



Jacob Sees the Face of God

Goal: To ask for forgiveness and 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, 21, 24

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: plain,
lightweight paper plates

choice 2: torn magazine
pictures

choice 3: rhythm
instruments

Exploring

choice 1: puppets from
“Guided Play” choice 1

choice 2: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

choice 4: copies of **GN 2**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Use **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.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Before the session, tear several magazine pictures into two pieces for “Guided Play” choice 2.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt the children to respond with the same words. Introduce yourself to parents and caregivers. Be sure that they know who will be caring for their children. Tell them that today’s story is about two brothers and how their relationship was restored when one asked for and received forgiveness.

Invite children to look at the guided-play activities, and encourage them to participate.

- 1. Making Puppets**—Provide plain paper plates, washable markers, scraps of colored paper, yarn, fabric scraps, scissors, and white glue. Invite the children to decorate a paper plate to look like a face. Older children may prefer using scissors; younger children can tear paper into desired shapes. Very young children may enjoy simply gluing materials onto the plate without making a recognizable face. Tape a craft stick to the back of the plate to make a puppet. Set aside the puppets for “Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1.
- 2. Repairing**—Place torn magazine pictures randomly on a table along with transparent tape. Tell the children that these pictures got torn in two and need to be repaired. Ask them to work with a partner to fix the broken pictures. Thank them for their good work!
- 3. Singing**—Teach the children a song, to the tune of “Frère Jacques.” Provide rhythm instruments for the children to use as they sing.

God forgives us,
God forgives us,
all the time,
all the time.



When we say we're sorry,
when we say we're sorry,
God forgives,
God forgives.

- T *Transitions can be difficult situations for children. This may be a good time for an adult helper to come close to a child and model and encourage appropriate responses.*

Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into story time, call them to the story corner, singing “Love”—**MM 24; SCM 21**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Growing Up



Invite the children to repeat your words and do the movements suggested in the poem. They can begin by pretending to rock a baby.

Once I was a baby, a baby, a baby. /
Once I was a baby, very small. /
Then I started crawling, crawling, crawling. /
Then I started crawling all around. /
Later I went walking, walking, walking. /
Later I went walking all day long. /
Then I started climbing, climbing, climbing. /
Then I started climbing anything at all. /
Now I can go running, jumping, skipping. /
Now I can do all three anytime I want. /

Repeat the action poem several times.

God's Love



Teach the children the following song to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” Invite them to sing along with you as they learn the words and follow your actions.

Twinkle, twinkle, stars above; *(lift hands in the air, wiggle fingers)*
you remind us of God's love. *(cross arms over chest)*
God promised a family; *(hold arms out wide)*
that includes both you and me. *(point to another person, point to self)*
Twinkle, twinkle, stars above; *(lift hands in the air, wiggle fingers)*
you remind us of God's love. *(cross arms over chest)*



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

Open the Bible to Genesis 33 so that children know that the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that today's story is about two brothers. One brother, Jacob, did something to make his twin brother, Esau, very angry. Invite the children to listen carefully to what happened to the two brothers.

Read **SCM 4**. Express the emotions of the story with your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Read the story again, inviting the children to bow down each time they hear the name *Jacob* and to open their arms wide each time they hear the name *Esau*.

After the story, invite the children to name something a person might do for which they need to say "I'm sorry." After each child shares, say, "We are thankful that God forgives us," and ask everyone to repeat that phrase. Repeat as often as the children offer responses.

T *Transitions can be difficult for children. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as squeezing your hands together, stretching, and so forth.*

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Play with Puppets

F LG C L

Form pairs and invite the children to use their puppets from "Guided Play" choice 1 to act out the story of Jacob and Esau. Then have the children pretend that two puppets are other people, perhaps siblings or friends or just make-believe people. Suggest that these two puppets are angry at each other. First, they can explain why they are angry. Then they can make up and become friends again.

Comment that asking for forgiveness and forgiving another person repairs the broken relationship.

2. Practice Asking for Forgiveness

F LG C L

Provide copies of **GN 1** and crayons. While the children decorate their page, read the "A B C D" forgiveness steps.

- ▼ **Admit what you did.** Explain that admitting that you did wrong is the first step of an apology.
- ▼ **Be sorry about it.** Let the children know that it is important to really mean that you are sorry, not just say it because it is expected.
- ▼ **Care for the other person's feelings.** The apology is sincere if you care that you made someone sad or angry or hurt.



- ▼ **Do better next time.** Tell the person how you plan to do better, such as, “Next time you ask me to put away my toys, I will do it right away.”

Give each child an opportunity to name a situation when they needed to ask for forgiveness, and help them walk through the four steps. If a child has a hard time coming up with a situation, you may suggest situations like taking a toy from someone, hurting a friend or sibling, or not doing what a parent or caregiver asks.

Once each child has practiced asking for forgiveness, invite the children to say the following echo prayer.

Dear God, /
you made us, /
you love us, /
and you like us. /
Thank you for giving us people to love. /
Amen. /

LG *It's important to help children understand the need to be kind, to act generously, to forgive, and to ask for forgiveness. They learn that they are responsible for their part in creating a caring community.*

3. God's Love for Us Is Truly Amazing

MS L

Tell the children that when we say or do something to hurt someone else, that relationship or friendship gets broken. When we say we are sorry to someone and they forgive us, it repairs a broken relationship. Explain that this is true with God too. When we say or do something that hurts God, our relationship or friendship with God gets broken, but when we say we are sorry to God, God always forgives us. God's love for us is truly amazing!

Listen to and sing “God's Love for Us Is Truly Amazing (El amor de Dios es maravilloso)”—**MM 29; SCM 24**. Explain that this song is sung in English and Spanish and that, while the words sound very different, they mean the same thing. Encourage the children to dance or make motions to go along with the song while singing.

4. Coloring Page

C FM

Hand out copies of **GN 2** and crayons. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What is Jacob thinking as Esau runs toward him?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What is Esau thinking as he sees Jacob?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What happened to Jacob's leg?”

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



Ages 3-5

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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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Have each child put away one toy or object. Although it may be faster to do the cleanup yourself, encourage the children to help as much as possible.

Have the children sit around a table or on the floor.

While you serve the snack, sing together “God’s Love for Us Is Truly Amazing (El amor de Dios es maravilloso)”—**MM 29; SCM 24**.

Help the children sense that God forgives us when we say we’re sorry. Say: “I wonder whether something we’ve talked about or done today has reminded you of ways God forgives you when you say ‘I’m sorry.’ Can you think of a way you could say you’re sorry to someone this week?”

As the children leave, bless each one: “(Name), God loves you and will always love you. The grace of God be with you.”

FORGIVENESS

Admit what you did.

Be sorry about it.

Care for the other person's feelings.

Do better next time.

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Jacob says that he is sorry to Esau, and Esau forgives Jacob.

