

Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

Esau and Jacob



Growing in God's Love

A Story Bible Curriculum

Unit Overview and Connecting page written by Carol A. Wehrheim
Sessions written by Edye Bender

Esau and Jacob

Introduction	2
Unit Overview	3
Intergenerational and Home Ideas	4



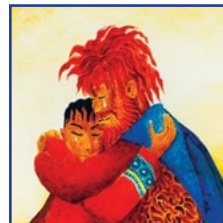
How the Twins Were Born 8
Genesis 25:19–28



When Things Get Really Scary 22
Genesis 32:22–32



Esau and Jacob Both Want Their Share 14
Genesis 27:1–29



How Esau and Jacob Got Over It 30
Genesis 32–33

The free At-Home Kit Guide provides instructions and suggestions for at-home faith formation. Download it at www.pcusastore.com/StoryBibleCurriculum or www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/StoryBibleCurriculum. Click on the unit title, and then click on the download button found at the bottom of the product page for this unit.

© 2020 Westminster John Knox Press

First edition
Published by Westminster John Knox Press
Louisville, Kentucky

All rights reserved. Except where permission to photocopy is expressly granted on the material, no part of these materials may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. For information, address Westminster John Knox Press, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40202-1396.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and are used by permission. In some instances, adaptations have been made to make the language inclusive. Scripture quotations marked CEB are from the Common English Bible, © 2011 by Common English Bible, and are used by permission.

Every effort has been made to determine whether texts are under copyright. If through an oversight any copyrighted material has been used without permission and the publisher is notified of this, acknowledgment will be made in future printings.

Printed in the United States of America

🌱 **Goal:** To explore the differences between Esau and Jacob that might have led to their rivalry.

Connecting with the Biblical Text

The story of Esau and Jacob begins with the pregnancy of Rebekah, who was barren until Isaac prayed to God on her behalf. From the beginning of her pregnancy, Rebekah knew that the babies in her womb were struggling with each other. God's answer gives her and us a clue as to what to expect from her sons throughout their lives. The younger son, Jacob, will dominate over the older son, Esau. This is a departure from the usual inheritance traditions, in which the oldest son takes the larger share and follows in the father's footsteps. The story of Esau and Jacob will turn the family upside down, even more than the birth of twins might. But God has given Rebekah the words to sustain her as a mother and to understand the importance of the children she will bear.

Read about this story and the continuing story of Esau and Jacob at bit.ly/JacobEsauCommentary.

Connecting with the World

- 🌱 As much as new parenthood feels overwhelming, parenting multiples—twins, triplets, and more—is an experience unlike any other. There is often a sense of feeling outnumbered. Read bit.ly/ParentingMultiples for information on the challenges of multiples.
- 🌱 Abraham and Sarah have died, so there are no grandparents around to help this family care for these twins. No doubt others assisted in caring for the babies, but grandparents can often be a go-between for both parents and children. To get some information on all aspects of grandparenting, go to bit.ly/GrandparentingTips.
- 🌱 Many families today live hundreds of miles from their extended family. How might your congregation match families with older adults as surrogate aunts, uncles, or grandparents?

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

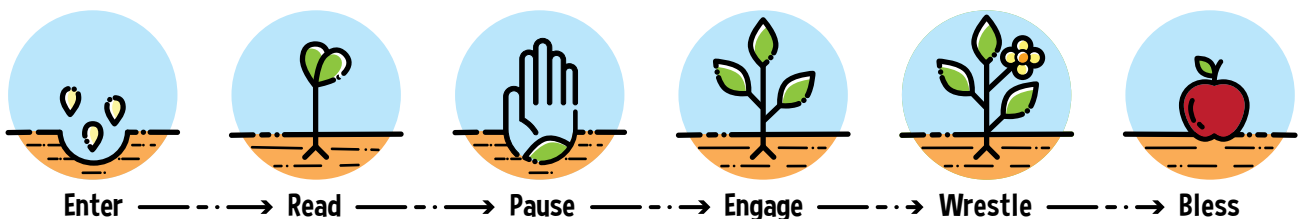
While most children are excited at the prospect of a baby brother or sister, few have any idea of the change in family life and structure this requires. The role of family friends, especially from the congregation, can be a steadying force for the child when the new baby comes home. Such friendships are also important to the spiritual lives of children as models for faithful living. Spending an afternoon with a church friend with the older child or children as the center of attention can do much to ease the tension created by the changes in the family routine and structure at home.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

