Preschool–Grade 6

Jacob and Esau

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: Lying and tricking hurt people. God wants us to tell the truth, and to be kind and forgiving to each other.
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, a soft ball or a beanbag, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: put bookmarks in your Bible at Genesis 27:22 and Genesis 33:4.

1. Opening game: Whose Voice? (5 minutes)

One child sits in a chair with their back to the class and eyes closed. Point to another child, who says, "Hello, how are you?" in their normal voice. The child in the chair guesses who it is. Give everyone a turn to guess. Say: "You know your friends by their voices! Today we will hear about a father who could not see. He knew a voice, but he was tricked anyway."

2. Bible story: Jacob and Esau (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Genesis 25, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

Isaac and Rebekah had no children, so Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, and God answered (Genesis 25:21). God gave them **twins**, two babies born at the same time (25:24)! The first baby was red and hairy all over. They named him **Esau**. The second baby came out holding on to Esau's heel. They named him **Jacob** (25:25–26).

The boys grew up. Esau was a hunter who loved to be out in the field. Jacob was a quiet man who stayed home by the tents (25:27). Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob (25:28).

One day Jacob was cooking a stew. The Bible calls it **pottage**. Esau came in from the field, tired and very hungry. He said, "Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage" (25:29–30). Jacob said, "Sell me this day thy **birthright**" (25:31). The birthright was the special place of the oldest son in the family. Esau said, "I am at the point to die," and he promised it to Jacob. Jacob gave him bread and a stew of **lentils**, small beans, and Esau ate and went away. Esau did not care about his birthright (25:32–34).

The story continues: Years later Isaac was old, and his eyes were so weak that he could not see (27:1). He told Esau to go hunting and cook him the tasty meat he loved, so he could **bless** him before he died (27:3–4). A blessing was a father's special prayer and promise for his son's life.

Rebekah heard it. She told Jacob to bring her two young goats, and she cooked the tasty meat so Jacob could take it to his father and get the blessing instead of Esau (27:5–10). Jacob said that Esau was hairy and he was smooth. If his father felt him, Jacob would "seem to him as a deceiver," a trickster (27:11–12). So Rebekah put Esau's best clothes on Jacob, and she put the **goats' skins** on his hands and on his neck, so they would feel hairy like Esau (27:15–16).

Jacob went in to his father and said, "I am Esau thy firstborn" (27:19). That was a lie. Isaac told him to come near so he could feel him (27:21). He felt Jacob's hands. **Read Genesis 27:22 from your Bible:** "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." Isaac could not tell, and he blessed Jacob (27:23, 27:27–29).

Then Esau came home with his meat. When he found out what had happened, he cried a great, bitter cry (27:30–34). Isaac said, "Thy brother came with subtilty," which means with a trick (27:35). Esau hated Jacob, and Jacob had to run far away from home to his uncle Laban (27:41–43). Jacob's lie hurt his father and his brother and split the family apart.

Many years later, God told Jacob to go back home (31:3). Jacob heard that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men, and he was very afraid (32:6–7). Jacob prayed and asked God to save him (32:11). He sent Esau a big present of goats, sheep, camels, cows and donkeys (32:13–15). That night God gave Jacob a new name: **Israel** (32:28).

In the morning Esau came. Jacob bowed down to the ground seven times (33:3). **Read Genesis 33:4 from your Bible:** "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept." **Embraced** means hugged. Esau's anger was gone!

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3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. Who was born first, Esau or Jacob? *(Esau, Genesis 25:25)*
2. What did Esau trade his birthright for? *(Bread and red pottage, a stew of lentils, 25:30–34)*
3. What did Rebekah put on Jacob's hands? *(The skins of the young goats, 27:16)*
4. Was it right for Jacob to say, "I am Esau"? *(No. It was a lie, and it hurt his father and his brother, 27:19, 27:34–35)*
5. What did Esau do when he saw Jacob again? *(He ran to meet him, hugged him and kissed him, and they cried, 33:4)*

4. Memory verse: Kind Words Toss (5 minutes)

Explain the words: **tenderhearted** means having a soft, caring heart, and **for Christ's sake** means because of Jesus. Kids stand in a circle. Say the verse in parts: *And be ye kind one to another, / tenderhearted, / forgiving one another, / even as God / for Christ's sake / hath forgiven you. / Ephesians 4:32.* Toss the ball to a child, who says the first part (everyone can help). That child tosses it to someone else, who says the next part. Keep going around until every child has had a turn, then say the whole verse together.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Jacob lied, and it hurt his family. God loves you very much. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: '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 we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."
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 truth, even when it is hard. If someone says sorry to you, forgive them, like Esau ran to meet Jacob.

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6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: 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), the coloring page or craft (vbshq.com/bible-stories/jacob-and-esau), or **The Present Parade:** split the class into three groups: goats, sheep and camels. You are Esau, standing across the room. The groups walk to you one at a time, with a space between each group, making their animal's sound (Genesis 32:16). When the last group arrives, say, "I have enough, my brother!" (33:9), and everyone gives a big smile and a high five. Play again with a new Esau.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for loving us and forgiving us because of Jesus. Help us tell the truth, even when it is hard. Help us be kind and forgiving to our brothers, our sisters and our friends. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks why Rebekah and Jacob did it: stay with the text. Before the boys were born, God said, "the elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23), but the Bible never says God told them to trick Isaac. The Bible tells what happened, and it shows the trick brought tears, anger and years apart. Lying is always wrong (Proverbs 12:22).
About Esau's anger: Genesis 27:41 says Esau planned to kill Jacob. This lesson says that Esau hated Jacob and Jacob had to run away. If a child asks, say gently, "Esau was so angry that Jacob was in danger, so he ran away. But years later God changed things, and the brothers hugged."

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