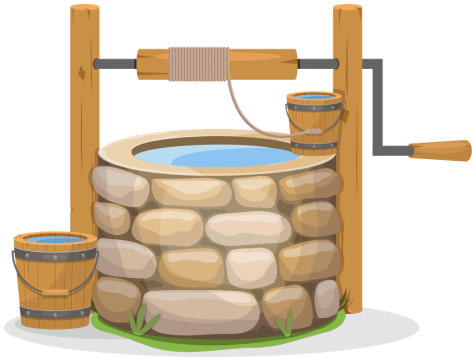
WELLS OF BLESSING



SERIES OVERVIEW

This series looks at Isaac and Jacob's story, focusing particularly on the themes of blessing, prayer, the flesh, ambition and then finishing with how Jesus fulfills the Lord's promises to Jacob and his descendants.

SESSION 1: ISAAC AND REBEKAH
(Introducing the concept of blessing)

SESSION 2: JACOB AND ESAU
(Esau sells his birthright and Jacob steals his blessing. Discussion on fleshly appetites and the effects on our ability to see clearly)

SESSION 3: JACOB SEEKS A WIFE
(Jacob's dream of the ladder to Heaven, as well as his marriage to Rachel and Leah and how God is faithful despite the messy family)

SESSION 4: GOD WATCHES OVER
(Laban repeatedly tricks Jacob and tries to amass wealth at his family's expense. Discussion on selfish-ambition and how we must seek first the kingom of Heaven)

SESSION 5: BLESSED AND FORGIVEN
(Jacob wrestles with God for a blessing and Esau forgives and welcomes Jacob home. Discussion on wrestling with God in prayer and not giving up)

SESSION 6: GREATER THAN JACOB
(A recap quiz on the series, followed by a look at three stories from Jesus' life and the question asked of him by the woman at the well in John 4 "Are you greater than our father Jacob?")

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WELLS OF BLESSING SESSION 1: ISAAC AND REBEKAH

Sarah died, Abraham sent his servant to find Isaac a wife from his relatives. Rebekah responds with faith and joy.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Story from Genesis 23 and 24

Discussion: Blessing

Prayer: blessing

Game: Camel in the middle

The story has been paraphrased and divided into numbered sections that can be cut out, put in a bucket and pulled out by the children. They can then read these in number order. Alternatively, you could use the paraphrase as a narrator's script while you play out the scenes using small world figures or the kids mime the story. Wherever a direct Bible quote is used, these are written in blue text.



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STORY



Abraham had had a long and remarkable life, having been called by God to leave the land of his fathers and journey to the land of Canaan. God had promised to give the land to his descendants one day and that through Abraham's descendants, the whole world would be blessed. Abraham and his wife Sarah were very old, when God gave Sarah a miraculous baby boy, named Isaac. Sarah lived to be 127 years old...that's very very old!! And then she died.

1

After Abraham had buried Sarah and mourned for her, he turned his attention to the future generations. He needed to find Isaac a wife. So he called his most trustworthy servant to him and made him promise to go to Abraham's relatives to find a wife for Isaac.
"What if she won't come?" Asked his servant. "Should I take Isaac to her?"

2

"No." replied Abraham. "The Lord, the God of heaven, took me away from my father's family. He brought me out of my own land. He made me a promise. He said, 'I will give this land to your family after you.' The Lord will send his angel ahead of you. So you will be able to get a wife for my son from there. The woman may not want to come back with you. If she doesn't, you will be free from your promise. But don't take my son back there." Genesis 24v7-8

3

So the servant loaded many gifts onto his master's camels and journeyed to the town of Nahor. They arrived in the evening and the servant had his camels kneel down by the well outside the town. He prayed, "Lord, you are the God of my master Abraham. Make me successful today. Be kind to my master Abraham. I'm standing beside this spring. The daughters of the people who live in the town are coming out here to get water. I will speak to a young woman. I'll say to her, 'Please lower your jar so I can have a drink.' Suppose she says, 'Have a drink of water, and I'll get some for your camels too.' Then let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. That's how I'll know you have been kind to my master." Genesis 24v12-14

4

Before he had finished praying, a young woman called Rebekah came to the well. The servant asked her for a drink. She immediately served him a drink and offered water to his camels. The servant did not say anything, but he watched her to see if God had answered his prayers.

5

The servant gave her gold jewellery and asked, "whose daughter are you? Can we stay in your father's house tonight?"
She answered, "I'm the daughter of Bethuel. He's the son Milkah had by Nahor." She continued, "We have plenty of straw and feed for your camels. We also have room for you to spend the night." Genesis 24v24-25
Then the servant worshipped God for leading him to his master's relatives.

6

Stop and think...
"What made the servant suspect that God was answering his prayers?"

7

STORY



Rebekah ran home and told her mother's household. Her brother Laban was especially excited to meet him! As soon as he saw the gold jewellery, Laban ran to the well to meet Abraham's servant and lead him to their home, saying, "come you who are blessed by the Lord!" 8

The servant was so excited to tell them why he had come and about how God had answered his prayers, that he refused to eat until he had told them. "Tell us then," said Laban.
So the servant told them how God had blessed his master Abraham and how Abraham had sent him to find a wife for Isaac among his relatives and how God had answered his prayers at the well. 9

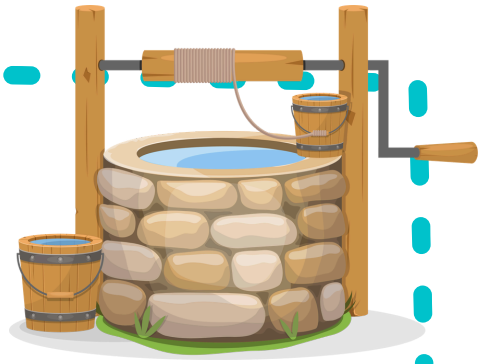
"Now tell me, what will your answer be?" asked the servant. Laban and Bethuel answered, "The Lord has done all of this. We can't say anything to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah. Take her and go. Let her become the wife of your master's son, just as the Lord has said." Genesis 28v51 10

The servant bowed and worshipped the Lord again. He gave gifts to Rebekah, her brother and her mother and had a very happy meal with them. In the morning, he was eager to leave and bring Rebekah to Isaac, but Laban said, "that's very fast! Let's ask Rebekah if she is willing to go."
Rebekah said, "I will go," and they blessed her. 11

Isaac was praying in the field when Rebekah came near. "Who is that in the field?" she asked. When she learned it was Isaac, she got down from her camel, covered herself with a veil and walked with the servant towards him. The servant told Isaac all that had happened and Isaac was delighted with Rebekah. They married immediately and Isaac loved Rebekah. He was comforted after his mother's death. 12

What do we learn about Rebekah's character in this story?
Think about how she acted at the well and how she responded to the servants story about God answering his prayer. 13

Considering God's promises to Abraham, why do you think it was important that Isaac found a wife? 14



BLESSING

Have the young people stand in a circle.

In the story, did you notice how many times blessing came up?
I want you to pass the ball to the next person around the circle when I say someone is blessed.

- Firstly, God blessed Abraham and Sarah with a son. [pass the ball to the next person]
- Then Abraham prayed for success for his servant, which is a kind of blessing, so we could say Abraham blessed his servant. [Pass the ball to the next person]
- When Rebekah met the servant, she blessed him with life-giving water. [Pass the ball]
- Then the servant blessed Rebekah and gave her gifts. [Pass the ball]
- When Laban saw the gifts, he blessed the servant and Abraham. [Pass the ball]
- When Rebekah agreed to be Isaac's wife, her family blessed her. [Pass the ball]
- When Rebekah married Isaac, within their marriage, they would bless one another. [Pass the ball]

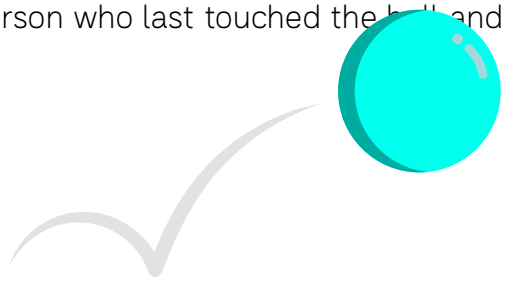
Blessing is a big part of Abraham and his descendants story!

Here is a helpful definition of what blessing is:
WHEN GOD BLESSES SOMEONE OR SOMETHING, IT BRINGS INTO REALITY THE THING THAT GOD IS SAYING. IT IS A CREATIVE ACT. BLESSING IS DRAWING FROM GOD'S LIFE-PRODUCING POWER AND DISTRIBUTING IT TO OTHERS, ENABLING CREATURES TO FLOURISH, BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY.

Rebekah drawing water from the well is a picture of a human image of God giving out God's life-producing blessing to others.

GAME: CAMEL IN THE MIDDLE

With the ball, have one person stand in the middle of the circle and the rest of you throw the ball back and forth across the circle, trying not to let the person in the middle catch it. When they do catch it, they switch places with the person who last touched the ball and so there is a new "camel in the middle".



