



UNIT 3 | SESSION 4

GOD CHANGED JACOB

GENESIS 25–33

KEY PASSAGE:

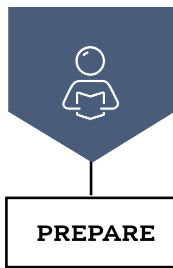
Psalm 135:5-6

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth. Nothing is outside of God's good plan.

CHRIST CONNECTION:

God changed Jacob's life and gave him a new name, Israel. Jesus came so that we might have a changed life, forgiven of sin. Jesus' death and resurrection provided sinful people the way to be adopted into God's family. When we trust in Jesus, we also receive a new name—children of God.



PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



PREPARE
PREPARE YOUR HEART TO TEACH; PLAN THE SESSION

WELCOME
GREET KIDS AND OPEN THE SESSION

LEARN
TEACH KIDS THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LOVE
LEAD KIDS TO LOVE THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

LIVE
LEAD KIDS TO LIVE OUT THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

LEADER Bible Study

Jacob’s journey in Genesis is one of unexpected and undeserved blessing after blessing. With a name that literally means “he cheats,” Jacob was a surprising recipient of the privilege and opportunity God gave him.

Jacob was a cheater, a liar, and a deceiver. He was quiet and not strongly gifted. And he was gullible, too. We cannot miss that the deceiver was deceived at times too—easily convinced by his mother and tricked by his uncle. But God would work through Jacob when no circumstances or characteristics made it seem possible.

In Genesis 32:10, Jacob expressed his own bewilderment to the Lord. “I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. Indeed, I crossed over the Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two camps.”

Jacob came to realize that nothing that he had accomplished or accumulated was the result of his own doing. He was not capable or competent enough to produce the many good things he had received and especially not to be the recipient of the promise of God to make his family like the dust of the earth. Jacob was humbled by the reality that through him and his offspring, all of the families of the earth would be blessed.

Have you ever had a moment of astonishment at the magnitude of what God has given you through Christ? Have you taken the time to recognize that all that you have is from God? Does it cause you to rejoice when you think about God’s grace?

It’s easy to look at Jacob and say he didn’t deserve what God gave him. It’s hard to feel that way about ourselves. But it’s just as true.

Paul wrote in Romans 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Salvation should bring about this astonishment in us as well. It should remind us that we are not worthy, and it should lead us to rejoice in the undeserving gift of God’s grace.

FACTS TO KNOW

Name changes in the Bible: Jacob was the third person to be renamed by God, after Abraham and Sarah. God usually gave a person a new name to indicate a new identity. Jacob’s new name—*Israel*—became the name of God’s people.



WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

SAY “ If you could change your name, would you? Why or why not? What would you call yourself? ”

2 SESSION STARTER

OPTION 1: QUICK CHANGES



Guide kids to form pairs. Instruct one partner to turn her back or close her eyes. Give the other partner 30 seconds to change three things about his physical appearance. He might untie or remove a shoe, move his watch to his opposite hand, restyle his hair, tuck or untuck a shirt, and so on. Then challenge the first partner to identify the three changes.

Switch rolls and play again. As time allows, form new pairs and play again.

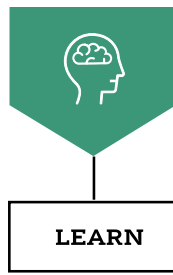
SAY “ We will hear a Bible story today about how God changed Isaac’s son Jacob. God changes us too. Sometimes these changes are obvious and happen quickly. Sometimes God changes us subtly and slowly. ”

OPTION 2: NAME SIGNS

Provide chenille craft stems of various colors. Invite kids to use the craft stems to form their first names. Instruct kids to connect the letters in a cursive style or with extra pieces of craft stems.

Help kids cut lengths of fishing line or twine and tie it to each end of their name signs so they can hang them in a locker or in their rooms.

SAY “ Our names are something we do not get to pick. Usually, our parents choose our names for us. In the Bible, a person’s name was sometimes given by a family members other than the parents. Sometimes a name was given by God. God told Abraham and Sarah to name their baby Isaac. When Isaac had a son, he named him Jacob. Today, we will hear how God changed Jacob—including his name. ”



THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

LEARN the Bible Story

1 TELL THE BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Genesis 25–33. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “God Changed Jacob.” Use the bolded text to retell or review the story.

GOD CHANGED JACOB

“**Abraham’s son Isaac grew up and married Rebekah.** When Rebekah was pregnant, God told her she would have two boys. God said, “They will grow up and have families who will be two separate nations. One nation will be stronger than the other, and the older child will serve the younger.”

