



OVERVIEW SECTION

How to Read This Lesson Plan

The **Overview Section** is the foundation of this lesson plan. The questions and activities for the class that you will be teaching on Sunday morning have been based (sometimes loosely) upon what you read in this section. The **Overview Section** is composed of five components (each component is underlined in the lesson plan):

How to Read This Lesson Plan (defines all components of the lesson plan)

Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation (a reminder of why we do this)

Scripture(s) for the Session (a reminder that the scripture is to be read in every class)

Key Verses & Theology (background for teachers to ponder)

Themes to Focus on from the Scripture (the ideas that the session's lessons are based on)

The actual lesson is found in the second section, **The Sunday Morning Experience Section**. Think of this section as the step-by-step instruction guide to your Sunday morning teaching experience. There are four components to this section (again, each component is underlined in the actual lesson plan):

Preparation (including supplies needed)

Classroom Statement (a brief explanation of what will be taught/happening in the classroom)

Step-by-step process of the lesson (including the scripture to be read)

Suggested variations for age groups (Self-explanatory but not always applicable)

We encourage you to read the rest of this **Overview Section** before reading the **Sunday Morning Experience Section**.

Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation

The purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation is, with God's help and in community, to hear and interact with the stories of our faith tradition, to pray, worship and play together, and to equip and support the building of relationships with God and with each other.

Scripture(s) for the Session: Genesis 32:3-12; 24-33:11

Please READ this aloud in every class you teach. The actual words to the scripture can be found in **The Sunday Morning Experience Section: Step-by-Step process of the lesson**. When reading to the class, please read it from the lesson plan (not an actual Bible) as the wording of the scripture has been modified to help clarify some language issues.

Key Verses & Theology: These are provided to help the teachers think about and build a framework for understanding the story to help in answering some of the questions that the students might raise in class.

31.3 Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your ancestors and to your kindred, and I will be with you." God is telling Jacob to do the opposite of what Jacob had been doing. Jacob had been going away from the land of his ancestors. Also, what is of note here, compared to earlier stories of Jacob, is that Jacob is actually hearing God. The first time Jacob hears from God is in a dream, AFTER Jacob has "stolen" the blessing from Esau by deceiving their father. But now, BEFORE the action begins, Jacob hears from God. Often times a way to discern that you are hearing God's voice is that what the voice says seems like the right thing to do, AND, you don't want to do it. So it is with Jacob. But Jacob is obedient. He heads back.

32.24 Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him This wrestling happens the evening before Jacob will meet Esau. Jacob is fearful and is wrestling with the direction God has provided. Jacob really is wrestling with God. Just like we all do when we agree to do something God has called us to, but then we don't want to. Or question whether we should continue. A similar scene plays out with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He's known that he is to be handed over, but on the eve of the actual event, it takes some effort to go through with it.

And so it is with Jacob. Jacob wants to turn back. Notice what side of the river he's on. Everyone else is on the Esau-side of the river, but Jacob's still on the side Esau is not. Jacob does not seem able to trust, (like the tree that won't bend and so then it breaks?) and thus the injury. However, the injury seems to become this reminder that God is with Jacob. And so, Jacob chooses (again) to be obedient, and thus the next key verse.

33.3 He (Jacob) himself went on ahead of them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near his brother. Jacob not only goes to the Esau-side of the river after wrestling with God and choosing to be obedient to God's call, but he's goes first. His plan had been to go last, and if Esau's 400 men attacked, Jacob would flee first and have all the other people and herds inbetween him and Esau. But after Jacob re-commits to being obedient, he goes AHEAD of his family and herds. He goes first. His choosing of God makes Jacob something that Jacob has yet to be in the previous stories: Brave.

Themes to Focus on from the Scripture: Themes are provided to help teachers understand the teaching of the *session* (not necessarily the class). Sometimes an activity in one class may not match up with any of the themes.

Distrust: At the beginning of the Esau and Jacob story, their mother, Rebecca asks God why the baby moves so much in her womb. God says because the baby is really two babies. And they will become two great nations and the older will serve the younger. It is unclear how much of this prophecy is told to the two sons. But if Jacob knows anything about it, he certainly does not wait for it to happen. He seeks to make it happen on his own. Why? Because he doesn't trust God, because he doesn't trust his father, and because he doesn't trust his brother. He only trusts himself. The story of Jacob and

Esau's reunion is therefore a story of Jacob learning to let go of his distrust of everyone else and to replace that distrust with trusting God.