PRAYER

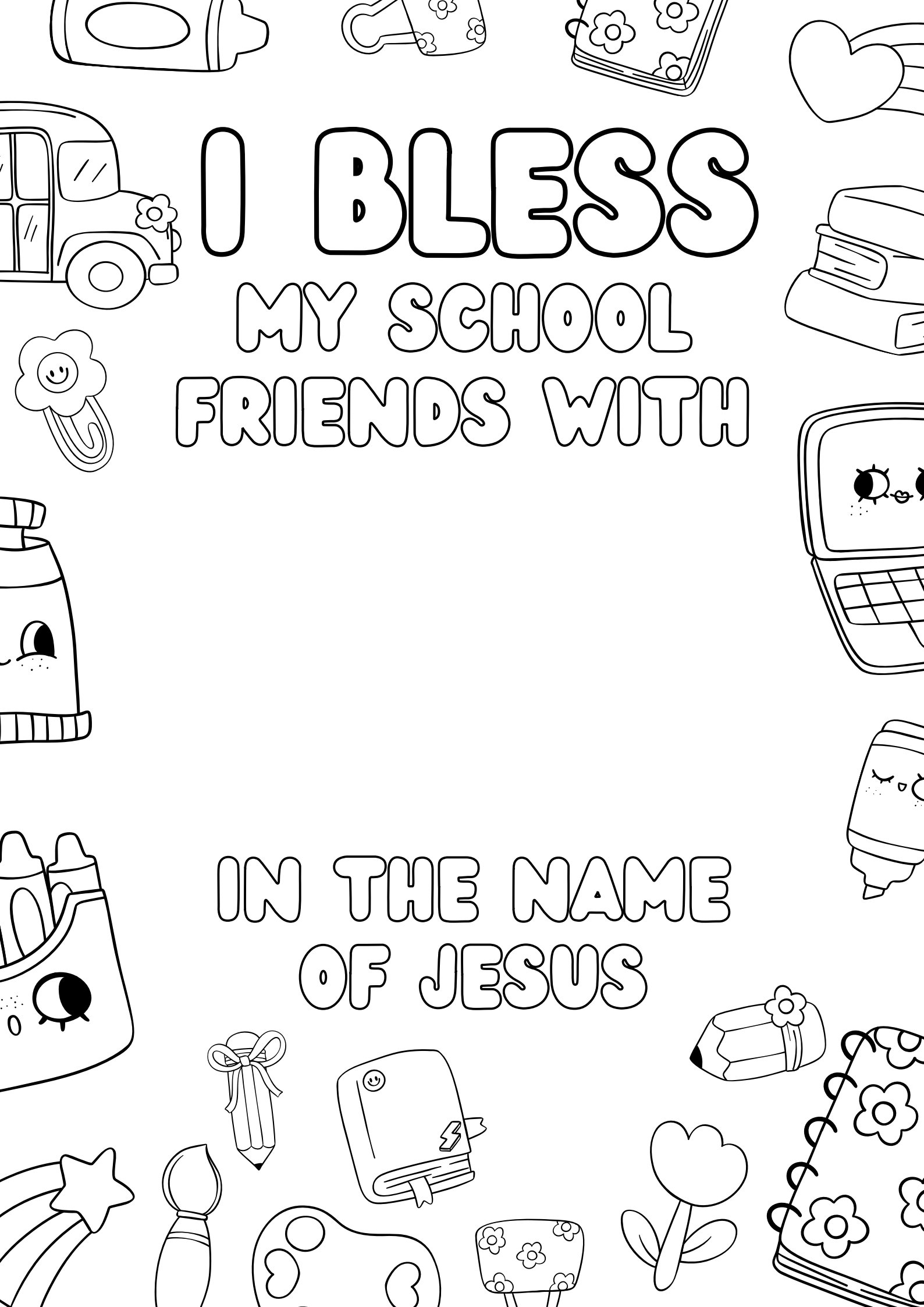
VIDEO ABOUT BLESSING

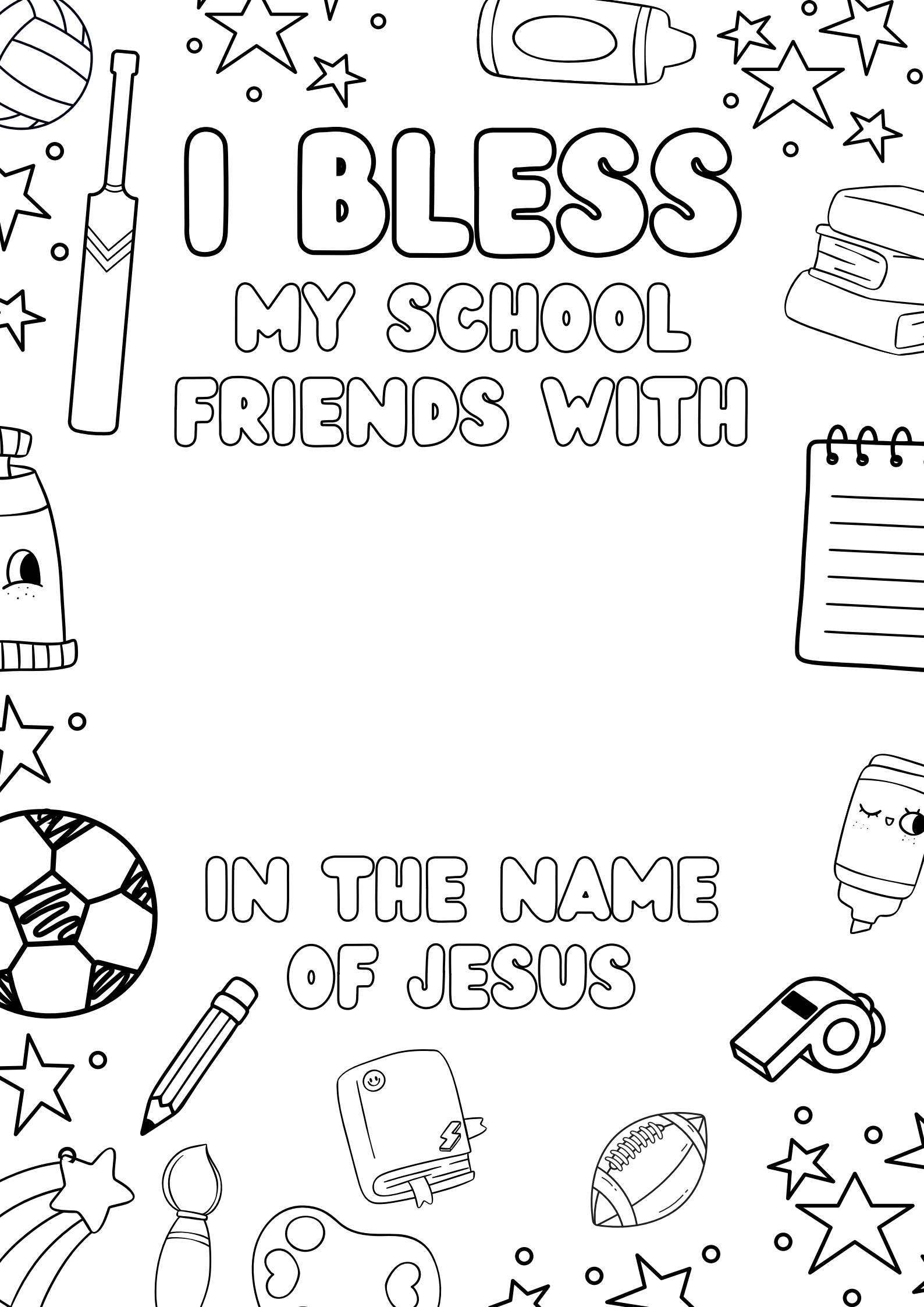
Watch the video on blessing that can be found on the local houses of prayer website, to help you understand the power and purpose of speaking blessing. Then have a go at writing a blessing. We will write a blessing in each session. The first one will be a blessing for our school friends. Encourage the children to read out their blessings at the end and to take them home and read them throughout the week as a prayer of blessing over their friends.

The video can be found on youtube at https://youtu.be/7wErOiivFVg?si=qUn1LxQA_iNyrbRi
Or on the home page of localhousesofprayer.org

A blessing prayer might be structured something like:

“I bless ...(my school friends)... with...(something good)... in the name of Jesus.


I BLESS
MY SCHOOL
FRIENDS WITH
IN THE NAME
OF JESUS


I BLESS
MY SCHOOL
FRIENDS WITH
IN THE NAME
OF JESUS



WELLS OF BLESSING SESSION 2: JACOB AND ESAU

Rebekah could not conceive. When Isaac prayed, the blessing of children was released. God spoke to Rebekah. Esau and Isaac were led by their stomachs, leading to blindness.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Story from Genesis 25 and 27

Discussion: Fleshly appetites

Prayer: Blessing

Game: Crispy Challenge

The story has been paraphrased and divided into numbered sections that can be cut out, put in a bucket and pulled out by the children. They can then read these in number order. Alternatively, you could use the paraphrase as a narrator's script while you play out the scenes using small world figures or the kids mime the story. Wherever a direct Bible quote is used, these are written in blue text.



