

Sibling Rivalry – Jacob/Esau & Joseph

Materials

- Bibles
- Scissors
- Watercolor paints
- Paint brushes
- Small bowl for water
- Fur fabric
- Glue
- Copy of coats pages on cardstock

Introduction

Discuss:

- Do you have a brother or sister?
- How about a cousin or close friend?
- What are some of the “not so good” things about having siblings?
- What are some of the good things about having siblings?
- Have you ever argued with that person?

Explain: Sometimes we fight with people we like, and even love, because we both want to get our own way. Did you know that the Bible is full of stories about people who wanted to be in control and who had trouble getting along with each other?

Story One – Jacob & Esau

Last time we learned about Abraham and Sarah’s baby, Isaac. Isaac grew up and had a family of his own. His wife was named Rebekah. Listen to what happened when she was pregnant.

Read Genesis 25:22-34

So, Jacob tricked his brother Esau out of his blessing – something that was supposed to go to the oldest son. There was more cheating ahead, and this time their mother helped. Isaac was very old and blind. He asked Esau to go out hunting and to bring the animal back home to cook it for him. He promised that then he would give him his blessing.

Rebekah heard the whole thing. She hatched a plan in which Isaac would trick his blind father into thinking that he was Esau.

Read 27:11-12, 15-16.

The trick was that his blind father would feel Isaac and think he was touching Esau.

Read 27:18, 19

The trick worked, and Isaac gave Esau’s blessing to Jacob.

Read 27:28, 29

When Esau found out that Jacob had tricked their father like this, he got so mad that Jacob had to run away.

Discuss:

- Who wanted Jacob to be the leader of the family?
- Do you think it was fair that Jacob got to be the leader of the family? Why?
- What do you think happened in Isaac's home (tent) the day after that whole stolen blessing episode?

There were consequences to Jacob's actions. He was forced to flee to escape the wrath of Esau. While in exile he met and fell in love with his future wife Rachel; however, he himself was also tricked into taking her older sister Leah as a wife as well.

With this story, it is too easy to get caught up in the tricks and not realize that God has the bigger picture in mind. He makes good out of the whole situation, which plays out over the course of Jacob's life and beyond. As Jacob returns to his brother in Genesis 32, we see God at work, laying the foundation for his people. In Genesis 32:22-32, Jacob spends an entire night wrestling with an angel of God. At the end of that evening, the angel blesses Jacob and gives him a new name, Israel, because he has wrestled with God and with humans and has prevailed.

Israel then reconciles with his brother and fathers an incredible leader in Joseph. God never loses sight of the big picture and with time, always makes good out of bad.

Let's move on now to the story about Jacob's sons. Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter. Joseph was Jacob's eleventh son. Let's find out how Jacob's sons got along with each other.

Read Genesis 37:1-28

Discuss:

- Why were Joseph's brothers so jealous?
- What upset them about Joseph's dreams?
- How did they respond to this frustration?
- What did they do to Joseph?
- Why do you think God included this story in our Bible?
- How does this story point us to Jesus?

Even if our family members do things that frustrate us, we know we are always part of God's family. God loves us unconditionally and will never let us down. In our own families, we can try to model this love to each other but we're still going to mess up and frustrate each other. When this happens, we remember the love of Jesus and His instructions to love and forgive one another just as we are loved and forgiven.

Time Capsule

Decorate two small coats to add to your time capsule, one representing Jacob when he tricked Isaac into giving him Esau's blessing and one for Joseph and his coat of many colors. Cut out the small coats.

For Jacob's coat, color it with crayons and cut out chunks of furry fabric to glue onto the coat.

For Joseph's coat, use watercolor paints to make it colorful.