Vulnerability: As Jacob trusts God, this then causes Jacob to act differently. Instead of running away from his brother and his past, Jacob is told, by God, to go back. This is contrary to Jacob's previous actions. And, so in acting differently, Jacob is then afraid. This is why he wrestles with God. He knows Esau is coming and this scares him. He has sent gifts to Esau but he doesn't think that will be enough. Jacob wants to flee. The last time Jacob heard from Esau (twenty years ago), Esau wanted to kill Jacob. And in going back as God has told Jacob, Jacob is now vulnerable. He is now at Esau's mercy and so Jacob is stuck between wanting to flee and obeying God, thus the wrestling. Jacob does not want to be vulnerable or at Esau's mercy. But in verse 33.3, what does Jacob do? He goes first, before his children and wives. He goes first to Esau.

Reconciliation: And what is Esau's response when he sees Jacob? When Esau sees Jacob, he runs to him. Esau weeps and embraces his brother. Jacob's choosing to listen to God and choosing to be vulnerable (at God's bidding) has allowed for this moment to happen. And it's a pretty moving moment. Jacob's language of "To see your face is like seeing the face of God" might seem over the top, but as far as cause and effect goes this is true of Jacob's experience. Jacob figured he'd be killed. But that's not what happened. Instead reconciliation took place. The brothers are brothers again, not enemies. This reconciliation is what God was planning for Jacob. But for it to happen, Jacob had to live into it. And since Jacob does, then Jacob sees how God is and was involved in the whole thing. Jacob sees God's face, and the symbol of God's face is the welcoming face of Esau.



THE SUNDAY MORNING EXPERIENCE SECTION

Preparation

- Print out this lesson plan and bring it with you on the Sunday Mornings you are teaching
- Arrive at pre-arranged time to join other teachers, shepherds and staff for an opening prayer.
- Supplies Needed: 3 Bowls, water, pepper, dish soap; three plastic cups, water; three or four balloons, scotch tape, a sewing needle; note cards, pencils

Classroom Statement

Students will hear the story of Jacob and Esau's reunion. Then the students will participate and view different types of "science-y tricks" as a way to better illustrate the story they just heard. The "tricks" part comes from Jacob's trickery with Esau that caused the problems between the two of them in the first place.

Step-by-Step Process of Lesson

SHEPHERD comes in with students

SHEPHERD asks "Question of the Day."

INTRODUCE yourself

Hi, my name is ____ and I want you call me (tell the students how they may address you).

PRAY (Short and simple is perfect)

God, thank you for this day and for each other. We need your help. Help us to learn about you this day. Amen.

TELL

- We're going to read a story about Jacob and Esau that hopefully you remember from Summer Sunday school this past year.
- In this story, it's been 20 years since Jacob tricked his father and stole Esau's blessing of the first born.
- When Esau found out what Jacob had done, he wanted to kill Jacob. So Jacob ran away. Now we're going to hear most of the story of how Jacob returns to and reconciles with his brother.
- As you listen to the story, listen for what might be scary for Jacob.

READ to the class

Genesis 31.3 Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your ancestors and to your kindred, and I will be with you."

32.6 So Jacob listened. As he approached Esau and the Jordan River, he sent messengers ahead to scout. The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." 7 This scared Jacob. Very much so. Panicked, he divided his people, sheep, cattle, and camels into two camps. 8 He thought, "If Esau comes on the first camp and attacks it, the other camp has a chance to get away."

13 Jacob slept the night on the bank of the Jordan river. 22 But during the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 He got them safely across the brook along with all his possessions.

32.24 But Jacob stayed on the other side of the Jordan. Once he was alone, there was a man who wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. 26 Then the man said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." 27 So he said to Jacob, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." 28 Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed Jacob. 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." 31 The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

33.1 Then Jacob crossed the river, and saw Esau coming, and the four hundred men with him. 3 Jacob went on ahead of his men, women, children and herds. Then, as Esau approached, Jacob bowed to the ground seven times. 4 But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced Jacob, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

5 When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he said, "Who are these with you?" Jacob said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." 6 Then the maids drew near, they and their children, and bowed down; 7 Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down; and finally Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. 8 Esau said, "What do you mean by all the herds that you sent me?" Jacob answered, "To find favor with my lord." 9 But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." 10 And Jacob said, "No, please; if I find favor with you, then accept my presents from my hand; for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God—since you have received me with such favor. 11 Please accept my gifts that are brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have everything I want." So Jacob urged Esau, and Esau took it.

