

Jacob's Dream

Genesis 27:42-46; 28:1-22

Level C | Lesson 2 | Teacher Overview



And Jacob took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.

Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it....

Genesis 28:11-12

For Teachers

This lesson has several activity options. You may wish to choose 2-3. Reading through all of the options will help you identify the activities that are best suited to your group's size, student mix, available supplies, and the time you have to prepare. You may also want to mix and match activities from other age levels.

Activity Options

1. Talk About It
2. Illustration: Jacob's Ladder
3. Explore: Fight or Flight Attitude Jar Look
4. Closer: The Ladder of Life

Talk About It

Reading: Genesis 28:10-22

Jacob tricked his father into giving him the firstborn's blessing. Esau's anger over this forced Jacob to flee. Stopping to sleep, he used a stone as a pillow and dreamed of a ladder reaching to heaven on which angels ascended and descended. From above, the Lord spoke to Jacob. In the morning Jacob set the stone up as a pillar and named the place Bethel (House of God). He vowed that if God was with him, He would be his God.

1. Jacob's trickery and the act of stealing Esau's blessing forced Jacob on a 500 mile journey of escape to Haran, where his uncle lived. His parents told him to flee there, hoping that he would find a woman to marry.
2. Jacob walked alone for many days on paths made of soil packed down hard by animals and people. There were no hotels or restaurants back then. At night he slept beside the road. How might he have felt as he traveled? (Genesis 28:17-22 suggests that he may not have been confident about his future)
3. What happened when he lay down to sleep at night? (He set up a stone as a pillow and dreamed of a ladder reaching to heaven. Angels ascended and descended, and from above the Lord spoke to Jacob.)
4. The word used for "ladder" literally means "way". Some people picture a stairway leading to heaven instead of a ladder. In Jacob's dream angels acted as messengers, traveling up and down between himself and the Lord.
5. Where can we communicate with the Lord today? (the Word)
6. What are the messengers that ascend and descend between us and the Lord? (our thoughts go up and the Lord's thoughts come down to us)
7. The stairway rested on the earth. In a similar way the Word is based on our ground—it is in human language written in a style that we understand. Hidden within are spiritual ideas that carry our thoughts up towards heaven and the Lord.
8. What do rocks correspond to in the Word? (true ideas we can build our lives on)
9. What did Jacob do with the stone he used as a pillow when he woke up? (set it up as a memorial and poured on oil)
10. In the Word oil corresponds to love. How do we love true ideas? (commit them to life by doing them)
11. What kinds of religious memorials do we use in the New Church today? (e.g. we put the Word on the altar, display our church seal, lay a cornerstone to dedicate a church building. We also mark commitments we make in our lives in special worship services, e.g. baptism, marriage, adults take holy supper.)
12. How did the dream change Jacob's outlook? (he had a new faith that the Lord was watching over him) In what way are our lives changed through reading the Word?

Explore: Fight or Flight Attitude Jar

At a Glance:

Jacob tricks his father and steals the blessing of the firstborn from his brother Esau. He flees to escape Esau's anger. Alone, he sets out on a long journey on foot. Jacob's actions in the Word were done for the sake of the deeper internal meaning. However, at times we may accidentally or deliberately do something that is not right. Afterwards we may "run away" and feel alone. Where can we find the Lord at these times? Students will take turns reading a situation aloud. The group will decide whether "Fight or Flight?" is the best response. *Note:* Read through all cards beforehand and remove any cards you do not wish to use with your group.



Supplies Needed:

- set of cards
- jar or bowl to put cards in

Directions:

1. Introduce the activity by reviewing the following story details: Jacob tricked his father and stole the blessing of the firstborn that was rightfully his brother's. In consequence he had to run for his life. Many people do things that they regret later. It is often easier to see others' mistakes than our own. Today we will look at situations in which someone has a problem or sees a situation they could change (fight for what is right) or that they should get away from right away (run for their life).
2. Seat everyone in a circle, including the teacher.
3. Model what the students will be doing by taking a card from the bowl and reading it aloud to the group.
4. Invite all of the students to suggest responses to the situation. Choose what you think will work best: invite students call out a response, raise a hand to speak, or take turns commenting by going around in a circle. Anyone not wishing to speak may pass.
5. Students should state whether their suggestion is a fight or a flight response.
6. Remind students to look for and support good points in others' responses. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers.
7. Pass the bowl around the circle, and invite each student to pick another a card to read to the group.
8. Continue until everyone has had a turn or until all of the cards are used up.
9. Wrap-up: Leave a little time to return to the story of Jacob. What were the benefits of Jacob running away? What might have happened if he had stayed?

