

# BROTHERS REUNITED

**THE AIM:** To be encouraged that God is with us in difficult relationships

## The aim unpacked

Having left his Uncle Laban, Jacob may have been hoping for an easier life. However, in this session, we'll see how he had to confront yet another difficult situation when he was reunited with his brother, Esau. For Jacob and Esau, time really did seem to heal the wounds. At the emotional reunion it appears that there was no desire for revenge; instead, they only seemed to want the best for one another.

## WAY IN



**WHAT:** famous siblings quiz  
**WHY:** to think about our relationships with our siblings  
**WITH:** magazine page 50

- 1 Make sure everyone has a copy of page 50. Encourage them to have a go at the 'Famous siblings' quiz, in pairs.
- 2 Gather the group back together and go through the answers.
- 3 Ask the young people to think about the relationships they have with their brothers and sisters (or if they don't have any, with other members of their family). Ask them to imagine being separated from their siblings for the next five years. Would they consider this to be a good or a bad thing? What would they miss the most?
- 4 Explain to the group that, in this session, you're going to be seeing what happens when Jacob was reunited with his brother, Esau. If necessary, invite them to have a quick look at Genesis 27 to remind them why they had gone their separate ways.



## SCENE SETTER

**WHAT:** game  
**WHY:** to introduce the idea that we should be after win-win solutions, not win-lose  
**WITH:** game such as *Top Trumps*

- 1 Play a game where the 'winner takes all' and the losers get nothing—for example, *Top Trumps* or *Snap*. Either divide the young people into small groups to play the game, or adapt it to suit the size of your group.
- 2 Discuss together whether the young people often want to win, and if that means, therefore, that they want other people to lose. Point out that this can sometimes cause problems, especially when it comes to resolving conflicts. Instead of thinking how we can win and make sure the other person loses, we should be thinking how we can both win! In this session, we'll discover how Jacob and Esau resolved their conflict in a very positive way.



## THEMED GAME

**WHAT:** water fight  
**WHY:** to introduce the idea of conflict  
**WITH:** two water pistols, tissues, sticky tape

- 1 Work out whether it's possible to take your group outside, and find out in advance whether it's OK for your young people to get wet! If yes, this activity might be quite good fun. If not, don't use this activity!
- 2 Divide the young people into twos and challenge each pair in turn to have a 'duel'. Do this by taping a piece of tissue to each of their chests and giving them both a water pistol. Tell them to stand back to back and then take five paces forward. Then, on the count of three, they should turn around and shoot each other. After five seconds stop them. The person whose piece of tissue is the wettest is the loser.
- 3 Do this until everyone has had at least one turn.
- 4 Introduce the session by explaining that a duel is probably not the best way for two people to resolve a conflict. Explain that in this session you'll be looking at what happened when Jacob and Esau met each other. Ask the group to vote on what they think happened. Did they fight or did they make up?

# BIBLE EXPERIENCE



## LEVEL 1: CONNECT

**WHAT:** drama  
**WHY:** to be encouraged that God is with us in difficult relationships  
**WITH:** Bibles

- 1 Divide the young people into small groups and challenge them to prepare a short sketch about a conflict between siblings and the consequences of it. For example, a younger sister borrows an item of clothing from her older sister and rips it by accident, then the older sister refuses to talk to her.
- 2 Gather the young people together and encourage the groups to perform their sketches to everyone else.
- 3 Ask the young people if they can remember why there was conflict between Jacob and his brother Esau. (If necessary, read or summarise Genesis 27)
- 4 Explain that Jacob is preparing to meet his brother Esau for the first time since these events. Understandably, he is extremely scared. Then ask a volunteer to read Genesis 32:22–31.
- 5 Ask the young people to think about how this bizarre encounter with God would have encouraged Jacob and prepared him to meet Esau.
- 6 Back in their small groups, challenge them to prepare another short sketch to show how the conflict situation in their first sketch might be resolved. Once everyone has prepared their sketches, invite them to perform them to everyone else, as before.
- 7 Ask a few volunteers to read Genesis 33. Then chat about the attitudes with which both Jacob and Esau approached this encounter: What can we learn from this? Would the young people's sketches have finished differently if the characters involved had shown the same attitudes as Jacob and Esau?



