

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.

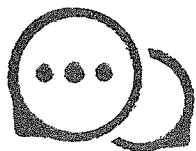
KEY PASSAGE:

Genesis 28:15

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

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

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 206



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 208



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 214



Additional resources for each session 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

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 talk about any nicknames they have. How did they get their nickname? Is it a shortened version of their normal name? Is it because of something they said or did?

SAY • People will often use nicknames to refer to their friends and family members. Nicknames can also be a way to show a difference between two people with the same name. In our story today, we will hear about a time God changed Jacob's name. Why do you think God would change Jacob's name?

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "What's In a Name?" activity page. Instruct kids to use the letters in *Jacob* and *Israel* to form new words. For example, you can spell *real* or *core*.

SAY • Great job making new words out of those two names. Jacob was a man, Abraham's grandson, who we have learned about before. Who do you think Israel was? Today we will learn more about Israel!

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Thumb wrestling

Show the kids how to thumb wrestle. While facing one another, each competitor should hold her thumb straight up and grasp her opponent's fingertips with her own fingertips. After a brief countdown each player will try to hold down the opponent's thumb with her own thumb.

Form pairs of kids and encourage them to play three thumb wrestling matches. The first kid in each pair to win two matches moves on to play a winner from another pair. Continue matches until one kid wins overall.

SAY • Thumb wrestling is fun, and quite a bit safer than real wrestling. Today we will learn about a time Jacob wrestled with a mysterious stranger. Jacob demanded that the stranger bless him. Who do you think the stranger could have been?

OPTION 2: Hop circles

Instruct the kids to stand in a circle. Explain that they will begin hopping on one foot when you say "go." Help the kids count seconds as they hop. See who can hop the longest.

SAY • Hopping can be difficult. Our bodies struggle to balance on one leg. Today we will hear about a time Jacob's hip got hurt, leaving him with an injury that lasted the rest of his life. He could stand on both his legs, but when he walked, he limped because one leg could not hold his full weight. How do you think he injured his leg? We'll learn more soon.

Transition to teach the story

**LOW
PREP**

• "What's In a Name?"
activity page,
1 per kid
• pencils or markers

TEACH 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.

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
• Bible
• walking stick

[Leader enters wearing overalls and work boots. He or she is carrying a Bible and a large walking stick.]

LEADER • Welcome, friends! This is my sheep ranch. I call it Woolen Wonderland. I'm the main tour guide and the head shepherd. My name is [your name]. Today I have a really special treat for you, and I don't just mean getting to see us shear the sheep today. No, I'm talking about a great Bible story about Jacob.

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • We've been using a specific big picture question to help us know more about God and what He is like from the Bible stories we've studied. Can anyone remember the question? [Allow responses.] Great job. That's exactly right. ***Does God keep His promises?*** And the answer we've learned is what? Who can tell me? [Allow responses.] Good memory! Right

again. ***God always keeps His promises because He is faithful.*** Let's say it all together: ***Does God keep His promises? God always keeps His promises because He is faithful.*** This is our last week with this question, so it's important to make sure we really understand it.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • At the very beginning of the Bible, we learned that ***God is our Creator and King.*** We learned that when sin came into the world, God already had plans to deal with sin by sending His Son. Then, we learned about Abraham and his family, including his son Isaac. We learned that ***we can trust God because He is faithful and does everything for His glory and our good.*** We have seen these truths continuing through the life of Isaac's son Jacob. God's promises to Abraham had passed on to Jacob. This week we will see more of God's faithfulness in our story. It's called "Jacob's New Name."

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 story, or show the Bible story video "Jacob's New Name."

LEADER • When we think back to the other stories we have learned about Jacob, it seems that Jacob really struggled to trust God's timing. God made some wonderful promises to Jacob, but Jacob kept trying to trick people and twist things to make God's

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

promises come.

From stealing his brother's birthright and blessing to marrying a second woman after God provided him with a wife, Jacob always seemed to be working on his own plans instead of resting in the good plans God had for him. That's one of the reasons his physical wrestling match with God is so interesting. It was, in some ways, a physical picture of the way Jacob had treated God his whole life.

Now here's a question for you: do you think God's plans can ever be stopped or changed? [*Allow responses.*] Of course not! Even when we try to follow our own plans, God can work out His plans. He can use us whether we trust Him and obey, or try to go our own way. Jacob learned this the hard way, as God touched his hip and gave Jacob an injury that would last the rest of his life. It would serve as a reminder that struggling against God is never the right choice.

However, even though Jacob struggled with God, God still kept His promises to bless Jacob. God had worked in Esau's life to heal that relationship. God had given Jacob many sons who would eventually be a great nation. Now, **God changed Jacob's name to Israel, the name of God's covenant people.**

Christ connection

LEADER • 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)

Jesus died on the cross for us and rose again on the third day, defeating sin and death. If we trust Jesus, we don't have to struggle against God. We can rest in His love and trust His plans for our lives and His plans for the world. Jesus promised to come again and fix everything broken in the world and make all things new. ***Does God keep His promises? God always keeps His promises because He is faithful.***

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 3, Session 3" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about what it means to be like Jesus. Guide them to discuss how God uses them for His glory.

• "Unit 3, Session 3"
Questions from Kids
Video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Display the "DJ's Family Prayer Card" printable for kids to see. Remind the kids that praying for DJ's family is a great way to partner with them in their ministry to South Asians living in Canada. Then play the following game.

