SU Scotland

Bible Overview Resource

07. Encounter

BIBLE STORY / REFERENCE

Genesis 28:10-22

(brief summary of Genesis 25:19-26 and 27:1-46)

Psalm 139

God meets with Jacob at Bethel

AIMS

To help the children reflect on Jacob's encounter with God and the idea that, though, like Jacob, they may not realise it, he is there everywhere they go too

Jacob had cheated his brother and had to run away, but although he had done things that were wrong God still cared and Jacob was changed by his meeting with God. Like Jacob, we may not always realise he is there, but God promises to be with his people today too.

PREP FOR LEADERS

Read the Bible verses for this session, and reflect:

- What does Esau and Jacob's story show us about God?
- When did you first encounter God?
- What difference does it make in your daily life to know that God is there?

Take some time to pray for your group.

GAMES / INTRO ACTIVITIES

Choose one of the following activities to introduce today's theme:

Walk about, talk about

You will need: equipment to play music

This works with a larger group and helps them to mix. Play some music and get the children to walk about the room as it plays. When the music stops, give them a number and they have to get into groups of that number of people. Give them a question to talk about or a challenge to try in their groups. Repeat this several times and encourage them to mix with different people. Have a mixture of some challenges and questions that are just for fun, and some linking in with the theme for the day, for example:

- Can you stick out your tongue and touch your nose?
- Which group can come up with the funniest joke?
- Have you ever met someone famous? If not, who would you like to meet?
- Who in your group can whistle for the longest?
- If you met God, what would you like to say to him?

Who am I? Game

You will need: post-it notes with names of famous people/

(continued overleaf)

characters

Give each child a post-it note with the name of a famous person/character on it. Stick it to their back and let them move around asking each other questions to discover their identity. They must be questions which can be answered yes or no, e.g. Am I a man? Am I on TV? etc. See who is first to discover the name they have been given.

Get the children to think - if you could meet any famous person or character (real or made-up, alive or dead) who would it be? Take a few answers. Today we're going to hear about a very special and unexpected meeting.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE

Recap

Recap the story of Abraham - God promised to bless him and give him lots of descendants. For a long time, Abraham and Sarah had no children but eventually they had a son Isaac. We heard last time about the big test of Abraham's faith - God asked him to kill his son but at the last minute provided a ram to take Isaac's place.

Esau and Jacob's Story

You will need: Esau and Jacob puzzle cards, hairy material for Esau, picture of Jacob's dream, Bibles

Summarise the story of Jacob and Esau. A suggested script is below, involving two of the children as the two brothers.

Today we're going to jump ahead in the story. Isaac grew up, got married and had two sons.

(Choose children to be the two sons, give them Esau and Jacob name puzzle cards (see *additional document: Esau and Jacob puzzle cards*) and get the children to guess their names by working out the puzzles)

Esau and Jacob were twins but they were very different. Esau was red and hairy (you could have hairy material to put on Esau's hands and neck) **and he liked hunting and being outdoors. Jacob was much quieter and liked to cook. The two brothers didn't get on well with one another at all as they were growing up. Although they were twins Esau had been born just before Jacob which meant that he had special rights as the eldest son, but Jacob was cunning and devious, and he tricked his father Isaac into giving him the blessing for the eldest son instead of Esau. Jacob dressed up as Esau and pretended to be him and because Isaac was old and almost blind he didn't notice the difference.**

Esau was furious when he found out and decided he was going to kill his brother, so Jacob had to run away to save his life.

Jacob travelled towards his uncle's house. It was a long journey so when it was getting dark he found a place to set up camp for the night. He found a stone to use as a pillow and lay down to sleep. He began to dream, and he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth to heaven. He saw angels going up and down the stairs.

(Show a picture of this *(see additional document: Jacob's Ladder picture)*

God stood at the top of the staircase and he spoke to Jacob. What do you think he said? (Get some answers from the children - they may suggest that God told him off for cheating Esau etc.)

Read Genesis 28:13-15. (If you have a set of Bibles available, you could get the children to look this up)

God makes some great promises to Jacob - to give him lots of descendants, to give his family the land, that everyone on earth would be blessed through his family and that God would always be with him and protect him. Is that how you would expect God to react to someone who has cheated his brother and run away?

Read Genesis 28:16.

Jacob said, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I didn't realise it." He realised that God was with him, and despite the things he had done wrong, God cared. When he got up in the morning, he took the stone that he had used as a pillow and stood it up to make a pillar to leave as a memorial to his encounter with God and a place to worship God. He decided that he was going to follow God from now on.

We're not going to have time to look at all the rest of Jacob's story but if you read in the book of Genesis you'll see that from this point on Jacob was different. He was much more honest and didn't lie or cheat anymore.

The Bible is full of stories of God caring for people who don't deserve it. Jacob had certainly sinned, but God still loved him and wanted to help him. Jacob realised that God cared, and that God would always be with him.

All through the Bible God promises to be with his people.

REFLECT & RESPOND

Reflection and prayer

Encourage the children to take a moment to think: how does it make you feel to think that God is always there?

Sometimes, like Jacob, we don't realise it, but the Bible teaches us that God is everywhere.

Encourage them to think about the places they will go this week - home, school, other places they will visit.

Either read Psalm 139 or use the song "You're Everywhere" by Jodie and Joff Alexander-Frye (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ng3ewkKvDrw) and encourage the children to keep those places in mind as they listen or as they join in with the song.

Lead the children in prayer, thanking God that he is everywhere and asking for awareness to notice him there this week.