

LESSON 3

JACOB'S DREAM AT BETHEL

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Jacob's Trip to Haran

Jacob had to travel approximately 400 miles from his home in Canaan to Haran, the place where his mother grew up. Haran was the place that his grandfather Abraham had migrated from years before.

The central event of Jacob's life occurred one night while he was fleeing north, possibly after the first day's journey. That first day, he traveled as far as he could on the threat of death, and he ended up a considerable distance from home. It was probably during that night that God had granted him the vision of the heavenly ladder. The promise given to Abraham—that his descendants would inherit the land and would be as numerous as the dust of the earth—was confirmed to him. God also promised His divine protection on Jacob's journey.

Jacob commemorated his dream by setting up the stone which he had used for his pillow and pouring oil upon it. Such simple monuments were often erected in sacred places. This one marked the place where, for Jacob, God was known to be present. God was his "ladder" to remind him of His presence and help.

God's Presence

God is faithful to His promises. From when Jacob lived with Laban to when he guided his family back to Bethel, God's faithfulness was evident. However, Jacob did not always so clearly experience God's presence. From today's text, it is clear that Jacob appeared to be a lonely, confused, and misguided man. At Bethel, he experienced the most isolated and lonely time of his life. We can feel that he was experiencing a heavy burden. Perhaps he was thinking about his past deeds, and wondering whether life would be different had he not deceived Esau. Maybe he was also thinking about how or why God would use a man like him. His dream at Bethel gave him a great assurance that God was with him. He was not alone. For the first time in Jacob's life, God gave a promise directly to him, "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 28:13-14). For the first time, Jacob began to understand his role in helping God's people become a numerous and fruitful people.

BIBLE TEXT

Genesis 28:1-29:14

BIBLE TRUTH

God is always with us, especially when we are lonely or afraid.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To turn to God in times of trouble or despair.
2. To pray unceasingly for God's guidance.
3. To trust in God and not to be afraid.

MEMORY VERSE

"In God I have put my trust;
I will not be afraid."

(Psalm 56:11a)

PRAYER

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. We thank You, Lord, for gathering us here to worship You. Today, we will be learning about how You are with us always. Let us understand that we can always go to You when we are sad, lonely, or afraid. Please guide us through today's lesson. Hallelujah! Amen.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS

Children may have many fears: fear of the dark, fear of being alone, fear of certain animals, etc. You may ask the students what kinds of fears they have. What makes them feel better when they are afraid? Most of the time, their fears are calmed when someone is with them, such as their mother or father.

We can help them face their fears by letting them understand that they are never alone. Jesus, the Almighty God who is everywhere and all-powerful, is always with

them. Jesus has told us, "I am with you always" (Mt 28:20). We can help the students understand that even though we can't see God, He is always here, helping us and guiding us. When we realize that God is always here, we can ask Him for the courage and strength to face whatever problems or fears we may encounter. And surely God will help us, for He loves each and every one of us with a love that surpasses all understanding.

VOCABULARY

ladder: two long sticks connected by rungs or steps; used for climbing

REVIEW

Last week, we learned about two brothers who were twins but were actually very different. Not only did they look different, but they also liked to do different things. What were their names? Right, Jacob and Esau! What did Jacob like to do? (He liked to stay near the tents.) What did Esau like to do? (He liked to hunt animals.)

In the last lesson, we learned how Jacob tricked his brother. What did Jacob trick Esau out of? (His birthright and blessing.) Because of this, what did Esau want to do to Jacob? (He wanted to kill him.) When Jacob found out that Esau wanted to kill him, he had to run away to his uncle Laban's house. Today, we will hear about an interesting dream Jacob had during his journey to his uncle Laban's house.

BIBLE STORY

To Laban's House

Jacob's uncle Laban lived very, very far away from where Jacob and his family lived. Jacob had to travel many days to get there. In those days, people did not have planes, trains, or cars. When they traveled, they either rode camels and donkeys or walked.

