

# Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

**rfour.org**

**Year 4: Session 9** – A stand-alone lesson

**Class 25: Genesis 28:10-22** – Jacob's Ladder

## CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Review who Jacob is and why he is traveling
- Highlight the difference between a promise and a covenant
- Discuss where God is and what the church is with the story providing context

## Materials needed:

1. Video clip (available on rfour.org) from *The Babe*
2. Electronics that show the video clip
3. Cell Phone or Digital camera for taking selfies and group selfies

## THE LESSON

### OPENING PRAYER

### OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here’s this week’s question:* What’s a promise you’ve made or has been made to you?

### INTRO

- Due to how the schedule worked out this year, we have an “extra” Sunday.
- So...today’s lesson is not part of a session.
- The story is about Jacob – so we’re going way back in time from the New Testament stories we’ve been reading and discussing lately
- We’ve talked about Jacob before – he’s the brother of Esau, son of Isaac, and grandson of Abraham.
- His name is also changed from “Jacob” to “Israel” when he wrestles with God.
- In the story we’re going to read today, there is talk of promises.

- So we already had our opening question about promises and now we're going to watch a movie clip from the baseball movie, "The Babe."
- Babe Ruth was a well-known baseball player from 1914 to 1935 and was a power hitter
- He was the first player to hit over 700 home runs. Eventually, Hank Aaron and then Barry Bonds surpassed him in total home runs, but those are the only three to ever hit 700 home runs
- In this movie clip, we see Babe Ruth make a promise.
- Let's see if he can keep his promise

## WATCH Movie Clip

### ASK

- What was the first promise that Babe Ruth made? (to hit a home run for the boy who was sick)
- What did the boy then ask Babe to do? (to hit *two* home runs)
- Did Babe Ruth agree? (yes)
- What did Babe Ruth say the boy had to do, though, if he, Babe, hit the two home runs? (that the boy, had to get better)
- So...did Babe Ruth follow through with his promise and hit two home runs? (yes)

## Transition to Scripture

- When one person says they will do something for another person, then it's a *promise*
- When two people or two groups of people make promises to each other, then it's a *covenant*
- In the movie clip, Babe Ruth starts with a promise, but then, because the kid asks for two home runs, Babe turns his promise into a covenant – meaning if he keeps his promise, then the kid has to do something for the Babe – which was to get better
- In today's scripture story, we see a similar thing happen.
- God gives Jacob a promise
- Jacob turns it into a covenant
- The story starts right after Jacob has lied to his father and stolen the blessing from Esau (got dressed up in animal skins and fooled his blind father into thinking that Jacob was Esau)
- Esau is so angry that he wants to kill his brother Jacob – so Jacob runs away
- This story happens directly after Jacob runs away
- Let's see what happens

## READ Genesis 28:10-22 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

10 Jacob left his home town and went toward a far away town called Haran. 11 It was a long journey, and he couldn't finish the journey in just one day, so when the sun set, Jacob found a place outside off the road and stayed there for the night. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. 12 That night, he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on

which you lie I will give to you and to your children; 14 and you'll have so many children living on the land that they'll be like dust upon the earth, and they shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your children. 15 Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!" 17 Then he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." 18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. 19 He called that place Bethel (which means House of God). 20 Then Jacob

made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, 21 so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, 22 and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that God gives me I will surely give one-tenth back to God."

## ASK

- Verse 10 - Where was Jacob headed? (Haran)
- Verse 11 – Did Jacob make it to Haran in today's story? (No)
- Why? (Because it was a long trip and he couldn't make it all in one day)
- So where did Jacob spend the night? (outside and "off the road")
- What did he use for a pillow? (a rock – story doesn't say why, but it was probably to keep the sand out of his hair; also imagine more of a smooth stone than a tiny pitted rock)
- While Jacob was sleeping, he had a dream. What did he see in the dream? (a ladder with "angels of God" walking up and down it)
- Verse 13-15 – There were two main things that God tells Jacob. What were they? (1. A reminder of the promise God has made to Jacob's family and will carry out through Jacob. 2. That God is with Jacob and will keep him wherever Jacob goes)
- Verse 16 - So when Jacob wakes up, where does Jacob say God is? (Surely the LORD is in the **PLACE** and I did not know it)
- But where did God tell Jacob where God would be? (with Jacob wherever Jacob went)
- Verse 19 – What does Jacob call the place? (Bethel, which means "house of God")
- Verse 20-22 – So God gave Jacob a promise. But then what does Jacob promise back? (to give one-tenth back to God)
- And, remember, when two people or groups of people make promises to each other, what do we call that? (a covenant)

## TELL

- Earlier in the year, we read the Transfiguration story, where we mentioned the phrase "all heaven broke loose"
- Jesus' clothing turns bright white, Moses and Elijah appear, and God's voice can be heard outloud
- Today's story of Jacob's Ladder is in many ways a very similar story: The division between God's location and Jacob's location is shown to be not much of a division at all. Jacob is where God is and vice versa, just like God was where Jesus was and vice versa
- That's what the stairway with angels going up and down it can help us think about: That the way God's messages get through to people is ... through the people. In this case, specifically, that would be Jacob and Jacob's people
- Except Jacob doesn't understand the significance of what's being told to him.
- Which is why instead of naming himself Bethel...he names the *land* Bethel
- He thinks God is in the place, even though God specifically said "I will be with you wherever you go.")
- To be fair to Jacob, this is STILL a mistake we make today.
- Often times we think "the church building" is "the church."
- That God lives or is experienced in the building.
- So we say things like, "I'm going to church." Or, "I'll see you at church."
- But the church building is just a place. A building.

- *The church* is the people. You can't *go* to church because you *are* the church.
  - If we choose to be, that is – being the church, being God's home is not an automatic thing.
- And this is a big deal – God is saying Jacob, you, me, all of us, can be, if we choose to be, God's home.
- That wherever we go, God goes, too.
- So, as a fun way to end the regular class – let's take some pictures of the church building and then some selfies and group selfies and then we can figure out something to do with them as way to help us and maybe help the rest of the congregation remember that *we* are the church and the home of God and that the *church building* as great as it is, is just that, the church building

## TAKE SELFIES

(We'll have to avoid the sanctuary and be sort of quiet; we can go outside, though)

## Conclusion

- [Share pictures with each other]
- [Pick our favorite ones]
- [Decide what we might want a brief article or captions of the pictures to say]
- [Decide where to share the pictures and captions – Forge newsletter, Forge Jr newsletter, Bulletin Board, Sunday morning worship announcements, other ideas?]

## CLOSING PRAYER