



Jacob Sees the Face of God

Goal: To recognize forgiveness and reconciliation as a way to fix broken relationships.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Genesis 32:1-33:15

Let the celebration begin with God's blessing, a blessing that leads to forgiveness and reconciliation! When God tells Jacob to go home to his father's land, Jacob obeys, even though he fears the encounter with Esau, who, with four hundred men, plans to meet Jacob. Jacob prays, asking God to remember that God sent him on this journey.

God's gracious acts and blessings notwithstanding, Jacob assumes that he will encounter a scorned brother, and he prepares for the meeting. God prepares for the meeting by changing Esau's heart.

The reunion begins with Jacob telling his brother, "God has dealt graciously with me" (33:11). Jacob recounts God's blessing of presence with this family through everything.

God's blessing transforms lives. It prepares Jacob and Esau for reconciliation. God's blessing has consequences, for Jacob and Esau, and for you. It changes relationships. Through God's grace, forgiveness and reconciliation lead to celebration.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children delight in the mending of broken feelings between family members and friends. The children have experienced forgiveness themselves, sometimes several times a day! They can recount times when God changed their hearts about someone or something. The heart change led to forgiveness and reconciliation. They know God changes lives; they've seen it happen.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

How hard is it to face someone we have hurt and to ask for forgiveness? Children will not understand the deeper implications of the story, but that is not necessary for now. Simply help your children hear that forgiveness is a work of God's grace, and that we are invited to forgive others as God forgives. As you do, you give the children a faith vocabulary to make sense of God's forgiveness—words such as *mercy*, *love*, and *grace*. Being able to recognize and name God's forgiveness empowers children to recognize people in their own lives who need forgiveness, even themselves.

Today's story describes Jacob's experience of Esau's forgiveness as seeing the face of God. In other places in the Bible, God's grace and blessing are described as God's face shining. Our faces reflect the bright, shining face of God; our grace and forgiveness reflect the grace and forgiveness of God. Express this foundational notion of grace with your shining face. Make sure the children see your smile and bright eyes often.

God, I am so thankful for your presence and your graceful love that lead me to love you and others. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 4, 4a, 20, 24

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

green cloth

candle

flashlight

Responding

Offering

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Extra

copies of **GN 2**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Welcoming and Preparing **LG**

Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace and peace to you.” Prompt the children to respond with the same words.

Invite the children to help prepare the setting as they arrive. Create a worship center with a green cloth, a candle, and a Bible.

Prepare the children for the story. Tell them that Jacob and Esau lived in the desert. Water was very important; the desert people would often camp near rivers, streams, and wells. Place a sheet of newsprint on a table and invite the children to make a desert scene with a river running through it.

While the children create the scene, cut out the cards on **SCM 4a**.

Ask a few children to help prepare any “Responding in Gratitude” activities you may be doing today. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Today’s Scripture passage is lengthy. Decide if you will have volunteers read it or use **SCM 4**. Ask for several volunteers to practice the reading.

T *For children who struggle with transitions, consider a quick physical activity—such as doing chair push-ups, squeezing their hands together, and stretching—before story time.*

Singing **L**

Gather around the river and listen to “God’s Love for Us Is Truly Amazing (El amor de Dios es maravilloso)”—**MM 29**; **SCM 24**. Play the song again, repeating one phrase or verse at a time. Invite the children to sing in English and Spanish. Encourage the children to create simple movements to go with the song.

Praying

Turn on the candle. Invite the children to pray an echo prayer:

Loving God, /
thank you for forgiving us /
time and time again. /
Help us to forgive /
and to love others. /
Amen.



Preparing to Hear the Story

Show the Jacob (no. 2) and Esau (no. 11) cards from **SCM 4a**. Tell the children that Jacob and Esau were twins, but they were very different. Esau loved to be outdoors and hunt. Jacob liked helping around their home. Esau was born first, so according to custom he would inherit everything from their father, Isaac. Jacob didn't like that and tricked Esau and Isaac to get the blessing of inheritance. Explain that today's story takes place many years later, after Jacob and Esau had not seen each other for a long time.

Lay out the following cards face-up. Ask the children to place Peniel (PEHN-ih-ehl) (no. 1) on one side of the river they drew earlier. Add Jacob (no. 2) next to Peniel. To the same side of the river, add the wives (nos. 3 and 4), the children (nos. 5, 6, 7, and 8), the servants (no. 9), and the flocks (no. 10). On the opposite side of the river, and Esau (no. 11) and the 400 men (no. 12).



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Hearing the Story

L MS

Have a volunteer open the Bible to Genesis 32 so that children know that the story comes from the Bible. Ask the volunteers to read Genesis 32:1-33:15 or **SCM 4**. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible in the worship area.

Read the story again using **SCM 4** or listen to the story audio. Invite volunteers to move the cards according to the movements they hear in the story.

Reflecting on God's Grace

C

Say that God's grace was always with Jacob and with everyone in his family. Explain that *Peniel* is a Hebrew word meaning "face of God." Wonder together why the place was named "face of God."