Bob is hosting a party while his parents are away. Jeff has been invited and really wants to go but he knows that if his parents find out that Bob's parents will not be home, they will not let him go. What should he do?

An adult has asked Jim to keep a secret. Jim does not know what to do but feels really uncomfortable about it. What should he do?

Sue's friend is experimenting with serious drugs. Should she do anything about it?

Anna's friend has turned against her and is organizing others to turn against her. What should Anna do?

Rob's friend has won a poetry competition. Rob knows that the winning poem was actually written by a famous poet. Is Rob responsible for telling someone?

Paul is at a party far away from home and has drunk too much alcohol. Nobody there is sober enough to drive him home. What should he do?

Sarah gets caught cheating on a math test. She knows her friend cheated too. What should she do?

Jane and Clare both go to church. One day Jane sees a group of friends teasing Clare about being religious. What should she do?

Rachel overhears someone threatening another person. The victim doesn't want anyone to know about the incident. Should she tell?

Jenny's parents have forbidden her to walk home alone after dark. She is out late and knows her parents are away. She needs to get home. What should she do?

Leah has a crush on John. She asks Michelle to tell him. Instead Michelle starts dating him. What should Leah do?

You find out that someone is spreading lies about Andrew. What should you do?

Sharon comes to school and shows you an expensive new electronic device. You know she cannot possibly afford it. You wonder if it has been stolen. What should you do?

You discover that a friend has been spreading damaging rumors about others online. What should you do?

Bridget is concerned that an older man has made friends with Melanie online. Melanie does not want her to interfere. What should Bridget do?

Eric has been given a big service award. He lied about his hours of service and knows that he does not deserve it. What should he do?

You find a large sum of money on the ground. Nobody is around. What should you do?

A teacher likes you and has given you an unfair opportunity. Should you accept it?

Someone accidentally compliments you on a performance given by another person. What should you say?

Josh sees the same victim being bullied daily. He is worried that if he tells the teacher she will accuse him of telling tales. What should he do?

Your teacher has made a mistake in your favor when marking a test. You need the good grade to pass the course. What should you do?

Lisa has drunk a lot of alcohol, has vomited and is passing out. You want to call emergency services. Your friends want to deal with it themselves. What should you do?

Your friend has recently started using a lot of rude language. What should you do?

Ben's parents are worried about him and trying to find out where he is. You see Ben ignoring their phone calls. What should you do?

You overhear Greg saying he has a high fever. He is ignoring his symptoms because he wants to see his friends. You are worried that someone else might get ill. What should you do?

Sue's clothing has ripped and people are laughing behind her back. Knowing this could really embarrass her. Should you say anything?

Sophie has many more friends than you do. But you know something about Sophie that might change what others think of her. Should you share it?

Wanda tells you that her family owns a fantastic yacht. People tend to ignore her because she often makes big claims like this. What should you say to her?

Ian is always boasting about how much he knows, and so he has no friends. Should you say anything to him?

James tells everyone he has seen a rare bird. You believe he is lying. Should you say anything?

Look Closer: The Ladder of Life

At a Glance:

Jacob's dream of angels going up and down a ladder (Genesis 28:11-22) depicts how the Lord connects us with Himself and with heaven through His Word. In this activity, students learn about the meaning of the ladder and arrange some truths about the life after death in a simple ladder format.



