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Bible: Genesis 28:10–22

JACOB'S LADDER

THE AIM: To be encouraged that God is always with us

The aim unpacked

Jacob's life was far from straightforward, but God was always with him, working in him and through him and continuing to keep his promises. In this session, we'll follow Jacob running away from his brother, Esau. We'll see a scared and lonely Jacob being reassured by God in a dream, God reaffirming the promises he had made to Jacob's grandad, Abraham, and assuring Jacob that he'd always be with him.

WAY IN



theGRID MAGAZINE

WHAT: discussion

WHY: to consider who you would want with you in difficult situations

WITH: magazine page 37

- 1 Make sure everyone has a copy of the 'Help, I need somebody...' activity on page 37. Give them a few minutes, on their own, to decide who they would most like with them in each of the situations.
- 2 Encourage the young people to chat, in twos or threes, about why they chose the people they did.
- 3 Explain that we are beginning a series where we'll discover that God was always with Jacob – through the good times and the bad. We'll also learn that God promises to always be with us. You may like to ask the young people how they feel about God's promise to always be with us.



SCENE SETTER

WHAT: memory game

WHY: to remind us that Jacob was on a journey and God would provide for him

- 1 Ask the young people to sit in a circle. Explain that you are about to begin a series about Jacob. Tell them that Jacob was on a journey and had to trust God to provide for him.
- 2 Give the young people a few moments to think, individually, about some of the things they would want God to provide for them if they were preparing to go on a long journey.
- 3 Ask one person to begin the game by saying, 'On my journey I would need...' and then to say something they would want to have on their journey (for example, a water bottle).
- 4 The person sitting on their left then has to repeat what's just been said and then add their own item. For example, 'On my journey I would need a water bottle and a pair of trainers.'
- 5 Why not play two rounds of this game? The first round could be for a present-day journey; then for the second round you could encourage the young people to think about what Jacob would have needed.



THEMED GAME

WHAT: partner tag

WHY: to introduce the idea of not being alone

WITH: large, safe space

- 1 Before you play this game, make sure you have a space that is safe and big enough for the young people to run around in.
- 2 Ask the young people to stand around the room and appoint one person as the 'tagger'. Explain that as soon as the tagger touches someone, that person must stand still. The game ends once everyone has been caught by the tagger.
- 3 Play the game again. Appoint one person as the tagger and divide the rest of the young people into pairs – a leader will need to step in if there is an odd number. Explain that this time, when you're tagged, you still have to stand still, but when your partner touches you, you're back in the game. Again, the game finishes when the tagger has managed to stop everyone from moving, but this time it should last a little longer.
- 4 Introduce the session by explaining that we'll discover that God was always with Jacob – through the good times and the bad.



LEVEL 1: CONNECT

WHAT: drama

WHY: to be encouraged that God is always with us

WITH: Bibles

- 1 Recap with the group what happened previously between Jacob and Esau. Explain that Jacob is on the run, scared that if Esau catches up with him, he'll be a dead man. Divide the young people into groups of three or four and ask them to read together Genesis 28:10–22.
- 2 Reread verses 13 and 15 and ask the groups to chat about how they think Jacob would have felt about these promises.
- 3 Explain to the young people that the most frequent promise we read in the Bible is not God saying he will forgive us or will give us eternal life (although he does promise us those things). The most common promise God makes in the Bible is, 'I will always be with you.'
- 4 Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 28:20 and ask the young people how they feel about Jesus' promise to always be with us.
- 5 In their groups, encourage the young people to prepare two short drama sketches. The first should be a re-enactment of Jacob's encounter with God, and the second should be a modern-day example of God being with someone when they're in a difficult situation.
- 6 When the groups have finished preparing their dramas, invite them to perform their sketches in front of everyone.



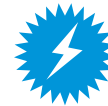
LEVEL 2: INTERFACE

WHAT: discussion

WHY: to be encouraged that God is always with us

WITH: Bibles, chilled music, magazine page 38

- 1 Recap with the group what happened previously between Jacob and Esau. Explain that Jacob is on the run, scared that if Esau catches up with him, he'll be a dead man. Then ask a couple of volunteers to read aloud Genesis 28:10–22.
- 2 Remind the young people that Jacob was on a journey, and in this passage we read that God promises to be with him every step of the way. God promises many different things in the Bible, but the most frequent promise we read is his promise to always be with his people. That includes us! Ask, 'How does that make you feel?'
- 3 Encourage the group to discuss in what ways life is similar to a journey. You may want to suggest that they compare life to a long car journey or a walk up to the top of a mountain.
- 4 Then put on some chilled music and invite everyone to find their own space in the room. Ask everyone to look at page 38 and to complete the 'My journey' activity.
- 5 Gather the group together and, either all together or in small groups, encourage the young people to talk about their 'journey' and times when they have really felt that God was with them. Don't pressurise anyone to share if they would prefer not to, and make sure there are leaders on hand to chat and pray with young people for whom this activity might stir up painful memories.



