



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 Provided: Scissors, magnet sheets, pencils, crayons, happy faces on yellow card stock, blank circles for more creative students who want to make their own happy faces.

Classroom Statement

Students will hear the story of Jacob and Esau's reconciliation. Students will then create a craft on a large scale that will help remind the congregation that "to see your face is like seeing the face of God."

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

- How many men did Esau have with him? (400)
- How did Jacob feel when he heard this? (Scared).
- Why do you think he felt scared? (Because he thought Esau was still angry about stealing the blessing and was coming to get revenge).

- So when Esau didn't try to get revenge, but instead cried and hugged his brother, how do you think Jacob felt? (Relieved; thankful)

TELL

- The only reason Jacob is meeting his brother is because God told Jacob to go.
- Jacob really doesn't want to go.
- This is why he wrestles with God on the other side of the Jordan River. He's incredibly scared.
- But then Esau receives Jacob and loves him. Then Jacob understands why God told him to go home.
- This is why Jacob tells Esau, "To see your face is like seeing the face of God" because Esau's love and forgiveness is a sign of God at work.
- Today, we're going to work on a craft that will remind the entire congregation that when we listen to and trust God, that the faces of the people God will lead us to will be like seeing the face of God.

EXPLAIN CRAFT

- We're cutting out these happy faces (example on last page)
- Then we're pasting magnet strips on the back of the smiley faces.
- Then, we're writing something on the back, like
 - "Trust God" or
 - "God loves you" or
 - "With God's love" and
 - Then sign your first name.
- Then do the next one. And the next one.
- If you want to make your own SMILEY FACES, there are circles available for you to do that as well. But if you choose to do that, remember that these are going to other people in the congregation, so make them in a way that they'll be reminders of care and love. If you can't make appropriate smiley faces, then I or your shepherd will instruct you to use the pre-made Smiley faces. Is that understood?
- We're trying to do as many as possible because we'd like every family in the church to get one of these.
- Any questions?

DO CRAFT

CLEAN UP

DISMISS FOR SINGING

Suggested Variations for age groups

K-1st will not be very good at writing. So you might want to prep ahead of time and write a number of the one-liners in advance, or encourage them to draw a picture on the back instead.

With all three classes, the kids will probably get a little antsy. If this happens, do a “emergency craft fire drill” and tell them to all stand up, put down their scissors and then run around the table and sit at a different seat. Tell them every time you say this, they have to put their scissors down and run around to a different seat. It’ll keep ‘em fresh.