The birth or adoption of a child brings new opportunities for the spiritual growth of the parents. The wonder of the tiny body is a profound spiritual experience for many new parents. Some who have grown away from a relationship with God or the church find themselves drawn to the spirituality latent in them. Alert pastors and church members will look for ways to help these parents mature in their spirituality.

- 🌱 How does your congregation minister to new parents or to families who have added a new child?
- 🌱 If you are a parent, how did becoming a parent awaken your spirituality or deepen your relationship with God?
- 🌱 How does your congregation celebrate the baptism of a child or mark the anniversaries of baptisms?

Loving God, we thank you for the joy that enters our homes with the presence of children and the adults who care for them and show them your love. Amen.



Gathering Supplies

Based on your choices, you will need:

- ✦ *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*
- ✦ Floor pillows, cushions, or beanbag chairs
- ✦ Resource Page 1
- ✦ Battery-operated candle
- ✦ Drawing supplies
- ✦ Balloons of two different colors with three of each color
- ✦ *The Pain and the Great One* by Judy Blume (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2014)
- ✦ Copies of Resource Page 2

Preparing to Lead

Read the story of Esau and Jacob's birth from the Bible (Gen. 25:21–28). As you read, make note of the parts of the story that stand out to you or raise questions. Then read the story "How the Twins Were Born" in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* (p. 30). Think about the ways you engage this story.

- ✦ What parts of this story set up the rivalry that Esau and Jacob will experience?
- ✦ How have you experienced rivalry in your life?
- ✦ How is Rebekah's pregnancy alike or different from pregnancies you have known?
- ✦ Where do you sense God's presence in this story?

The story of Esau and Jacob (and Isaac and Rebekah) is filled with interesting and difficult family dynamics. This story begins to set up those dynamics.

- ✦ What are some warning signs of the dysfunction that is to come?
- ✦ What advice would you have for Isaac and Rebekah?
- ✦ What would we miss learning about God's love if Esau and Jacob's family had been easy and conflict free?
- ✦ What can the stories of Esau and Jacob teach the children in your group?

Recall the faces and names of the children in your group. What do you know about them? Pray for them and for your time together.

As children gather, invite volunteers to create a comfortable seating area with items such as floor pillows, cushions, or beanbag chairs in a circle. Place a small table or cloth on the floor with the story Bible and a candle.



Enter into sacred space together.

Invite the children to gather in the seating area. Show the children Resource Page 1 and wonder together about the following:

- ✦ What do these twin babies have in common?
- ✦ What differences do they have?
- ✦ How do you think their parents can tell them apart?
- ✦ What do you imagine they will be like when they are as old as you are?

Encourage the children to tell about twins they know and how they are alike or different from each other. Point out that even though twins have some things in common (they were born at the same time, have the same parents, probably have grown up with similar experiences), they have likes, dislikes, and personality traits that are just as different as those between any two people.

Turn on the candle and pray:

Lord God, we thank you for making each of us in our own way, with our own personalities! Help us use our differences to help one another and the world. Amen.



Read a story of God's people.

Invite the children to hear about a set of twins in the Bible. Read the first four paragraphs of the story "How the Twins Were Born" (p. 30). Have a conversation using the questions below.

- ✦ What did Rebekah guess about her babies before they were born?
- ✦ Do you think she was right?

Read the rest of the story and then talk about the following questions:

- ✦ Why were the twins named Esau and Jacob?
- ✦ What were some of the things they had in common?
- ✦ What were some of the differences they had?



Pause to let God's Word enter into hearts and minds.

Ask the children to maintain silence for a few moments. Encourage them to use their curiosity and imagination as they ponder this story. Suggest that they may use the drawing supplies quietly as they think about some differences between Esau and Jacob. They can draw or write their ideas.