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STORY



Isaac, son of Abraham, was 40 years old when he married Rebekah. For 20 years, Rebekah could not have children. You will remember that God had promised that Abraham's family would have God's blessing and God would give him as many descendants as the stars in the sky. So Isaac prayed for his wife to have children and, at last, the blessing came. Rebekah was pregnant, but she felt like there was a war going on inside her womb!

1

She said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to ask the Lord what she should do.
The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your body. Two tribes that are now inside you will be separated. One nation will be stronger than the other. The older son will serve the younger one." Rebekah gave birth to twin boys. One was red and hairy, called Esau and his younger brother Jacob came out grasping his heel.

2

As the boys grew up, Esau became a skilled hunter and Jacob preferred to stay near the tents and flocks, shepherding. Isaac loved Esau's wild game and so Esau was his favourite son. Rebekah loved Jacob... uh oh! Having favourites is a recipe for disaster!

3

One day Jacob was cooking some stew. Esau came in from the open country. He was very hungry. He said to Jacob, "Quick! I'm very hungry! Let me have some of that red stew!" That's why he was also named Edom.
Jacob replied, "First sell me the rights that belong to you as the oldest son in the family."
"Look, I'm dying of hunger," Esau said. "What good are those rights to me?"
But Jacob said, "First promise to sell me your rights." So Esau promised to do it. He sold Jacob all the rights that belonged to him as the oldest son. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. Esau ate and drank. Then he got up and left. So Esau didn't value the rights that belonged to him as the oldest son. Genesis 25v29-34

4

When Isaac was old, his eyesight grew worse. He called his son Esau to him and told him to go and hunt some of his favourite meat, then cook Isaac a delicious meal and Isaac would bless him. Esau went out to hunt.

5

Rebekah overheard what Isaac had said. She did not want Esau to receive the firstborn blessing. She wanted Jacob to have it. So, she called him and made a plan to trick Isaac. Jacob was scared. "What if he finds out it was a trick and curses me instead?" He asked. "Let any curse fall on me" said his mother and they set about wrapping Jacob's arms in goat skin to make them hairy. They dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes. Rebekah cooked stew just the way Isaac liked it and sent Jacob in to speak with his father.

6

He went to his father and said, "My father." "Yes, my son," Isaac answered. "Who is it?"
Jacob said to his father, "I'm your oldest son Esau. I've done as you told me. Please sit up. Eat some of my wild meat. Then give me your blessing." Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" "The Lord your God gave me success," he replied. Genesis 27v18-20

7

STORY



Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near so I can touch you, my son. I want to know whether you really are my son Esau.” Jacob went close to his father. Isaac touched him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob. But the hands are the hands of Esau.” Isaac didn’t recognize Jacob. Jacob’s hands were covered with hair like those of his brother Esau. So Isaac blessed him. “Are you really my son Esau?” he asked. “I am,” Jacob replied. Genesis 27v21-24

8

Isaac said, “My son, bring me some of your wild meat to eat. Then I’ll give you my blessing.” Jacob brought it to him. So Isaac ate. Jacob also brought some wine. And Isaac drank. Then Jacob’s father Isaac said to him, “Come here, my son. Kiss me.”
So Jacob went to him and kissed him. When Isaac smelled the clothes, he gave Jacob his blessing. Genesis 27v25-27

9

“It really is the smell of my son. It’s like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. May God give you dew from heaven. May he give you the richness of the earth. May he give you plenty of grain and fresh wine. May nations serve you. May they bow down to you. Rule over your brothers. May the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed. And may those who bless you be blessed.” Genesis 27v27-29

10

Jacob left hurriedly and just as he did, Esau arrived. Isaac was very confused when Esau announced his entry and it dawned on them both that Jacob had tricked them! They were furious! Esau pleaded with his father to bless him too, but Isaac had so thoroughly blessed Jacob, he could not think of anything more to give him. He said...

11

You will live far away from the fruit of the earth. You will live far away from the dew of heaven above. You will live by using the sword. And you will serve your brother. But you will grow restless. Then you will throw off the heavy load he has caused you to carry.” Genesis 27v39-41

12

Esau vowed to kill his brother just as soon as his father died and Rebekah overheard it. Esau had also married two Hittite wives by this time, which were making Rebekah’s life miserable, so Rebekah hatched another plan.

13

Rebekah went to Isaac and asked him to send Jacob away to find a wife for himself among their relatives, just as Abraham’s servant had done years before. Perhaps Jacob would find a blessing by the well, just as Abraham’s servant had done on Isaac’s behalf. So Isaac agreed and blessed Jacob, sending him to the house of Bethuel and Laban, Rebekah’s brother in search of a wife.

14

DISCUSSION:
FLESHLY DESIRES AND SPIRITUAL SIGHT

We saw last week that God was intent on blessing Abraham's family, however, the blessing was delayed. Rebekah was struggling to have a child. What did Isaac do in response?

Isaac prayed and the blessing was released. Prayer is very powerful, as we discussed last week, in releasing blessing.

When Rebekah asked the Lord what was going on inside her womb, what did God tell her?

As the first born son, Esau received the firstborn birthright, which in that culture meant that he would inherit a double portion of all of his parents property when his parents died and he would be responsible for the family.

What does the incident with the bowl of stew show us about Esau's desires? What does he think and care about? What does Jacob care about?

In the incident of the blessing, why does Isaac love Esau so much?

When you consider what God told Rebekah when the children were in her womb and that Rebekah would have surely told Isaac this, do you think Isaac was acting in line with God's plan or against it in wanting to bless Esau first?

There is a strong link in scripture between being driven by fleshly appetites like the desire for food or riches and with spiritual blindness. Esau was willing to give up his birthright for the sake of a meal and he chose for himself two wives from the Canaanites, who caused trouble for his parents. Isaac overlooked the promise of God, because he liked Esau's food the best.

As imperfect a character as we will see that Jacob is, one thing he doesn't lose sight of is the value of the blessing and promises of God.

Can you think of any "fleshly appetites" that might distract us from what God has for us? (E.g. could the desire for food, video games, money, etc. become something that stops us seeing things clearly? Be sensitive to the age and stage of your group. Depending on your particular group it may be appropriate to talk about the addictive nature of these things and you might want to branch out the into perhaps less obvious desires like the desire to be popular, wanting to make people laugh, body image. With teenagers it may be appropriate to talk about lust.)



GAME: A CRISPY CHALLENGE

IMPORTANT - check allergies in your group before playing this game

You will need: 4 or more packets of crisps of different flavours, a couple of bowls, a blindfold and a piece of paper with the different coloured packets written down and a space to put people's guesses.

Before the session, prepare the packets by opening them and emptying the contents into separate bowls, keeping the flavours distinct from one another. Then put them back into the wrong packets. For example, put ready salted in the cheese and onion packet; cheese and onion in prawn cocktail; prawn cocktail in salt and vinegar; and salt and vinegar in the ready salted packet. Don't tell the kids that you have swapped them over.

Blindfold a child and offer them a crisp from each packet in turn. Ask them what flavour it is. Write down their guesses. Blindfold another child and offer them a crisp from each packet. Write down their guesses. Then pass around the packets to a couple of kids who don't have their eyes closed and write down their guesses. See who managed to guess correctly and who was tricked by the packaging.

GAME: BLIND MAN'S BUFF

You may also want to choose a more energetic game if you have a group that enjoys regularly letting off steam. Blind man's buff could be a good one, with one person blindfolded, who is trying to tag the others and everyone else tries to stay out of reach. Swap the blind man over whenever someone is tagged.

PRAYER

Take a moment to pray for oneanother that you will not live by your fleshly appetites, but by the Spirit of God.

