

Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Proper 12 (A)

Old Testament: Genesis 29:15-28

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. Today’s story highlights marriage customs of the time: multiple wives, a bride price, and older daughters having to wed before younger. It sets the stage for the growth of Israel into twelve tribes.

THEME

Waiting and Patience

BEFORE CLASS

You will need a small piece of yarn and a timer or watch with a second hand. You will also need a Bible map or atlas if you wish to do map work. Add two empty triangles to the God Creates a Great Nation chart. [See Attachment One] Prepare the twelve squares with the sons' names.

BEGINNING

There are two empty triangles on our chart today. I wonder why? [Entertain answers, if offered.] Do you remember when we talked about God making a promise to Abraham? [Review the promise] God had a plan to make a great nation from one person. God can make a lot from very little. Let's find out today what happens to Jacob that helps further God's plan for a great nation.

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Lord, help us to serve you with patience and determination. Amen.

THE STORY: GENESIS 29:15-28

Jacob had left home in fear and sadness. His brother Esau had threatened to harm Jacob because Jacob had tricked him out of his inheritance. But Jacob was also on a journey to find something. Can you guess what? He was looking for a wife. His parents wanted him to find a wife from their own people back in Haran. The Canaanites, who lived in his home land, practiced a different religion. God had spoken to Jacob in a dream. God promised Jacob that He would always be with Jacob and care for him no matter where Jacob went. This made Jacob feel stronger and not so afraid. I wonder if feeling God's love for him made him start to want to be a better man?

Jacob's journey took him to the people of the east, his mother's relatives in Haran. There was a well where shepherds were waiting to water their sheep. Jacob saw Rachel with her flock. She was the daughter of Laban, Jacob's mother Rebekah's brother, which made Laban Jacob's uncle. Rachel's beauty caught Jacob's eye and he began to fall in love with her. Jacob wanted to impress her with his strength, so he removed the huge stone that was covering the well all by himself. He introduced himself and told her who his people were. Rachel ran to get her father. Laban invited Jacob to stay with them a little while.

So Jacob agreed to stay and started to do work for Laban. After a month had passed, Laban said to Jacob, "Just because you are my nephew that doesn't mean that you have to work for me for nothing. What can I pay you?" Laban had two daughters. Leah was the oldest. Rachel the younger daughter had already won Jacob's heart with her grace and beauty. In those days, if you wanted to marry a girl you had to give her father a gift called a bride price. Jacob had left home with nothing. He had nothing to offer Laban but himself. So Jacob answered Laban, "I will serve you for seven years in exchange for your daughter Rachel as my wife." Laban agreed saying, "It is better that I give her to you than a stranger. Stay with me."

So Jacob worked for Laban for seven years taking care of his crops and his flocks. The time seemed to pass quickly for him and he didn't mind the wait because he loved Rachel so much.

When the seven years were finished Jacob asked Laban to prepare the wedding feast. Laban gathered all the people of the place together to celebrate the wedding. It was the custom of the time for the bride to be completely covered by a veil. That night Jacob the old trickster got tricked himself. Guess who was under the veil? The older sister Leah! Jacob had been fooled into marrying the older daughter instead of Rachel. The next morning Jacob angrily complained to Laban, "What have you done to me? Did I not serve you for seven years in return for Rachel? Why have you fooled me?" Laban explained, "This is not done in our country for the younger one to be wed before the first born. Stay with Leah for a week. Then if you agree to work for me for another seven years I will let you have Rachel." Jacob agreed. The next week Laban allowed him to marry Rachel.

Jacob's love for Rachel must have been very strong. And I wonder if God was helping Jacob learn patience and determination. For the next seven years Jacob worked hard for his uncle Laban before he was allowed to return to his own home with his family. Over time Jacob became the father of twelve sons. According to God's plan, Jacob's twelve sons became the founding tribes of the great nation of Israel.

[Write in Leah and Rachel on the triangles.]

Note to the teacher: If the children are asking about Jacob and the two wives, you may want to let them know that those were different times.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Now I bet this story has you wondering about something: Why did Jacob have two wives? In Biblical times life was very hard. A family needed a lot of people to work the fields and care for the flocks. So the custom was that a man could have more than one wife so he could have a lot of children to help with the work. Women and children were considered the property of the father and then the husband. That's why young women had to be bought from their fathers for a bride price; also to compensate for the loss of their labor. I wonder what the girls thought of that. Today our custom is to marry only one person and women are independent and not the property of men.

There's a lot to think about in this little story:

- When Laban tricked him, was Jacob getting what he deserved?
- What do you think of choosing someone based on their looks?
- How do you think Leah felt when Jacob chose her younger sister?
- How did Jacob change in this story?
- What was God up to?
- Does seven years seem like a long time to you?

- I wonder if you have ever had to wait a long time for something you really wanted. [Listen to any stories offered] What does it take to wait for something you want? [Answers to listen for include patience, faith, and trust that you will eventually get it, determination.] Give the example of learning to play an instrument or a sport. It takes a long time to get really good at it, but if you really love what you are doing you don't mind. Have the children give examples of things that make time feel like its dragging and other things they love doing that makes time seem to fly. How did Jacob feel about the time he had to wait? How do you think God's plan for making a great nation was going?

ACTIVITIES

Games

In the Jacob stories there are several times when people are tricked and fooled. In real life this can cause a lot of anger and pain. We can play some games about fooling people because it will be just for fun.

The Real Rachel

This is a simple guessing game. Make a simple nametag that says Rachel. Have several children cover their faces with veils. Put the nametag on one. Make sure it is covered with the veil. The rest of the children are Jacobs. Each bride says, "Jacob will you choose me?" aloud. Then the Jacobs try to guess the real Rachel. When all have guessed, the brides remove their veils and the real Rachel takes a bow.

Waiting Game: The One-Minute Challenge

Children have a much different sense of time than do adults. A minute can seem like an eternity to a waiting child. Remind the children how long Jacob had to wait for what he wanted. Talk again about the personal qualities it takes to wait successfully: patience and determination. Use a timer or a watch for these challenges. Make a flourish of starting and ending time. [For example you could say on your mark, get set, go, or time is almost up.] The Challenges: 1. Standing on One Foot 2. No smiling 3. Keep your eyes closed until I say, "open them." 4. Others you might think of.

GETTING CLOSURE

Have the children help put all supplies away. Return to the circle. Teach the Indian greeting of "Namaste." Explain that this means that 'the Spirit of God in me recognizes and greets the Spirit of God that lives in your heart.' Have the children bow to each one as they go around the circle saying "Namaste."

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, Thank you for being patient with us. Help us to be kind and patient with everyone in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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Abraham's Family Tree

