



Jacob Sees the Face of God

(based on Genesis 32:1–33:15)

Esau (EE-saw) and Jacob had not spoken for a long time. Jacob had stolen Esau's blessing. Esau hated him for it. He was so angry with Jacob that he wanted to kill his brother.

Jacob ran away to escape Esau's anger.

God told Jacob to go home. Jacob and his family traveled back to the land where Esau lived—the land that God had promised to Jacob. When they were a few days into their journey, Jacob learned that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred of his strongest men. Jacob was very worried!

That night, Jacob and his family came to a river. Jacob helped his family cross the river to set up camp. Then he went off by himself.

Alone and afraid, he worried, "What am I going to do?"

Suddenly, a stranger stepped from the darkness. The man grabbed Jacob. They began to wrestle. All night long, the two men struggled. The stranger grabbed Jacob's thigh so hard that he tore the muscle. Still Jacob hung on.

"Let me go," the stranger cried.

"I won't let you go until you bless me," responded Jacob.

"What is your name?" asked the stranger.

"Jacob," replied Jacob.

You will not be called Jacob any longer," explained the stranger. "You will be called Israel. You wrestled with God and with men, and you won."

The stranger blessed Jacob and left. Jacob named the place Peniel (PEHN-ih-ehl), which means "face of God."

"Tonight I saw God face to face," marveled Jacob as he crossed the river to join his family, limping because of the torn muscle.

As the sun appeared, Jacob looked over the land. He saw a cloud of dust in the distance. It was Esau and his four hundred men!

Esau's army came closer and closer. Jacob could hear the stomp, stomp, stomp of their feet on the ground.

Jacob went ahead of his family. He bowed to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. Jacob didn't know what to expect.

With joy, Esau ran to Jacob and wrapped his arms around him. Both brothers were crying. Jacob could hardly believe what was happening.

"God has surely blessed me," Jacob cried. "Seeing you is like seeing the face of God!"

Jacob introduced his brother to his family. They were friends again. God had brought them back together. God's love had changed everything.



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your child—imagine and wonder.
- Have everyone close their eyes and imagine what it felt like to be angry like Esau and scared like Jacob. Open eyes and make faces for Esau and Jacob. Then imagine Jacob as humble and Esau as joyful. Act out those feelings.
- Wonder together how Esau's feelings changed from bitterness to love and from anger to forgiveness. Tell, act out, or draw the story of Esau's changed feelings.
- Invite everyone to finish one of these sentences: "I was angry when . . .," "I was scared when . . .," or "I forgave when . . ."



Responding to God's Grace

- Sing a feelings song to the tune of "Oh, My Darling Clementine."

I was angry. I was angry. I was angry with my friend.

I forgave (*her or him*). I forgave (*her or him*).
I forgave (*her or him*) in the end.

I was scared. I was scared. I was scared for a while.

I am braver. I am braver. I am braver and can smile.

It is joyful. It is joyful. It is joyful to forgive.
God can help me. God help me. God help me learn to live.

Think of new feelings and create verses to sing.

- Create a "wrestling-with-my-feelings" pillow. Decorate an old, solid-color pillowcase with feeling words or faces by using fabric markers or crayons. Stuff the pillowcase with old T-shirts, old sheets, or pillow foam. Tie or sew the end closed. Invite anyone to grab, wrestle, and pray with the pillow anytime they need help with strong feelings.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Invite each person to tell one feeling he or she experienced this week and how God helped with the situation. Encourage everyone to celebrate God's grace in that person's circumstance by clapping, jumping, leaping, or spinning.
- Pray this prayer each day this week:

God, show me when I need forgiveness. God, show me when I need to forgive. God, show me when I need to be more loving. God, show me. Amen.