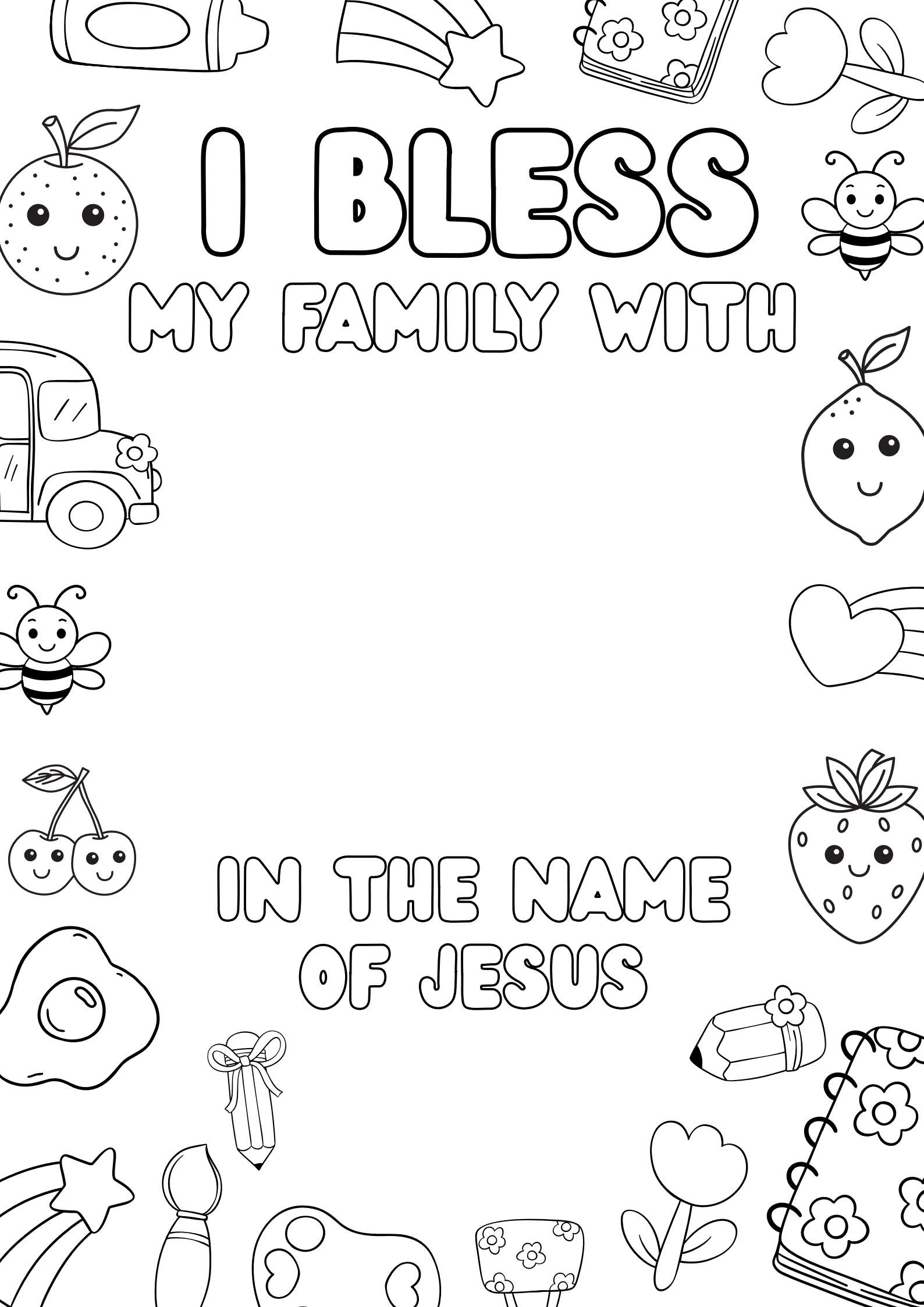
BLESSING

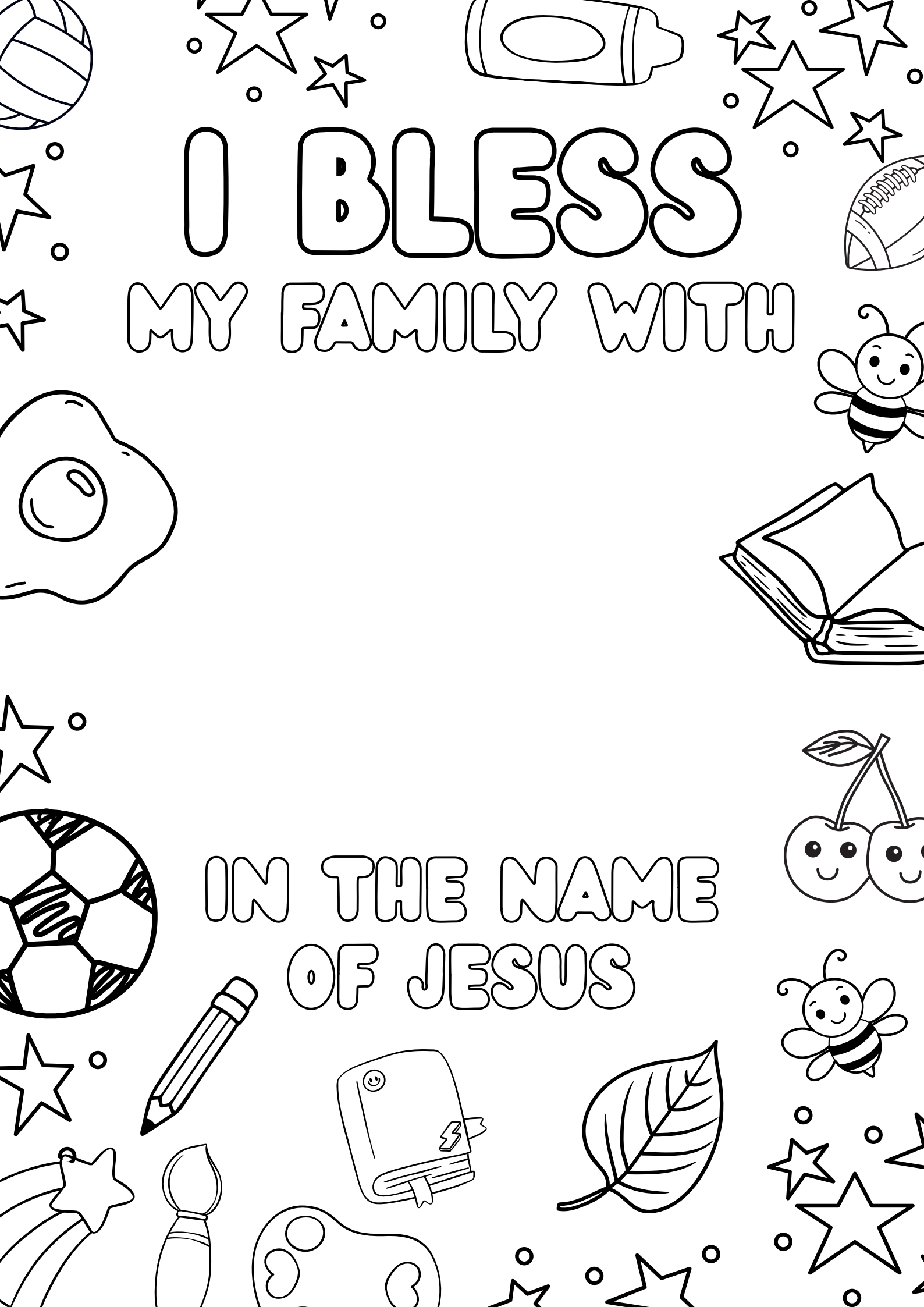
We are learning about praying blessings. If you want to revisit the video from last week, it can be found here:
On youtube at https://youtu.be/7wErOiivFVg?si=qUn1LxQA_iNyrbRi
Or on the home page of localhousesofprayer.org

This week we are going to bless our family. Encourage the children to read out their blessings at the end and to take them home and read them throughout the week as a prayer of blessing over their friends.

A blessing prayer might be structured something like:

“I bless ...(my family)... with...(something good)... in the name of Jesus.


I BLESS
MY FAMILY WITH
IN THE NAME
OF JESUS


I BLESS
MY FAMILY WITH
IN THE NAME
OF JESUS



WELLS OF BLESSING SESSION 3: JACOB SEEKS A WIFE

Jacob is sent to his uncle's house to seek out a wife. Jacob is tricked into marrying Leah and Rachel. God blesses Jacob, despite the messy family situation.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Story from Genesis 28 to 30

Discussion: Gateway to Heaven

Prayer: Gateway of Blessing

Game: Wells and Buckets

The story has been paraphrased and divided into numbered sections that can be cut out, put in a bucket and pulled out by the children. They can then read these in number order. Alternatively, you could use the paraphrase as a narrator's script while you play out the scenes using small world figures or the kids mime the story. Wherever a direct Bible quote is used, these are written in blue text.



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STORY



Abraham had a son, Isaac and Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. God had promised to bless Abraham with as many descendants as the stars in the sky and Isaac carried forward that blessing. Jacob had tricked his older twin brother, Esau, into giving him his birthright and his blessing and at this point in the story, Esau, as you can well imagine, was angry with Jacob. In fact he was so angry that he wanted to kill him! So Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob away to Rebekah's family, to look for a wife.

1

On the way from Beersheba to Haran, Jacob stopped for the night and rested his head on a stone. Then he had the most amazing dream!

2

In a dream he saw a stairway standing on the earth. Its top reached to heaven. The angels of God were going up and coming down on it. The Lord stood beside the stairway. He said, "I am the Lord. I am the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your children after you the land you are lying on. They will be like the dust of the earth that can't be counted. They will spread out to the west and to the east. They will spread out to the north and to the south. All nations on earth will be blessed because of you and your children after you. I am with you. I will watch over you everywhere you go. And I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."
Genesis 28v12-15

3

When Jacob woke up, He said, "surely God is in this place! This place must be the gate of Heaven!" He set the stone up on its end that he had been sleeping on and poured oil on it and prayed to God there.

4

Jacob went on to the East and came across a well where three flocks gathered. He asked the shepherds if they knew his uncle Laban and if he was well. They said that they did and that his daughter was coming now with his sheep. He asked why she came in the middle of the day to fetch water and they said that they waited for all the sheep to be gathered before they would roll the stone away from the mouth of the well. Jacob saw Rachel, Laban's daughter and Laban's sheep and he rolled away the stone for her.

5

Then he kissed Rachel and explained that he was from her father's family and she ran home to tell Laban. Laban ran out to greet him and welcomed him into their home. For a month, Jacob stayed with Laban and helped tend his flock. Then Laban asked, "what should I pay you for your help?" Jacob had fallen in love with Rachel, so he said, "I will work seven years for Rachel's hand in marriage."

