his 400 men coming to meet him. **Jacob went to meet Esau.** He bowed down seven times to show respect to his brother. **Esau ran to Jacob and hugged him. He was not angry anymore.** The two brothers cried together.

Esau returned to his home. Jacob and his family traveled on to Shechem (SHEK uhm), and Jacob bought land for them to live on. He was finally home in the land God had promised him.

Christ Connection: God changed Jacob's life and gave him a new name, Israel. Jesus came so that we might have a changed life, forgiven of sin. (2 Corinthians 5:17) Jesus' death and resurrection provided sinful people the way to be adopted into God's family. When we are adopted into the family of God we also receive a new name—children of God. (John 1:12)

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use props:** As you tell the story, move a group of props (blocks, people figures, or other manipulatives) to show the movement of Jacob's family toward Canaan, their division into two groups, and Jacob's departure overnight.
- **Role play:** Choose two volunteers to act out the roles of Jacob and Esau. Pause throughout the story for the volunteers to role play traveling, wrestling, greeting, and so on.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Jacob's New Name

BIBLE PASSAGE: Genesis 32–33

STORY POINT: God changed Jacob's name to Israel, the name of God's covenant people.

KEY PASSAGE: Genesis 28:15

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? God always keeps His promises because He is faithful.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share what they like about their name, either their full name or nickname. If they could change their name, what would it be and why?

SAY • In the Bible, names not only identified people, but they often had an important meaning. Today we will see how God changed Jacob's name to show a bigger change in Jacob's life.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete "Jacob's New Name" on the activity page. Kids should color in the spaces that have one dot to discover Jacob's new name.

SAY • When Isaac and Rebekah had twin boys, they named them Jacob and Esau (EE saw). When Jacob was grown, God gave him a new name. In today's Bible story we will hear more about when that happened and why.

• "Jacob's New Name"
activity page,
1 per kid
• pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: What are you afraid of?

Play a picture drawing game with the kids. Ask for volunteers to draw something they are afraid of. The first person to guess correctly gets the next turn to draw. Be sure to monitor the discussion so no kid is made to feel inferior because of a particular fear.

Option: Write common fears on strips of paper for kids to pull from a bag. (Examples: *spiders, snakes, heights, storms*, and so on)

SAY • As we've learned about Jacob the past two sessions, we've seen how he struggled through hard situations. This week, we will see what Jacob did when he had to face his biggest fear!

OPTION 2: A long journey

Before the session, research the distance from your town to various locations, moving farther and farther away from your town. (Examples: the next town, the closest large city or landmark, the next state, the closest country or ocean)

Line up kids on one side of the room. Challenge them to guess each distance by taking steps. Each step represents 1 mile, 10 miles, or 100 miles—whichever is most appropriate for the actual distance. Reveal the correct distance before announcing the next location.

SAY • Jacob traveled several hundred miles from home to get to his uncle's land. When it was time for Jacob to travel several hundred miles back home, he had a family and many possessions with him. How much harder do you think the trip was for Jacob?

**LOW
PREP**

• large sheets of paper
or dry erase board
• marker

• list of distances to
various locations

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? God always keeps His promises because He is faithful.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

• large walking stick or shepherd's staff

[Leader enters wearing jeans, work boots, and jacket. If possible, carry a large walking stick or shepherd's staff.]

LEADER • Hi, everyone! You got here just in time for the final part of our tour experience. The flock has eaten the entire field on this side of the farm, so it's time to move them over to a new pasture. I hope you wore comfortable shoes because we have a long journey ahead of us. This journey feels so long when you're moving an entire flock of sheep! But with your help, maybe it won't be so baaaa-d. Get it?