TELL

- Did you hear anything that might have been scary for Jacob?
- This story of Jacob tells us of how Jacob eventually stopped trusting his own ways of living and starting trusting God's ways of living.

- One of Jacob's ways of living was to trick people. In this story, even though he was going back to see Esau because God told him to do so, Jacob was still being rather tricky in this story, right? First, he sent gifts to Esau. Then he set his people up in columns so that if Esau attacked, at least some of Jacob's people might be able to get away. And until Jacob wrestled with God, Jacob's plan was to stay behind the columns and be the very last person to meet Esau. Jacob certainly had some tricks.
- Jacob's tricks were about getting what he wanted. But there are other types of tricks too. Tricks that are simply fun little things about life. We're going to do a number of those type of tricks today.

Class activity

1. "Make it go away"

Pour water into a bowl. Put pepper in the bowl. Point out how it is evenly distributed on the water. Now put a drop of dishwashing liquid on your finger tip and put that fingertip into the middle of the water. All the pepper should push immediately to the sides of the bowl. Let one or two of the kids give it try (not all of them – it'll take too long). For an online demonstration, click here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhOKIpzA698>

TELL as you do:

- Sometimes we want to find the perfect solution to make our problems go away.
- Pretend that this pepper is a big problem.
- Jacob wanted to find a trick to make his problems go away.
- A trick like THIS (at this point, put your finger in the water)!

2. "Drinking upside down"

What to do:

- Take a plastic cup and put water in it.
- Hold the cup right side up, and put your mouth on the opposite side of the cup as you normally would.
- The opening of the cup will actually be around your chin, not up around your nose. Now turn your head to the side so that everyone can see you, dip your head down and...DRINK UPSIDE DOWN!
- Then explain what you did and ask for a volunteer to try it. Again, only have one or two kids do this.

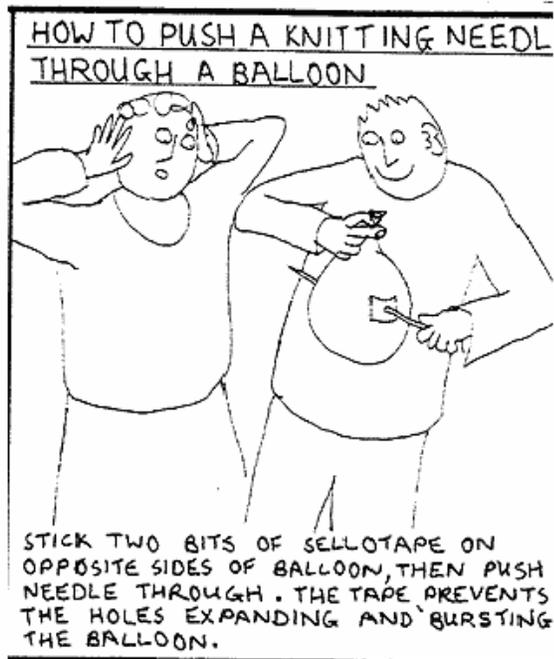
TELL as you do:

- Sometimes what God calls us to do something we do everyday, only a little bit differently.
- With Jacob, God calls Jacob to trust God, instead of trusting himself.
- The action is the same, but it looks a little bit different.
- Sort of like THIS (and drink upside down)!

3. "Really, it won't pop!"

Take an already prepared balloon (one that is blown up and has scotch tape crossed on the soon-to-be entry points) and push a pin through the balloon. It won't pop. See drawing below. After demonstrating, let one or two kids try.

<http://www.HunkinsExperiments.com>



TELL as you do:

- Sometimes when we choose to trust God, it's going to feel a little bit crazy.
- Like Jacob, we might think something big and scary might happen.
- But then...it DOESN'T (push pin through balloon).