## LEVEL 2: INTERFACE

**WHAT:** discussion  
**WHY:** to be encouraged that God is with us in difficult relationships  
**WITH:** large sheets of paper, pens, Bible, magazine pages 51 and 52

- 1 In pairs, encourage the young people to complete the 'You're so annoying!' activity on page 51.
- 2 Gather everyone together and discuss the activity. Then recap as a group why there was conflict between Jacob and his brother Esau. (If necessary, read or summarise Genesis 27)
- 3 Divide the young people into two groups. Give each group a large sheet of paper and ask them to divide it into three columns. In the first column, ask one group to write down Esau's thoughts and the other group to write down Jacob's thoughts after the events of Genesis 27.
- 4 Invite the groups to feed back, and then explain that Jacob and Esau are about to meet up for the first time since these events. Ask the groups to jot down in the second column how they think their character might be feeling before this encounter.
- 5 Feed back again, then read Genesis 32:22–32 together. Discuss how Jacob may have been feeling about meeting Esau after this bizarre encounter with God. Change the list that the 'Jacob' group made in their second column accordingly.
- 6 Invite each group to read Genesis 33 and to make a note, in the third column, of how they think their character might have felt after meeting his brother. Also make a note of the attitudes shown by their character.
- 7 Feed back, and then chat about what we can learn from Jacob and Esau about how we should approach people we have wronged or who have wronged us. Conclude by asking everyone, individually or in pairs, to complete the 'Let's be friends' activity on page 52.



## LEVEL 3: SWITCH ON

**WHAT:** Bible study  
**WHY:** to be encouraged that God is with us in difficult relationships  
**WITH:** Bibles, copies of resource page 53

- 1 Ask the young people if they remember why there was conflict between Jacob and his brother, Esau. (If necessary, read or summarise Genesis 27)
- 2 Divide the young people into twos or threes and make sure each group has a Bible, a copy of resource page 53 and a pen. Ask them to read Genesis 32 and 33 and discuss the questions on the resource page.
- 3 Gather everyone together and chat about what they've been reading. Spend some time discussing any questions that they may have.

# RESPOND



## MUSICAL

**WHAT:** song  
**WHY:** to thank God for restoring our relationship with him  
**WITH:** words and music for 'How Deep the Father's Love for Us' by Stuart Townend, playback equipment or musical accompaniment

- 1 Talk to the group about how during this session we've thought about how Jacob and Esau were reunited and restored their relationship. God is very much into restoring relationships. In fact, the whole Bible is about him restoring the relationship between the people he made and himself, their Creator.
- 2 Encourage the young people to spend some time reflecting on how amazing it is that God has made it possible for our relationship with him to be restored. Do this by either listening to or singing the song 'How Deep the Father's Love for Us' by Stuart Townend.
- 3 You may like to use a different song or additional songs. Conclude by encouraging the young people to say short prayers thanking God for making it possible for us to have a relationship with him.



## PRACTICAL

**WHAT:** card making  
**WHY:** to take the first step towards reconciliation  
**WITH:** card, art supplies

- 1 Remind the group that, as we read Genesis 33, we discover that both Jacob and Esau seemed to approach their meeting with a positive attitude.
- 2 Encourage everyone to think of someone they have a difficult relationship with at the moment—maybe someone they need to say 'sorry' to—perhaps a brother or sister?
- 3 With the materials available, ask everyone to make a 'sorry' card for the person they are thinking of. Ask them to think carefully about the message they write inside it and encourage them to actually give it to the person, if appropriate.
- 4 Ask a leader to conclude by praying for the group. Pray that we would have attitudes like Jacob and Esau when it comes to resolving conflict, and thank God that he is with us in whatever difficult situations we face.



## CREATIVE

**WHAT:** seed planting  
**WHY:** to let go of past conflicts and learn forgiveness  
**WITH:** plastic cups, potting soil, sunflower seeds, plastic sheets

- 1 Before you start, make sure you cover with plastic sheets any surfaces that need protecting!
- 2 Give everyone a plastic cup and invite them to three-quarters fill it with potting soil.
- 3 Next, instruct them to make a little hole in the soil a centimetre or so deep.
- 4 Encourage the young people to think of someone, maybe a brother or a sister, with whom they are in conflict at the moment. Perhaps they are holding a grudge against someone and they know they need to let go of it.
- 5 After they have had the opportunity to think of a situation, give everyone a sunflower seed. Tell them that the seed represents the conflict, and then invite them to place the seed in the hole.
- 6 As they cover the seed with soil, encourage them to spend some time talking to God about the conflict. They may like to pray that God would help them move on from the situation, to offer forgiveness to the person involved and rebuild the relationship.
- 7 Encourage the young people to take good care of their sunflowers and, as they grow, to remember that they have 'buried' their past conflict and should be trying to rebuild and strengthen their relationship with the other person.

