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Bible: Genesis 35:1–15

JACOB'S TIMEOUT

THE AIM: To be encouraged to frequently pause and reflect on life and our relationship with God

The aim unpacked

After an epic journey full of lots of adventures, in this session we see Jacob 'pausing' and spending some time with God. As he did so, he acknowledged that God had been with him, he dealt with the things that were getting in the way, between his family and God, and God reaffirmed his promises to him once more.

WAY IN



theGRID MAGAZINE

WHAT: word search
WHY: to introduce the idea of taking time out
WITH: magazine page 57, prize (optional)

- 1 In pairs, ask everyone to attempt the word search on page 57. If they need help finding the ten words, tell them that the words they are looking for are: adjournment, half-time, holiday, interlude, intermission, interval, pause, recess, timeout, vacation.
- 2 Then give each pair a sheet of paper and challenge them to write down as many things as they can think of that people might do during the half-time of a football match. Give them a minute to write down as many things as possible. They get two points for things they write down that no other group writes down and one point for things that other groups also write down.
- 3 Repeat this activity as time allows with other scenarios. For example, why might you press 'pause' while watching a film?
- 4 Award a prize to the team that scores the most points.



SCENE SETTER

WHAT: eating slowly
WHY: to think about how we miss things if we rush through life
WITH: selection of snack foods and drinks

- 1 Have a selection of common snack foods and drinks available for your group to try.
- 2 Ask each young person to take something to eat or drink and hold it in their hands. Encourage them to look at it for a few moments and then to eat and drink it really slowly. Encourage them to really think about what it tastes like, to savour the texture, and to really enjoy the experience of eating or drinking.
- 3 Allow them to sample all the different foods and drinks.
- 4 Then, in small groups, ask them to think about some of the things we might 'miss' because we rush too much. For example, the amazing scenery we walk past on the way to school each day.
- 5 Explain that in this session we'll be thinking about how it's important that we frequently take time to pause and reflect on life and our relationship with God.



THEMED GAME

WHAT: musical statues
WHY: to introduce the idea of 'pausing'
WITH: large, safe space, music, playback equipment

- 1 Make sure you have a large, safe space in which the young people can move around.
- 2 Invite everyone to stand up, and then explain that when the music is playing, they must move around. As soon as the music stops, they must freeze. The last person to freeze, and any people who move when the music isn't playing, are out.
- 3 Start playing the game, and keep starting and pausing the music until there is only one person left in the game.
- 4 Introduce the session by saying that today you're going to be thinking about the importance of 'pausing'.

BIBLE EXPERIENCE



LEVEL 1: CONNECT

WHAT: discussion

WHY: to be encouraged to frequently pause and reflect on life and our relationship with God

WITH: Bibles

- 1 Read together Genesis 35:1–15 by going around the group asking each person to read one verse at a time.
- 2 Explain to the young people that Jacob certainly had some adventures during his life, and now we see him pausing and spending some time with God. This involved getting his family to get rid of their 'foreign gods'. As his family had lived among people who didn't worship God, they had started to worship the various gods that these people worshipped. That didn't necessarily mean they rejected God: it meant they worshipped him alongside other gods. That, as we discover throughout the Bible, is not something that God wants. He is the only God, and he wants us to worship him alone. These 'foreign gods' would probably have been represented by statues (idols).
- 3 Invite the young people to reflect on what 'idols' they might worship alongside God.
- 4 Then, in pairs, ask them to make a note of what a person's life might look like if they were to worship that particular 'idol' above anything else. Conclude by discussing this activity as a whole group.



LEVEL 2: INTERFACE

WHAT: Bible study

WHY: to be encouraged to frequently pause and reflect on life and our relationship with God

WITH: Bibles, reflective music (optional)

- 1 Read together Genesis 35:1–15 and chat about any questions the young people have about the passage.
- 2 In small groups, ask the young people to divide a sheet of paper into three columns, titled 'Past', 'Present' and 'Future'.
- 3 Explain that Jacob seems to be pausing and spending some quality time with God. Ask the groups to reread Genesis 35:1–15 and make a note of the following:

- Past: What did Jacob say about what had happened (v. 3)? How might he have felt towards God?
- Present: What did Jacob ask his family to do (v. 2)? Why did he want them to do this?
- Future: What did Jacob learn about his future (vs 10–12)? How would this have encouraged him?

- 4 Gather together and obtain feedback. Chat about Jacob's time with God and, if necessary, summarise by saying that he acknowledged that God had been with him (and probably thanked him for this), he dealt with the things that were getting in the way, between his family and God, and God reaffirmed his promises.

- 5 Ask the young people to divide another sheet of paper into three sections, titled 'Past', 'Present' and 'Future', and to find some space in the room where they can spend some time with God alone. You may like to put on some quiet, reflective music.

- 6 Ask them to think about the following:
 - Past: How have things been with God lately? What have you got to thank him for? What questions would you like to ask him?
 - Present: Are there things in your life that you need to deal with? What are they? What are you going to do to sort them out?
 - Future: What are your prayers for the future? What are you looking forward to? What are your dreams? And your concerns?