4. It's alive!

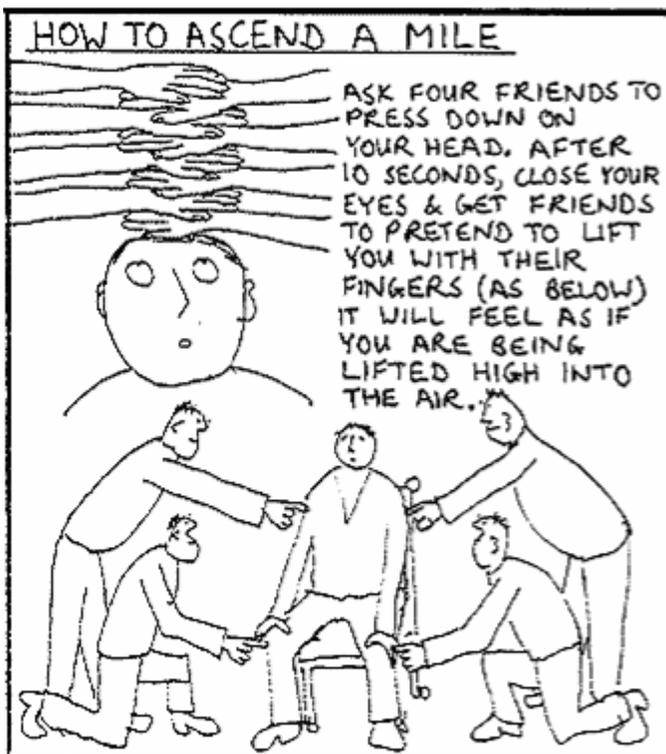
- Ask for a volunteer.
- Tell them to go stand in the middle of the doorway.
- The volunteer should be facing into the classroom.
- Once in position, tell your volunteer to raise their arms from their side so that the top of their hands are now pressing against the sides of the door frame. One on each side.
- Tell them to try to spread their arms apart inside the doorway as hard as they can.
- Have them do this for 60 seconds or so.
- Then tell them to stop pressing, to put their arms at their side to just walk into the classroom.
- Their arms should start to raise up on their own.

TELL as you do:

- When God tells us to do something, whatever it is that we're to do, might seem to be hard.
- But if we do it long enough, (tell volunteer at this time to come out of the doorway), we get used to what we're doing and then the thing that at first seemed hard, eventually becomes an AUTOMATIC response (arms should be going up around this time. Let one or two other kids try it).

5. Feeling lighter

- Pick a volunteer. Have them sit on a chair.
- Choose three more volunteers plus yourself.
- Each of you determine a place where you will stick a finger underneath the first volunteer (under feet, legs or arms).
- Tell the first volunteer to close his/her eyes.
- Then all of you place your hands on the first volunteer's head.
- Press down hard for 10 seconds.
- Then each of you place one finger where you had practiced and press upwards lightly. First volunteer keeps his/her eyes close.
- First volunteer will feel like he/she is being lifted up.
- Picture below demonstrates the procedure.

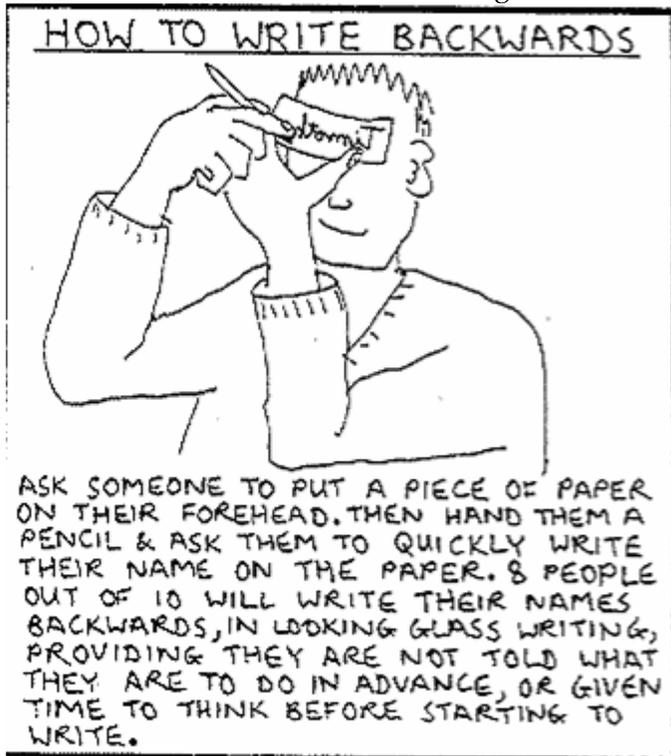


TELL as you do:

- When you do choose to listen to God, to trust God and you follow through with what you were supposed to do, then you will feel lighter.
- You will feel lifted up.
- Let other kids try.

6. Just for fun, if there's time

Give each child a pencil and a notecard. Tell them to put their notecard on their forehead. Tell them to write their name. Some of them might write it backwards.



CLEAN UP

DISMISS FOR SINGING