

Jacob: The Person Who Became Israel

Genesis 25:19–33:20; 35:16–29

This lesson comes from *Volume 6 of The Complete Guide to Godly Play*. The lessons in *Volume 6* are all Old Testament Extension Lessons. We generally introduce these lessons to children who have spent at least three years working with the Core Lessons in *Volume 2* and are now developmentally ready for more.

The story of Jacob starts with the story of “The Great Family.” Abraham and Sarah had Isaac. Isaac married Rebekah. Then Isaac and Rebekah had twins, Esau and Jacob. Much of Jacob’s story is in his two names. *Jacob* refers to how he was born second and grabbed his brother’s heel, but it also means he took his brother’s place by trickery (Genesis 25:26). He also wrestled all night with a stranger by the Jabok River. The stranger (either a messenger of God or God himself) named him *Israel*, saying, “for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed” (Genesis 32:28). “Israel” means “one who struggles with God.” This is the story about the origin of the twelve tribes of Israel and how God uses imperfect people for God’s purposes.

How to Use This Parent Page

With your child, begin by looking together at the illustration below and listening as your child recalls—and in a sense relives—the experience of today’s lesson. Invite your child to respond to the drawing. You might say, for example:

- I wonder what you can tell me about this picture?
- I wonder what this picture has to do with today’s story?

Just listen. This is not a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about their own

creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to listen in a supportive way. You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today’s presentation offered below. Whether you read the lesson or simply listen as your child shares what was received in today’s lesson, ask the Wondering questions printed in the left column. Remember, there are many right answers! Be open to what the presentation can mean to you and your child. God will teach you new meanings every day. Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying “Amen.”

The Presentation

Isaac and Rebekah had twin boys, Esau (who was born first) and Jacob. Jacob thought it was not fair that Esau was treated special because he was the oldest. They were born on the same day! One day Esau came home from hunting and he was hungry. Esau asked his brother for some soup. “I will give it to you,” said Jacob, “if you will agree that I can have Father’s things when he dies.” Esau agreed.

When Isaac grew very old he asked Esau to go hunting and make the stew he liked best. Then Isaac would bless him. Rebekah thought Jacob should get the blessing,

Wondering

- **I wonder** what part of this story you like the best?
- **I wonder** what part of this story is the most important?
- **I wonder** where you are in the story and what part is about you?

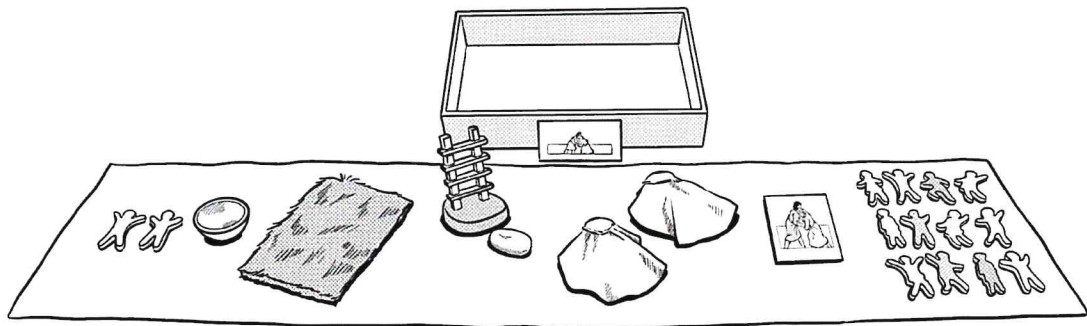
so she and Jacob made Isaac's special stew and dressed him up like Esau. Isaac gave Jacob the blessing.

When Esau returned he discovered that Isaac had been tricked into giving away the blessing that should have been his. He threatened to kill Jacob. Rebekah convinced Isaac to send Jacob away to her family and to find a wife. One night while traveling Jacob dreamed of a ladder all the way into heaven. There were angels climbing up and down the ladder, and God was everywhere. God said, "I give you this land to bless the world and will always be with you."

Jacob traveled on and met Rachel. He worked for seven years in exchange for permission to marry Rachel, but he was tricked into marrying her sister Leah. Rachel's father said he could marry Rachel too, if he worked another seven years. Finally Jacob and Rachel were married.

Then God told Jacob it was time to return home. Jacob was afraid. Esau had threatened to kill him. That night a mysterious stranger fought with him. The stranger told Jacob, "Now you will be called Israel because you have fought with God and people and have prevailed." The next day, Jacob went to meet Esau. His brother welcomed him home.

Jacob, or Israel as he was now called, had twelve sons. Each of these sons became the head of a tribe. Now there were twelve tribes in the Great Family, and it was called *Israel*.



Godly Play The Godly Play Spiral, Part I, "The Creative Process"

In every Parent Page, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. Today we will discuss the Godly Play Spiral.

We sometimes say that Godly Play is organized as a kind of living spiral. The spiral moves upward and outward through early, middle, and late childhood constantly making room for new experiences and new learning. One way the spiral moves is by the creative process. The circle of the creative process begins when a person's circle of meaning (the ways in which we make sense of who we are and what is

happening around and to us) is opened by a crisis (a hard break) or something softer like wondering. Scanning for meaning starts and continues until there is an insight. The insight is then articulated and developed until there is closure, which awaits a new opening.

Children and adults tend to prefer certain aspects of this circle that are related to their personalities. In Godly Play the mentor attempts to move the children through the whole circle of the creative process (opening, scanning, insight, articulation and development, closing) despite personal preferences so they will have the whole process available to them.