Moving a flock is hard work for us and the sheep don't really like it either, but it's necessary. We have to give them good grass to eat so they will continue to grow and stay healthy. Right now, the good grass is pretty far away. You know, the same is true for us. Not the grass part, but sometimes we have to endure some hard stuff to get to the best stuff.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • During the hard times, it's always good to remind ourselves of our big picture question. Does anyone remember what it is? *[Allow kids to respond.]* Let's all say the question and answer together: ***Does God keep His promises? Yes, God always keeps His promises because He is faithful.***

That definitely keeps me going when I have a huge task ahead of me. But God promises to provide. I think He might have sent you to provide me some help. I'm so glad you're here!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • God had made a covenant with Jacob's grandfather, Abraham. Then God told His promise to Jacob's father, Isaac. God had a plan for Jacob too. Even though Jacob was the younger brother, God wanted Jacob to receive the blessing for his family.

Years before, Jacob tricked his father and his brother; he stole the blessing from Esau. Then Jacob ran away to escape Esau's anger. God met with Jacob and promised to be with him.

After 20 years, God told Jacob that it was time to go home. On the way home, Jacob had another surprising encounter with God. I can't wait for you to hear about it, so let's listen.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Genesis 32–33. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the

• Bibles
• "Jacob's New Name" video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster
• Story Point Poster

story, or show the Bible story video “Jacob’s New Name.”

LEADER • This story is fascinating to me. It seems Jacob actually had two long journeys; Jacob came a long way across the land, and he also came a long way in his relationship with God. From the very beginning, God promised to bless Jacob and be with him, but time and time again, Jacob tried to accomplish God’s plan on his own. He never seemed to fully trust that God would keep His promise. ***Does God keep His promises? God always keeps His promises because He is faithful.***

Now it was time to face his biggest fear: seeing his brother after 20 years. Jacob ran away because Esau wanted to kill him. How did Esau feel now? Did he still hold a grudge? Jacob had no way of knowing. As he prepared to meet Esau, Jacob prayed to God for protection. He got more than he asked for. Jacob encountered God in the form of a man and wrestled with Him. At daybreak, the man injured Jacob, but Jacob wouldn’t let go until God blessed him. **God changed Jacob’s name to Israel, the name of God’s covenant people.**

God did bless and protect Jacob. God had already softened Esau’s heart. Esau was no longer angry with Jacob. Jacob could stay with his family in his new homeland without the fear he had felt for the past 20 years. Jacob was finally home.

Christ connection

LEADER • God not only blessed Jacob, He gave Jacob a new name. *Jacob* meant “deceiver.” His new name was *Israel*, which meant “struggles with God.” God

changed Jacob from the inside out. From then on, Jacob would look to God, not himself.

The same is true for us. When we trust in Jesus, God changes us from the inside out. Jesus forgives our sin and adopts us into His family. When we are adopted into the family of God, we also receive a new name—children of God!

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 3, Session 3” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about how God changes us when we trust in Jesus. Guide them to discuss how God might use them for His glory.



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Share DJ’s family prayer card and remind kids we can be partners with missionaries through prayer. Then play a parachute prayer game.

Form groups of four to six kids. Lead groups to form a tight circle, clasping their hands behind their backs. Toss a tissue “parachute” in the air and challenge kids to keep it aloft by blowing. When the tissue falls on the floor, pause and discuss one specific way to pray for DJ’s family and the people to whom they minister. End the activity with prayer.

LEADER • Lord God, thank You for the work You are doing through DJ and his family. We pray you would bless their obedience to You in taking the gospel to the nations. Soften the hearts of the people who hear the gospel so that they would receive the good news about Jesus with joy. God, thank You for always keeping Your promises. We love You. Amen.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 213 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

• “Unit 3, Session 3” missions video

• “DJ’s Family Prayer Card” printable
• facial tissue

• Key Passage Poster
• "Look I Am With You"
song

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Genesis 28:15.

LEADER • It's our final week to focus on this special key passage. Has anyone been able to memorize it yet? *[Allow a few volunteers to say the key passage from memory.]* Great work! Let's sing it together one more time.

Lead boys and girls to sing "Look I Am With You."