Jacob journeyed to his uncle Laban's house to run away from Esau, who was very angry with him for tricking him. Jacob was also following his father Isaac's instructions that he go there to find himself a wife.

Jacob traveled by himself for many days. Since it was too dark to travel at night, he had to travel as far as he could during the day and camp in the open wilderness at night. Boys and girls, have you ever been camping? How does it feel to live out in the wild? Jacob didn't have any camping supplies or even a tent. Can you imagine how it must have been for Jacob to sleep by himself in the wild? It was lonely traveling all by himself, and it was tiring, too. Days and days went by. Jacob hoped that he had enough food to last him throughout the journey.

During these lonely days of traveling, Jacob probably did a lot of thinking. Boys and girls, what do you think Jacob was thinking about during his journey? He probably felt sorry that he had tricked his brother and father. Now

he was forced to go to a faraway place that he had never seen before, and he didn't know if he would ever see his mother again. Jacob probably wished he had never tricked his brother out of his birthright and had never lied to his father. Jacob just wanted to go back home. However, even though Jacob was often lonely, he still kept on going.

The Dream

One night, after traveling for the whole day, Jacob stopped somewhere because it was getting dark. He chose a spot for his bed and put a stone under his head for his pillow. Because he was tired, he lay down to sleep.

That night, as he fell asleep, he had a dream. He dreamt that there was a ladder going up to heaven from earth. Angels went up and down the ladder and at the very top stood the Lord.

The Lord said to him, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. Your children will become as many as the dust of the earth, and they will live in many places of the world and I will bless them and other people will be blessed because of them. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised."

Jacob Calls the Place "Bethel"

Then, Jacob woke up from his sleep. He thought, "The Lord is here, and I didn't know it." He realized that God had been there with him all the time throughout his trip. He knew he had to be careful about what he did because he had come to a holy place where the Lord appeared to him, but he was also comforted because God promised to take care of him.

To remember what had happened to him at that place, he took the stone that he had used as a pillow and poured oil on top of it. He then set it up as a pillar. He called the place "Bethel," which means "house of God," because God was there with him. "Beth" means house and "el" means God. For example, Bethlehem means "house of bread," where "Beth" means house and "lehem" means bread.

Jacob then made a promise, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey, and if He will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my home, then the Lord will be my God. This place will be God's house and I will give Him one-tenth of everything I have."

Then, he continued on with his journey.

Jacob Reaches Laban's House

After a long journey, Jacob finally came to a place where there was a well. Beside the well were shepherds with flocks of sheep. He went to the shepherds and asked, "Where are you from?"

They replied, "We're from Haran."

Haran was where he was heading! That was where his uncle Laban lived. Jacob asked them, "Do you know a man named Laban?"

They answered, "We know him. Look, here comes Rachel, Laban's daughter."

Rachel came to the well with her flock of sheep. He was so happy to see her because that meant his journey was finally over! He had reached Laban's house! He went over to Rachel and greeted her with tears and explained who he was and how he had traveled so far to see them. Rachel then ran home to tell her father.

When Laban heard that Jacob, his sister's son, had come, he hurried out to meet him. He hugged him and brought him home, and Jacob told him about everything that had happened. Jacob stayed there, and he was very thankful that God had brought him safely to his uncle's house.

On his journey, Jacob had been tired, sad, and lonely. He was probably very sorry for what he had done, but he couldn't go back home. He thought he was all alone on his journey, because he didn't realize that God was actually with him the whole time.