Recall and say together Jacob's words to Esau: "to see your face is like seeing the face of God" (Genesis 33:10). Together brainstorm the ways God was with Jacob and Esau in today's story. Wonder about the ways God is with you and the children now.

Singing

Play and listen to "Sing Thanks to God"—**MM 23; SCM 20**.

Help the children learn the song. Sing one phrase at a time, and ask the children to repeat. Play the song again, inviting the children to sing, clap, dance, shout, and praise enthusiastically.

Turn off the candle.

A Adapt any activity to suit your children's needs. Ask yourself, "How can I change this activity so that this child can do it?"



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God’s Grace



Invite the children to think about things that can be fixed. Ask questions such as:

- ▼ When has something of yours been broken?
- ▼ Could someone fix it? Why or why not?

Invite the children to work in pairs to find objects around the meeting space (such as toys, blocks, and crayons) or outside (such as sticks, leaves, and rocks) and decide whether they can be fixed when broken. Some children may disagree about what can be fixed or not, so invite them to discuss their different opinions. Remind the children that we may not always agree, but we can still be friends.

Help children recognize forgiveness and reconciliation as ways to fix relationships. Ask the children to explain what Jacob did to show he was sorry. Remind the children, if necessary, that he bowed seven times before his brother as a way to say, “I am sorry. Please forgive me.”

Engage the children in a conversation, asking:

- ▼ Have you tried to fix a relationship? What did you do?
- ▼ When have you given someone a gift to show you’re sorry?
- ▼ When have you been given a gift of forgiveness?
- ▼ How did you feel?

Help the children recognize God’s grace at work when people forgive one another. Forgiveness strengthens healthy relationships.

Praying God’s Grace



Invite the group to express their feelings with movement as they listen to “Prayer Music”—**MM 31**. Use the following guided meditation:

Think of a time when you hurt someone else. Maybe you took a toy that a friend was playing with, you got angry and called someone a mean name, or you disobeyed your parents. You might have felt like running away or hiding. When we hurt others, or disobey God, we sin. That can make us want to hide or run away from God. When Jacob ran away from his brother, he thought he ran away from God, too, but God followed him. Jacob prayed to God to save him and his family when he was very afraid. The stranger who wrestled with him gave him a new name: Israel. That was how Jacob realized that God had forgiven him and was giving him a new start in life!



Stop “Prayer Music” and ask the children to freeze and close their eyes. Continue with the guided meditation:

How do you think Jacob felt about the new start God gave him? Have you ever been forgiven like Jacob was? Maybe the person you hurt came back to play with you, or Mom or Dad gave you another chance to listen to them. See if you can move how that felt like.

Play “Sing Thanks to God”—**MM 23**—while the children move about.

When the song is over, tell the children that God is always ready to turn moments when we hurt someone into bright moments when we can ask for and receive forgiveness. God loves us and forgives us. We do not have to hide from God in a dark place. All we need to do is remember to stop, pray, and ask for forgiveness as Jacob did.

L *Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty with quiet listening activities. To help with focus, suggest listening prompts or provide them with a soothing object to hold.*

Offering God’s Grace

Tell the children that they will make a tool to help them when they are unsure of how to repair a relationship after one has been broken.

Provide copies of **GN 1** and crayons or markers. Ask one or more volunteers to read the words in each square. Invite the children to decorate or illustrate each in the space provided. Help the children cut along the solid lines and fold along the dotted lines. Show them how to glue or tape the tabs to the inside, forming a cube.

Encourage the children to use the cube, shaking it and rolling it, any time they need a way to gain forgiveness. Tell the children that asking for forgiveness and forgiving others are ways to model God’s grace to form strong, healthy relationships or repair broken ones.

Extra Activity

Hand out copies of **GN 2**. Have the children unscramble the words, then use the letters in the circles to fill in the blanks at the bottom of the page.

GN 2 Solution:

Jacob	love
Esau	blessing
forgiveness	stranger
brothers	family
desert	darkness
escape	Peniel

Seeing you is like seeing
the face of God.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

SD

Invite the children to gather around the river they created earlier. Sing together “God’s Love for Us Is Truly Amazing (El amor de Dios es maravilloso)”—**MM 29; SCM 24**. Invite the children to sing in English and Spanish. Encourage the children to use the movements created earlier.

Read the blessing below, and ask the children what they think the words mean that talk about God’s face shining. Wonder how we can be the face of God in our relationships.

Gather the children in a circle, and shine the flashlight on their foreheads, signifying the light of God shining on them. Invite a volunteer to lead the group in saying Numbers 6:24–27 as an echo prayer.

