

# Blessings and Birthrights

## Bible Verse

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

## Did You Know?

**T**he 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](http://DeepBlueKids.com).

## Exploration Points

Children will:

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

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## UNIT 3

### Spiritual Practices Station

## Bible Story

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

## Anchor Point

God blesses us.

## My Plan

- ☐ Bible Story—Blessings and Birthrights
- ☐ Emphasize the Bible Verse
- ☐ Explore the Blessing Centers All Children
- ☐ Guided Meditation of Blessing All Children
- ☐ Make Prayer Stew Younger Children
- ☐ Write a Blessing for Someone Older Children
- ☐ Worship

## 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)

Set up three different blessing centers in separate corners or areas of the room.

**Blessing Center 1:** Cut a large piece of mural paper and lay it on a table or on the floor. In the center of the paper, write the words, "I am blessed," in large letters. Place several baskets of crayons on the paper. Place a variety of sizes of LED candles along the far side of the paper. Turn the candles on just before the class period.

**Blessing Center 2:** Set a table and chairs in this center. Protect the table with plastic or paper covering. Fill several shallow trays with sand to a depth of 1-inch. Place three to five small rocks in each tray. Provide tools to draw in the sand such as plastic rakes, craft sticks, or unsharpened pencils.

**Blessing Center 3:** Obtain a CD of instrumental music. Set up a CD player so that the music will be ready to play when you turn it on. Set the volume low. Spread a piece of fabric on the floor. Place a basket of chenille stems on the fabric. Provide pillows or carpet squares for the children to sit on, and place these around the fabric.

## BIBLE STORY—BLESSINGS AND BIRTHRIGHTS

**SAY:** Our Bible story today is about a family. Like many families, they didn't always get along with each other.

- Tell the children the following story:

Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons. Their names were Esau and Jacob. Esau was the oldest son. Although they were twins, Esau and Jacob were different from each other. Esau grew up to be an outdoorsman who liked to hunt. Jacob was quieter and liked to stay at home.

In those days, the birthright was a special blessing given to the oldest son. Esau would receive the birthright when Isaac died since he was the oldest. However, one day when Esau came home from hunting and smelled the stew Jacob was making he said, "Give me some stew!"

Jacob said, "I'll give you some stew if you'll give me your birthright." Surprisingly, Esau agreed. Jacob gave him some stew.

Now when Isaac grew old, he called Esau and told him to go hunting and make him some food. Isaac said that after he ate the food he would give Esau his blessing. Isaac didn't know that Esau had traded away his birthright.

When Rebekah overheard Isaac talking to Esau, she called Jacob and told him that she would make some food for him to take to Isaac so that he would receive the blessing instead of Esau. She gave Jacob some of Esau's clothes to put on and put goatskin on his arms so he would feel hairy like his brother. In this way, Jacob tricked Isaac into giving the blessing to him instead of Esau.

When Esau returned from hunting and discovered that Isaac had already blessed Jacob, he was furious. He wanted a blessing, too.

In order to keep Jacob safe until Esau calmed down, Rebekah sent him away to live with her brother's family.

## EMPHASIZE THE BIBLE VERSE

- Show the children the Bible verse poster you made.
- Encourage the children to read the verse with you.

**SAY:** When you say, "The Lord bless you and keep you," to others, you're letting them know God loves them and will take care of them. We're going to say our Bible verse seven more times. Each time we say the verse we will stress a different word. The first time we say the verse, we'll put the emphasis on the first word. The second time we say the verse, we'll put the emphasis on the second word. We'll continue until we have stressed each word in the verse.

- Encourage the children to say the Bible verse with you seven times, emphasizing a different word each time.

## Activity Options

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

## EXPLORE THE BLESSING CENTERS—ALL CHILDREN

**Supplies:** bell or chime

**Before Class:** Set up the blessing centers as described in Station Setup. Turn on the music in Blessing Center 3 just before this activity.

**SAY:** Today we're exploring spiritual practices. A spiritual practice is anything that helps us connect with God. Our Bible story today talked about blessings.

**ASK:** What is a blessing? (An affirmation or a way to let someone know that he or she is special or something that makes you feel special and loved)

**SAY:** I have set up three blessing centers for you to explore today. As you explore these centers, spend time thinking about what makes you feel blessed and loved by God. Also think about the special people in your life that you would like God to bless.

- Show the children the different blessing centers.

**SAY:** In Blessing Center 1, you may draw pictures or write words that show and tell about the blessings in your life. Draw or write about the things that make you feel loved and special. In Blessing Center 2, you may spend time thinking about your blessings and praying to God as you draw designs in the sand. In Blessing Center 3, there are chenille stems for you to shape into your blessings. Think about the people in your life that you would like to bless. Use a chenille stem to form the first letter of that person's name, and leave the letter on the fabric in the center. You may make as many chenille stem letters as you would like.