6

Laban agreed and the seven years seemed like barely a few days to Jacob, because he was so in love. Finally, the day came to be married to Rachel, but Laban played an awful trick on Jacob. The bride would cover her face with a veil and instead of sending Rachel to Jacob, he sent Rachel's older sister Leah to Jacob.

7

STORY



When Jacob woke up the next morning, there was Leah next to him! So he said to Laban, "What have you done to me? I worked for you so I could marry Rachel, didn't I? Why did you trick me?" Laban replied, "It isn't our practice here to give the younger daughter to be married before the older one. Complete this daughter's wedding week. Then we'll give you the younger one also. But you will have to work for another seven years." Genesis 29v25-27

8

Jacob completed the week with Leah and then married Rachel. He loved Rachel, but he did not love Leah. He worked seven more years for Laban.
As you might imagine, the relationship between Leah and Rachel was troubled and the relationship between Laban and Jacob was troubled. It was a very messy situation!

9

Yet even in the mess, the blessing spoken over Jacob was still effective. Jacob had 12 sons and a daughter. Through Jacob's children God would build the 12 tribes of Israel...and, much later down the line, God Himself would come into this messy family and restore the relationships between God and people and people with each other, but now we are jumping ahead! We will come to that more in session 5.

10

DISCUSSION:
THE GATEWAY OF HEAVEN

What did Jacob see in his dream and what did God promise him?

When Jacob woke from his dream, he said that that place must have been the gateway to Heaven. What do you think? Was the place the gateway or might something else have been the gateway?

We learn throughout the Bible that it is not so much places that are gateways to God, (although some places can symbolise the things of God and be set apart for worship) but rather it is people. Temples and tabernacles symbolise God's throne room and a place where people and God can meet together, but God's intention from the very beginning was that God would live in His people by the presence of His Holy Spirit. Then, wherever God's people are, becomes a Heaven-meets-Earth spot.

Can you think of any way that Jacob himself may have been like a gateway to God?

As God's chosen representative, Jacob was carrying the blessing and promise of God. Jacob did not realise it, but he was bringing God's blessing and presence with him, even as he travelled through the wilderness to a foreign land and to his uncle's house.

Despite all the mess and trickery between Jacob, Laban, Rachel and Leah, God blessed Jacob and multiplied his family. *What does this tell us about the blessings of God? Do you think they are something we earn? If not, who does God bless and why? (You may like to read Ephesians 1v3)*

If we are in Christ, we carry God's presence and blessing with us wherever we go. In this way, we are like a gateway to Heaven! The Holy Spirit lives in us and through us He will bless others.

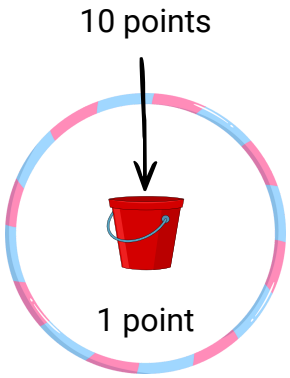
PRAY

Pray for one another to be filled with the Holy Spirit and for us to be like a gateway to blessing for other people to experience.

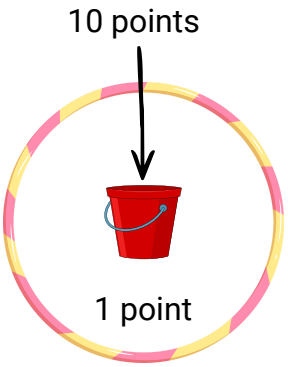
As you complete the colouring of Ephesians 1v3, you may enjoy listening to "Bless me" by Maverick City as a background sound track.

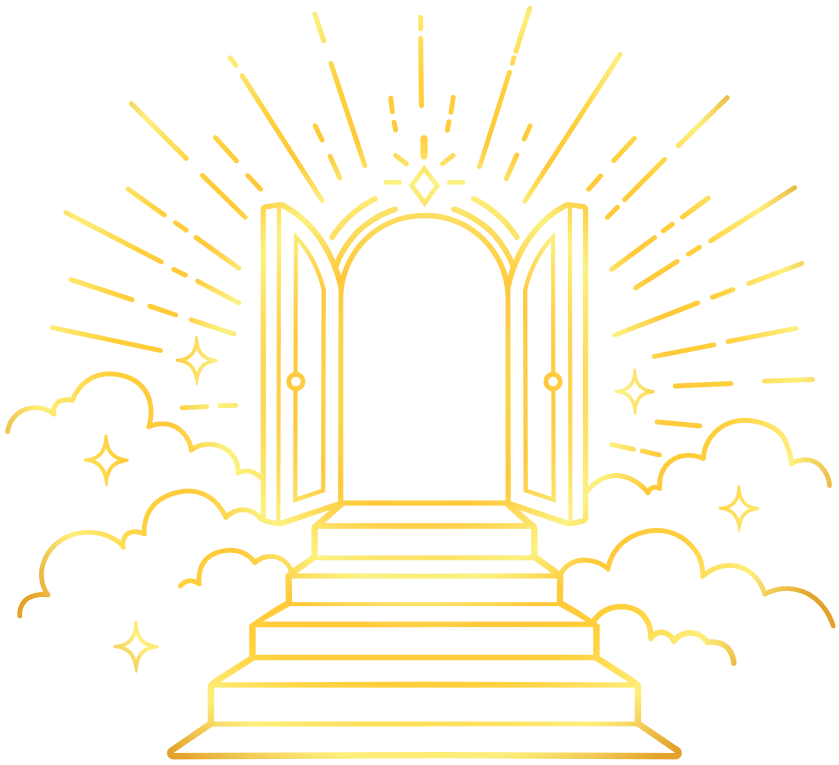
GAME: WELLS AND BUCKETS

- Place a hoop on the floor at either end of the room and a bucket inside the hoop. Have a ball or beanbag as the object to throw. Divide the group into two teams.
- Each team must make at least three passes before they can throw the beanbag into the opposite bucket.
- Players may not move with the beanbag.
- If they drop the beanbag, throw it out of bounds or the pass is intercepted, the play switches possession and the other team has a go to pass the beanbag to one another at least three times and throw it into the opposite bucket.
- No one is allowed to step inside or knock the hoops (wells).
- 1 point is scored when a team successfully throws a beanbag and it lands in the well (hoop), even if it bounces out again.
- 10 points are scored if the beanbag lands in the bucket.



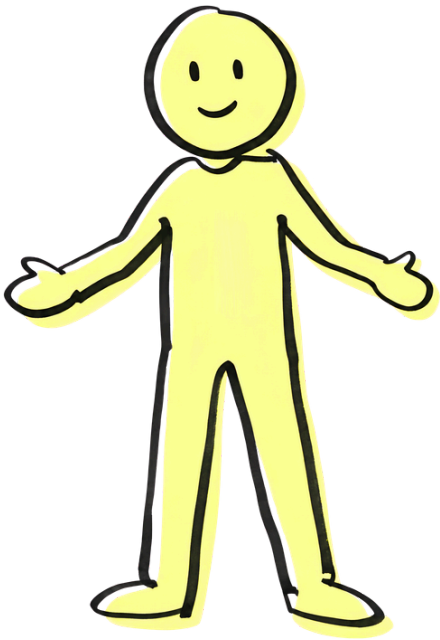






Give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Those blessings come from the heavenly world. They belong to us because we belong to Christ.

Ephesians 1v3





WELLS OF BLESSING SESSION 4: GOD WATCHES OVER

Jacob and Laban are at odds, tricking one another. Laban changes Jacob's wages 10 times, but God watches over and blesses him.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Story from Genesis 30 to 31

Discussion: Ambition and Riches

Prayer: Never forget

Game: Changing Colours

The story has been paraphrased and divided into numbered sections that can be cut out, put in a bucket and pulled out by the children. They can then read these in number order. Alternatively, you could use the paraphrase as a narrator's script while you play out the scenes using small world figures or the kids mime the story. Wherever a direct Bible quote is used, these are written in blue text.



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STORY



Abraham had a son, Isaac and Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. God had promised to bless Abraham with as many descendants as the stars in the sky and Isaac carried forward that blessing. Jacob had tricked his older twin brother, Esau, into giving him his birthright and his blessing and then left to travel to his Uncle Laban's house. There, Jacob met Rachel, fell in love and agreed to work 7 years for Laban so that he could marry Rachel. On the night of his wedding, Laban sent Rachel's sister Leah to Jacob instead and told Jacob he could only marry Rachel, if he worked another 7 years for him,

1

While Jacob was in charge of Laban's flocks, Laban's flocks grew larger and Laban became richer. Eventually, Jacob wanted to travel back to Canaan, but Laban did not want him to leave. Jacob was making him rich!

2

But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your sight, I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you. Name your wages, and I will give it." Jacob said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you, and how your livestock has fared with me. For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly, and the Lord has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?"
Genesis 30v27-30

3

"What shall I give you so you stay?" asked Laban. Jacob suggested that he be allowed to go through all of Laban's flocks and take the spotted and speckled lambs for himself. "Agreed!" said Laban. But that night, Laban went through his flocks first and took out all the speckled and spotted lambs and sent them off with his sons. When Jacob looked through, there were none left.

