



CREATION AND THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN HISTORY

#41 – Jacob Wrestles with God

Genesis 32:22-32

PICTURES NEEDED

- 41-1 Jacob and his sheep
- 41-2 Jacob wrestling with God

REVIEW (Before Teaching Lesson)

- **Journal Review:** Ask students to share an important truth that they learned from their journal readings at home that week. Share some of your own insights.
- **Previous Lesson Review:**
What happened in Jacob’s dream? What was God’s promise to Jacob? What did Jacob do in response?
- **The Big Question Review:** What happens when we trust God completely?
Let the students give their answers to the question.
- **Bible Verse Review: Proverbs 3:5-6**
God makes our paths straight.

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
⁶in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

LESSON CONTENT

NOTE: If most of the students have done the journal readings at home, you can ask the questions in brackets and let them give the answers. Otherwise, you will need to explain the information.

Why did Jacob have to leave his home? After Jacob dressed up like Esau and tricked his father into giving him Esau's blessing he had to go away because Esau wanted to kill him.

Where did his parents send him? His parents Isaac and Rebekah sent him to Paddan Aram where Rebekah's family lived. Rebekah wanted Jacob to find a wife among the daughters of her brother Laban.

Jacob fell in love with Rachel and worked seven years for his uncle Laban so he could have her as his wife. On his wedding night Laban tricked Jacob and gave him Rachel's older sister Leah as his wife instead, so Jacob ended up with two wives.

What is God's design for marriage? God designed marriage to be between one man and one woman. When this design isn't followed there can be real problems in a family and the society.

(What problems were there between Leah and Rachel?) Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah but Rachel didn't have any children. Jacob didn't love Leah but God granted her children. The fact that Leah had children and she didn't made Rachel very jealous, so she did what Sarah had done and gave her maidservant Bilhah to Jacob as a wife. Bilhah had two sons by Jacob. Then to get more children for herself Leah gave her maidservant Zilpah to Jacob as his wife. Zilpah also had two sons by Jacob.

Finally, God opened Rachel's womb and she gave birth to a son, Joseph. This gave Jacob eleven sons from four wives. Later he would have one more son by Rachel named Benjamin.

Where was Jacob living when his wives had all these children? Jacob was living in the land of Rebekah his mother in the house of his uncle Laban.

Why couldn't Jacob stay in that land? Jacob needed to leave that place because it wasn't the land that God had promised to give to his grandfather Abraham. God had called Abraham and had sent him to the land of Canaan and Jacob needed to go back there.

After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob asked Laban to send him on his way and let him go back to his homeland. (How did Laban respond to Jacob's request?) Laban had been blessed by God because Jacob was living in his household, so he didn't want Jacob to leave.

(picture 41-1) Jacob made a bargain that he would go on tending Laban's sheep if he could separate for himself the speckled, spotted and dark colored sheep and goats. Once he made this bargain with Laban, Jacob tried to make it so the speckled, spotted and dark colored sheep and goats were the ones that mated.

Who caused Jacob to prosper in his uncle's house? Jacob tried to gain riches himself through trickery but it was God who caused him to grow very prosperous with large flocks of animals and lots of servants. When he left Laban's house to return to his own land he was very rich.

What do you think Jacob was concerned about in returning home? Jacob was concerned about how his brother Esau would respond to him as he had tricked Esau out of both his birthright and blessing.

As he approached the place where he would meet Esau he divided his animals into smaller flocks sending some of them ahead to Esau as a gift, hoping that this would grant him favor with Esau.

What kind of man was Jacob? Jacob was an imperfect man who did things that displeased God but he knew and acknowledged God. He recognized that his life and possessions were a gift from God. Listen to his prayer to God before he met Esau. (Genesis 32:9-12)

"O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' ¹⁰I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. ¹¹Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. ¹²But you have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.' "

What did Jacob recognize in his prayer? Jacob understood that he was unworthy but God was faithful to keep his promises. He knew he was dependent upon God. The night before he met Esau Jacob was left alone in the camp and God in the physical form of a man came and wrestled with him.