Form groups of four to six kids. Provide each group with a bit of facial tissue. Toss the tissue into the air, and encourage the kids to keep it aloft by blowing on it. They cannot use their hands to keep it aloft. Each time the tissue hits the ground, ask the group to suggest a specific way to pray for DJ and his family. Then start a new round with the tissue. After a few rounds, pray for DJ and his family using the suggestions of the kids.

• "DJ's Family Prayer
Card" printable
• facial tissue

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Genesis 28:15. You may sing the key passage song,

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

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

"Look I Am With You."

LEADER • This key passage comes from the Book of Genesis. God promised Jacob that He would be with him wherever he went. *Does God keep His promises? God always keeps His promises because He is faithful.* God had big plans for Jacob's family, and God's plans always come true. We can trust God.

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • God is our wonderful Creator and King. He is good and deserves all our praise and worship. Let's sing to Him.
Sing together "Our Creator and King."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father, thank You for growing Jacob's family and making Him into a great nation. Thank You for using the nation of Israel to send Jesus to save us from our sin. Help us trust Him and live for Your glory. 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.

• "Our Creator and King" song

APPLY 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.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- tennis ball
- "Look I Am With You" song (optional)

Allow volunteers to say the key passage from memory. Praise each kid for his effort, and encourage kids to keep working on memorizing the verse. Then invite the kids to sit in a circle and pass a tennis ball around. Each time a kid catches the ball, she must say the next word of the key passage. Play until the key passage has been said at least once, or until each kid has had a chance to catch the ball and toss it to another.

SAY • Our key passage is a wonderful reminder that God always keeps His promises. God promised to be with Jacob and to bring him back to the good land He had promised Abraham. In a similar way, Jesus promised to be with us and to give us eternal life with God. Jesus keeps that promise for everyone who believes in His death and resurrection for salvation.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Genesis 32–33. Ask the kids to tell you how they can find specific books, chapters, and verses in their Bibles. Read the Bible passages or review the story using the bolded text of

the Bible story script.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Why was Jacob afraid about going back to Canaan? (*He feared Esau would still be angry and want to kill him, Gen. 32: 7*)
2. Who did Jacob wrestle with? (*Jacob wrestled with God, and God blessed him; Gen. 32:28-30*)
3. Was Esau still angry with Jacob? (*No, he was happy to see his brother; Gen. 33:4*)
4. Who did Jacob trust when he faced a situation he feared? Who can we trust when we are afraid? *Guide kids to see that Jacob prayed to God for help and asked Him to protect his family. Jacob reminded God of His promises and asked Him to be faithful. Tie that to the fact that we can pray when we are afraid and ask God to help us be bold for His glory.*
5. What are ways that God blesses people? *Guide kids to think about more than just material possessions or wealth. Lead kids to see that salvation, given by grace through faith, is the best blessing God gives.*
6. God changed Jacob's name to Israel; what are ways we are changed by God when we trust Jesus? *Guide kids to see that we receive new hearts that love God, we receive the Holy Spirit who helps us obey God, and we receive forgiveness for sin so we no longer need to be afraid of God's judgement.*

SAY • Jacob was not a perfect person. He lied, cheated, and stole. Even so, God used him and blessed him. **God changed Jacob's name to Israel, the name of God's covenant people.** Israel's family became a great nation. God used them to send the Messiah, Jesus, many years later to save the world from sin.

• small stones, large beads, or plastic gems

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

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: A *gutte* game

Teach the kids in your group to play *gutte*, a traditional Indian game. *Gutte* is similar to the game of jacks.

1. Form smaller groups of two or three kids. Provide each group with five small stones, large beads, or plastic gems.
2. Groups will sit in a circle on the floor. The first player in each group will drop the five stones on the floor. She will then choose one stone to pick up. The remaining stones will stay put.
3. The first player will toss the stone up and attempt to grab one of the four remaining stones before catching the tossed stone. She will repeat this process until she has collected all of the four remaining stones, or until she drops the tossed stone or a stone she attempted to pick up.
4. If she is successful, she will continue to play as explained above, but will try to grab two at a time. If she is unsuccessful, play passes to the next kid who will re-scatter the stones, select one to toss, and play as explained in step 3.
5. The last two rounds will have a player trying to grab three stones, then one stone, followed by a player attempting to grab all four at once. The first player to successfully complete each round wins.

SAY • Jacob had a large family. **God changed Jacob's name to Israel, the name of God's covenant people.** His family eventually became a nation. A *nation* is a large group of people living in one area who are united by their culture, ancestors, history, or language. There

are many nations in South Asia, including India, where the game *gutte* is from. Many Indians have moved to Canada. In Canada, DJ and his family work to share about Jesus with South Asians. DJ might even play *gutte* with some of them!

OPTION 2: Family groups

Write the names of family roles (*father, mother, brother, sister*, and so forth) on separate sticky notes. Put a different sticky note on the back of each kid, and encourage kids to ask yes or no questions of the other kids to guess what family role they have on their back.

SAY • Some families are large and some small. Jacob's family grew very large and eventually became the nation of Israel. **God changed Jacob's name to Israel, the name of God's covenant people.** Everyone who believes in Jesus is part of God's family too!

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the activity page and any other pages home with the kids so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

**LOW
PREP**

• sticky notes
• pen

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring 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.