Sometimes we may also feel sad and lonely, and it may seem like no one understands or cares about how we feel. But God is always there, watching over us and taking care of us. Because He made us, He knows how we feel, even though nobody else may understand. So whenever we feel sad or lonely, let's always remember that God is always there! He loves us and will always be with us.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- 1. Why did Jacob have to go to his uncle Laban's house?** Esau was angry with him for tricking him and wanted to kill him; his father Isaac did not want him to marry a Canaanite woman, but someone in Laban's family.
- 2. Was the trip to Laban's house a long one or a short one?** It was a long one.
- 3. What happened to Jacob one night while he was traveling?** He had a dream of a ladder going up to heaven. Angels went up and down on it and the Lord stood at the top.
- 4. What did the Lord say to him in the dream?** God promised that He would always be with him and watch over him, because He was his father and grandfather's God. He kept His promise with them and would keep His promise with Jacob.
- 5. What did Jacob promise God after he had the dream?** If God would watch over him and bring him safely back to his home, then he would also worship the Lord, and he would offer God one-tenth of everything that he had.
- 6. What did Jacob call the place where he had the dream? What does the name mean?** Bethel, house of God.

MEMORY VERSE PRACTICE

Please reinforce the memory verse every week.
You can practice the memory verse with your students anytime during class.

"In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid." (Psalm 56:11a)

SPIRITUAL TEACHING & LIFE APPLICATION

1. God is always with us.

1. Like Jacob, sometimes we feel sad, afraid, or lonely. Share a time when you felt this way.
2. God tells us that He is always with us. Turn to Matthew 28:20 and read the last part of it.
3. Sing the chorus of the hymn "Never Alone." Be sure to emphasize the eighth-beat rest after each "No."

2. Turn to God in times of despair.

1. Draw a vertical line on the board so that you have a table with 2 columns. Label the left column "Fears" and the right column "Comforts."
2. Ask the students, "What are some things you are afraid of?" Write them up on the left side of the board as the students respond.
3. Ask the students, "What are some things that comfort you when you are afraid?" Write them up on the right side of the board as students respond. Be sure that "God" is in this column.
4. Say to the students, "Which of the things under 'Comforts' are not always there? Let's put a star (*) next to these things." Read the list aloud, asking the students whether each item is sometimes not there, and put a star next to everything except "God." Then circle "God."
5. Notice that only God is always there. We can count on God whenever we're afraid, even when our parents aren't around or even if we don't have our blankies, teddy bears, etc., with us.

3. Trust in the Lord and do not be afraid.

Read today's memory verse to see what we can do when we are afraid. What does it mean to put your trust in God? Ask a volunteer to come up to the front. Tell the volunteer to fall back and say that you will catch them. Ask the volunteer, "Did you trust me?" Ask the students if they trust the teacher to catch them if they fall. Would they trust their parents to catch them? Do you trust God to catch you when you fall? Do you trust that He will take care of everything and that you don't have to be afraid?

ACTIVITIES

1

My Prayer

Objectives: 1. To understand the importance of praying to God at all times.
2. To rely on God in all situations.

1. Help your students read and illustrate the prayers listed below. You can type them out and distribute them to each student as you speak. The students are encouraged to bring them home and hang them up at home.
2. Talk about the prayers and help the students realize that they can compose their own prayers, too. Let them hear you pray in simple words and encourage them to talk to God just as if they were talking to you. Soon your students will be able to talk to God whenever they want to share their joys or concerns.

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I pray. Dear God, I can do lots of things by myself, but I know there will always be times when I need Your help. Sometimes I feel scared. Please help me know that You are with me when I'm afraid."

"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I pray. Please help me at all times to remember that You love me. Thanks for caring for me. Thanks for helping me. I love You, Lord Jesus. Hallelujah! Amen."

2

Bible Bookmarks

Objective: To form a good habit of remembering the word of God.

Materials

- 5" x 7" blank index cards
- Markers
- Single-hole punch
- Ribbon or yarn

Instructions

1. Cut out the index card into the shape of a wide heart (try to use as much of the index card as possible).
2. Have the students print the memory verse on the front. They may decorate the bookmark with the markers.
3. Punch holes along the edges of the bookmark approximately 1" apart. Thread it with the ribbon and tie it at the top.
4. The students can keep this bookmark in their Bible to remind them to always trust in God when they're afraid.