Engage curiosity and imagination with God's story.

Engage the children's curiosity about the story by having them think about a friend or relative who is different than them in several ways. Maybe that person is taller or shorter, athletic, artistic, musical, older or younger, louder or quieter.

- ✎ In what ways do your differences help you to be friends or work well together?
- ✎ Are there ways that your differences make it hard to get along?
- ✎ In what ways could Esau's and Jacob's differences make it hard for them to get along?

○ Role-Playing Esau and Jacob

- ✎ Form pairs among the children and have one pretend to be Esau while the other pretends to be Jacob. Invite the pairs to use what they have learned about these boys' personalities to make up a conversation about what they want to do with some free time this afternoon.

If your group has an odd number, you may participate as a character!

- ✎ After a few minutes of role-playing, discuss:
 - All of you who played Esau, what were some of the things you wanted to do?
 - For those who played Jacob, what were some of the things you wanted to do?
 - Do you think that these boys spent a lot of time arguing? Why or why not?
 - Can you remember a time when you had this sort of problem with a friend or sibling? How did that make you feel?



Wrestle with our place in God's story.

○ Rivalries

- ✎ Think together about ways that differences can become fights or rivalries. Sometimes, rivalry can be fun, such as in a game. Invite all the "Esaus" from the first exercise to form a group, and have all the "Jacobs" form another group. Give each group their own color of an inflated balloon and ask them to work together to keep that balloon in the air. See whether the "Esaus" or the "Jacobs" can keep the balloon up longer.

Challenge options:

1. Give each group several of the same color balloons.
 2. Create "rivalry" by telling the groups that besides keeping up their balloon(s), they can try to bat down their rivals' balloon(s).
-

- ✎ Discuss the following together:
 - Was it fun trying to beat the other team?
 - When might a rivalry quit being fun?
 - The story tells us that Jacob and Esau "wrestled with each other their whole lives." Do you think that sounds like a fun rivalry? Why or why not?
- ✎ Wonder with the children about where God is in this story.
 - Why do you think God made these boys so different from each other?
 - Why do you think God put them in the same family?
 - How do you think God can work through relationships that sometimes feel like rivalries?
- ✎ Have the children look back at what they drew or wrote during the "Pause" segment. Invite them to suggest ways Esau and Jacob could celebrate their differences instead of building up their rivalry.



Bless one another with God's grace.

Gather in a circle. Invite the children to create motions with their hands or whole bodies for the words in all capitals and italics as you read the following prayer:

Thank you, God for loving me,
whether I am *TALL* or *SHORT*
whether I like to *RUN* or *HOP* or *SIT*
whether I like to *SHOUT* or be *QUIET* as
a mouse.
Thank you for making me *ME!*
Amen.

Turn to the person on your right, place your hand on their shoulder, and say, “(Name,) God loves you!” Turn to the person on your left and do the same thing. Invite both people to continue the blessing around the circle. It will cross paths and return to you.



Grow with more.

