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 storytelling and drama.
• 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
Storytelling 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
❑ Oh, Jacob! Oh, Esau!—All Children
❑ Illustrate the Story—All Children
❑ Move to the Story—Younger Children
❑ Lip-sync Storytelling—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)

Follow these directions to set up for the Illustrated Story Activity.

Set up tables around the perimeter of the room.

Make a copy of “Captions for Illustrated Story” (pp. 11-12), and cut the captions apart.

Cut 23 pieces of mural paper.

Glue each caption at the bottom of a separate piece of mural paper.

Lay the pieces of mural paper out on the tables in order.

BIBLE STORY—BLESSINGS AND BIRTHRIGHTS

SAY: Our Bible story today is about Jacob and Esau. Before we hear today’s story, you need to know what a birthright is. Back in Bible times, being the oldest son came with special privileges. The oldest son often inherited most or all of the father’s land and possessions when the father died. The father of the family gave the oldest son a special blessing before the father died. This blessing was called the birthright. The oldest son then became the leader of the family.

• Tell the children the following story:

Even though Jacob and Esau were twins, they were different from each other. Esau was an outdoorsman who liked to hunt. Jacob was quieter and liked to stay at home. Their father, Isaac, liked to eat the food that Esau caught, and so he loved Esau the best. The boys’ mother, Rebekah, loved Jacob more.

As the oldest son, Esau would have received the birthright when Isaac died. But one day Esau traded his birthright for a bowl of stew that Jacob was making. That’s how little he cared about his birthright!

Now when Isaac grew old, he called Esau to him. He told Esau to go hunting and make him some food. After he ate the food, he would give Esau his blessing.

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. Rebekah and Jacob tricked Isaac into giving Esau’s blessing to Jacob.

When Esau returned from hunting and went to Isaac, he discovered what Jacob had done. Esau was furious with Jacob. He decided that after their father died, he would kill his brother. In order to keep Jacob safe, Rebekah sent him away to live with her brother’s family until Esau calmed down.

SIGN THE BIBLE VERSE

Before Class: Familiarize yourself with the signs for the Bible verse from American Sign Language (p. 8) so you can teach them to the children.

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• 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 several times.

**SAY:** This Bible verse is a blessing. A blessing is a way to indicate that someone is special. Each one of you is special to God.

**Activity Options**

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

**OH, JACOB! OH, ESAU!—ALL CHILDREN**

**Supplies:** Leader’s Guide—pp. 9-10

**Before Class:** Make copies of “Oh, Jacob! Oh Esau!” (pp. 9-10)

**SAY:** The story of Jacob and Esau is complicated. There isn’t one person who always does the right thing or one person who always does the wrong thing. Throughout the story each person does some things that don’t seem quite right or are rather silly. We’re going to hear the story again, but this time I need you to help me tell the story.

• Give each child a copy of “Oh, Jacob! Oh, Esau!”

**SAY:** Follow along as I read the story. Your part is in bold type. Make sure you put a lot of feeling into the words.

• Read the story from “Oh, Jacob! Oh, Esau!” encouraging the children to respond where indicated.

**SAY:** Thank you for your help with the story. As you heard, everyone in the story did some things that probably shouldn’t have been done.

**ASK:** What did Isaac do that might not have been the right thing to do? *(He loved Esau more than Jacob. He was tricked into blessing Jacob instead of Esau.)* What did Rebekah do that might not have been the right thing to do? *(She loved Jacob more than Esau. She helped Jacob trick Isaac.)* What did Esau do that might not have been the right thing to do? *(He sold his birthright for a bowl of stew. He didn’t tell Isaac he’d traded away his birthright. He decided to kill Jacob.)* What did Jacob do that might not have been the right thing to do? *(He convinced Esau to sell him his birthright for a bowl of stew. He lied to his father and tricked him into giving him the blessing.)*

**SAY:** Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob lived a long time ago. But they were human just like we are. We don’t always do the right thing either. The good news is that even when we mess up, God still loves us.
ILLUSTRATE THE STORY—ALL CHILDREN

Supplies: mural paper with captions as described in Station Setup, crayons
- Set crayons beside each piece of mural paper.
- Invite each child to stand in front of a piece of mural paper.

SAY: Today you’re going to illustrate the story of Jacob and Esau. When I tell you to begin, start drawing a picture to go along with the words on the paper in front of you.
- Invite the children to begin coloring.
- Give the children a few minutes to draw.

SAY: Now stop drawing your picture and put your crayons down on the table. Move to the picture on your right, and begin drawing a picture to go along with the words on that paper. If someone has already begun a picture, continue drawing that picture.
- Encourage the children to move and begin drawing.
- Continue in this manner, having the children move and draw until it appears that most of the pictures are done.