- Ask the children if they have questions about any of the centers.

**SAY:** This will be a quiet time of blessing. You may move from center to center, but please do so quietly so that others may continue with their activities. I'll ring a bell when there is one minute left in our blessing center time. When you hear the bell, finish up what you are doing and return to our group area.

- Allow the children time to explore the blessing centers.
- Be ready to assist children who aren't sure what to do or where to go first.
- Encourage the children to be quiet and respectful of others.
- The amount of time to allow for this activity will depend on the size of your class and the personalities of the children.
- Ring the bell to give the children a one-minute warning.
- Encourage children to finish their activities and return to the group area.

## **GUIDED MEDITATION OF BLESSING—ALL CHILDREN**

- Invite the children to sit on the floor with enough space around them to stretch their arms out to either side.
- Read the following meditation slowly.

Sit on the floor with your legs crossed. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath in and slowly let it out. Take another breath in and hold it for a count of three: 1, 2, 3. Now slowly let it out. Now continue to breath normally.

Place your hands on the ground in front of you. As you sit with your hands on the ground, think about the things you do in the morning—waking up, saying hello to your family, eating breakfast, getting ready for school, and all those other things you do in the morning. Thank God for the opportunity to wake up to a new day every morning. What blesses you in the morning? Whom do you see in the morning that makes you feel loved? Thank God for that person.

Now stretch your arms out to each side. Open your arms wide as if you could hold the whole world. Wiggle your fingers back and forth and open and close your hands. As you are wiggling your fingers, think about all of the things you do during the middle of the day—playing with friends, eating lunch, going to school or staying home, and all of the things you do throughout the day. Thank God for the middle of the day. What do you do during the middle of the day that makes you feel special? Thank God for that activity.

Now stretch your arms up above your head. Sit up tall and reach way up! Imagine you can touch the sky. As you reach up, think about all of the things you do in the

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evening—eating supper, spending time with your family, doing homework, getting ready for bed, and all of the things you do in the evening. Thank God for evenings. What blesses you in the evening? Thank God for evening blessings.

Rest your hands on your lap. Think about the nighttime. Think about rest and sleep. Thank God for the nighttime. Take a deep breath in and slowly let it out. Continue to rest your hands in your lap and keep your eyes closed as we pray. Thank you, God, for your constant presence in our lives. Thank you for the many ways we are blessed throughout every day. Amen. You may open your eyes.

## **MAKE PRAYER STEW—YOUNGER CHILDREN**

**Supplies:** Leader's Guide—pp. 8-9, scissors, crayons, glue

**Before Class:** Make copies of "Prayer Stew, Part 1" (p. 8) and "Prayer Stew, Part 2" (p. 9) for each child.

**ASK:** Have you every heard the saying "count your blessings"? What do you think that saying means?

**SAY:** We have many things to be thankful for. Sometimes we focus on the things that are going wrong and forget that we have many things to be thankful for. Today you're going to make prayer stew to help you remember to be thankful.

- Give each child a copy of "Prayer Stew, Part 1" and "Prayer Stew, Part 2."
- Encourage each child to write one thing he or she is thankful for on each vegetable.
- Have each child cut out the vegetables and glue them in her or his bowl.
- Let each child color the bowl and vegetables.

**SAY:** Use this prayer stew to thank God for your many blessings. Let's take some time right now to silently thank God for our blessings.

- Allow the children time to use their prayer stew to pray.

## **WRITE A BLESSING FOR SOMEONE—OLDER CHILDREN**

**Supplies:** paper, colored pencils

**ASK:** Who gave a blessing in our Bible story today? (*Isaac*) Who can give a blessing to someone else?

**SAY:** God loves and blesses each of us. We can pass on God's love and bless others.

**ASK:** What are some ways you can bless someone else?

- Allow children the opportunity to share their ideas.

**SAY:** There are many ways to bless someone. It may be as simple as sharing a smile or a hug. Or you could say a prayer for someone. You might tell the person what you like about him or her and what makes him or her special. Today you're going to write a blessing for someone.

- Invite each child to think of someone to write a blessing for.
- Give each child a piece of paper.
- Have each child write the name of the person she or he is blessing vertically down the left side of the paper.

**SAY:** Now think of a characteristic of the person you're blessing that begins with each letter of the person's name. Write the characteristic next to the appropriate letter. As you're writing, say a silent prayer of thanks to God for the person you are blessing.

- Encourage each child to write a blessing acrostic for the person he or she has chosen.
- Be prepared to help children think of words as needed.
- Allow children time to write.