○ Forced Choices

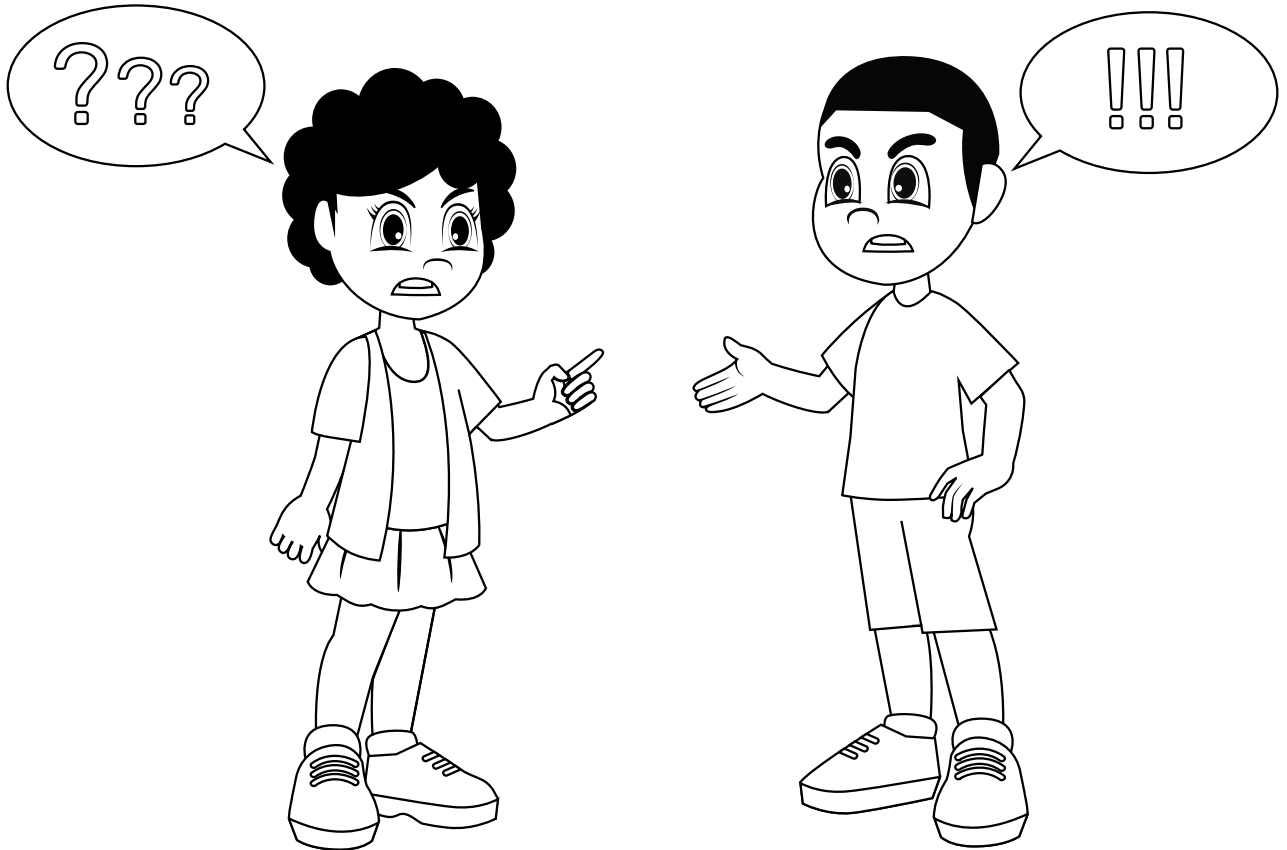
- ✦ Play a game of “Forced Choices.” Have the children think about differences within the group. Do they think that in some ways they might be as different as Esau and Jacob? Designate two areas that the children can move between easily (for instance, the right and left sides of your room). Call out two choices, and ask all the children to move to one side or the other (no standing in the middle!) to show their preference between the two things. Examples of choices might include: chocolate or vanilla, dogs or cats, summer or winter, doing some math or reading a book, choice of local sports team rivalries, choice between favorite restaurants in your area, and so on. Reflect on the activity together:
 - Did all of you agree on all the choices? on *any* choices?
 - Were you surprised by the differences in choice? Why or why not?
 - How do you think Esau and Jacob would have played “Forced Choices”?

○ Sibling Rivalry

- ✦ Read *The Pain and the Great One* by Judy Blume or watch the YouTube video “The Pain and the Great One children’s book read aloud by Books with Blue” (bit.ly/PainAndGreatOne, 5:54).
- ✦ Form pairs and hand out copies of Resource Page 2. Invite the pairs to respond to the prompts. They may wish to color as they talk about the prompts.
- ✦ Engage the children in conversation about the brother and sister stories they created.
- ✦ Wonder together:
 - When do you feel like the brother or sister with your siblings or friends?
 - What can you do when you feel like this?

How the Twins Were Born
Resource Page 1





- Make up a story for this brother and sister.

- How is your story similar to *The Pain and the Great One*?
- How do you think each sibling feels about the other?
- How do you know they have feelings of affection as well?
- What do you think the siblings could do to make their relationship better?