SAY: Let’s take a look at the story you have drawn.
- Have the class stand in front of picture number 1.
- Invite volunteers to read the captions as you move around the room.

SAY: You have done a great job of illustrating our story!

MOVE TO THE STORY—YOUNGER CHILDREN

SAY: I’m going to tell you the story of Jacob and Esau again. This time I have some actions that I want you to do each time you hear a name of someone in the story.

ASK: Who are the people in this story? (Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob)

SAY: Let’s talk about the people in the story. Isaac was the father. He was very old in this story, and he couldn’t see very well. Every time you hear Isaac’s name I want you to stand up and pretend you are leaning on a cane. Squint your eyes as if you are trying to see.
- Have the children practice the actions for Isaac.

SAY: Rebekah was the mother in this story. She made food for Jacob to take to his father. When you hear Rebekah’s name, pretend you are at a campfire stirring a big pot of stew. It’s hot, so you might need to wipe some sweat off of your forehead every once in awhile.
- Have the children practice the actions for Rebekah.

SAY: Esau is the oldest twin. He is big and hairy and he likes to hunt. Each time you hear Esau’s name, pretend you are shooting a bow and arrow.

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Blessings and Birthrights

Have the children practice the actions for Esau.

SAY: Jacob is the younger twin. He is quiet and likes to stay at home. Each time you hear Jacob’s name, sit down and place your hands quietly in your lap.

Have the children practice the actions for Jacob.

SAY: When you hear someone’s name, begin doing the actions for that person. Continue doing those actions until you hear another name.

Read the children the following story and encourage them to do the actions as directed.

Esau and Jacob were twins. Esau was the oldest son. Jacob, the second son, was holding onto Esau’s heel when they were born, as if Jacob wanted to pull Esau back so he could be born first. Even though Jacob and Esau were twins, they were different from each other. Esau was an outdoorsman who liked to hunt. Jacob was quieter and liked to stay at home. Their father, Isaac, liked to eat the food that Esau caught, and so he loved Esau the best. The boys’ mother, Rebekah, loved Jacob more.

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. One day Jacob was making soup. Esau came in from the field, and he was hungry. He smelled the soup Jacob was cooking and said, “Give me some of that stew!”

Jacob saw a chance to get something from his brother and said, “I’ll give you some soup if you sell me your birthright.” And just like that, Esau traded his birthright for a bowl of stew that Jacob was making. That’s how little he cared about it!

Now when Isaac grew old, he called Esau to him. He told Esau to go hunting and make him some food. After Isaac ate the food, he would give Esau his blessing.

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 Jacob would receive the blessing instead of Esau. Jacob went along with Rebekah’s plan. Jacob went into Isaac’s tent, gave him the food, and asked for a blessing. When Isaac asked who he was, Jacob told him, “I’m Esau, your oldest son.” Isaac was tricked into giving Esau’s blessing to Jacob.

When Esau returned from hunting and went to Isaac, he discovered what Jacob had done. Esau was furious with Jacob. He decided that after their father, Isaac, died he would kill his brother, Jacob.

When Rebekah heard how mad Esau was, she sent Jacob away to live with her brother so he would be safe.

SAY: Good job moving to the story!

LIP-SYNC STORYTELLING—OLDER CHILDREN

Supplies: Leader’s Guide—pp. 13-16, scissors, clothesline, clothespins, step stool, pencils

Before Class: Make copies of the faces of Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob (pp. 13-16). Cut out the mouths as indicated. Make a copy of “Lip-sync Story” (pp. 17-19). Set up chairs or designate an area for an audience to sit. In the stage area in front of the audience area,
string the clothesline across the room at a height that will be just at the children's heads. Use a marker to write the name of the character on the back of each page so that the children will be able to tell which characters they are playing. Use clothespins to hang the faces up on the clothesline. Spread the pages across the line and make sure all faces are pointing out toward the audience.

- Have the children sit in the audience and show them the faces you have hung up.

**SAY:** We’re going to retell the story of Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob. I’m going to invite four children at a time to come up front. Stand behind one of the faces. Notice which character you are behind, and put your mouth right up to the hole in the paper. As I read the story, when I mention your character’s name, move your lips as if you’re speaking but don’t make a sound. Continue moving your lips until it is another character’s turn to talk.

- Invite the first four children to come to the front and take their places. Provide a step stool for any child who needs it.
- Read Act 1 of “Lip-sync Story,” encouraging the children to move their lips at the appropriate times.
- Continue reading the story, inviting new children up before each act so that each child has an opportunity to participate.

