

Session 8

God blesses Jacob

In this session we can encourage our children that their faith isn't just for church and church groups – God is with them wherever they go and whatever they are doing.

To plan your session... Choose a selection of *Opening, Into the Bible* and *Living the life* activities to make your session fun and memorable.

Options to open your session...

Jigsaw

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to recap Jacob's story so far

You will need: jigsaw from page 63

- 1 Make several copies of the jigsaw puzzle on page 63.
- 2 Show the children the first five pieces, asking them to tell you about each picture. Recap the story so far (see Sessions 5, 6 and 7).
- 3 Give each child (or pair of children) a set of the five pictures to put the jigsaw together. Allow them a few minutes to fit the pieces together and discover that there is a piece missing. Explain that, today, they are going to hear about God's final promise to Jacob.

Passed down

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to think of things being passed down through families

You will need: your family tree or photos of relatives; Jacob's family tree from page 64

- 1 Show the children your family tree and point out your parents, grandparents, etc. Mention anything that has been passed down through the family, for example, names, hair and eye colour, physical characteristics, abilities and interests, or special items. If you have time, encourage the children to talk about their families.
- 2 Then show Jacob's family tree. Ask what was passed down through his family (*God's promise to be with them and make them into a great nation*).

Aim

To discover that God is with us because he has promised to be

Bible passage

Genesis 35:1–15

Ready to use activity

Mime and thank

Activity time: 10 minutes

Aim: to realise that God is always with us

- 1 Ask the children to think of an everyday activity that they enjoy. Invite them to take it in turns to mime it, while the others guess what it is. When they have guessed correctly, encourage the mimer to say a thank-you prayer to God for being with them when they did their activity.
- 2 Repeat with activities they don't enjoy so much.
- 3 Say that the activities were very different, with some being done by the children on their own, or with other people. But one thing was the same about all the activities – God was with them!

Tip for Leaders: Three important benefits of a group time are learning, fun and relationships.

Into the Bible – options based on the Bible passage...

Ready to use *activity*

Bible story with mime

Activity time: 15-20 minutes

Aim: to discover that God is with us because he has promised to be

You will need: Jacob's family tree from page 64, jigsaw from page 63

1 Looking at Jacob's family

Find Abraham on Jacob's family tree. Ask a child to read Genesis 12:2 and another to read Genesis 17:7. Ask the two children to write a P for 'promise' on a sticky note and stick it on the family tree next to Abraham. Say that God made the promise not just for Abraham, but also for his descendants (children, grandchildren, etc).

Ask a child to read Genesis 26:3b-4, write P for promise on a sticky note and stick it next to Isaac on the family tree. Finally, ask the children whether they remember the name of the place where God first made a promise to Jacob (*Bethel*). Ask a child to read Genesis 28:13-15 and stick a sticky note next to Jacob on the family tree.

2 Miming the story

As you tell the story, encourage the children to mime the actions described:

Story: One day God told Jacob to go back to Bethel to worship him. Jacob knew that this was going to be a special time, so he made sure that he and his family were ready. (*Ask the children to mime what they might have done to get ready.*)

In fact, Jacob knew that the most important thing was to get right with God, so he told them to get rid of all their idols. Explain that in those days some people worshipped statues. Say that the people gave Jacob their idols. They also took off their earrings, which had pictures of idols on them, and gave them to Jacob. He buried the statues and earrings under a tree. (*Encourage the children to mime this.*) Jacob then told them to put on clean clothes. (*Ask the children to mime this.*)

Now everyone was ready to set off for Bethel. (*The children should follow you round the room and, if you have space, stop at a different area.*)

While Jacob was worshipping, God appeared to him. (*Read Genesis 35:10-12 and stick another sticky note next to Jacob on the family tree.*) In those days, people would set up big rocks to remember special things that had happened, so Jacob set up a large rock at Bethel. (*Invite the children to mime setting up a rock.*) He then poured wine and olive oil over the rock to show that it was dedicated to God. (*The children should mime this.*)

3 Reflect

Ask the children to sit down. Remind them that Jacob said that God had always been by his side. How did he know this? Look at all the sticky notes representing the promises made to Jacob's family. Say that we too can trust God's promises to us. Remind the children that, before he went up to heaven, Jesus said that he would always be with us. Ask the children to close their eyes and imagine that God is by their side. Encourage them to talk to him if they wish.

4 Complete the puzzle

If you did 'jigsaw' in *Opening activities*, add the final piece to the puzzle.