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LEVEL 3: SWITCH ON

WHAT: spiritual check-up

WHY: to be encouraged to frequently pause and reflect on life and our relationship with God

WITH: Bibles

- 1 Ask the group to recap Jacob's story so far, and then invite a couple of volunteers to read Genesis 35:1–15.
- 2 Use some of the ideas from 'Level 2 Interface' to help the young people delve into the time Jacob spent with God, reflecting on his life and relationship with God.
- 3 Either all together or in small groups, discuss why it's important that we frequently pause to spend time with God.
- 4 Explain that cars have to have an annual MOT to check they are in good working order, and it's recommended that we all have annual check-ups at the dentist to check our teeth are healthy. In the same way, it's important that we frequently give ourselves a 'spiritual check-up' to ensure our life and relationship with God are healthy.
- 5 Divide the young people into twos and threes and encourage them to devise a 'spiritual health check'. Encourage them to be creative, but suggest that the check-up could be based around a series of ten questions.

RESPOND



MUSICAL

WHAT: time with God
WHY: to encourage young people to spend time with God
WITH: quiet worship music, playback equipment

- 1 Encourage the young people to spend some time alone with God, thinking about their life and their relationship with him. Suggest they find some space in the room where they won't be disturbed by anyone else. Put on some quiet worship music that will help them focus on God. Have Bibles, paper and pens around the room that the young people can use if they would like to.
- 2 If the young people created a 'spiritual health check' during the *Bible experience* section, perhaps they could use it here.
- 3 Afterwards, encourage the young people to chat in small groups about how they found this activity. What were they thinking about? Do they think God said anything to them?
- 4 You may like to conclude by singing a song together. Be Thou My Vision or 'In the Secret' (Andy Park) are two possibilities.



PRACTICAL

WHAT: prayer feet
WHY: to encourage young people to think about the future
WITH: cards, scissors

- 1 Give everyone three sheets of card and ask them to draw around their feet three times and to cut out the foot shapes.
- 2 Chat together about what you've learned about Jacob over the past few sessions. Emphasise that God was always with Jacob (Genesis 35:3) and that, during Jacob's 'timeout', God encouraged him regarding the future (Genesis 35:10–13).
- 3 Ask the young people to think about their future and about how they want to develop their relationship with God. On one of their 'feet', encourage them to write what they want their life and relationship with God to be like over the next month. On another 'foot', encourage them to write what they want to be like in three years' time, and on the final 'foot', encourage them to write what they want it to be like in ten years' time.
- 4 Invite them to lay their 'feet' on the floor, and then ask a few people to pray for the group.



CREATIVE

WHAT: prayer hands
WHY: to help the young people develop their prayer lives
WITH: card, scissors

- 1 Explain to the group that taking a 'timeout' each day to pray is a good idea. Spend a few minutes chatting with the group about their experiences of prayer. When do they usually pray? What do they find difficult?
- 2 Give each person a sheet of card and ask them to draw round their hand and then cut out the shape.
- 3 Encourage the young people to write a Bible verse on the thumb. This could be their favourite verse, a verse from this session or perhaps a verse about prayer (for example, Philippians 4:6).
- 4 Now invite them to write the words 'Adore', 'Confess', 'Thank' and 'Supplicate' on the four fingers.
- 5 Explain that it can sometimes be difficult to know what to include in our prayers. Suggest that using the acronym 'ACTS' might be helpful. Explain what each of the words mean:
 - Adore: Praise God for who he is.
 - Confess: Say sorry for the things you know you've done wrong.
 - Thank: Thank God for the good things he has done.
 - Supplicate: Ask God for things. Speak to him about the things that are on your mind; pray for yourself, your friends, your family and the world.
- 6 In small groups, encourage the young people to pray using this as their model. Then encourage them to spend a few minutes each day in prayer, using this as the model.

MORE ON THIS THEME:

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

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|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 5 | <i>Jacob's ladder</i> | <i>Genesis 28:10–22</i> |
| 6 | <i>Chat-show Jacob</i> | <i>Genesis 29–31</i> |
| 7 | <i>Brothers reunited</i> | <i>Genesis 32,33</i> |
| 9 | <i>Forgiven and forgotten</i> | <i>Genesis 45:1–15</i> |

HAVE A BREAK

Can you find ten different words you might use for 'taking a break' in the word search? If you need help there is a list of the words on page 318.



Bible bit Genesis 35:1 – 15

After an epic journey full of lots of adventures, in this session we see Jacob 'pausing' and spending some time with God. As he does so, he acknowledges that God has been with him, he deals with the things that were getting in the way between his family and God, and God reaffirms his promises to him once more.

It's so important that we frequently pause and reflect on life and our relationship with God, and this story provides us with a great model. 1) Thank God for being with us in the past. 2) Deal with anything in the present that is getting in the way of our relationship with God. And 3) spend some time chatting to God about the future.

D	H	W	A	Q	Y	U	S	I	O	M	B	N	C	R	X
A	S	H	Q	H	W	P	T	F	J	K	L	I	H	E	W
B	Z	A	D	J	O	U	R	N	M	E	N	T	X	C	Q
S	U	L	O	I	Y	L	G	H	L	K	E	A	C	E	E
A	S	F	T	R	U	F	I	W	A	F	J	H	L	S	B
V	B	T	X	Z	S	J	I	D	U	Y	W	U	T	S	O
P	N	I	M	V	C	E	N	E	A	G	U	Q	D	K	L
R	U	M	Y	I	K	D	J	L	G	Y	D	Z	V	C	X
B	M	E	N	R	E	U	Y	U	O	I	P	J	R	I	N
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J	H	S	Y	O	P	Q	R	S	E	H	G	D	J	Y	V
U	E	W	T	Y	I	O	P	M	T	E	G	S	R	N	B
A	S	C	C	V	B	M	I	F	S	D	Y	I	J	K	L
E	S	T	U	W	R	T	S	D	C	H	K	A	X	O	R