

Supplies: A large room to move around in; *optional:* a large, light, smooth stick (like a polished cane/hiking stick)

OPENING PRAYER

TELL

- For the opening question, I'm going to ask you a question and then we'll go around the circle and say our names and then our answer to the question.
- I'll ask the question and then I'll answer first, ok?
- Opening question: *Have you ever had to tell someone (who you had wronged) that you were sorry? Did you want to do it? Why or why not?*

GO AROUND THE CIRCLE

- During this Session (Patriarchs, Joseph and Moses), we've been talking and learning about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses.
- These 5 individuals had a lot to do with the beginning of who we call the Israelites.
- By learning the stories of these 5 individuals, we are also getting the chance to learn and see how the relationship between the Israelites and God starts, struggles, and matures.
- All of these stories that we're hearing and talking about in this Session are from the Old Testament. This means these things happened well before Jesus was born. Between 1600 to 2000 years before Jesus was born. This means some of these stories are 4000 years old!
- Last week we heard and talked about Jacob, who was Isaac's son (and Isaac was Abraham's son). Jacob, if you remember bought his brother's birthright for a bowl of soup, but then, later on, tricked his dying father into believing he was Esau so that he would get the blessing instead of Esau.
- For today's story, Jacob is twenty years older and God has told him to return to his home to reunite with his brother Esau, who Jacob hasn't seen in 20 years. Last time Jacob saw Esau, Esau wanted to kill Jacob for stealing his blessing.
- Jacob is getting closer to meeting Esau and is very afraid of what's going to happen. Let's listen to what happens.

READ Genesis 32

3 Then Jacob sent messengers on ahead to his brother Esau in the land of Seir in Edom. 4 He instructed them: "Tell my master Esau this, 'A message from your servant Jacob: I've been staying with Uncle Laban and couldn't get away until now. 5 I've acquired cattle and donkeys and sheep; also men and women servants. I'm telling you all this, my master, hoping for your approval.'" 6 The messengers came back to Jacob and said, "We talked to your brother Esau and he's on his way to meet you. But he has four hundred men with him." 7 Jacob was scared. Very scared. Panicked, he divided his people, sheep, cattle,

and camels into two camps. 8 He thought, "If Esau comes upon the first camp and attacks it, the other camp has a chance to get away."

9 And then Jacob prayed, "God of my grandfather Abraham, God of my father Isaac, God who told me, 'Go back to your parents' homeland and I'll treat you well.' 10 I don't deserve all the love and loyalty you've shown me. When I left here and crossed the Jordan I only had the clothes on my back, and now look at me - two camps! 11 Save me, please, from the violence of my brother, my angry brother! I'm afraid he'll come and attack us all, me, the mothers and the children. 12 You yourself said, 'I will treat you well; I'll make your descendants like the sands of the sea, far too many to count.'"

13 He slept the night there...22 But during the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. 23 He got them safely across the brook along with all his possessions.

24 But Jacob stayed behind by himself, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he couldn't get the best of Jacob as they wrestled, he deliberately threw Jacob's hip out of joint. 26 The man said, "Let me go; it's daybreak." Jacob said, "I'm not letting you go 'til you bless me." 27 The man said, "What's your name?" He answered, "Jacob." 28 The man said, "But no longer. Your name is no longer Jacob. From now on it's Israel (God-Wrestler); you've wrestled with God and you've come through." 29 Jacob asked, "And what's your name?" The man said, "Why do you want to know my name?" And then, right then and there, he blessed him. 30 Jacob named the place Peniel (God's Face) because, he said, "I saw God face-to-face and lived to tell the story!" 31 The sun came up as Jacob left Peniel, ready to meet his brother and limping because of his hip.

ASK

- Jacob sent a message to Esau telling him that he's got lots of people and hopes to find favor with him. When his messengers came back, what do they tell Jacob about Esau? (That Esau has 400 men with him)
- Do you think this information calms Jacob? (No!)
- What does he do in response to this information? (splits his people into two camps, so that if one camp gets attacked, then the other camp might be able to escape)
- Did you hear one thing that Jacob did that he didn't do in last week's story (hint: it's in verse 9)? (he prayed!)
- What is Jacob's name changed to? (Israel, which means "To wrestle with God")
- Does that name sound familiar? (yes!)

TELL

- What God was asking Jacob to do was not easy for Jacob to do. He was really scared of Esau.
- But instead of running away, Jacob prayed to God, and that prayer led to Jacob's wrestling with God.
- Jacob's name means "To grasp" and that's what we saw him do in last week's story, right? He grabbed Esau's heel, then Esau's birthright, then Esau's blessing. What we see happening in this story 20 years later is that instead of grabbing things, Jacob is instead holding on to God.
- This is a major change in Jacob! So big a change that God also changes Jacob's name.