3

Jacob's Map

Objective: To remember that God is always with us.

Materials

- A Bible map for your reference
- Sheet of paper
- Colored pencils

Instructions

1. On the map that you find or draw, show the students the journey that Jacob made from his home to Bethel, and then from Bethel to Laban's house in Haran.
2. Ask the students to draw a map of their own by marking the names of the three important geographical points. Leave a space on top of the piece of paper.
3. To be creative, students can choose to draw objects representing each place, for example, a house, a ladder, a stone, a well, or even Laban!
4. After finishing drawing the map, write "Don't be afraid, God is with us!" on the top of the sheet.
5. If time allows, have the students draw a map with routes they often take, e.g., from home to school, from home to friends' homes, church, etc.

For each location, draw objects representing each place—the purpose is to let the students know that God is with them every day wherever they go, just like He was with Jacob!

HOMEWORK ANSWER KEY

1. "In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid." (Psalm 56:11)
2. B
3. A
4. True
5. ladder, Angels
6. home, one-tenth
7. Bethel, house of God
- 8-10. Answers may vary.

E1 Year 1 Book 2 Lesson 3—Jacob's Dream at Bethel

Homework Assignment

Name: _____ Parent signature: _____ Date: _____

Bible Truth: God is always with us, especially when we are lonely or afraid.

- Lesson Objectives:**
1. To turn to God in times of trouble or despair.
 2. To pray unceasingly for God's guidance.
 3. To trust in God and not to be afraid.

Bible Reading: Please put a checkmark in the space when you complete the reading each day.

Prayer: Please put a checkmark in the space on the days you prayed to God.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Bible Reading							
Prayer							

Memory Verse

Please write down this week's memory verse.

(Psalm 56:11a)

What I Learned from the Bible This Week

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Homework Assignment

Understanding What You Have Learned

1. Write down the memory verse without looking.
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Multiple Choice

2. _____ : Why did Jacob have to go to his uncle Laban's house?
- Jacob had to bring some sheep from his parents to his uncle Laban.
 - Esau was angry with him for tricking him and wanted to kill him.
 - Jacob made a promise to Esau that he would go to his uncle Laban's house.
3. _____ : What did the Lord say to him in the dream?
- God promised that He would always be with him and watch over him, because He was his father and grandfather's God, and because He would keep His promise with them and now with Jacob.
 - God told him that He would grant him anything he wanted, and he asked for wisdom.
 - God told him that he would have a son and would name him "John" and he would prepare the way of the Lord.
4. **True or False:** Jacob walked during the day and slept in the wilderness at night. _____

Fill In the Blank

one-tenth	ladder	home	angels
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5. One night while Jacob was traveling he had a dream of a _____ going up to heaven. _____ went up and down on it and the Lord stood at the top.
6. Jacob promised God after he had the dream that if God would watch over him and bring him safely back to his _____, then he would also worship the Lord, and he would offer God _____ of everything that he had.

Short Answer

7. What did Jacob call the place where he had the dream? What does the name mean?
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Life Application

8. Work with a parent. Read a testimony from Manna magazine, Holy Spirit Monthly, or any TJC publication. Discuss how God was with the person who wrote the testimony. Write a one-paragraph (3-5 sentences) summary about the testimony and how God was with the person in the testimony.
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9. Look up the word "trust" in the dictionary and write the definition. What does it mean to trust in God?

10. Each day this week, under each rung of the ladder, write one instance when you felt that God was with you.
(Hint: Start at the bottom and work your way up.)

The graphic is a ladder with two vertical side rails and six horizontal rungs. Each rung is labeled with a day of the week, starting from the top and moving down: Friday, Thursday, Wednesday, Tuesday, Monday, and Sunday. Below each label is a large, empty rectangular box for writing.