Genesis 32:22-32 (picture 41-2)

²² That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³ After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. ²⁴ So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵ When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. ²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

²⁷ The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

²⁸ Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

²⁹ Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

³⁰ So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

³¹ The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. ³² Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.

Why was Jacob wrestling with the man? He wanted him to bless him. Jacob was always seeking a blessing. With Essau he tricked him to get a blessing, this time he was physically fighting for it.

Why did God change Jacob's name? To acknowledge what Jacob had done; he struggled with God and overcame. The descendants God promised to Abraham that came through the sons of Jacob (Israel) are called the Israelites.

Why was Jacob successful? Because of the promise that he had made to Abraham, God kept his hand upon Jacob and caused him to prosper in a foreign land. Then he brought Jacob and his family back to the land he had promised to Abraham. God is God and will see that his plans are completed. He is faithful to do all he has promised.

Isaiah 46:3-4 says: *Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. ⁴Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.*

From these verses what can be said about God? Because God is God, he will always do what is right. He will fulfill his promises and take care of his creation. He will watch over us and if we respond rightly to him on earth, we will spend all eternity in his presence.

LESSON WRAP-UP

- **Overview Questions:** Why was Jacob afraid to go back to his home? How did he prepare to meet Esau? What happened when Jacob wrestled with God?
- **Thought Questions:** Did Jacob deserve to be blessed by God? Why did God bless Jacob? What are the blessings God bestows on us? What does it mean that God "causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous"? (Matthew 5:45) What would happen to us if God removed his hand of blessing (provision)?
- **Prayer:** Thank God for being the author and sustainer of life. Thank him for keeping his hand upon you. Pray that you would recognize his hand in your life and the blessings he gives you every day. Pray that you would devote yourself more fully to him.
- **The Big Question: What enables us to live and flourish?**
Let the students give their answers to the question. Share the memory verse. Ask how it answers the question.
- **Memory Verse: Isaiah 46:3-4**
God sustains and takes care of his people.

Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all you who remain of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. ⁴(Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.)

ACTIVITIES (Completed after the lesson)

Any age appropriate activity can be included which fits into the class time. The activities with a star are included on the class notes.

- ★ **Lesson Notes:** Have the children answer the two questions individually or as a group. What did you learn from this lesson? How can you put into practice what you learned?
- ★ **Memory Verse:** Read the memory verse on the cover of the class notes and then have the students fill in the blanks in the verse.
- ★ **Activity Page:** Maze
Instructions: Help Jacob find his way back home from Padan Aram.
- ★ **This Week's Big Question:** Have the students fill in the blanks for the way the memory verse answers the big question.
God sustains and takes care of his people.
- ★ **Coloring Page:** Color the lesson picture.
- **Craft:** Sheep paper chain
As a reminder that God blessed Abraham with children and possessions, make a sheep paper chain.
Materials: legal size white or cream-colored paper, scissors, colored pencils
Preparation: Run off craft 41 on legal size paper. Cut lengthwise into strips. Each child should have a strip.
Instructions: Fold the strip of paper accordion style with the sheep on front. Cut along outline of the sheep to folded edges. Open the strip up and color in the face of each sheep.
- **Game:** Moving Back Relay
As a reminder that Jacob took all his possessions and moved back to the land God had promised Abraham engage in a "Moving Back Relay."
Instructions: Divide the group into two teams. Establish a starting line and a drop off line. Gather an equal number of objects for each team to move (books, light chairs, clothes, cooking utensils, etc.) and place them in a pile at the starting line. The first person on each team picks up an object and runs over to the drop-off line where he leaves it. He then runs back to his team and touches the next person in line to go and do the same. The first team to move everything in the pile over the drop-off line wins.

JOURNAL

The journal is passed out at the end of class for the students to complete at home. It has six poetic readings and related Bible verses. It would be beneficial for the teacher to read through and be familiar with its content.