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • Esau's act of forgiveness to Jacob reminds me of God's forgiveness to us through Jesus. No matter what we've done, Jesus is willing to forgive us when we turn to Him. That alone is reason enough to stand and sing praises to Him!
Sing together "Our Creator and King."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Lord God, thank You for promising to be with us wherever we go. We need You, and apart from You we can do nothing. Help us rely on You and not on ourselves. All power and every good gift comes from Your hands. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means "good news." It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



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KEY PASSAGE: Genesis 28:15

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Does God keep His promises? God always keeps His promises because He is faithful.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- index cards
- colored pencils or markers

Display the key passage poster. Lead the kids to read the key passage together. Then distribute index cards and colored pencils or markers.

Instruct kids to spend a couple of minutes writing out the key passage and decorating it as a bookmark. Collect all of the cards and mix them up. Give each kid a card that is not his own. Encourage kids to keep the cards somewhere they will see them often.

SAY • Genesis 28:15 tells us about God's promise to Jacob. God promises to be with us too. ***Does God keep His promises? God always keeps His promises because He is faithful.***

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster

Distribute Bibles and guide kids to find Genesis 32–33. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 32:28. Invite kids to share what they have learned about Jacob from Genesis 25–33.

SAY • From these stories, we have learned that God's promises for Abraham and Isaac were promises for Jacob too. God showed Jacob in a dream that He

would bless Jacob's family, which would grow to be a whole nation—the nation of Israel—as part of His plan to bring Jesus, the Savior of the world.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. How does God change us when we trust in Jesus?
Lead kids to understand that when a person trusts in Jesus, that person goes from being God's enemy to being God's child. He or she is no longer a slave to sin but is counted as righteous.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Col. 1:21–22.)

2. How can God use difficult circumstances for our good? *Guide kids to consider how difficulties can draw us closer to God, leading us to turn away from sin and depend completely on Him.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 2 Cor. 1:8–9.)

3. What are some ways God has blessed you? How can you be a blessing to others? *Allow kids to consider physical blessing, but ultimately point them toward the love and grace God shows us in providing Jesus as our Savior. As we live for God, He calls us to show this same love and grace to others.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Col. 3:12–14.)

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Play gutte

Invite kids to play the traditional Indian game of gutte, or five stones. (It is played like the game of jacks.) You may group kids or play in one big group. Demonstrate how to play before assisting kids in playing.

Begin by placing the stones close to you. Lightly toss one stone in the air while picking up another stone from the ground. Keep the stone if you are able to collect it without

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- small stones, 5 per group

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

dropping the stone you tossed. Try to collect all of the stones, one at a time. Allow each kid a turn.

SAY • India is the largest country in South Asia. Many people from India have moved to Canada, where DJ and his family live. DJ and his brothers probably play games like this with their Indian friends so they will also have opportunities to tell them about Jesus.

OPTION 2: Practice thankfulness

SAY • Jacob had been away from home for more than twenty years, and God finally brought him back to the land of Canaan. Even though Jacob's life had not been easy, he had much to be thankful for.

What are some things Jacob might have been thankful for? [*Allow kids to respond.*] Our lives may not always seem easy, but each of us has things to be thankful to God for. What are you are thankful for?

Prompt kids to write on strips of paper things they are thankful to God for. Instruct them to place their strips in an envelope and put the envelope in their Bible. Encourage them to read the strips when they need a reminder of all that God has done for them.

SAY • Jacob probably wondered if he would survive his encounter with Esau. God met with Jacob at night and promised to be with him.

God changed Jacob's name to Israel, the name of God's covenant people. Jesus came so that we might have a changed life, forgiven of sin. Jesus' death and resurrection provided sinful people the way to be adopted into God's family. When we are adopted into the family of God we also receive a new name—children of God. (John 1:12)

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God for adopting us into His family when we repent (turn away from our sin) and trust in Jesus.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Heading Home" on the activity page. Kids should number the events in the order they happened.

• pencils
• Journal Page
• "Heading Home"
activity page,
1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

• strips of paper
• pencils
• envelopes

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.