**SAY:** Make sure you give your blessing to the person you have written it for. It's sure to bless them.

## Worship

**Supplies:** Leader's Guide—p. 7

**Before Class:** Make copies of the "Reproducible Family Letter" (p. 7).

**SAY:** Since we've been talking about blessings today, we're going to end our time together by blessing each other. I'm going to invite a group of you to stand up. As you're standing, the rest of us are going to say to you, "You are children of God."

- Invite children whose first name begins with A, B, or C to stand.
- Encourage the rest of the children to say, "You are children of God."
- Continue inviting children to stand based on the letters of their first names until all children have had a chance to stand.
- As each group of children stands, encourage the rest of the children to say, "You are children of God."

**PRAY:** Loving God, thank you for loving us. As your beloved and blessed children, help us remember to bless others and share your love with them. Amen.

- Send a family letter home with each child.

# Reproducible Family Letter

Today we heard the story of Jacob and Esau and used spiritual practices to explore blessings.

## WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE?

A spiritual practice is anything that helps us form a connection to God. Spiritual practices may include prayer, personal reflection, group sharing, worship, meditation, and study. There are many different types of spiritual practices, and some people may find certain practices more meaningful than others. Participating in a variety of spiritual practices helps to keep us focused on God.

## Do This Activity at Home With Your Family

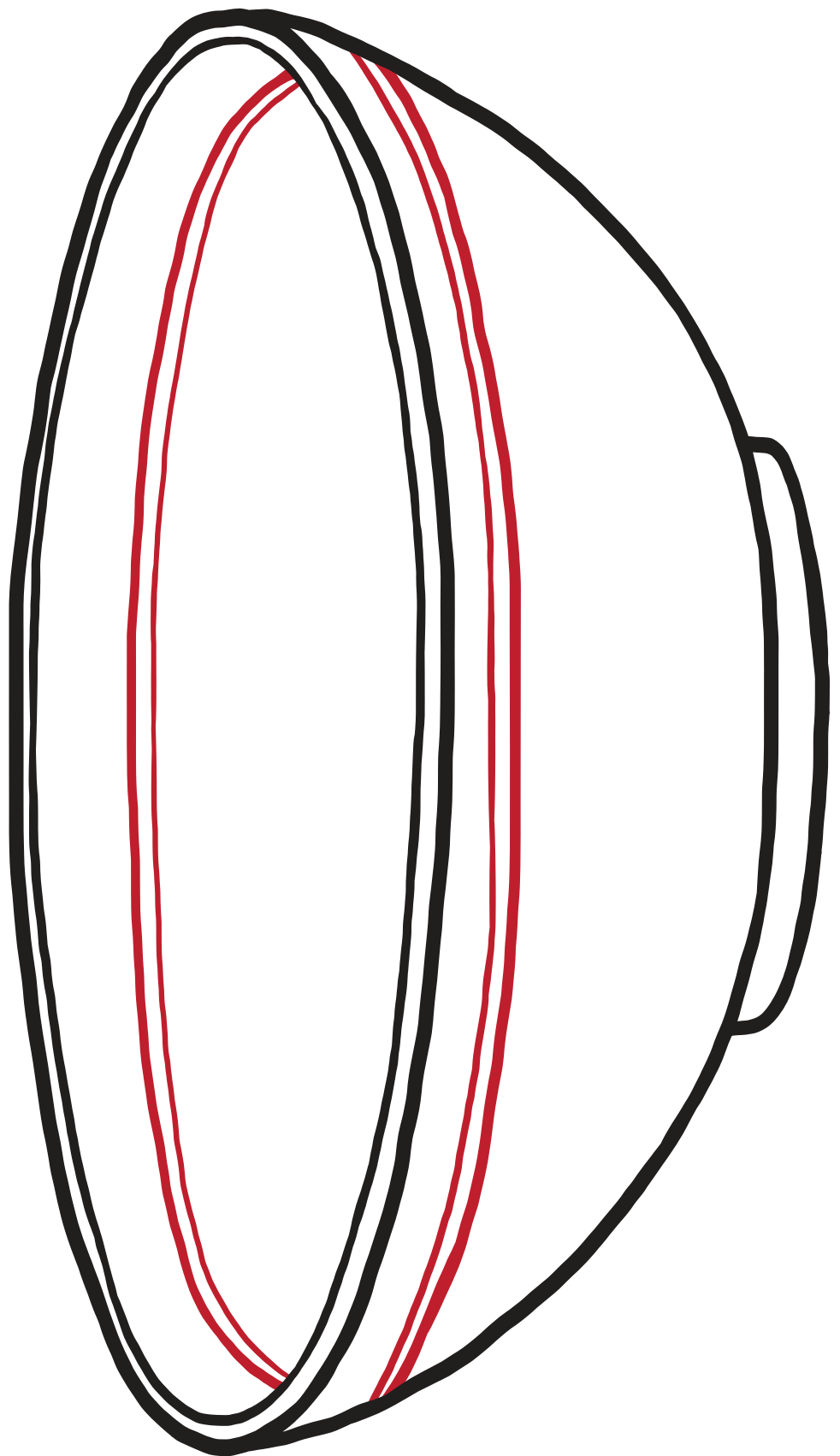
Look up a blessing in the Bible. The Bible verse we talked about today is the first part of a priestly blessing found in the Book of Numbers. The entire blessing is often used as a benediction at the end of worship services. Look up Numbers 6:24-26 in the Bible. Read the verses aloud. Talk about how these verses make you feel when you hear them.

