

Blessings and Birthrights

Bible Verse

The LORD bless you and keep you. (Numbers 6:24)

Did You Know?

The birth of Jacob and Esau, twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah, continues the story of the descendants of Abraham. It is through Jacob, who had twelve sons, that the descendants of Abraham really began to multiply.

Rebekah's sons fought with each other before they were born, setting the stage for a complex relationship that lasted throughout their lives. When Rebekah asked God why her pregnancy was so difficult, God told her that two nations were struggling inside of her. Rebekah eventually gave birth to twin boys. Esau was born first, but the second son, Jacob, came out holding on to Esau's heel.

As the oldest son, Esau was entitled to the birthright. The birthright was a blessing and conferral of rights usually passed on to the oldest son. Israel and some other ancient cultures gave special privileges to the oldest son in a family. The birthright brought with it a leadership role in the family and a larger share of the inheritance. Although the birthright was usually passed on to the oldest son, other stories of the time indicated that it could be forfeited.

The ancient Hebrew concept of "blessing" is also important to our story. It was believed that a blessing released a power that determined the character and future of the person being blessed. Once spoken, it could not be taken back. Genesis 27 tells the story of Rebekah and Jacob conspiring to convince Isaac to bless Jacob instead of Esau.

For more Bible background information, go to DeepBlueKids.com.

Exploration Points

Children will:

- hear the story of Jacob and Esau.
- explore the story of Jacob and Esau through games and movement activities.
- discover that no matter what we do, God blesses us.
- learn that we can share God's love and bless others.

Leader's Guide • DeepBlueKids.com

UNIT 3

Game Station

Bible Story

Genesis 25:29-34;
27:1-46

Anchor Point

God blesses us.

My Plan

- ☐ Bible Story—Blessings and Birthrights
- ☐ Sign the Bible Verse to Each Other
- ☐ Musical Blessings All Children
- ☐ Who Are You? All Children
- ☐ I Spy a Blessing Younger Children
- ☐ Make a Blessing Ball Older Children
- ☐ Worship



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Station Setup

Write the Bible verse on a large sheet of mural paper or a piece of posterboard, and hang it where the children can see it. (The Lord bless you and keep you. Numbers 6:24)

BIBLE STORY—BLESSINGS AND BIRTHRIGHTS

SAY: Our Bible story today is about blessings. A blessing is a way to let someone know that he or she is special and loved.

- Read the children the following story:

A long time ago there was a family.
The family had a father and mother.
Their names were Isaac and Rebekah.
And there were twin boys in the family.
Their names were Esau and Jacob.
Esau was big and had red hair.
He liked to hunt and be outside.
Jacob was different from his brother.
He preferred to stay at home.

Now Esau was the oldest, and he was treated special.
When Isaac died Esau would receive the birthright.
Well, that would have happened except for one thing.
One day Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew.
I guess he was really hungry.

When Isaac got old he called Esau to him.
“Go out and hunt. Make me some food, and I will bless you.”
Isaac didn’t know about the birthright/stew swap, you see.
But when Esau left, Rebekah and Jacob hatched a plan.
Rebekah made food, and she dressed Jacob up like Esau.
Isaac couldn’t see well anymore, so they planned to trick him.
Isaac was fooled and ended up blessing Jacob.
You can imagine what happened when Esau returned.
Esau was so mad! Oh, he was mad!
He was so mad that he wanted to kill Jacob.
Rebekah heard of Esau’s plan.
She sent Jacob away to live with her brother.
Rebekah wanted to keep Jacob safe until Esau calmed down.

ASK: Who received the blessing in this story? (*Jacob*) Who gave the blessing? (*Isaac*)
Why was Esau mad? (*He wanted the blessing for himself.*)

SAY: We all receive blessings from God. We don’t need to get mad at others about their blessings because God has plenty of blessings for all of us.

SIGN THE BIBLE VERSE TO EACH OTHER

Supplies: Leader's Guide—p. 7

- Show the children the Bible verse poster. Encourage the children to read the verse together with you.
- Teach the children the signs for the Bible verse.
- Encourage the children to sign and say the Bible verse with you.

SAY: This Bible verse is a blessing, and we're going to use it to bless each other.

- Have the children find partners. Encourage each pair of children to take turns saying and signing the Bible verse to each other.
- Have the children find new partners. Encourage children to take turns saying and signing the Bible verse to their new partners.

Activity Options

Choose from the following activities as your time and the children's interests allow.

MUSICAL BLESSINGS—ALL CHILDREN

Supplies: CD of upbeat Christian children's music, CD player

SAY: In our Bible story today, Isaac gave Jacob a blessing. A blessing is an affirmation or a way to indicate that someone is special. We've received many blessings. God blesses us every day. The blessings we receive don't stop with us. We can pass those blessings on and share God's love with others. Let's bless each other.

- Divide the children into two even groups. If you have an odd number of children, have an adult join one of the groups.
- Have one group of children form a circle. Show this group which direction they will be walking.
- Have the second group form a circle outside of the first circle. Show this group that they will be walking in the opposite direction of the inside circle.

SAY: When I begin playing the music, you'll begin walking. When the music stops, stop walking and turn to face the other circle. Adjust your circles until everyone has a partner from the other circle.

- Begin playing the music and encourage the children to begin walking.
- Stop the music and have the children partner up.

SAY: Give your partner a blessing by telling something you like about him or her.

- Continue playing the game and encouraging the children to share blessings.

ASK: How does it make you feel when someone says something nice to you?

SAY: God blesses us. We can pass the blessing on.

≈ TIPS ≈

Familiarize yourself with the signs for the Bible verse from American Sign Language (p. 7) so you can confidently teach them to the children.

