

date: **10/15/17****Bible Passage: Genesis 27:41—28:17; 32—33**
(Jacob)

God Is Faithful

REMEMBER VERSE

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.
Philippians 1:6

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

My dad is an attorney and a natural fighter with an ability to wiggle his way out of sticky situations. In the past, when he got himself into trouble because of his fiery personality, my dad charmed his way out of it—or, at least, escaped. However, all along he has loved God. My dad has always awakened before the sun to pray and underline the pages of his Bible over and over until they tear. He has approached his relationship with God with the same energy and determination he applies to everything else in his life.

Though many people might say my dad has a difficult personality, God has changed him over time. I used to avoid confrontation with him because he always won any argument out of sheer force. Now I don't hesitate to speak with him about anything. My dad responds with grace and humility—traits he wouldn't have without God in his life.

God faithfully travelled with my dad on his journey and lovingly formed him to be more like Him. God continues to be faithful to finish the work He began in my dad, and He will be faithful to walk with me and with you.

Tori Funkhouser
TruStory Team

Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

God's faithfulness in Jacob's life didn't always take the form we might expect. In Genesis 32:26–28, Jacob wrestled with God all night. God took on the form of a man, and Jacob struggled and struggled until the man asked Jacob to let him go. Jacob refused, saying he wouldn't let go until the man blessed him. Then the man asked his name, and after Jacob responded, the man changed Jacob's name to Israel.

Why did God ask for Jacob's name right after Jacob said he wouldn't let God go until He blessed him? Some biblical scholars suggest this question parallels the one his father Isaac asked him many years before. When Isaac asked Jacob for his name, he said, "I am Esau." Then he used his brother's name to steal the blessing.

In today's passage, God came to redeem Jacob of what his name symbolized. (Remember, Jacob means "deceiver.") Obviously, God knew Jacob's name. Perhaps God asked him for his name because He wanted to know if Jacob knew it. When Jacob answered, "My name is Jacob," he acknowledged his true self.

After many years of running away, Jacob finally faced his sins, repented, and was changed by God. God even changed Jacob's name to Israel, which means "one who strives with God." God's plan for Jacob's life was greater than Jacob could imagine. God prevailed in Jacob's life, blessed him, and made him into a great nation. God is faithful to complete what He begins.

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

It seems like just about every major character in the Bible has had a "desert experience"—a time when God worked through trying circumstances to form and shape him into the kind of person He wanted him to be. Moses had his 40 years in the desert. Joseph was sold into slavery and spent time in jail. David spent his time in the wilderness being chased by Saul. Even Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness, being tempted by Satan.

Jacob also had his time of testing and trials. He was gone from his home for 20 years—all the while being deceived by his uncle Laban. God eventually blessed him and brought him home, but that time away served to mature and grow him into the person God wanted him to be.

Think back over your life and what sorts of desert experiences you have gone through. What have been the most significant times when God has used life experiences to really get your attention? What was God teaching you through these times? How has God shown Himself to be faithful?

SMALL GROUP

SECTION

EXPLORE// 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity

about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

All Tied Up (for Younger Kids)

God is faithful. Even when we make mistakes, God doesn't give up on us. He patiently continues the good work He started in us. Children will create a giant knot and then patiently work together to untie themselves.

SUPPLIES

- Rope (12" per child)

SET UP

Tie a knot at each end of each piece of rope.

RELATE

Today we're going to play a game that might feel kind of frustrating at times. Even if it gets difficult, let's work together to complete it!

Group your kids into a circle. Make sure you have an even number of people in the circle; if you have an odd number of kids, have a leader join the circle. (If you have a large group, divide the kids into circles of 8 to 10.) Give each child a piece of rope and ask half of the kids to hold it in their right hands and the other half in their left hands, gripping it at a knot.

I want everyone holding a piece of rope in your right hand to hold up the rope. Now ask somebody who doesn't have a rope in her right hand to grab the end of your rope. Great job! Now we'll do the opposite: I want everyone holding a piece of rope in your left hand to hold it into the air. Now ask someone who isn't holding a rope in his left hand to grab your rope. Let's check our work before we begin the game. Make sure the ropes you're holding connect to two different people! Also, don't hold the ropes of anybody right next to you.

Once the children are all tied up, help them to work together to untie themselves. Make sure to tell the children that they can't let go of one another's pieces of rope! If you have several groups, you might make this a competition to see which group finishes first. Otherwise, continue the game until each group completes the task. The kids may get frustrated or impatient at times, but encourage them to continue until they finish!

Knot Done Yet (for Older Kids)

God's Word explains that He is faithful to continue the good work He started in us. Even though we may make mistakes, God doesn't give up on us. Children will play a game to remove all knots in a rope.

SUPPLIES

- Long ropes (1 for every 5–8 kids, about 12' each)

SET UP

Tie several knots in each rope. Make the knots about two to three feet apart.

RELATE

Today we're going to play a game that might feel kind of frustrating at times. Even if it gets difficult, let's work together to complete it!

Split the kids into groups of five to eight and give each group a piece of rope. Have each child hold the rope with at least one hand. Explain that the kids must work together to remove all the knots from their rope. However, they can't take their hands away from the rope. Each child must always have one hand on the rope at all times. Cheer the kids on as they work through the knots, and encourage them to continue even when they might feel frustrated or discouraged.