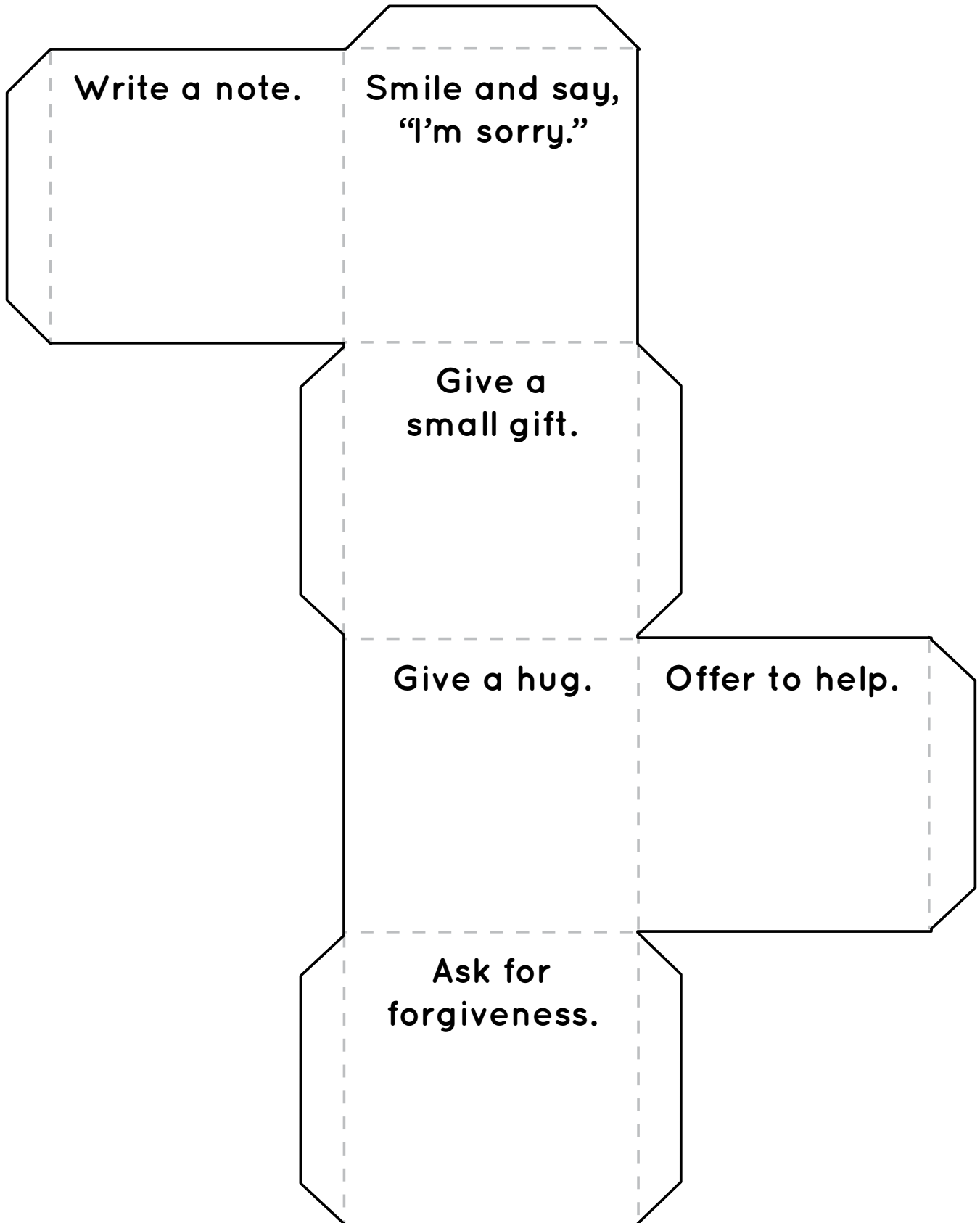


Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

The LORD bless you and protect you. /
The LORD make his face shine on you /
and be gracious to you. /
The LORD lift up his face to you /
and grant you peace. /
—Numbers 6:24–27 (CEB)

Encourage the children to practice ways to repair broken relationships through acts of forgiveness.

As the children leave, bless each one, saying, “(Name), the grace of God is with you.”

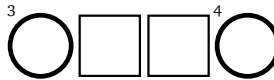


Mixed-Up Words

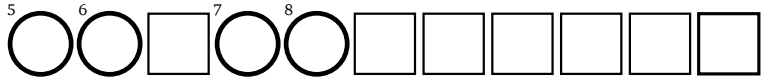
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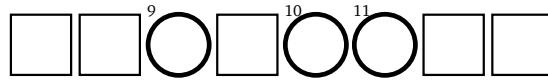
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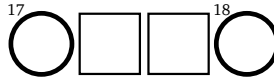
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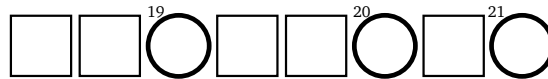
E E S P C A



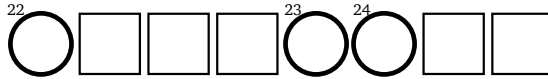
V E L O



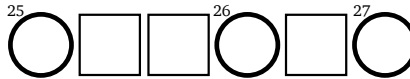
L E S B I G N S



R R A N S T G E



F A I Y M L



N E S K D A S R



N I E L P E

