

# AT HOME FAITH TIME FOR PRETEENS

## PRETEEN SECTION

*Make sure your parents read the Bible story too! You may read together, or separately.*

### BIBLE STORY: ESAU AND JACOB (GENESIS 25-36)

When Isaac grew up, he married a powerful and confident woman named Rebekah. But Isaac and Rebekah had a hard time having children.

Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord.

**Notice:** *What does Isaac do when he and Rebekah are faced with a problem?*

The Lord said to her,

"Two nations are in your womb,  
and two peoples from within you will be separated;  
one people will be stronger than the other,  
and the older will serve the younger."

**Notice:** *Normally back then the eldest child was given special status. What happens here?*

When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

**Notice:** *Who is Isaac's favorite child? Who is Rebekah's favorite?*

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Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.)

Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."

“Look, I am about to die,” Esau said. “What good is the birthright to me?”

But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

**Notice:** Birthrights are important. Why does Esau give up his? What do you think of Jacob’s actions?

Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

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When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, “My son.”

“Here I am,” he answered.

Isaac said, “I am now an old man and don’t know the day of my death. Now then, get your equipment—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.”

**Notice:** What does Isaac want to do before he dies?

Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, ‘Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die.’ Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.”

Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “But my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin. What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.”

His mother said to him, “My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me.”

So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made.

He went to his father and said, "My father."

"Yes, my son," he answered. "Who is it?"

Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing."

Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?"

"The Lord your God gave me success," he replied.

Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not."

Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he proceeded to bless him. "Are you really my son Esau?" he asked.

"I am," he replied.

Then he said, "My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing."

Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come here, my son, and kiss me."

So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said,

"Ah, the smell of my son  
is like the smell of a field  
that the Lord has blessed.  
May God give you heaven's dew  
and earth's richness—  
an abundance of grain and new wine.  
May nations serve you  
and peoples bow down to you.  
Be lord over your brothers,  
and may the sons of your mother bow down to you.  
May those who curse you be cursed  
and those who bless you be blessed."

**Notice:** What does Isaac bless Jacob with? What do you think of Jacob's actions?

After Isaac finished blessing him, and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, "My father, please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing."

His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?"

"I am your son," he answered, "your firstborn, Esau."

Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him—and indeed he will be blessed!"

When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me—me too, my father!"

But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing."

Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? This is the second time he has taken advantage of me: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?"

His father Isaac answered him,

"Your dwelling will be  
away from the earth's richness,  
away from the dew of heaven above.  
You will live by the sword  
and you will serve your brother.  
But when you grow restless,  
you will throw his yoke  
from off your neck."

**Notice:** What does Isaac bless Esau with? What does Esau think of Jacob's actions?

Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Your brother Esau is planning to avenge himself by killing you. Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Harran. Stay with him for a while until your brother's fury subsides. When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I'll send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?"

**Notice:** Why does Jacob leave?

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Jacob left and set out for Harran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

**Notice:** What does God promise Jacob? Does this promise sound familiar?

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel.

**Notice:** When Jacob realizes he's in God's presence, what does he do?

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

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Jacob made it to the home of his uncle Laban, and lived there a long time – at least 30 years. While there, he became very rich.

Jacob also married two sisters, Leah and Rachel (this was acceptable back then). Between his wives and their female servants, Jacob had 12 sons.

Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau. He instructed them: "This is what you are to say to my lord Esau: 'Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have

remained there till now. I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, male and female servants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes.”

When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, “We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.”

**Notice:** *Why is Jacob afraid of his brother?*

In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. He thought, “If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape.”

Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, Lord, you who said to me, ‘Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,’ I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two camps. Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. But you have said, ‘I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.’”

He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift for his brother Esau: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, “Go ahead of me, and keep some space between the herds.”

**Notice:** *Why does Jacob send Esau gifts?*

He instructed the servants: “When my brother Esau meets you, you are to say, ‘These belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us.’” For he thought, “I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me.” So Jacob’s gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp.

That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.”

**Pro Tip!** *One of Jacob’s 12 sons isn’t born yet. Jacob also has at least 1 daughter.*

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." Then he blessed him there.

So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

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As the sun rose, Jacob crossed the stream, and he was limping because of his hip.

Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.

But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept. Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked.

Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant."

Then the female servants and their children approached and bowed down. Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down.

Esau asked, "What's the meaning of all these flocks and herds I met?"

"To find favor in your eyes, my lord," he said.

But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself."

"No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.