### Worship

**Supply:** Leader’s Guide—p. 7

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

**SAY:** Today we’ve heard the story of Isaac and Rebekah’s twin sons, Esau and Jacob.

**ASK:** Who was the oldest son? (Esau) Do you remember what a birthright is? (A special blessing for the oldest son)

**SAY:** Since Esau was the oldest, the birthright would have been his. But one day he sold it to Jacob for a bowl of stew. And then Jacob tricked Isaac into blessing him instead of Esau.

**ASK:** Who do you think should have received the blessing?

**SAY:** It’s complicated, isn’t it? Esau was the oldest, but he seemed not to care about the birthright. But Jacob got the birthright by lying to his father. Sometimes life is messy. The good news is that God loves us no matter what! Even when we make mistakes, God loves us and blesses us.

**PRAY:** God, thank you for your love for us. Thank you for the many blessings that you have given to us. Help us to pass your love on to others. Amen.

- Send a family letter home with each child.

≈ **TIPS** ≈

If you have access to a video camera, computer, and projector, record the children’s performance and then play it back for them.
Reproducible Family Letter

Today we used storytelling and drama to explore the story of Jacob and Esau.

Do This Activity at Home With Your Family

Find the story of Jacob and Esau in the Bible.

The story of Jacob and Esau is found in the book of Genesis. Genesis is the first book of the Bible. Find Genesis 25 and read verses 29-34 aloud. Then turn to Genesis 27 and read verses 1-46 aloud.

Invite each family member to share his or her favorite part of this story.

Discuss the following questions, remembering that there are no right or wrong answers.

Does trading a bowl of stew for a birthright seem like a fair trade?

Do you think Esau was treating his birthright with the respect it deserved?

Were Jacob’s actions in the best interest of the family? Why or why not?

What if Esau had refused to trade his birthright for the stew?

Do you think Jacob would have given him some stew anyway or would he have sent him away hungry?

Say the following blessing from Numbers 6:24 to each other:
The Lord bless you and keep you.
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.
Oh, Jacob! Oh, Esau!

Jacob and Esau were twins. Esau was the oldest son. Jacob, the second son, was holding onto Esau's heel when they were born, as if he wanted to pull Esau back so he could be born first.

Oh, Jacob!

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.

It's not a good idea for parents to have favorite children, but Esau and Jacob's parents did. Their father, Isaac, liked to eat the food that Esau caught, and so he loved Esau the best.

Oh, Isaac!

The boys' mother, Rebekah, loved Jacob more.

Oh, Rebekah!

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. One day Jacob was making soup. Esau came in from the field and he was hungry. Esau smelled the soup Jacob was cooking and said, "Give me some of that stew!"

Jacob saw a chance to get something from his brother and said, "I'll give you some soup if you sell me your birthright."

Oh, Jacob!

Esau agreed. So Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the bread and soup and then got up and left.

Oh, Esau!

Years passed and Isaac grew old. His eyesight was failing, and he knew he would die soon. Isaac called Esau to his tent. He told Esau to go hunting and make him some food. Isaac told Esau that when he brought him the food he would give Esau his blessing. Isaac didn't know that Esau had traded his birthright for a bowl of stew.

Oh, Isaac!

And Esau didn't tell his father what he had done.

Oh, Esau!

Now Rebekah was eavesdropping and overheard the conversation between Esau and Isaac.

Oh, Rebekah!

Rebekah went to 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.

Oh, Rebekah!

Rebekah fixed the food Isaac liked. She also covered Jacob's neck and arms with goat hair so he would be hairy like Esau. She even gave Jacob some of Esau's clothing so that he would smell like Esau.

Oh, Rebekah!

Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright today, then."

Oh, Jacob!
Oh, Jacob! Oh, Esau!
(continued)

Jacob went along with the plan.

Oh, Jacob!

Jacob went into Isaac's tent, gave him the food, and asked for a blessing. When Isaac asked who he was, Jacob told him, “I'm Esau, your oldest son.”

Oh, Jacob!

When Isaac asked him how he had returned from hunting so quickly, Jacob told him, “The Lord provided an animal for me.”

Oh, Jacob!

Isaac's eyesight was failing because he was old. He touched Jacob's hands and arms, and they were hairy like Esau's because of the goat hair. He asked his son to come close and kiss him. Because Jacob was wearing Esau's clothes, he smelled like Esau. Isaac ate the food and blessed Jacob.

Oh, Isaac!

Esau begged his father to give him a blessing, too. Isaac told Esau that he had already blessed Jacob and made Jacob more powerful than him.

Oh, Isaac!

Isaac finally gave in and gave Esau a blessing, too, though not the same blessing he had already given to Jacob. Esau was furious! He decided that after their father died he would kill Jacob.

Oh, Esau!

Rebekah heard what Esau was planning to do. She told Jacob that his brother was planning to kill him. She sent Jacob away to live with her brother's family until Esau calmed down. So Jacob went away.