4

Jacob knew he had been tricked, but he did not take revenge. He trusted God to help him. So, when the sheep and the goats came to drink water and mate together to make lambs, Jacob took branches with stripes cut in the wood and laid them in front of the troughs. Then all the sheep and goats gave birth to speckled and spotted lambs.

5

Jacob took the speckled and spotted lambs and separated them from Laban's flock. Whenever the stronger animals came to drink, Jacob put the branches out and whenever the weaker animals came, Jacob did not put the branches out. In this way, the strong lambs were born speckled and spotted and grew healthily in Jacob's flocks and the weak animals belonged to Laban.

6

Laban watched as Jacob's wealth grew faster than his own and he was not happy! Jacob noticed that Laban was not friendly towards him like he used to be. the Lord said to Jacob "Go back to the land where your ancestors lived. I will be with you." Genesis 31v3
Jacob called his wives adn his children to meet him in the field. He explained how Laban had changed his wages 10 times and the Lord had told him it was time to go back to the land promised to Abraham and Isaac.

7

STORY



Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, “Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has indeed devoured our money. All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do.”
Genesis 31v14-16

8

Jacob set his family on camels and packed up everything he had. They rode off quickly, without telling Laban, who was away shearing his sheep. They had a three day head start from Laban and were in the mountains of Gilead before Laban found out and rushed after them. Before Laban caught up with them, God warned Laban in a dream, saying, “Be careful! Do not do anything to Jacob either good or bad.”

9

Laban caught up with Jacob and said, “What have you done? You have tricked me. You have taken my daughters away like prisoners of war. Why did you run away in secret and trick me? Why didn’t you tell me? Then I could have sent you away happily. We could have sung to the music of tambourines and harps. You didn’t even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters goodbye. You have done a foolish thing. I have the power to harm you. But last night the God of your father spoke to me. He said, ‘Be careful. Do not say anything to Jacob, whether it is good or bad.’ Genesis 31v26-29

10

Jacob said, ”I worked like a slave for you for 20 years. I worked for 14 years to marry your two daughters. Then I worked for six years to get my share of your flocks. You changed my pay ten times. But the God of my father was with me. He is the God of Abraham and the God Isaac worshiped. If he hadn’t been with me, you would surely have sent me away without anything to show for all my work. But God has seen my hard times. He has seen all the work my hands have done. So last night he warned you.”
Genesis 31v41-42

11

Laban protested, saying that everything Jacob had belonged to him, but he knew he could not harm Jacob, because God was with him. Instead, he made an agreement with Jacob that they would do one another no harm and Jacob would take care of his family. After a special meal, they spent the night on the mountain.
Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters. He gave them his blessing. Then he left and returned home. Genesis 31v55

12

DISCUSSION:
AMBITION AND RICHES

Think back to the beginning of the series, where we looked at how God brought blessing to Isaac, by leading Abraham's servant to Rebekah to be Isaac's wife. Laban is Rebekah's brother. *Do you remember what Laban first saw that excited him about the prospect of sending Rebekah to Isaac?* (You could read Genesis 24v30 to remind you.) Laban saw gold... the gold bracelets and rings that Abraham's servant had given Rebekah. Laban recognised that God's blessing was on Isaac to make him rich and he wanted some of those riches.

When Jacob came and fell in love with Rachel, Laban tricked him into marrying both of his daughters so that Jacob would work for him for 14 years. *How did that go for Laban's flocks?* Laban's flocks grew and Laban became richer.
How did it go for Leah, Jacob and Rachel's relationships? It caused a terrible struggle between them.

When Jacob had finished the 14 years, Jacob asked to leave. *What was Laban's reaction?* He urged him to stay and promised to pay him. Laban changed his wages 10 times. *How did God look after and bless Jacob despite Laban's sneakiness?*

Selfish-ambition is when we want our wealth, reputation or success to grow, but we do not care about how that affects other people. Laban was possessive and full of selfish ambition. He hurt his family trying to get as rich as possible and it was only when God stepped in and gave him a warning, that Laban backed down. It is not wrong to have ambition, hopes and dreams in life. In fact, God gives us hopes and desires, but we must keep God's highest priority our highest priority and ask God to help our desires line up with His plans and purposes for our life.

Jesus said:" 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your mind.' This is the first and most important commandment. And the second is like it. 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.' Everything that is written in the Law and the Prophets is based on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37-40)

The terrible irony in Jacob and Laban's story is that while everyone was trying to trick each other, pay for and earn blessing, God was graciously handing it out as a free gift. There was no need to fight over God's blessings, His blessings are abundant and free. God delights to bless us out of His GRACE and mercy, because He loves us.

Discuss the meaning of the word GRACE.

Do you have ambitions, dreams or hopes for your life? How might you pursue them while also following what Jesus said is the greatest commandment?

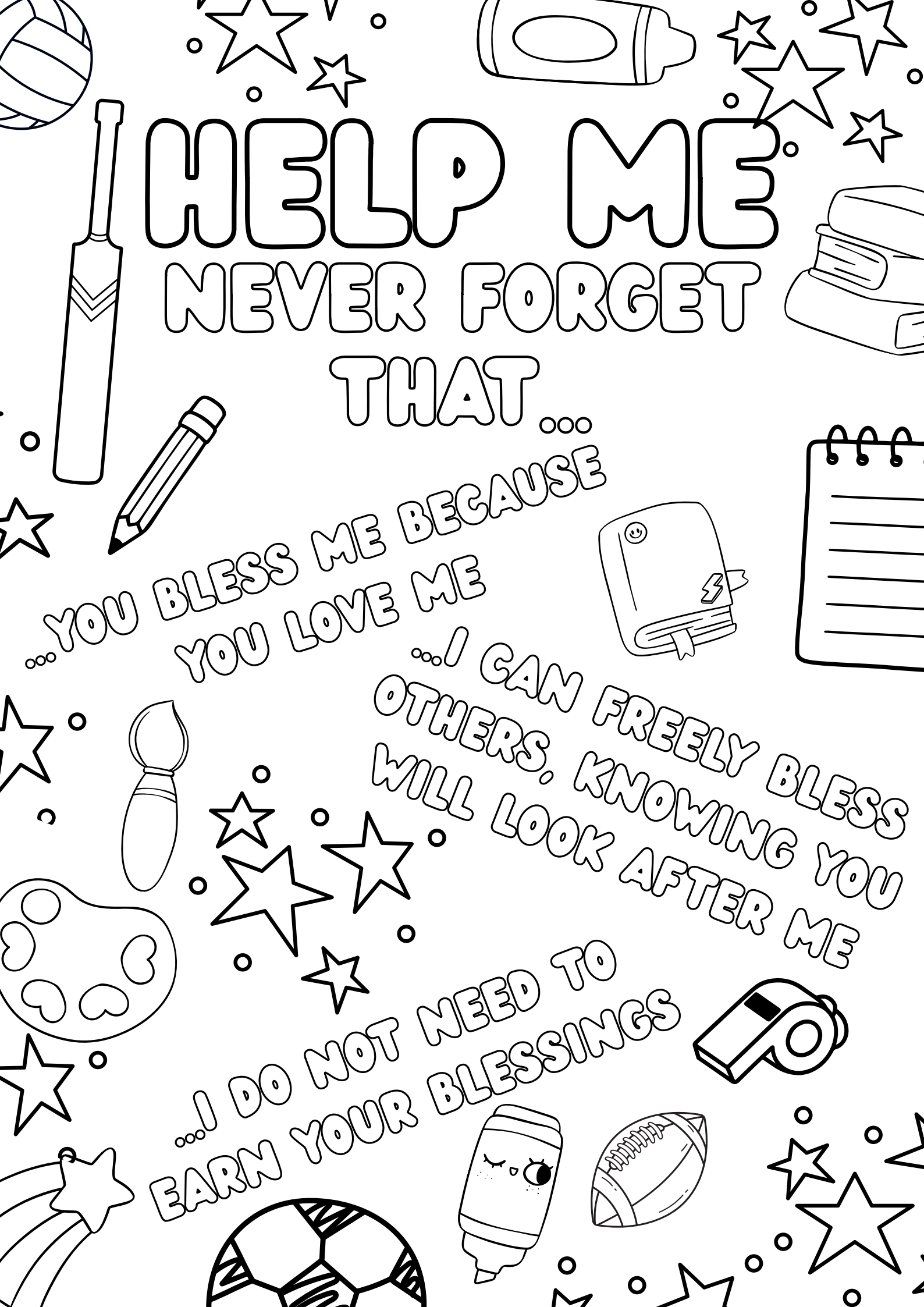
GAME: CHANGING COLOURS

- Place three or 4 buckets spaced out in the room
- Either empty a load of different coloured bean bags or ball pit balls into one central bucket or distribute them around all the buckets
- Divide the group into teams and assign each team a bucket
- Only one person from each team may run at a time
- When you say go, call out a colour. E.g. “Green!”
- The first players from each team will run to another bucket and try to find a ball of that colour and bring it back to their own bucket
- When they have returned to their team bucket, the next player from their team runs
- Players may steal a ball from the central bucket or from one of the other buckets
- After a while, change the colour that the teams are looking for. E.g call out “Blue!”
- After another while change the colour again and so on
- Either at the end of 10 minutes or sooner as you see fit, call time
- Count how many each team has of the last colour called and declare that team the winner or give them a point and restart








HELP ME
NEVER FORGET
THAT...
...YOU BLESS ME BECAUSE
YOU LOVE ME
...I CAN FREELY BLESS
OTHERS, KNOWING YOU
WILL LOOK AFTER ME
...I DO NOT NEED TO
EARN YOUR BLESSINGS

PRAYER - NEVER FORGET

Look at the three statements on the colouring sheet. Pray that you will not forget these truths. Pray for one another that you will pursue your hopes and dreams in life while seeking first the kingdom of God, loving God and other people.