**Notice:** Why is it so important to Jacob that he be blessed? What do you think of the blessing he receives?

**Notice:** What does Esau think of Jacob after all this time? Is he still angry or has he forgiven him?

Then Esau said, "Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you."

But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the flocks and herds before me and the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir."

So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir. Jacob, however, went to Sukkoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock.

**Notice:** *Why doesn't Jacob go with Esau like he said he would?*

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Then Jacob moved to Bethel in the land of Canaan. There he built an altar, because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

After that, God appeared to Jacob again and blessed him. God said to him, "Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel." So he named him Israel.

And God said to him, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you." Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.

#### LET'S SUMMARIZE!

Answer each question yourself.

**What is God doing in this story?**

**What does this story tell me about God?**

**What does this story tell me about me?**

**What does this story tell me about my relationship with God?**



## MEMORY WORK: THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Bible is a collection of many smaller books. Because these books were written in a different language, they have names that may sound very strange to us. To help us navigate the Bible, it's very useful to memorize their order.

This week, try to **memorize the first three columns**, including the **Wisdom and Poetry books**.

If it helps you memorize, try any of these songs. Pick the version you like best!

- [youtube.com/watch?v=g4KEWLNnmCQ](https://youtube.com/watch?v=g4KEWLNnmCQ)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=i7ZtWRSCH7E](https://youtube.com/watch?v=i7ZtWRSCH7E)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=V\\_\\_n3oXTBcc](https://youtube.com/watch?v=V__n3oXTBcc)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=powlzb2Rfdw](https://youtube.com/watch?v=powlzb2Rfdw)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=v3aRB1xMs5g](https://youtube.com/watch?v=v3aRB1xMs5g)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=5PGW70OrOdk](https://youtube.com/watch?v=5PGW70OrOdk)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=K9DodTRI3vU](https://youtube.com/watch?v=K9DodTRI3vU)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=OwDywQ5qaqM](https://youtube.com/watch?v=OwDywQ5qaqM)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=4gMcKtleVko](https://youtube.com/watch?v=4gMcKtleVko)
- [youtube.com/watch?v=eTbSZfc7s1Q](https://youtube.com/watch?v=eTbSZfc7s1Q)

## THE 39 BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

### The Pentateuch

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy

### Historical Books

Joshua  
Judges  
Ruth  
1 Samuel  
2 Samuel  
1 Kings  
2 Kings  
1 Chronicles  
2 Chronicles  
Ezra  
Nehemiah  
Esther

### Wisdom and Poetry

Job  
Psalms  
Proverbs  
Ecclesiastes  
Song of Solomon

### Prophets

Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Lamentations  
Ezekiel  
Daniel  
Hosea  
Joel  
Amos  
Obadiah  
Jonah  
Micah  
Nahum  
Habakkuk  
Zephaniah  
Haggai  
Zechariah  
Malachi

## THINGS TO NOTICE

Some of the most beloved verses in the Bible come from the Psalms. "Psalms" simply means songs. There are many different psalms: Some praise God, some complain to God, some describe happy times, and some describe times of deep pain and fear. No matter what you're feeling, there's probably a psalm that could help you express your emotions to God. Many of these psalms show up in our church music today.

# AT HOME FAITH TIME FOR PRETEENS

## PARENT SECTION

*As you discuss questions with your preteens, these thoughts might help you go deeper.*

### CONVERSATIONS – BIBLE

#### **What does Isaac do when he and Rebekah are faced with a problem?**

Isaac prayed! Going to God when we have problems is a natural part of faith. Sometimes, like with Isaac, our prayers are answered right away. But prayer isn't like a genie in a bottle. Sometimes we don't get the answers we expect. Prayer's real power is being in relationship with God. Just like how you turn to parents with problems and they listen and guide, God listens and guides us.

#### **Normally back then the eldest child was given special status. What happens here?**

The younger child is declared special! In ancient culture, this would have been surprising. The firstborn was expected to take over the family business. The firstborn would get double the inheritance. Only the firstborn could become a priest. Why does God favor the younger child?

#### **Who is Isaac's favorite child? Who is Rebekah's favorite?**

Esau is Isaac's favorite; Jacob is Rebekah's. Are parents allowed to have favorites? It's natural to get along with people differently, but sometimes prioritizing one relationship over another can lead to problems. Do you have a favorite parent? What can you do to build a stronger relationship with your other parent?