Rebekah gave birth to twins. Esau was born first, and then Jacob. When they grew up and their father Isaac was old, **Isaac wanted to bless Esau. Instead, Jacob tricked Isaac and stole his brother’s blessing. Esau was very angry, so Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob away.**

One night, God spoke to Jacob: “I am the God of your grandfather, Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. I will give you and your offspring this land.” **God made the same covenant with Jacob as He had made with Abraham. God said, “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go.”** Jacob promised to follow God and honor Him.

Years passed. Jacob got married and had a family. Finally, Jacob took his family and all his possessions **and headed home to Canaan.** Jacob was afraid that Esau would still be angry with him for stealing his blessing. **He sent a large gift of animals to try to make Esau happy.**

That night, a man appeared to Jacob. The man wrestled with Jacob all night. Jacob refused to give up, so the man injured Jacob’s hip.

“I will not let You go unless You bless me,” Jacob said.

“Your name will no longer be Jacob,” said the man. “Your name will be Israel because you wrestled with God and men, and you have won.” The man blessed Jacob.

Now Jacob went to meet Esau. Esau ran to Jacob and hugged him. He was not angry anymore.

Esau returned to his home. Jacob and his family traveled on, and Jacob bought land for them to live on. **Jacob was finally home in the land God had promised him.**

Christ Connection: God changed Jacob’s life and gave him a new name, Israel. Jesus came so that we might have a changed life, forgiven of sin. Jesus’ death and resurrection provided sinful people the way to be adopted into God’s family. When we trust in Jesus, we also receive a new name—children of God. ”

STORYTELLING TIPS

Make a sketch: As you tell the story, draw stick figures and label them with names to help kids understand the relationship between Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob.

Use dramatic dialogue: Stand in one place when speaking the words of God. Stand in another place when speaking Jacob’s words.

Small Group Discussion/Questions

2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

SAY “ Before they were even born, God told Rebekah that the boys would form two nations, so Jacob and Esau’s relationship was rough from the start. They struggled in the womb, and Jacob was born grabbing onto Esau’s heel. Then, even though he was younger, Jacob received the birthright because Esau traded it to him for some stew. Later, when Isaac was old and blind, the time came for Isaac to bless Esau. With the blessing came the privilege given to the firstborn—leadership over the family. Jacob deceived his father and stole his brother’s blessing.

Was Esau OK with that? Look at Genesis 27:41. [**Choose a volunteer to read aloud Gen. 27:41.**] Esau was angry. He planned to kill Jacob. Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob away from home. Rebekah expected him to be gone for a few days—just until Esau calmed down. (See Gen. 27:44.) But days and then weeks and then months passed; Jacob was away for 20 years. In that time, he became the father of 12 sons.

God was with Jacob. He had reaffirmed to Jacob the promise He gave Abraham and Isaac. But Jacob was still nervous about going home because Esau was there. Jacob encountered the Lord one night when he wrestled a man. The man was actually an appearance of God. Did Jacob win the wrestling match? Was he stronger than the Lord? Look at Genesis 32:24-25. [**Choose a volunteer to read aloud Gen. 32:24-25.**] The victory was unexpected. Jacob did not win by strength—God proved His power by crippling Jacob with just a touch—but by confessing his dependence on God.

Jacob had nowhere else to turn. His whole life, he had tried to get his own way by tricking people and working things out by his own plans. But now Jacob realized he could not succeed by his own strength. So Jacob held onto God and would not let go. Just before dawn, God showed grace to Jacob and blessed him. ”

3 CHRIST CONNECTION

SAY “ God changed Jacob’s life and gave him a new name, Israel. From Jacob’s descendants—from the nation of Israel—God would bring into the world His Son, Jesus. Jesus came so that we might have a changed life, forgiven of sin. Jesus’ death and resurrection provided sinful people the way to be adopted into God’s family. When we trust in Jesus, we also receive a new name—children of God. ”

(Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

2 GROUP DISCUSSION

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

| **SAY** “ How did God change Jacob? ”

God not only blessed Jacob, He gave Jacob a new name. Jacob meant “deceiver.” He had tricked his father and cheated his brother. Jacob’s new name was Israel, which meant “struggles with God.” God changed Jacob from the inside out. He gave Jacob a limp, humbling him. From then on, Jacob would look to God, not himself, for everything he needed.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Prov. 22:4.)

| **SAY** “ How can God use difficult circumstances for our good? ”

Guide kids to consider how difficulties can draw us closer to God, leading us to turn away from sin and depend completely on Him. Remind kids that Jacob clung to God because he knew he would have no success apart from God’s blessing. Desperation and dependence may seem like weakness, but that place of humility is where we find the power of God.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 2 Cor. 1:8-9.)

| **SAY** “ How does God change us? ”

When we trust in Jesus, God changes us from the inside out. Jesus forgives our sin and adopts us into His family. When we are adopted into the family of God, we also receive a new name and identity—children of God. He blesses us and gives us the mission of telling others about Him.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 John 3:1.)