Together as a family, write the words from Numbers 6:24-26 on a piece of paper. Have each person write a few of the words. Post the paper up in your house where you will see it often.



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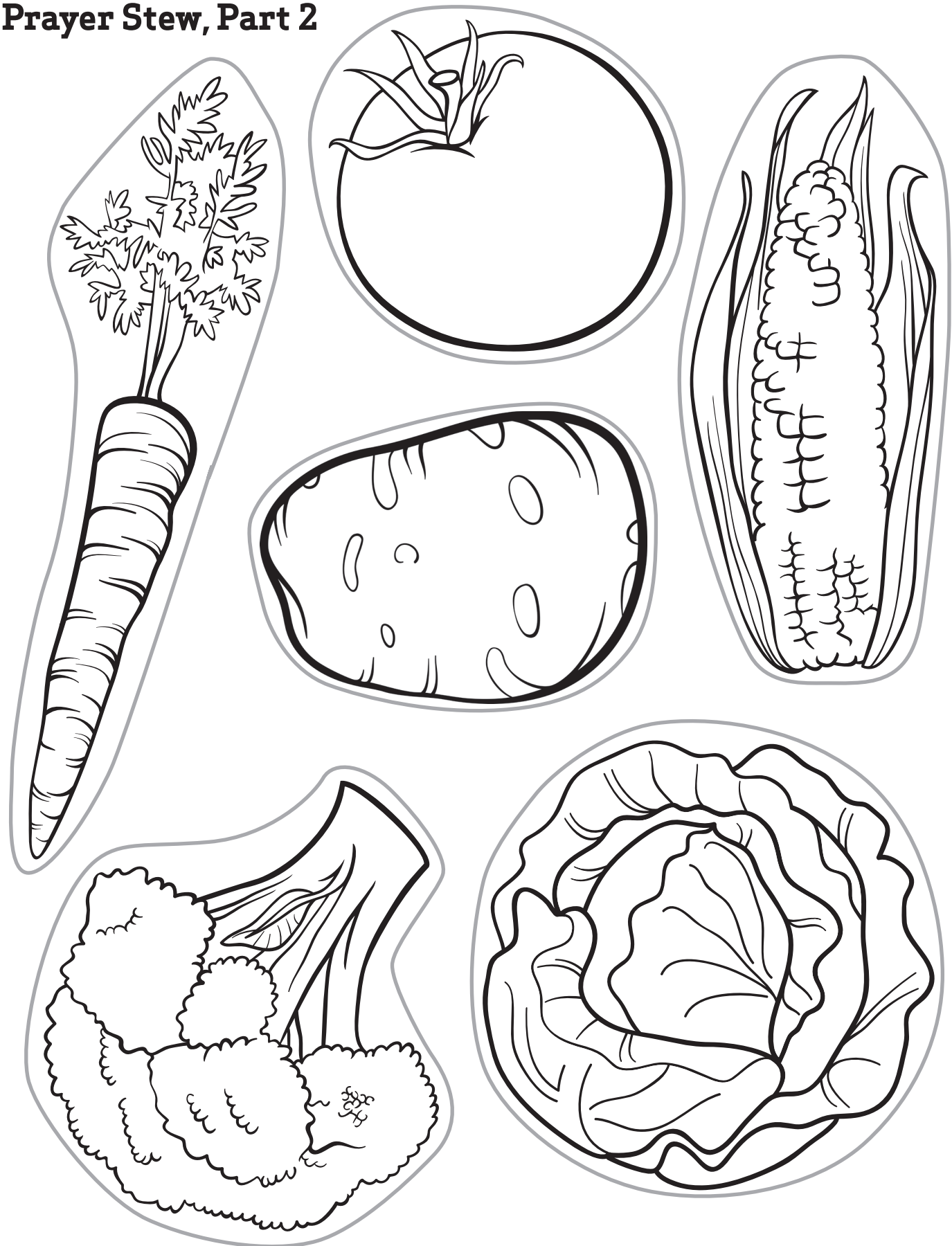
# Prayer Stew, Part 1



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**Prayer Stew, Part 2**



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