### MORE ON THIS THEME:

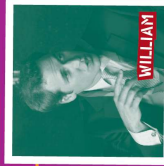
If you want to do a short series with your group, other sessions that work well with this one are:

- |   |                               |                         |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 5 | <i>Jacob's ladder</i>         | <i>Genesis 28:10–22</i> |
| 6 | <i>Chat-show Jacob</i>        | <i>Genesis 29–31</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>  |

Can you match up these pictures of famous siblings? For a bonus point, do you know who the older sibling in each family is?

# FAMOUS SIBLINGS

1



WILLIAM

A



VENUS

2



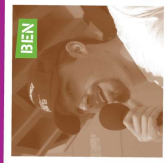
KEVIN

B



CASEY

3



BEN

C



MAGGIE

4



KYLIE

D



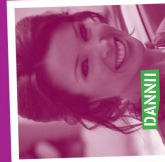
HARRY

5



JAKE

E



DANNI

6



SERENA

F



JOANNE

## Bible bit Genesis 32, 33

Having left his Uncle Laban, Jacob may have been hoping for an easier life. However, there were yet more obstacles in his way. It was now time for him to be reunited with his brother Esau. It's understandable that Jacob was a little nervous about this, after all, the reason for Jacob's sudden departure all those years ago was the fact that Esau wanted to kill him!

However, it seems that time really did heal Jacob's and Esau's wounds, because at their emotional reunion it appears that there was no desire for revenge; instead they only seemed to want the best for one another.

This story not only shows us how God is with us in difficult relationships, but we'll also be able to learn how we can handle conflict situations wisely, especially with our brothers and sisters!

Image credit: Casey Attkick - wayfromus



Answers on page 318

# YOU'RE SO ANNOYING!

1

Your dad asks you both to do the washing up but your brother refuses to help. You do the washing up on your own while he watches TV.

2

You share a room with your sister. She's really messy and you always have to wade through her dirty clothes to get to your bed.

3

Your brother borrows your new hoodie and spills a drink down it.

4

Whenever there's a mess in the house, your parents blame you rather than your little brother.

5

Your older sister always borrows your stuff, but she never lets you borrow any of hers.

6

Your sister uses your mobile phone without your permission.

Have you got a brother or sister who occasionally annoys you? Whether you have or haven't, which of the following situations would annoy you the most?



7

# LET'S BE FRIENDS



What advice would you give the following people to deal with their family feuds?

Clare can't find her favourite jumper. She's convinced that her sister, Elli, has borrowed it. However, when Clare asked her if she knew where it was, Elli said she didn't. So yesterday Clare went looking for her jumper in Elli's room. The problem is, Elli caught her and, well, things erupted! They haven't spoken to each other since (and the jumper still has not been found).

Chris is fed up that his brother Paul never helps out around the house. Their parents are really busy and Chris does his best to help out, but whenever he asks Paul to help, Paul says he's busy and then locks himself in his room and plays on his Xbox. Chris is angry with Paul for not helping, and he's angry with his parents for not making Paul help him.

Yesterday, Kate found out that her brother Tom not only went into her bedroom but also found her diary and read it! But that's not all he did; he then posted some of what he read on his Facebook page. What he wrote was about Kate's best friend Sarah, and now Sarah's not speaking to her. Kate is so upset that she just doesn't know what to do.

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Read Genesis 32:1–12. Jacob is worried about meeting up with his brother after so many years and so much conflict between them (read Genesis 27 to remember why). What would you advise him to do?

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Read Genesis 32:13–21 to find out what he actually did!

Do you think it will work? — YES / NO

Check out Genesis 33 to find out whether it worked or not!



## USE WITH SESSION 7 BIBLE EXPERIENCE 'LEVEL 3 SWITCH ON'

### Brothers reunited

*In your groups, discuss these questions as you read Genesis 32 and 33.*

#### **Genesis 32:1–8**

- If you were Esau, what would you be planning to do to Jacob after all these years? Kill him? Punch him? Hug him? Or would you be planning something else?

#### **Genesis 32:9–12**

- Sensibly, Jacob turned to God. When was the last time you turned to God when you faced a difficult situation? What did you say to God? What happened?

#### **Genesis 32:13–21**

- Jacob prepared a gift for Esau; what do you think we can learn about Jacob's attitude from this? How do you think Esau is going to respond to the gift?

#### **Genesis 32:22–32**

- Have you ever laid awake in bed, knowing you have something difficult to face the next day? Imagine how Jacob must have felt before and after this bizarre encounter with God. How do you think it changed how he was thinking about meeting his brother?

#### **Genesis 33**

- Esau and Jacob both seemed to approach this situation very positively. How do you think the situation might have turned out if one or both of them had approached it with an 'I'm still mad at you' attitude? What do you think we should learn from this?