Bible story with stones

Activity time: 20 minutes

Aim: to discover that God is with us because he has promised to be

You will need: large stones or card, chalk, envelopes, a tray, oil, red-coloured drink, jigsaw from page 63

1 Prepare

If you are using card, cut out four large stone shapes. Write 'Get Ready!', 'Steady!', 'Go!' and 'Bethel' on each stone. On the bottom of each stone write the following Bible references and questions. (The answers are in brackets.) If you are using real stones, write the words and references in chalk and attach small envelopes with the questions in them.

Get ready! (Genesis 35:1) Why did God want Jacob to go back to Bethel? (*To remind him of his earlier promise.*)

Steady! (Genesis 35:2-4) Why did they bury their idols and put on clean clothes? (*To get ready to worship God – this is easier to understand in the CEV than the GNB.*)

Go! (Genesis 35:5) Why were the people terrified of Jacob and his people? (*Because they knew God was with them.*)

Bethel (Genesis 35:10-12) What do these promises remind you of? (*They are just like the promises already made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*)

2 Bible Timeline

Ask the children to stand in lines of about three opposite the SU Bible Timeline. Tell them you are going to ask them to run up and touch a picture, but they must wait until you have said 'Go! Start with Abraham. Say 'Get ready! Steady! Go!' and invite them to run. Repeat with other characters on the Bible Timeline. (If you do not have much space, ask the children to throw balls of crumpled paper at the pictures.) See if the children can tell why you started with Abraham. Remind them that God promised to bless Abraham with a huge family, and that most of the people on the Bible Timeline are part of his family.

More on this theme

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

Session 5 God's promises to Jacob, Genesis 28:10-22

Session 6 Jacob gets married, Genesis 29-31

Session 7 Jacob goes home, Genesis 32,33

Session 9 God at work, Genesis 45:1-13

3 Move and listen

Space the stones out on the floor in order, and say that you are going to go on a journey with Jacob. First sit around the 'Get ready!' stone and ask a child to turn it over to find the Bible reference. Ask a good reader to read it from the Bible (or read it yourself) and another to read the question. Chat about it together. Do this at each stone in turn.

Staying at Bethel, say that Jacob wanted to remember this special place, so he set up a large rock to remind him of what had happened there. Ask a child to stand the stone on its side and lean it against a chair or the wall. Say that Jacob then poured wine and oil over the rock to show it was a holy place. If you have a tray, oil and red liquid, place your stone in the tray and invite one child to pour a little oil on it, and another to pour a little of the red liquid on it. Say that Jacob could now look back and see that God had always kept his promise to be with him wherever he went, and so he could trust him to be with him in the future.

4 Thanks for God's promise

Ask the children what they have learned from the story. Say that God kept his promise to be with Jacob wherever he went and promises to be with each of us wherever we go. Invite the children to write their name on a stone (a dry one!). Then ask them to kneel round the stone, close their eyes and thank God for being with each of them (mention each name).

5 Complete the puzzle

If you did 'Jigsaw' in *Opening activities*, add the final piece to the puzzle.

Living the life – options to help live God's way...

Promise stones

Activity time: 10–15 minutes

Aim: to make a reminder of God's promise to be with us

You will need: large smooth stones, paint (optional), diluted PVA glue or varnish and paintbrushes

- 1 Ask the children what Jacob did to remember God's promise to him. (*He set up a large stone.*) Say that using a stone was a good choice as it lasts for ever, just like God's promises.
- 2 Give each child a stone and ask them to decorate it. They can write a prayer or one of God's promises on their stone if they wish. If you have time, allow the children to varnish their stones. Suggest that they put the stone somewhere at home as a reminder of God's promise to be with them always.

Challenging activities

Activity time: 15 minutes

Aim: to remember that God is with us whatever we do

You will need: a selection of challenging activities

- 1 Set the children a number of challenges, like: building a house of cards, balancing on a fit ball without touching the ground or getting a note out of a trumpet. Invite them to have a go on their own before offering to help.
- 2 Ask: Were the activities hard, or were they easier when you received help? Ask what they find difficult in life. (Discourage suggestions about computer games.) Mention something you find difficult. Say: Wouldn't it be good if someone was always by your side to help you? If a child does not point out that God is always with us, remind them! Encourage the children to ask for God's help with what they find difficult.

Ready to use activity

Splash!

