

Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children

Proper 11 (A)

Old Testament: Genesis 28:10-19

BACKGROUND

The Season After Pentecost is the longest season of the church year, spanning almost half the calendar year. The weeks after Pentecost are called Ordinary Time coming from the word “ordinal” which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. The liturgical color of the season is green. It is often thought of as a season of growth both in our personal faith and in the life of the church. Common themes to focus on throughout the season are:

- Our relationship with God.
- Our relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another through our prayers, the sacraments and life in the body of Christ.
- The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- The Church and its work for God’s mission.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK’S READING

The Book of Genesis provides the foundational stories of our faith: God’s calling of a people; their often failed responses to Him; and God’s steadfast love throughout. The Abraham saga tells of the formation of the nation of Israel, beginning with the faithfulness of its patriarch, Abraham. Although disillusioned with the wickedness of men, God separates out one family line to bring divine blessing to all subsequent families of the world. Abraham, the model of absolute faithfulness, trust, and obedience, is symbolic of Israel’s idealized self. At the request of God, Abraham leaves his homeland travels to a promised land. God promises him an heir even though Abraham and his wife Sarah are long past childbearing age and Sarah gives birth to Isaac. Isaac marries Rebekah who gives birth to twins, Esau and Jacob. Jacob tricks his brother Esau out of his birthright and blessing. Jacob then leaves his home for two reasons: Esau wants to harm him and his parents want him to take a wife from among their own people. This is also an etiological story that explains the significance of Bethel as an important place of worship. Bethel means ‘house of God.’ The phrase ‘the gate of heaven’ suggests the ancient view that a sanctuary was a place where God came down to meet the people.

THEME

The Lord is with Us

BEFORE CLASS

You will need copies of the scripture for each child, a stone for each child, blue watercolors or diluted blue tempera paint, wide paintbrushes, paper, crayons, a bible map or atlas. Make sure to prepare all the art supplies and locate Jacob's travels on a map. It might be fun to have one of the musical renditions of "Jacob's Ladder" ready to play while the children do the art project.

BEGINNING

We are in the middle of a very long story called a saga. A saga is a story that follows one family through many generations over a long time. This is the saga of Abraham and his family. Let's review who is in that family. Abraham was a man of great faith and obedience. God promised Abraham a new land and many descendants if he would move to the land God showed him. When Abraham and his wife Sarah were very old, God gave them a son named Isaac. When Isaac grew up, he married Rebekah. Rebekah had twin boys named Jacob and Esau. Jacob tricked Esau out of his inheritance and blessing. Then Jacob ran away from home because Esau wanted to harm him.

Let's trace Jacob's journey on our map. Trace a path from Beer-sheeba to Luz/Bethel and then Haran.

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Lord, wherever we travel in life we know that you are there with us. Help us to remember this and be strong because of your presence. Amen.

THE STORY: GENESIS 28:10-19

Jacob left home carrying a heavy load in his heart. It was sad to say goodbye to his parents, Isaac and Rebekah. They were very old and he didn't know if he would ever see them again. Jacob was afraid. He had never traveled alone. What if Esau came looking for him and still wanted to harm him? What if he met robbers along the way? Jacob started to feel bad about the mean trick he had played on Esau and for lying to his father, Isaac. Sad and worried, Jacob was on his way to a town called Haran, hoping to stay with his mother's people for a while. Now the sun was setting and Jacob was getting very tired. He came to a certain place and decided to spend the night there. He took a stone from the place and put it under his head for a pillow and soon he fell asleep. Jacob began to dream. He dreamt he saw a very, very tall ladder that reached all the way up to heaven. Angels of the Lord were going up and down on the ladder. And the Lord God himself stood next to Jacob and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your children and your children shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and your children. Jacob, know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you."

Jacob woke up with a start from his dream. He said, “Surely the Lord is in this place and I didn’t know it.” It was still dark out. Jacob started to feel afraid and said, “How awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” That meant that this was the place where God met the people. Jacob got up early that morning. He took the stone that had been his pillow and stood it up as a pillar. [A column or post] He poured oil over it as a way of anointing it, which means making it holy for God. Jacob called the place Bethel, which means house of God. Many generations came to worship God in that holy place. Our church building is one of many holy places where we can spend time.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder what stands out for you about this story?
- I wonder if you have ever been sorry about something you have done?
- Have you ever dreamt about something that seemed so real?
- I wonder why Jacob built the stone altar?

ACTIVITY: REMEMBERING WITH STONES

Pass out stones and ask the children to hold them in their hands. Comment on the hardness and permanence of stone. What are some things that are built from stone? When we want something to last we build it out of stone. When we want to remember something we use stones. We build monuments out of stone. What did Jacob do with his stone? Let’s hold these stones in our hands to help us reflect on this story.

Do you remember God’s promise to Abraham? In the Bible a covenant is a sacred contract between God and humanity. Can you hear a covenant in Jacob’s dream? Can you think of anything in your family that is passed from one generation to the next?

In the Bible people believed that a dream that was not interpreted [not explained] was like a gift left unopened, especially if the dream was from God. Dreams use a language of symbols to show us something. Objects or people can stand for ideas or feelings. In Jacob’s dream, the ladder is an important symbol. What do you think it could mean? [Listen to their answers.] In the Old Testament, God enters into human history and communicates with people directly and through dreams, visions, and angels. Jesus is the ladder God gave us - a way we can get closer to God. What did God say to Jacob? How did that change things for Jacob?

Ask the children to place their stones on a table making an altar for our closing prayers.

ACTIVITY: WAX RESISTANCE TECHNIQUE

Have the children draw Jacob sleeping on the ground, God at the top of a ladder, and a few angels going up and down the ladder. Use light and bright-colored crayons. Press hard and fill each shape in completely. If they want to make the angels white, they can outline them in yellow and then fill them in with white crayon. Yellow and gold rays at

the top of the ladder can represent God speaking. When the drawing and coloring is complete, they can use blue watercolors or a diluted dark blue tempera wash. With a wide brush, they make wide strokes over the entire paper. The wax will resist the color of the wash. The places where there are no crayon marks will absorb the blue paint, giving the drawing the look of night time. This activity will help the children visualize and remember the story.

Variation: Use light and bright oil pastels on dark blue paper.

GETTING CLOSURE

Have the children help put all supplies away. Return to the circle. Invite them to share what they created today.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, Thank you for always being with us to love and care for us no matter where we go. Amen.

*Written by **Trudy Ardižzone**.*



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Abraham's Family Tree

