Preschool–Grade 6

Jacob and Esau

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: A lie can get you what you want and still hurt the people you love. God wants us to tell the truth, and to forgive as God has forgiven us.
Bible passage: Genesis 25:19–34, Genesis 27 and Genesis 32–33. Read them before class.
Memory verse: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." *Ephesians 4:32 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, paper and pencils, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Worth It? (5–10 minutes)

Read each trade. Kids stand up if it's a good trade and stay sitting if it's a bad one. 1) Your bike for one candy bar. 2) Ten minutes of video games for a whole day of no screens. 3) A friend's trust for one easy win in a game. 4) Telling a lie to stay out of trouble, when it means your parents can't believe you next time. Ask: *Why do people make bad trades when they want something right now?* Say: "Today we will meet a hungry man who made a very bad trade, and his brother who told a lie to get a blessing."

2. Bible story: Jacob and Esau (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Genesis 25. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Twins. Isaac prayed for Rebekah because she had no children, and the LORD answered (Genesis 25:21). The babies **struggled together** inside her, and God told her, "the elder shall serve the younger" (25:22–23). Esau came first, red and hairy all over; Jacob came out holding Esau's heel (25:25–26). Esau became "a cunning hunter, a man of the field" (**cunning** means skillful), and Jacob "a plain man, dwelling in tents," a quiet man who stayed home (25:27). Isaac loved Esau because he ate his **venison**, the meat of wild animals Esau hunted; Rebekah loved Jacob (25:28).

Red pottage. Jacob **sod pottage**, which means he cooked a stew (25:29). Esau came in from the field faint with hunger. **Look up Genesis 25:31.** Jacob said, "Sell me this day thy birthright." The **birthright** was the special place and share of the firstborn son. Esau said, "I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" Jacob made him **swear** (make a solemn promise), and Esau sold it (25:32–33). **Look up Genesis 25:34.** Jacob gave him bread and pottage of **lentiles** (lentils, small beans). Esau ate, got up and left. "Thus Esau **despised** his birthright": he treated it as worth nothing.

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The blessing. Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim so that he could not see. He told Esau to hunt venison and make him **savoury meat**, tasty cooked meat, "that my soul may bless thee before I die" (27:1–4). Rebekah heard and told Jacob to fetch two young goats so she could cook the meat, and Jacob would take it in and get the blessing (27:5–10). Jacob said Esau was hairy and he was smooth: "I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing" (27:11–12). Rebekah dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes and put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth of his neck (27:15–16).

Look up Genesis 27:19. Jacob said, "I am Esau thy firstborn." When Isaac asked how he found the meat so fast, Jacob said, "Because the LORD thy God brought it to me" (27:20). He even used God's name in his lie. **Look up Genesis 27:22.** "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." Isaac asked again, "Art thou my very son Esau?" and Jacob said, "I am" (27:24). Isaac blessed him (27:27–29).

The cost. Esau came in from hunting. Isaac "trembled very exceedingly," and Esau "cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry" (27:30–34). **Look up Genesis 27:35.** "Thy brother came with **subtilty**," with trickery. Esau said Jacob had taken his birthright and now his blessing (27:36). Esau hated Jacob and said in his heart that he would kill his brother (27:41). Rebekah sent Jacob away to her brother Laban in Haran (27:42–43).

Coming home. Years later God told Jacob to return to his country (32:9). Esau was coming with 400 men, and Jacob was "greatly afraid and distressed" (32:6–7). **Look up Genesis 32:11.** Jacob prayed, "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother." He sent ahead a present of goats, sheep, camels, cattle and donkeys, with a space between each drove (32:13–16). That night a man wrestled with Jacob until morning. Jacob said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," and his name was changed to **Israel** (32:24–28). Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face" (32:30).

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The meeting. Jacob bowed to the ground seven times as he came near his brother (33:3). **Look up Genesis 33:4.** "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept." When Jacob offered the present, Esau said, "I have enough, my brother" (33:9). Jacob said seeing Esau's face was "as though I had seen the face of God" (33:10), and Esau took the present (33:11).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Esau traded something that lasts for something that was gone in one meal (25:34). What "one meal" trades do people make today, giving up something good for something quick?
2. Jacob was worried about getting caught (27:12), not about doing wrong. What is the difference?
3. Jacob got the blessing, but what did the lie cost him (27:34, 27:41–43)?
4. Esau ran to meet the brother who had tricked him (33:4). Why is forgiving hard? What helps?
5. Ephesians 4:32 says to forgive "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." How does remembering God's forgiveness help us forgive others?

Recall questions

1. Who was born first? *(Esau, Genesis 25:25)*
2. What did Rebekah put on Jacob's hands and neck? *(The skins of the young goats, 27:16)*
3. What new name did God give Jacob? *(Israel, 32:28)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the words: **tenderhearted** means having a soft, caring heart, and **for Christ's sake** means because of Jesus. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Jacob's lie hurt his whole family, and the Bible says, 'Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight' (Proverbs 12:22, KJV). **Abomination** means something God hates. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: tell the whole truth, even when a small lie would be easier. If someone hurts you and says sorry, forgive them.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Genesis 25:26: What was Jacob holding when he was born? *(Esau's heel)*
2. Genesis 25:30: What color was the pottage? *(Red)*
3. Genesis 27:1: Why couldn't Isaac see? *(He was old, and his eyes were dim)*
4. Genesis 27:9: What did Rebekah tell Jacob to fetch from the flock? *(Two good kids of the goats, young goats)*
5. Genesis 27:22: Whose voice did Isaac hear? *(Jacob's voice)*
6. Genesis 32:6: How many men came with Esau? *(Four hundred)*
7. Genesis 32:28: What new name did Jacob get? *(Israel)*
8. Genesis 33:3: How many times did Jacob bow to the ground? *(Seven times)*

Or choose the **Jacob and Esau word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/jacob-and-esau-word-search), crossword (vbshq.com/puzzles/jacob-and-esau-crossword), maze (vbshq.com/puzzles/jacob-and-esau-maze) or worksheet (vbshq.com/worksheets/jacob-and-esau-worksheet).

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7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for forgiving us because of Jesus. Help us tell the truth even when a lie would be easier, and help us forgive the people who hurt us, the way Esau ran to meet his brother. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks whether God wanted Jacob to trick Isaac: stay with the text. Before the twins were born, God said, "the elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23), but the Bible never says God told anyone to lie. The Bible tells what happened, and it shows what the lie cost: Esau's bitter cry, his anger and many years apart (27:34, 27:41–45). God's Word says lying lips are an abomination to Him (Proverbs 12:22).
If a child asks who wrestled with Jacob: read Genesis 32:24–30 together. The Bible calls him "a man," and Jacob said, "I have seen God face to face" (32:30). Stay with those words.
About Esau's anger: this lesson tells Esau's plan in one line (27:41), with no details. Answer questions simply and gently.

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