LEVEL 3: SWITCH ON

WHAT: Bible search

WHY: to be encouraged that God is always with us

WITH: Bibles, concordances or internet access, whiteboard or flip chart, marker pens

- 1 Ask the young people what they can remember of the story of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Esau so far. If necessary, fill in any significant gaps.
- 2 Divide the young people into small groups and ask them to read Genesis 28:10–22. Encourage them to discuss how they think this event would have made Jacob feel—especially given his situation at the time (read Genesis 27:41–43 if they need a reminder).
- 3 Give each group a Bible concordance or access to the internet (whichever is easier) and give them up to ten minutes to look for other passages in the Bible where God promises to be with people (for example, Joshua 1:5,9 and Matthew 28:20).
- 4 Gather the group together and compare notes. Explain that the Bible contains many promises that God makes to his people, but the most frequent promise he makes is, 'I will always be with you.'
- 5 Ask the young people to chat about how it makes them feel that God has promised to always be with his people—and that includes us!
- 6 Encourage the young people to choose one of the verses they came across during their Bible search and memorise it.

RESPOND



MUSICAL

WHAT: monuments

WHY: to praise God for his faithfulness

WITH: 'How Great Is Our God' by Chris Tomlin, playback equipment, stones

- 1 Explain to the group that in the Old Testament, when someone had a significant encounter with God, they often created an altar or monument to God. It was a reminder and acknowledgement of what God had said or done. In this session, we've read about Jacob doing this.
- 2 Give everyone a stone and invite them to reflect on a time when they really knew that God was with them. Listen to the song 'How Great is Our God' by Chris Tomlin. Encourage the young people, as and when they feel ready, to place their stones in the middle of the room, together building a 'monument' that reminds them that God has been with them during some difficult times.
- 3 Ask someone to pray, thanking God that he's always with you and praying for those who don't feel that God is close at the moment.



PRACTICAL

WHAT: standing with people

WHY: to discover that we're meant to be representing Jesus

WITH: flip chart or whiteboard, marker pens

- 1 Talk to the group about how, in this session, we've thought about God's promise to always be with his people. Once, God was physically with us here on earth, in the person of Jesus. Then, when Jesus returned to heaven, the Holy Spirit was sent to be with us. But God also wants to be with people and reveals himself through the church. In the Bible, the church is called 'the body of Christ' (1 Corinthians 12:27). Jesus has asked us to be his representatives, to help people, to care for people and to do whatever we can to reveal God's love.
- 2 Ask the young people for suggestions of people who might feel that God is not with them, people who are having a difficult time at the moment. Make a list on a flip chart or whiteboard. The list could contain general groups of people (for instance, people who are bullied at school) or specific names (for instance, Sarah, whose grandma died last week).
- 3 Chat about how you could show these people that God is with them in their difficult situations.
- 4 Encourage each young person to choose one person or group of people from the list that they will reveal Jesus to over the next week. Then pray for one another in small groups, asking God to help with this.



CREATIVE

WHAT: bookmarks

WHY: to remind the young people that God is always with us

WITH: card, art materials

- 1 In advance, cut out bookmark-sized or credit-card-sized pieces of card for everyone in your group, plus a few spares.
- 2 Invite the young people to decorate these cards as a reminder that God is always with them. Suggest that on one side they write Genesis 28:15 and focus on Jacob's story, then on the other side ask them to write Matthew 28:20 and think about how God promises to always be with us.
- 3 Encourage the young people to keep their bookmarks or cards with them at all times.

MORE ON THIS THEME:

If you want to do a short series with your group, other sessions that work well with this one are:

6	<i>Chat-show Jacob</i>	<i>Genesis 29–31</i>
7	<i>Brothers reunited</i>	<i>Genesis 32,33</i>
8	<i>Jacob's timeout</i>	<i>Genesis 35:1–15</i>
9	<i>Forgiven and forgotten</i>	<i>Genesis 45:1–15</i>

HELP,

I NEED SOMEBODY...

...NOT JUST ANYBODY!
THAT'S HOW THE LYRICS
OF THE FAMOUS SONG BY
THE BEATLES GOES.

THE QUESTION IS,
WHO WOULD YOU WANT
WITH YOU IN THE
FOLLOWING SITUATIONS?



**AFTER YOU'VE HAD
A HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE**

**TRAPPED IN A
BURNING BUILDING**

**FOUND OUT YOUR PET
HAS JUST DIED**

**LOST IN THE MIDDLE
OF THE JUNGLE**

**JUST BEEN DUMPED BY
YOUR BOY/GIRLFRIEND**

**SOMEONE ASKS YOU
A DIFFICULT QUESTION
ABOUT GOD**

MY JOURNEY

Life is a journey and, in the same way as God promised to be with Jacob on his journey, God promises to be with us on our journey through life.

Start by writing your birth date in the cake.

Then, on the footprints, mark out some of the 'big steps' – the significant moments of your life. They might be big changes (such as moving house or changing school), high moments (such as when your football team won the cup final), or low moments (such as when your pet died).

Think about how God has helped you on your 'journey'. Read Genesis 28:10–22 to see how God promised to be with Jacob on his journey.

Finish by writing in the 'dream cloud' where you'd like to be on your journey with God in five years' time.