Oh, Jacob!

(Based on Genesis 25:29-34; 27:1-46.)
Captions for Illustrated Story

1. Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons.

2. Esau was the oldest twin. He had lots of red hair all over his body. He liked to hunt.

3. Jacob was the youngest twin. He was smooth-skinned and liked to stay at home.

4. One day Jacob was cooking stew over a fire.

5. Esau came to Jacob and said, “Give me some of that stew!”

6. Jacob, still cooking the stew, said, “I’ll give you some stew if you sell me your birthright.”

7. Esau said, “My birthright won’t do me any good if I starve to death!”

8. So Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew.

9. One day Isaac called Esau to his tent and said, “I am old.”

10. Isaac told Esau, “Go hunting, and make me some delicious food. Then I can bless you before I die.”

11. Rebekah said to Jacob, “Your father is getting ready to bless Esau. I will make you food to take to your father, and he will bless you instead.”

12. Rebekah made food for Jacob to take to Esau.
13. Rebekah gave Jacob some of Esau’s clothes to put on and put goatskin on his arms to make him hairy.

14. Jacob went into Isaac’s tent and said, “Here is some food, father. Now you can bless me.”

15. Isaac said to Jacob, “Who are you?”

16. Jacob replied, “I am your oldest son, Esau.”

17. Isaac touched the goatskin on Jacob’s arms and smelled Esau’s clothes that Jacob was wearing.

18. So Isaac blessed Jacob, saying, “Bless you my son. May God give you what you need. May you be the most powerful among your brothers. Those who bless you will be blessed.”

19. As Jacob left their father’s tent, Esau went in.

20. Esau said, “Father, sit up and eat so that you may bless me.” But Isaac said, “Who are you?”

21. When Esau said, “I am your oldest son,” Isaac asked, “Who was the hunter that was just here?”

22. Esau shouted, “My brother has tricked you! Bless me, too!”

23. Rebekah sent Jacob away to live with her brother’s family because Esau was so mad.
Isaac
Esau
Jacob
Lip-sync Story

Act 1

Isaac: This is a story about me. I have twin sons.

Rebekah: This story is about me, too. I am the mother of the twin sons.

Esau: I am the oldest son. I am big and strong and my hair is red. I like to hunt.

Jacob: I am the younger son. I am not hairy like my brother. I prefer to stay at home.

Isaac: As the oldest son, Esau will receive the birthright when I die.

Act 2

Isaac: I like to eat the food Esau brings home from hunting. I love Esau the best.

Rebekah: I love Jacob the best.

Esau: One day I came home from hunting and my brother was making stew. It smelled so good! Hey, Jacob, give me some stew!

Jacob: I'll give you some stew if you'll give me your birthright.

Jacob: Okay, here's some stew. Do we have a deal?

Esau: Sure, the birthright is yours.
**Act 3**

**Isaac:** I know that I’m getting old and I don’t see as well as I used to. I will probably die soon. Esau, come here!

**Esau:** Here I am, Father.

**Isaac:** Go hunting and make me some food. When you come back I will give you my blessing.

**Esau:** Okay, Father. I’ll be back.

**Rebekah:** Jacob, come here! Your father has sent your brother hunting, and he is going to bless him when he comes back. I will make some food for you to take to your father so he will bless you instead.

**Jacob:** But my brother is hairy and I am not. Father will know I am trying to trick him, and then he will curse me instead of bless me!

**Act 4**

**Rebekah:** Here, Jacob, put on your brother’s clothes. Put this goatskin on your arms and neck to make you hairy. Here is some stew to take to your father.

**Jacob:** Father, here is some food for you.

**Isaac:** Who are you?

**Jacob:** I am Esau, your oldest son.

**Isaac:** Come here so I can feel you. You feel like Esau and you smell like Esau, but the voice is Jacob.

**Jacob:** I am Esau, Father. Give me your blessing.

**Isaac:** Bless you, my son.
Act 5

**Esau**: Father, I’m back from hunting. Sit up so you may bless me.

**Isaac**: Who are you?

**Esau**: I am your son, Esau. Bless me, Father.

**Isaac**: Who is that hunter who was just here? I gave him my blessing.

**Esau**: That was my brother, Jacob! He has tricked you and taken my blessing! Bless me, Father!

**Isaac**: I have already blessed your brother and made him more powerful than you.

**Esau**: I will get my brother for this!

**Rebekah**: Jacob, come here! Your brother is really mad. You had better leave until he calms down.

**Jacob**: But where will I go?

**Rebekah**: Go and stay with my brother’s family.

**Jacob**: Goodbye, Mother.

The End (of this part of the story…)