#### **Birthrights are important. Why does Esau give up his? What do you think of Jacob's actions?**

Esau was hungry and wanted food! Why didn't Jacob share? Do you ever use situations to gain an advantage over your siblings or friends? What makes it so hard to simply love one another?

#### **What does Isaac want to do before he dies?**

Have a good meal and bless Esau. A blessing is like a prayer for another person, but instead of asking God for stuff, we declare to someone what we hope God will do for them. It's a way of sharing your joy and happiness and wishing someone well. A blessing is a beautiful way of saying, "I love you, and want the best for you."

Have your parents ever blessed you? Have you ever blessed your parents? Maybe you could try it. The easiest way is to use your thumb to make a cross on their foreheads and say, "God bless you." Your parents' blessing for you might be more detailed, like Isaac's for his sons.

**What does Isaac bless Jacob with? What do you think of Jacob's actions?**

Isaac blesses Jacob with many good and beautiful things, including strength and power. But Jacob had to lie to get this blessing. Why was it so important to Rebekah that Jacob be receive this blessing?

**What does Isaac bless Esau with? What does Esau think of Jacob's actions?**

Esau was told he would not receive anything Jacob got, but one day he would be free of his brother. Esau is furious that Jacob stole his blessing; he's so angry that he wants to kill his brother (but he won't do it until after their father dies)! Have anyone ever done anything to upset you? When you're upset, what do you do?

**Why does Jacob leave?**

He's afraid of his brother! Have you ever been afraid of someone because they were upset with you? What did you do when you were afraid?

**What does God promise Jacob? Does this promise sound familiar?**

Jacob is promised his descendants will be abundant, like the dust of the earth, and that the world will be blessed through them. This is the same promise God made to Jacob's grandfather, Abraham. Why do you think God is making this promise again? How long do you think it will take before God's promise is fulfilled?

In Christian tradition (as well as Jewish and Muslim), we consider everyone who's part of the Church to be a descendant of Abraham. That makes you part of this promise! How are the people of this world being blessed by Christians like you?

**When Jacob realizes he's in God's presence, what does he do?**

He sets up a pillar or altar, just like his grandfather Abraham did. Just like Abraham, Jacob knows that when we encounter God, the natural thing to do is worship. Jacob uses sweet, scented oil, which was a sign of blessing in his culture. How do you share a blessing with God?

**Why is Jacob afraid of his brother?**

Esau wanted to kill him, and it looks like he's bringing an army! If you saw someone angry with you bringing a whole mob with them, what would you do? What does Jacob do?

**Why does Jacob send Esau gifts?**

Maybe Jacob is trying to say sorry. When you've hurt someone else, how do you say sorry? One way might be trying to make up for what you've done wrong.

**Why is it so important to Jacob that he be blessed? What do you think of the blessing?**

It might be because Jacob is afraid of what will happen the next day when he meets his brother, and he wants to know he'll be OK. The blessing he receives is a new name; the name is a promise that no matter who he struggles with, he will ultimately come out on top. Do you think this is a good blessing?

**What does Esau think of Jacob after all this time? Is he still angry or has he forgiven him?**

Esau seems to have missed his brother. He's not angry; instead, he shows signs of deep love. He's probably forgiven Jacob. How long do you think it took him to forgive? How long does it take you?

**Why doesn't Jacob go with Esau like he said he would?**

Jacob still seems to be afraid of his brother. What would it take to really heal this relationship?

**LET'S SUMMARIZE!**

Answer each question yourself. I've put in some of my answers but remember: Our answers don't have to be the same. You may have heard and seen things I didn't even notice!

**What is God doing in this story?**

Answering prayers, appearing in dreams, making promises, guiding, wrestling, blessing

**What does this story tell me about God?**

God hears our prayers. God stay with us, even when we've messed up. Some of God's promises take a long time to be fulfilled.

**What does this story tell me about me?**

There are times in my life when things will look bad, but I can't know what the future holds; at those times, all I can do is trust God. When I'm afraid, I can pray.

**What does this story tell me about my relationship with God?**

God's promises to me never end. God may ask me to do things that are scary. Sometimes God and I might not see things the same way, and we may even wrestle with each other!

**CONVERSATIONS – THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

If you have any favorite psalms, read them together. Some of the most popular psalms are Psalm 23, Psalm 121, and Psalm 1. Jesus quoted Psalm 22 from the cross.

One great psalm for families is Psalm 133: How good and pleasant it is when siblings get along!