Activity time: 10–15 minutes

Aim: to remember and think about God's promise to Jacob

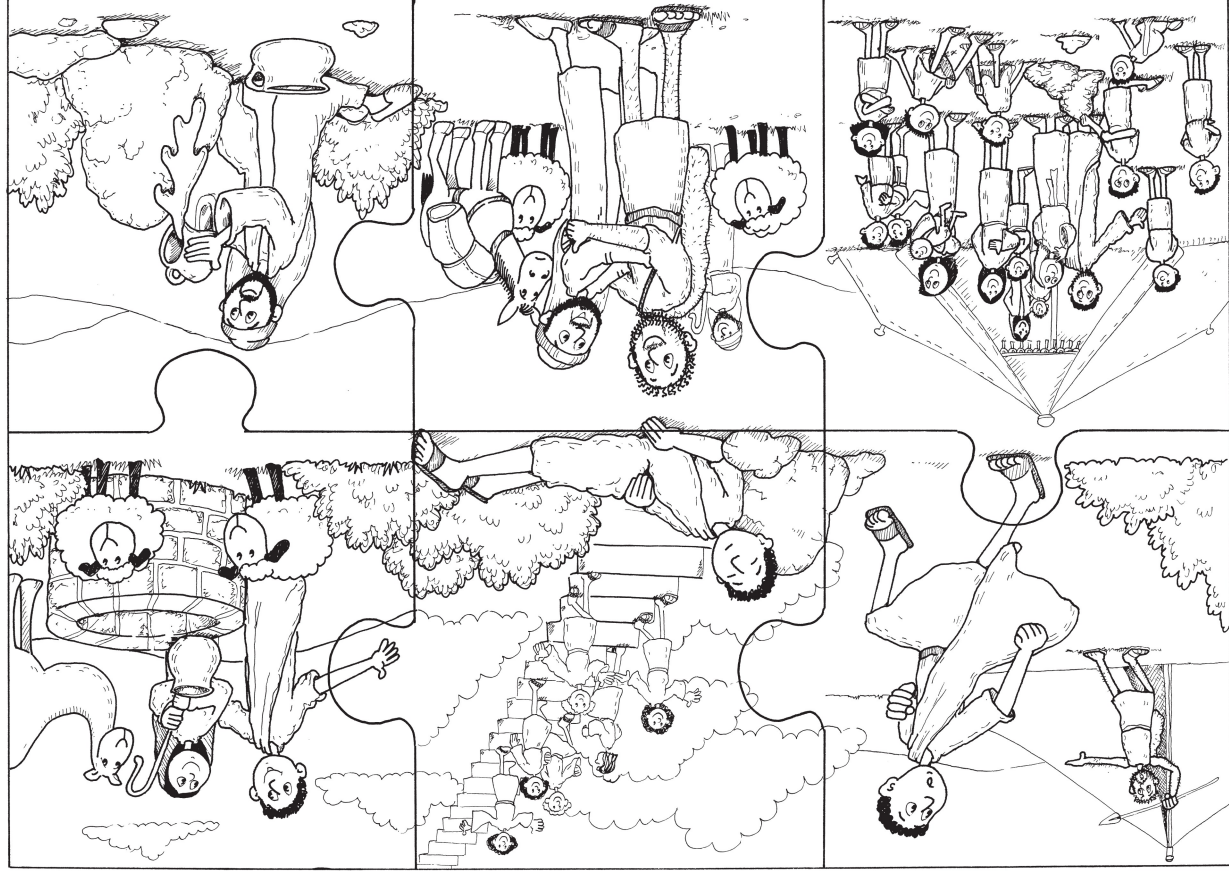
You will need: copies of the *Splash!* sheets from pages 65 and 66