- The last few weeks, we've done a number of fun arts and crafts. But this week, we're going to play some games. The first set of games we're going to play are wrestling games. But these are wrestling games where each one has a certain skill that you will be matching up with against your fellow classmates. Mostly the skills have to do with patience and balance.

EXPLAIN 1st Activity

- There are a number of wrestling games we're going to try.
- After I explain an activity, try it out with a friend, but then challenge as many people in the class as possible. You'll have a pretty short time to try these out, so try to see how many different people you can defeat!
- Remember patience and balance are key to these games.
- When I need to get your attention, I'm going to clap my hands once and say, "If you can hear my voice, clap your hands twice." Then after you clap your hands twice, I'll say if you can hear my voice, clap your hands 3 times. As you hear the clapping, that means to stop talking/doing what you are doing. Once I have your attention, I will tell you to sit down. Do so immediately and I will then explain the next wrestling activity.

NOTE TO TEACHERS: Once an activity is explained, let the kids try it out for 3 or 4 minutes, tops. Always stop with them wanting to do the activity some more.

DO WRESTLING ACTIVITIES (See Explanations of activities below)

- **ROOSTER FIGHT**

Opponents squat down and grab the insides of their ankles from behind, palms covering the ankles and thumbs pointing back. At signal, each tries to knock the other over or force him/her to let go of his ankles; winner gets to crow like a rooster. Encourage them to challenge students who aren't just their friends.

- **WRIST WRESTLING**

Wrestlers stand facing each other, with right wrists clasped, and feet flat on mat with outside of right feet touching. At signal ("Go"), each tries to force the other to move one of his/her feet.

- **PUSH**

Opponents face each other with about 2 feet of space between them. Plant feet shoulder-width apart. Each raise their hands to shoulder height so that palms are facing their opponent. On "Go," they push or slap the palms of their opponent with their palms. First one to move their feet loses.

- **FOOT TAP**

Have opponents lock hands on each other's forearms (once game begins, hands must stay there). First one to tap the top of the other person's foot/feet three times wins (watch them dance).

OPTIONAL WRESTLING ACTIVITIES (if the whole class wants more to do. With these following activities, you have to match height, age and weight more closely between opponents)

- **ROCK WRESTLING**

Wrestlers stand up straight back to back, linking arms at the elbows (with the feet flat on the mat). At signal, each tries to lift the other onto his own back by leaning forward.

- **ONE-FOOT WRESTLING**

Wrestlers stand on their right foot, with left foot raised, clasping each other's right wrist. At signal, each attempts to force the other to lower his raised foot or topple to the mat. Contestants have a lot of fun hopping around.

- **KNEE Tap**

Opponents see who can tap the other's knee three times first. Calls for great quickness.

- **STICK**

Opponents grab the stick between them with both hands. On "go" the first one to fall or let go of the stick (with either hand) loses.

TELL

- In these activities, our wrestling does two things: 1. The more we practice, the better we get 2. Playing against others who are better than us helps us to see new or better ways to do what we were doing.
- The same is true in the story today with Jacob wrestling with God. Jacob wrestles with God and comes to understand that he's ready to meet his brother. (If you survive wrestling with God, you can survive meeting your brother)
- *If there's time...* Now, just like God called Jacob to reunite with Esau, so are we going to practice being separated and then reunited by playing the game of Sardines!

EXPLAIN SARDINES (this is basically a reverse game of hide-n-go-seek):

- We're all going to go into one room.
- Now, boundaries for this game are..... (suggested: not outside, not in nursery, not in bathrooms).
- I need one volunteer to go hide within the boundaries while the rest of us wait. I'll give you 1 minute before I let everyone try and find you.
- When one of us DO find you, stay where you are. The person who finds you will find a hiding space as close to you as possible.
- When the next person and the person after them and so forth find you, then they'll hide as close to you as possible, too, until everyone is hiding in the same space, like sardines packed into a can.
- I'll pick the one person who will hide after every round

DO SARDINES ACTIVITY

TELL

- Playing Sardines is fun, but for Jacob, finding his brother was not going to be fun. Instead, it was scary for him.
- But by paying attention to God, Jacob was able to overcome his fear.

- The same is true for us, too. When we pay attention to God, God will show us, often in unexpected ways, how to move through the situation.

CLOSING PRAYER