But put God's kingdom first. Do what he wants you to do. Then all those things will also be given to you. Matthew 6v33



WELLS OF BLESSING SESSION 5: BLESSED AND FORGIVEN

Jacob travels to his homeland to meet Esau.
On the way, he wrestles God for a blessing.
Esau forgives Jacob and welcomes him home.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Story from Genesis 32 to 33

Discussion: Wrestling prayer

Prayer: Wrestling prayer

Game: Hip strike

The story has been paraphrased and divided into numbered sections that can be cut out, put in a bucket and pulled out by the children. They can then read these in number order. Alternatively, you could use the paraphrase as a narrator's script while you play out the scenes using small world figures or the kids mime the story. Wherever a direct Bible quote is used, these are written in blue text.



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STORY



God had chosen Abraham and blessed his descendants and Abraham's grandson Jacob was carrying the blessing and promises of God forwards into the next generation. Jacob had been sent away from his father's homeland of Canaan to his uncle's house in Haran, to look for a wife. Before he had gone, he had tricked his father, Isaac, into giving him the firstborn blessing that Isaac intended to give to his elder twin brother, Esau. Esau was furious with Jacob and wanted to kill him.

1

On the way to Haran, God had appeared in a dream to Jacob and promised to look after him and bring him safely home. After 20 years of living with his uncle, who tried to cheat him out of his wages, God told Jacob to return home. His homecoming was not easy. His uncle Laban had chased him, but did not hurt him, because God had warned him not to in a dream.

2

Having left Laban safely behind, another obstacle lay in front of him. Can you guess who it was? His brother Esau. Jacob had no idea whether his brother still wanted to kill him or not. So Jacob sent messengers to his brother, saying "Your servant Jacob says, 'I've been staying with Laban. I've remained there until now. I have cattle and donkeys and sheep and goats. I also have male and female servants. Now I'm sending this message to you. I hope I can please you.' " Genesis 32:4-5

3

The messengers found Esau and returned to Jacob with worried looks on their faces... Esau was coming to Jacob...and 400 strong men were with him! Uh oh... what was Jacob to do? He divided everything he had into two camps, thinking, "if Esau takes one camp, the other can run away." Then he began to wrestle God in prayer.

4

Then Jacob prayed, "You are the God of my grandfather Abraham. You are the God of my father Isaac. Lord, you are the one who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives. Then I will give you success.' You have been very kind and faithful to me. But I'm not worthy of any of this. When I crossed this Jordan River, all I had was my walking stick. But now I've become two camps. Please save me from the hand of my brother Esau. I'm afraid he'll come and attack me and the mothers with their children. But you have said, 'I will surely give you success. I will make your children as many as the grains of sand on the seashore. People will not be able to count them.' " Genesis 32v9-12

5

The next morning, Jacob prepared herds of animals and sent them one at a time ahead of him, each with a servant. He told each servant to explain to Esau that these animals were a gift from Jacob. There were 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 300 female sheep, 20 male sheep, 30 female camels and their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, 10 male donkeys. It was a rich and generous gift!

6

That night, Jacob sent everything he had and all of his wives and children across the Jabok river, but he stayed behind alone. Then a man came to him and wrestled with him until daybreak. Jacob would not give up, so the man struck Jacob's hip and put it out of joint. Still Jacob would not give up!

7

STORY



Then the man said, “Let me go. It is morning.” But Jacob replied, “I won’t let you go unless you bless me.” The man asked him, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he answered. Then the man said, “Your name will not be Jacob anymore. Instead, it will be Israel. You have wrestled with God and with people. And you have won.” Genesis 32v26-28

8

Jacob said, “Please tell me your name.” But he replied, “Why do you want to know my name?” Then he blessed Jacob there. So Jacob named the place Peniel. He said, “I saw God face to face. But I’m still alive!” The sun rose above Jacob as he passed by Peniel. He was limping because of his hip. Genesis 32v29-31

9

When Jacob looked up, he saw Esau and the 400 men with him coming towards him. Jacob organised his family and walked ahead of them to meet his brother. As he went, he bowed 7 times flat on the ground before Esau, hoping that Esau would welcome him.

10

But Esau ran to meet Jacob. He hugged him and threw his arms around his neck. He kissed him, and they cried for joy. Then Esau looked around and saw the women and children. “Who are these people with you?” he asked. Jacob answered, “They are the children God has so kindly given to me.” Genesis 33v4-5

11

Esau asked, “why did you send me so many herds? I have everything I need.” Jacob replied, “I wanted to please you my master.” “I have enough already. Keep what is yours.” Replied Esau, but Jacob insisted that he accept the gifts, so Esau did. Jacob said to Esau, “Seeing your face again, is like seeing the face of God, because you have accepted me.” Esau offered to accompany Jacob to Edom, but Jacob wanted to travel slowly towards Shechem. When Jacob arrived in Shechem, he bought a field, set up an altar to the God of Israel and thanked God for fulfilling His promises.

12

DISCUSSION:
WRESTLING PRAYER

When the messengers first come back from Esau and report that Esau is coming with 400 men, how did Jacob feel?

Jacob divided the camp in two and then he prayed to God. Have a look at Genesis 32v9-12. On the top half of the worksheet or on a flip chart or whiteboard altogether, note down when Jacob does these three things in his prayer:
1) tells God the situation and how he feels about it
2) recalls God's promises and faithfulness
3) makes a request to God

After Jacob prayed the first time, he sent the gift to his brother and prepared his family by sending them over the river, but he stayed back by himself. Why do you think he might have wanted to be alone? In the gospels, when Jesus goes off by himself, it is always to pray. It seems likely that Jacob was continuing to pray and felt that he had not yet gained the answer he sought.

How did God appear to him?

Why did God say that his name would now be called Israel, which means "to wrestle"?

How is wrestling a helpful image of prayer?

Wrestling prayer is praying until you receive the blessing. It is not giving up, but praying through until the answer comes. When Esau first set out with his 400 men, it seems a reasonable assumption that he was considering attacking Jacob. Yet after Jacob prayed, Esau welcomed Jacob with forgiveness and love. Jacob would not let go of God until he had received the blessing. Jesus Himself urged His disciples to pray like this. Have a look at Luke 18v1-8.

PRAYER

What can you be wrestling God for? Are there things that you talk to Him about often? Using Jacob's example and the second half of the worksheet, think of a situation and jot down...

1) what is the situation and how do you feel about it?
2) recall God's faithfulness and promises (these could be Bible verses)
3) make your request to God

and one more step...
4) pray that God would strengthen you to bring this before Him until the answer comes.

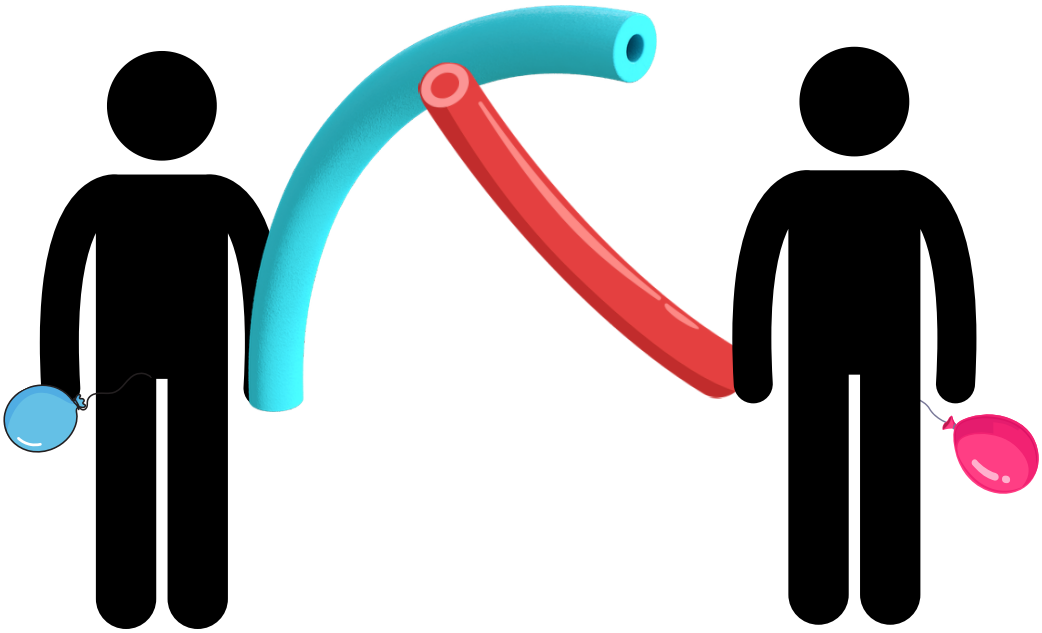
In Genesis 32v9-12, Jacob begins wrestling in prayer

