



A Workshop Rotation Model Lesson Plan from rfour.org

Jacob and Esau Reunite | Genesis 32:3-12; 24-33:11

Season 1. Session 1: Arts & Crafts, Storytelling, Science

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.



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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: The scripture and story to read to the class; costume for the storyteller; sheets with answers for game.

Classroom Statement

Students will hear the story of Esau and Jacob's reunion. Students will then hear the story again, only this time from the perspective of Rachel. Students will then play a memory game to help remember some basic facts from the story. If there's time, students will then pantomime emotions from the story.

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

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.

ASK

- Who told Jacob to go back to see his brother? (God)
- What was Jacob's brother's name? (Esau)
- How many men did Esau have with him? (400)
- Why did Jacob divide his people into two camps? (To escape/flee more easily if Esau attacked)
- What did Jacob do after he had sent all his people to the other side of the river? (he wrestled)
- What body part of Jacob's was hurt in the wrestling (his hip)
- What new name was given to Jacob? (Israel)
- How did Esau greet Jacob? (With hugs and tears of joy)

TELL

- OK, now I'm going to tell you the story again, only this time I'm going to pretend, and I need you to pretend too that I am Rachel, Jacob's wife.
- I'm going to tell the story as Rachel might have experienced it.

STORYTELL

My name is Rachel and I am the younger sister to Leah. Both of us are married to Jacob. Our father, Laban, tricked Jacob into marrying both of us. That was quite the turn of events for Jacob, because Jacob is the one who is usually fooling other people. 20 years ago, Jacob fooled his brother, and then his father in order to get the first born's (Esau's) blessing, even though, like me, he is the younger sibling. But when he did that, his brother Esau, wanted to kill him. So Jacob ran away. He ran away to live with my Dad, his uncle, Laban. For twenty years, Jacob has worked for my dad, and he has done well. He has large flocks of sheep and cattle and many men who work for him. My sister and I have borne him 11 children.

It is evening right now. And all of us, all of Jacob's men and herds and women and children are on one side of the Jordan river, while Jacob is alone and on the other side of the river. On the side of the river that we're on is the same side of the river where Esau lives. There have been reports that he has been sighted and that he has 400 men with him! This is even more men than Jacob has! We are all a little nervous about what's going to happen. We don't think it was wise or the right decision to be here. But Jacob says that's what God says to do. But now Jacob is on the wrong side of the river and we are afraid he is planning to fool Esau again, which will make Esau even angrier. We are afraid because even though Jacob loves us, we think his fear is even more powerful than his love for us. We think he's going to run away and leave us to Esau. Why else would he be on the other side of the river? And then what will become of us? Will we be Esau's slaves? Or will Esau just kill us?

We are nervous throughout the night. None of us can sleep very well. Though our kids don't really know what's going on, they do know that Jacob is missing. In the early morning, the leader of Jacob's men comes and tells us to get into two different columns. Now we're really scared. Two columns? We're being split up! What is going on?!

Then we're told to move forward in the direction where Esau is supposed to be. Jacob is still missing. I hold Joseph, my son, close to me. I've given up hope. I believe that Jacob has left us. Oh, why is this happening? What has Jacob done to us?

We finish our light breakfast and pack up. We gather into the column that we were told to join. Jacob's men have placed us at the back of the column. We've been told that if Esau's men attack, we are to flee at once. They've put us at the back of the column so that we'll have a greater chance at escaping. I can see that Leah and her children have been placed in the same position in the other column.

Now we're moving forward. The sun is coming up. Dust rises into the air in front of us. Being behind everyone else is a miserable way to travel. We wrap scarves around our faces and squint our eyes to keep the dirt out of them.

Then suddenly there is a shout followed by many other shouts. I look around to see why. There! Behind us! There is a horse running towards us with a man on it. Could it be Jacob? It must be Jacob! Because who else could it be?! As he passes us by, he waves to us. Yes! Yes, it is Jacob! But he does not stop. He keeps going to the front of the columns. He briefly speaks to his men and then he's riding again...ahead of us! He's gone in front of the two columns. But no one goes with him. He has left his men behind to protect the columns and he rides by himself to meet his feared brother. Today, I think of my husband in a way I never have before: I think of him as brave.

The columns move again. A little later, Jacob's men come to get us from the back of the column. Over in the other column, Leah and her children are being brought to the front as well. The men are bringing us to Jacob! When we get to Jacob he is there with a very large, strong, red-headed and hairy man. It must be Esau! And they are both crying. They each have an arm draped around the shoulder of the other. Now Jacob is introducing us to Esau. Esau is very pleased to meet us and is very polite. He tells Jacob that he has a beautiful family. Jacob tells him that because Esau has received all of us with such favor that to see his face is like seeing the face of God. This is such a wonderful line that I keep repeating it in my mind: To see your face is like seeing the face of God. To see your face is like seeing the face of God.

I think about how relieved and excited I was when I saw Jacob riding his horse past us. And as I think about it more, I know that the only reason Jacob came back was because he listened to God. Seeing him come back was like seeing the face of God.

God had obviously been speaking to both Esau and Jacob and I am so thankful that they both listened to what God has been telling them. I know it must not have been easy. Esau must've struggled with wanting to get revenge, and Jacob wrestled with wanting to run away. But today both of them listened to God and acted differently than they would've on their own and because they DID listen to God, there was no battle, and I and the rest of my family is free and alive, instead of enslaved or dead. Today was better because of God. Thank you, God. Thank you.

EXPLAIN activity

- Now we're going to play a game to help us remember some things about the story.
- You'll see on the floor that I've placed some paper on the floor with some pictures and words.
- So, first, we need to stand up and make a circle around these papers.
- Now, I'm going to ask you the same questions I just asked you earlier in the class.
- As I'm asking you a question, you need to all walk as a circle around the papers.
- Once I'm finished with the question, and ONLY after I'm finished with the question, you may then answer the question.
- The way you answer the question is by stepping on the answer.
- First person to step on the correct answer gets to stay there and the rest of the class gets back in the circle.
- Remember, you cannot start to move toward an answer UNTIL THE QUESTION IS NO LONGER BEING ASKED! You will know the question is finished, because I will say "Go."
- If we run out of people before we run out questions, we'll all get back in a circle and keep going. Any questions?

DO activity (use the same questions from earlier in the lesson. Arrange answers in a 3 x 3 shape. There will be a space open in the middle since there are only 8 questions/answers)

EXPLAIN NEXT ACTIVITY (if there's time)

- We're now going to act out some of the emotions that were in this story.
- I will invite one student up to the stage and I will whisper the emotion to that student.
- Then that student WITHOUT TALKING will show you that emotion.
- First person to guess what the emotion is gets to come up to do the next one.

List of emotions from story (feel free to add your own):

- Anxious
- Scared
- Hurt
- Humble
- Brave
- Sad
- Joyous
- Confused

CLEAN UP

DISMISS FOR SINGING

Suggested Variations for age groups

The K – 1st class might have trouble reading some of the answers. There are pictures with most of the answers, so that shouldn't be too much trouble. But feel free to hold up the answer sheets when doing the questions at the beginning of the lesson so that they can associate the right answer with each question.