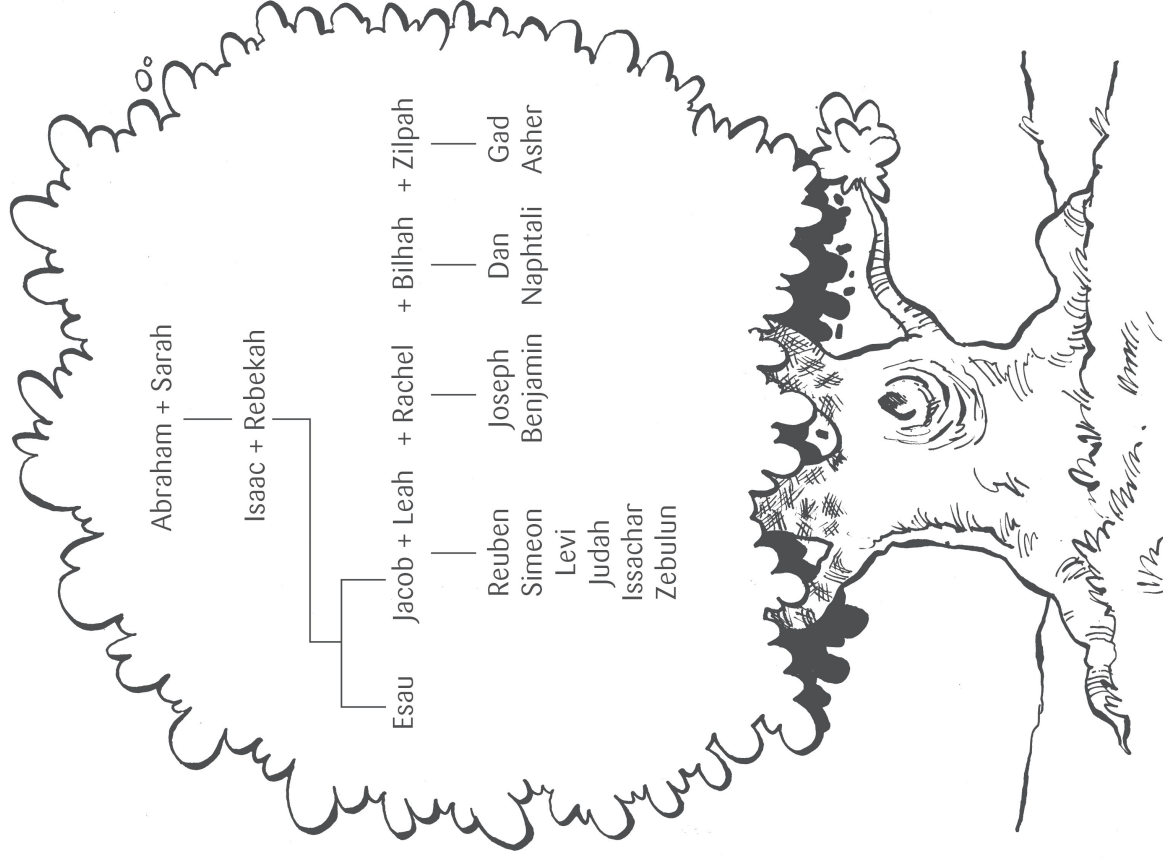
- 1 Tell the children that they are going to do some puzzles to help them remember the important things about the story of Jacob. Give each child a copy of the *Splash!* sheets and help them to do the puzzles on the sheet. Read them through with the children. Allow them to work through them at their own speed, helping those who are not so good at reading and writing.
- 2 At the end ask what word came up most often in the puzzles (*promise*). Discuss why this was such an important word and what it means for them.

Extra ideas for the session, and beyond...

Play Snakes and Ladders, reminding the children that God was with Jacob through the ups and downs of his life.

Walk around your church and find any things that remind you of what God has said or done.





Splash!

Have a go at these puzzles to help you remember the story of Jacob.



Colour in the shapes with a dot to find out the place where God spoke to Jacob.



Fill in the grid with the correct answers to spell the most important word in today's story.

What did God tell Jacob to do at Bethel?

W

Who was Jacob's grandfather?

A

What did Jacob set up at Bethel?

S

What did God change at Bethel?

J

What did Jacob bury before going to meet God?

i

What did Jacob's name change to?

I

Where did God meet with Jacob?

B

Jacob's name: stone, Abrahim, Idols, Israel, Bethel, worship

Put vowels
(a e i o u) in the
spaces to complete the
verse.
*Learn and remember
verse.*

" h _ v _
c _ n f _ d _ n c _
n y _ r
str _ n g t h ;
y _ _ r _
m y r _ f _ g _
_ G _ d _ .

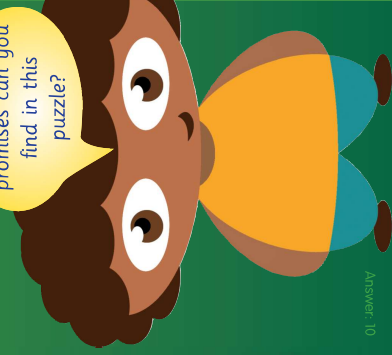
Psalms 59:9

a e i o u

p	r	o	m	i	s	e	r	o	m
p	r	e	s	i	m	o	r	p	i
o	s	e	i	m	o	r	p	e	s
m	o	i	m	o	s	m	s	i	
i	m	o	m	i	s	e	m		
s	i	p	o	r	s	e	m	o	
e	s	i	m	o	r	p	e	r	
s	p	r	o	m	i	s	e	p	r
i	r	i	e	s	i	m	o	r	p
m	o	e	s	i	m	o	r	p	r

Jacob had
confidence in God
because he knew that
God would keep
his promises.

How many
promises can you
find in this
puzzle?



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