JACOB TELLS GOD THE SITUATION AND HOW HE FEELS ABOUT IT	JACOB RECALLS GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND PROMISES	JACOB MAKES A REQUEST TO GOD
TELL GOD THE SITUATION AND HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT IT	RECALL GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND PROMISES	MAKE YOUR REQUEST TO GOD

LORD GOD, STRENGTHEN ME AND TRAIN ME TO WRESTLE IN PRAYER UNTIL THE ANSWER COMES. HELP ME, LIKE JACOB, TO PRAY "I WILL NOT LET YOU GO UNTIL YOU BLESS ME!" IN THE NAME OF JESUS, AMEN

GAME: HIP STRIKE

- You will need 2 long balloons or swimming noodles or length of foam pipe lagging and 2 small round balloons attached to a string long enough to be tied loosely around a person's waist
- This is a 1 v 1 battle, so choose two opponents to go first. Loosely tie the balloon around their waist (so the balloon is roughly at hip height) and arm each player with a swimming noodle
- When you say go, the players must attempt to tap their opponents balloon with the end of their swim noodle
- If the player successfully taps the balloon, they score a point
- Time the contest for 1 or 2 minutes and tally the scores. Then swap players





WELLS OF BLESSING SESSION 6: GREATER THAN JACOB

Jesus meets a woman by a well dug by Jacob in John chapter 4 and she asks Him directly "Are you greater than our father Jacob?"

SESSION OVERVIEW

Quiz: Story recap

Discussion: Greater than Jacob

Prayer: Greater than Jacob

Wordsearch: Greater Jacob

Game: Wells and Buckets



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INTRODUCTION

We have learnt a lot in this series about carrying the blessing and favour of God and blessing other people in prayer.

Jesus said of the Old Testament (the first part of the Bible)...

You study the Scriptures carefully. You study them because you think they will give you eternal life. The Scriptures you study are a witness about me. (John 5v39)

Everything in the Old Testament points forwards in one way or another to Jesus. We are going to take a look back at the stories we have journeyed through in this series and see if we can spot some ways in which they point forwards to things that Jesus did, stories Jesus told or to who Jesus is.

To help us remember, first off... a little quiz!

QUIZ - WELLS OF BLESSING

Q1. How many wives were met at wells in the stories of Isaac and Jacob?
A1. 2 - Rebekah and Rachel. Fun fact: Moses also met his wife Zipporah at a well in Exodus 2:16

Q2. Which son did Isaac bless, saying, “May nations serve you. May peoples bow down to you.”?
A1. Jacob (much to the anger of Esau)

Q3. When Jacob went away to Haran, how did God appear to him at night?
A3. In a dream. Jacob saw a ladder or staircase going up to Heaven. Angels went up and down on it and the Lord stood at the top.

Q4. Jacob went to his Uncle Laban’s house and agreed to work for him for seven years doing what?
A4. Shepherding his flocks

Q5. Laban played a series of nasty tricks on Jacob and Jacob ended up working for him for 20 years. How many times did Laban change his wages?
A5. 10 times

Q6. Yet in all that time, God was with Jacob and grew his family and his flocks. How did God help Jacob’s flocks to grow?
A6. When Laban agreed that Jacob should have speckled lambs, God ensured the healthy animals gave birth to speckled lambs. When Laban changed it to streaked lambs, God ensured the healthy animals gave birth to streaked lambs.

Q7. After 20 years, God told Jacob to go back to Canaan. Why was Jacob afraid to return to his father’s land?
A7. He was afraid that his brother Esau would kill him.

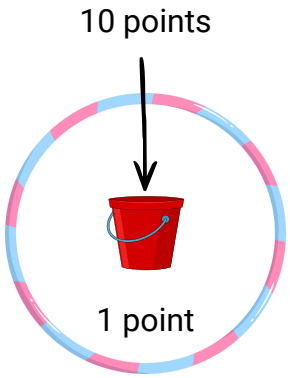
Q8. How many men came with Esau to meet Jacob?
A8. 400

Q9. Jacob wrestled with God in prayer and then wrestled with Him in person! What part of Jacob’s body did God injure, when He saw that Jacob would not let go?
A9. His hip

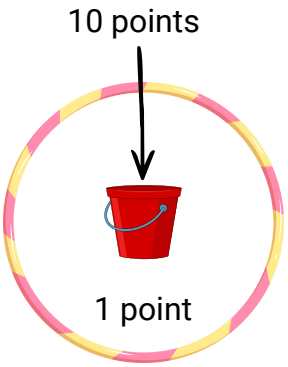
Q10. God blessed Jacob and what was the result of that blessing when his brother Esau met him?
A10. Instead of killing Jacob, Esau ran to him and hugged him, welcoming him home.

GAME: WELLS AND BUCKETS

- Place a hoop on the floor at either end of the room and a bucket inside the hoop. Have a ball or beanbag as the object to throw. Divide the group into two teams.
- Each team must make at least three passes before they can throw the beanbag into the opposite bucket.
- Players may not move with the beanbag.
- If they drop the beanbag, throw it out of bounds or the pass is intercepted, the play switches possession and the other team has a go to pass the beanbag to one another at least three times and throw it into the opposite bucket.
- No one is allowed to step inside or knock the hoops (wells).
- 1 point is scored when a team successfully throws a beanbag and it lands in the well (hoop), even if it bounces out again.
- 10 points are scored if the beanbag lands in the bucket.







DISCUSSION:
GREATER THAN JACOB

The more you become aware of the links between Jesus and Jacob's life, the more you will see. I have just 3 to look at together, but afterwards you might want to go away and read a gospel, one of the stories of Jesus' life in the Bible, and ask the Holy Spirit to show you more!

Pick one of the 3 picture cards, read the Bible verse and then read the information about it below before moving onto the next picture card.

JOHN 4V5-15



At this point in history ~30AD, although the Samaritans and Jews were both descendants of Jacob, they were enemies. In 931 BC, After the reign of King Solomon, the tribes of Israel split into the kingdom of Israel in the north, ruled mainly by kings from Joseph's descendants and the kingdom of Judah in the south, ruled by David's descendants from the tribe of Judah. Samaria had been ransacked by the Assyrians centuries before Jesus was born and resettled with non-Israelites and Israelites. The Jews (from the southern kingdom of Judah) hated the Samaritans and looked down on them, even though they were brothers.

What did God "remember" by sending Jesus to Samaria? (Read Luke 1v33)

He remembered the scatterred tribes of Israel and his promise to bless Jacob's descendants. They may have rejected one another, but God had not rejected them. He came to redeem them all.



JOHN 1V51

The image of angels going up and down on the Son of Man might remind us of Jacob's dream about a ladder going up to Heaven and one like a Son of Man standing at the top of it, while angels go up and down. In the image Jesus uses, it sounds like the Son of Man is at the bottom of the ladder, i.e. on the earth. Who do you think it might refer to? Jesus, the eternal beloved Son, had come to earth and was, like Jacob, but even more so, a gateway to God's blessing and favour. Read John 14v6

LUKE 15V11-24



While the story of the prodigal son does not map on exactly to Jacob's life, the language of running, hugging, kissing and forgiving is a strong link between this parable that Jesus told and Esau's forgiveness of Jacob. Do you remember what Jacob did before this blessing was finally given to him? He wrestled with God in prayer. At Gethsemane, before Jesus went to the cross, Jesus wrestled with God in prayer. Then the blessing was released, but not to Him exactly.... to the whole world. Jesus made a way for us all to come home to Father God.

DISCUSSION:
GREATER THAN JACOB

So what would you reply to the woman at the well? Is Jesus greater than Jacob? Why?

PRAYER

Spend some time thanking God for sending Jesus who...



REMEMBERS GOD'S LOST CHILDREN



MADE A WAY BACK TO GOD



BROUGHT US HOME TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

Luke 15v11-24

Does this remind you of Jacob's homecoming at all?



Who surprisingly is in the role of the welcoming father?

John 1v51

Does this image remind you of a dream that Jacob had?



John 4v5-14

Are there any links here to a story in Jacob's life?



"Sychar" sounds very like the Hebrew word for "remember"

"Are you greater than Jacob our father?" John 5v12

Greater Jacob

T T W E L L U N R N R H U R I
O Q R A T T B A A E E O U A M
M E A I T E D I E B B M B T N
A L A D D E R R R L O E T C U
N P J F N A R M A W E C K U O
E T R E M S S E C R T O L A E
I N I A S E R L H E C M C T H
G R S J Y U B L E S S I N G E
U N P A A E S P L T S N O T O
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- [ ] Angels
- [ ] Blessing
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- [ ] Homecoming
- [ ] Isaac
- [ ] Israel
- [ ] Jacob
- [ ] Jesus
- [ ] Ladder
- [ ] Living
- [ ] Prayer
- [ ] Rachel
- [ ] Rebekah
- [ ] Samaria
- [ ] Sychar
- [ ] Water
- [ ] Well
- [ ] Wrestle

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