LARGE GROUP

SECTION

DISCOVER// 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible Verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)
- [Remember Verse image](#) (see Resources)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philipians 1:6

Connect

Encourage the members of your community to get to know one another through engaging questions, energizing games, and creative activities.

Question

What's the most interesting dream you've ever had?

The Big God Story

Storytelling Technique: First-Person Monologue

Bible Passage: Genesis 27:41—28:17; 32—33

God Is Faithful

SUPPLIES

- Optional: **Storytelling video** (see Resources)
- **Timeline image** (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Bible-times costume

SET UP

Have the Storyteller put on the costume and play the part of Jacob while relating today's portion of The Big God Story.

RELATE

Hello, everyone! Let me introduce myself. My name is Israel, but you might know me as Jacob. I'm the grandson of Abraham, whom God made a covenant with long ago. God told Abraham that his family would be so big that counting all the family members would be like trying to count the stars in the sky—impossible! God also told Abraham He would lead them to the Promised Land. God is always faithful. He always finishes what He starts. Before we begin, let's pray together. Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

There was a time in my life when I didn't know God, nor did I trust and obey Him. Let me explain. Before I and my twin brother Esau were born, God told our parents that I would receive the covenant blessing. When my father reached the end of his life and the time came for him to give the blessing, he planned to give it to my brother, Esau. Well, my mother remembered God's words and came up with her own plan to trick my father into giving me the blessing instead of Esau. So that's what I did: I lied and deceived my father.

Now, if I had known God and not just known *about* Him, do you think I would have lied to get the covenant blessing from my dad? Allow kids to respond. No way. I would have trusted God to be faithful to His promise that I would receive the blessing. But I didn't trust God because I didn't have a relationship with Him or trust in the truth of His promises.

Well, my family was no ordinary family, and the blessing was no ordinary blessing. But first I needed to learn to trust God. And that's where my journey toward knowing God began.

Encourage children to open their Bibles to Genesis 27:41 and follow along as you read the verse aloud. **Esau was really angry. In fact, he wanted to kill me! My mother told me to leave Canaan, so I fled to the desert. One night while I slept, I had a vivid dream.** Encourage children to follow along as you read Genesis 28:12 aloud. Then speak as if picturing the dream again. **There was a stairway that led from earth to heaven. Angels walked up and down the stairs. Then God stood at the top and made a promise to me.** Read verses 13–15 aloud as children follow along. **When I woke up, I was amazed! I realized that God had been my God all along and I hadn't even known it. He had always been faithful to me, and He promised me the same things He had promised to my grandfather, Abraham. God desires for us to know Him, and sometimes He reveals Himself in unusual ways!**

As I traveled, God kept me safe. He provided food and shelter for me. He promised to be with me wherever I went. I vowed to trust and obey the Lord. He was my God. When I arrived at my uncle's home, I was welcomed. I found a job and a wife and stayed for 20 years. But I couldn't hide forever, and one day God told me it was time to return home.

Remember, when I left home 20 years ago, Esau had wanted to kill me. Well, I didn't know what he might do when he saw me again! As I got closer to home, I sent messengers ahead to tell Esau that I was coming. They reported that Esau was coming to meet me with 400 men. A whole army! I panicked! I was terrified. So, I humbled myself before God and begged Him to save me and my family. Encourage children to follow along as you read Genesis 32:11–12.

That night, something amazing happened: I wrestled with God until morning. Encourage kids to turn to verses 24–28 and follow along as you read. I wrestled with God! And now I have this limp to prove it. Limp as if your hip socket is out of place. Most importantly, God blessed me and gave me a new name: Israel. That experience changed my life. I became a different man.

When I saw my brother the next morning, I bowed to the ground. Then Esau did something that surprised me: He hugged me! Can you imagine? I expected my brother to be really angry, but instead he reached out his arms for a hug! We cried and cried together. God had changed my brother's heart too. God had faithfully taken care of me like He had promised.

My relationship with God was a journey. Sometimes God revealed Himself to me, protected me, or blessed me. Other times I cried out to Him for help and turned away from my sins. I even wrestled with God and He wrestled with me! God never gave up on me. He is faithful.

God wants you to know Him too. He loves you and invites you to be part of His big story. It's a story He's still writing, and because He's faithful, He will finish it. Share a personal story of a time you saw God's faithfulness in your life.

SMALL GROUP SECTION

RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Reflect: God Is Faithful

Encourage the children to open their Bibles to the suggested passages.

Questions for Younger Kids

- Why was Jacob scared to see his brother, Esau? Genesis 27:41
- Have you ever had a dream about heaven or God? What was it like?
- Have you ever had to apologize for something? How did it feel?
- Why did Jacob wrestle with God? Genesis 32:24–28

Questions for Older Kids

- Do any of you feel that you know facts about God but you don't really know Him?
- What do you think it means to experience God?
- Why did God change Jacob's name to Israel? Genesis 32:28
- Why do you think Jacob sent gifts ahead to his brother Esau? Genesis 32:17–21
- Have you ever done anything like that after you made somebody angry?

BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

As you bless your kids, tell them they have the opportunity to also be a blessing to others. Encourage them to freely share the joy and love they have received from God.

Encourage children to sit in a circle and take turns sharing ways they have seen God's faithfulness recently. After each person shares, have the group clap as they thank and praise God for His faithfulness. After a few children have shared, open a Bible and read Psalm 100:4–5:

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

May you see God's faithfulness in your life. May you praise Him for His goodness and love.