WHO ARE YOU?—ALL CHILDREN

Supplies: blindfold

ASK: Whom did Isaac bless in the Bible story we heard today? (*Jacob*) Whom did Isaac think he was blessing? (*Esau*)

SAY: Isaac's eyesight was failing. He couldn't see so he had to use his other senses to decide who was in his tent. We're going to play a game to see how you do at identifying people without being able to see them.

- Have the children stand in a circle facing toward the middle of the circle.
- Choose one child to stand in the middle of the circle and blindfold him or her.
- Explain the rules of the game to the children:
 - Begin walking around the circle. You may also switch places with each other, but you must still form a circle.
 - When the person in the middle says, "Stop," everyone in the circle must stop moving.
 - The person in the middle of the circle will then point at someone and say, "Who are you?"
 - The person who has been pointed at says a name. The name may be his or her name or someone else's name.
 - The person in the middle has two guesses to correctly identify the speaker.
 - If the speaker is correctly identified, he or she trades places with the person in the middle.

I SPY A BLESSING—YOUNGER CHILDREN

- Have the children stand in a circle.

SAY: We've been talking about blessings today. We're all blessed from God. Also, we can all be blessings to other people. We're going to play a game called, "I Spy a Blessing." I'm going to begin to describe someone in our circle who is a blessing. If I might be describing you, remain standing. If I'm not describing you, sit down and try to guess whom I am describing.

- Choose a child and begin describing that child using sentences beginning with "I spy a blessing who..." For example, you might say, "I spy a blessing who is wearing blue. I spy a blessing who is wearing blue and has short hair. I spy a blessing who is wearing blue, has short hair, and has tennis shoes on."
- Continue describing the child until he or she is the only one standing.
- Say to the standing child, "Thank you for being a blessing."
- Have the children stand up again, and continue playing the game.

MAKE A BLESSING BALL—OLDER CHILDREN

Supplies: inflatable beach ball, permanent marker, CD of upbeat Christian children's music, CD player

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Before Class: Inflate the beach ball.

- Have the children stand in a circle. Hand the beach ball to one child and the marker to another child.

SAY: I'm going to play some music. There are two things you must do while the music is playing. You must keep the beach ball in the air, and you must pass the marker around the circle. When the music stops, someone needs to catch the beach ball, and the person with the marker will hold on to the marker.

- Begin playing the music, and encourage the children to keep the beach ball in the air and keep the marker moving.
- Stop the music.
- Invite the person holding the beach ball to name one thing for which he or she is thankful.
- Have the person holding the marker write the blessing that has been named on the ball.
- Continue to start and stop the music, and encourage the children to play the game. Challenge the children to name blessings that have not already been mentioned.
- When it is time to stop the game, have all of the children sit down.

ASK: Was it easy or difficult to continue to name blessings as the game went on?

SAY: You have named a lot of things for which you are thankful. This beach ball can remind us of how blessed we are.

Worship

Supplies: Leader's Guide—p. 6

Before Class: Make copies of the "Reproducible Family Letter" (p. 6).

SAY: We have shared many blessings with each other today. Let's bless each other one more time before we leave.

- Have the children partner up.

SAY: You and your partner will take turns blessing each other by drawing a cross on the back of the other person's hand with your finger. As you draw a cross, say, "The Lord bless you and keep you."

- Encourage children to bless each other.

PRAY: God, we ask your blessing on each of us. Bless us that we may be a blessing to others. Amen.

- Send a family letter home with each child.

≈ TIPS ≈

If you have a large class, divide the children into small groups to play this game.

You may use balloons instead of beach balls. Caution the children to be careful when writing on the balloons so they do not pop.

Reproducible Family Letter

Today we heard the story of Jacob and Esau and explored blessings through games and movement activities.

Do This Activity at Home With Your Family

TAKE A BLESSING WALK

In the Bible story we heard today, Isaac blessed Jacob. This was a spoken blessing. Blessings can also be things that can be seen or touched, such as a smile or a bowl of soup. A tree can be a blessing. Some blessings are big and some are small. All blessings remind us that we are special and loved by God.

When we are outside we are surrounded by blessings. Experiencing God's creation reminds us of God's amazing love for us.

Take a walk outside with your family. As you walk, point out things you see and say a prayer of thanks to God for the many blessings that surround you.

Your prayer might end up sounding something like this:

Thank you God for the sky.

Thanks, God, for that tree.

Hey, God! Thanks for those cool rocks.

Thank you for squirrels, God!

Hear that bird singing? Nice blessing, God—thanks!

Thanks for the air I'm breathing.

Thank you, God, for my family!



Numbers 6:24

The LORD bless you and keep you.



Lord

Make an L with the right index finger and thumb. Place the L at the left shoulder and then move the L across the body to the right waist.



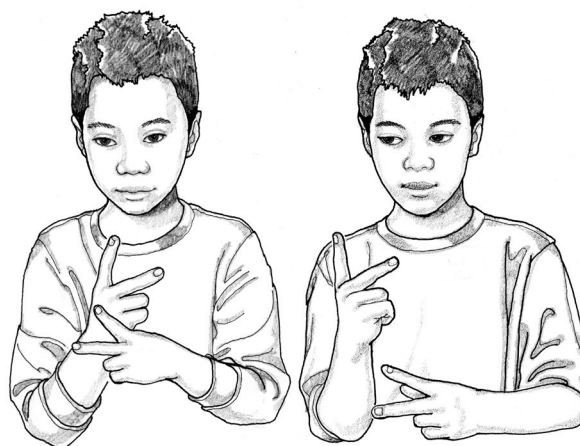
Bless

Touch your thumb and fingers together on both hands. Touch your hands to your mouth. Move both hands down and flatten them with palms down and your fingers spread apart.



You

Point out with your index finger.



Keep

Hold the fingers on both hands in a K position. Move the right wrist over the left wrist.