Supplies Needed for Each Student:

- copy of *The Ladder of Life Readings*
- copy of *Ladder of Life: What Happens to People when They Die?* pages (2 pages)
- scissors
- glue or tape

Directions:

1. Hand out The Ladder of Life pages and read them through together.
2. Tell the students that they are going to read some teachings about what happens after someone dies and then put them on a ladder, ranking them from easy to understand (for young children) to harder to understand (for adults).
3. Hand out the ladder outline pages and have students follow the directions on them. Students may work individually or in pairs.
4. Note: The order of the items within each rung doesn't matter. The goal is to successfully divide the 9 teachings into the 3 categories: young children, teenagers, adults.
5. To help students identify the simplest teachings, ask them what someone might say to young children if someone they know dies.
6. It is OK if students don't understand the more complex teachings. These are things they may learn more about later. (A hint for finding the most complex ideas is that they are the longest!)
7. Let students check their answers. Remind them that the order of the teachings inside each rung don't matter. Have them complete the activity by gluing or taping the teachings in place.
8. Finish by telling the students that this is just an example of how the Lord accommodates truth to us. The Word is filled with teachings on many topics at many different levels. We will understand different teachings at different times in our lives.



The Ladder of Life Readings

Through the Word...the Lord is present with a person and conjoined with him, for the Lord is the Word, and as it were speaks with the person in it (*Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 78).

Jacob's dream of angels going up and down a ladder (Genesis 28:11-22) is a symbol of how the Lord connects us with Himself and with heaven through His Word. The truths of the Word are accommodated or adapted to bring the Lord's love and truth into the world in a way that human beings can understand.

To understand more clearly how the Lord's love and truth are adapted, let's compare this with the way the Lord protects us from the sun's heat and light.

The Sun

1. Heat and light radiate out of the sun. They are so strong and bright that anything close to the sun is burned up instantly.
2. The earth is surrounded by many layers of different gases called the atmosphere. The sun's heat and light travel through space a long distance and then pass through the layers of the atmosphere to reach earth.
3. Despite all that distance and layers, the sun's light and heat are still strong when they reach earth. Looking directly at the sun can blind us. If we spend too long in the sun without protection, our skin burns. But we need the light and warmth to give life to everything on earth, for example, to enable plant growth so animals and people can have food.

The Lord's Love and Truth

1. In the same way, love and truth come from the Lord Himself, radiating from Him like the light from the sun. They are so warm and bright as they first come from Him that no one could live if the light and heat touched them directly, not even the angels.
2. The Lord's love and wisdom are accommodated, first for the angels in heaven and then for people on earth. The heavens filter the love and wisdom in the same way that the earth's atmosphere filters the light and heat of the sun.
3. Love and truth are finally adapted for us through the written Word that the Lord has given us. As we read and study the Word, we come to understand it and to see the Lord reflected in it more and more. The more we understand and follow the Word, the more we become connected with heaven and the Lord. The Word provides us with what we need for our spiritual life.

In this way, the Word is like the ladder in Jacob's dream that connects earth to heaven.

Ladder of Life: What Happens to People When They Die?

1. Below are 9 true statements about what happens when people die and what the life after death is like. Cut the statements apart.
2. Arrange the statements in front of you and read them. These are all true statements about what happens after people die. Some are simple statements that small children can understand. Others give more details about heaven that would be hard for young children to understand.
3. Pick out the three simplest statements and put them in the space between the bottom and second rung of the ladder.
4. Pick out the three most complicated statements and put them in the space just under the top rung of the ladder.
5. The three statements left go in the middle of the ladder.
6. Check over your ladder to see if you think the statements are on the correct step or rung and rearrange if needed.
7. When you feel fairly confident, check your answers against the teacher's answer sheet.
8. Glue the statements in place.

People choose heaven or hell based on the union of good and truth or of evil and falsity that is within them.

People who choose to live in hell are as happy as they will let themselves be.

We are already spirits, existing in a spiritual world simultaneously with our natural world. We create heaven or hell within ourselves.

The Lord looks after everyone who dies.

People go to heaven or hell depending on how they lived on earth.

A person's spirit lives forever.

People choose whether to go to heaven or to hell.

All good people go to heaven.

People wake up in a place between heaven and hell called the world of spirits. Gradually their outer characteristics fall away to reveal the inner person.

**The Lord's
Love and Truth**

Adults

Teenagers

Young Children

**What Happens to
People when They Die?**

The Lord's Love and Truth

Adults

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Teenagers

People who choose to live in hell are as happy as they will let themselves be.

People go to heaven or hell depending on how they lived on earth.

People choose whether to go to heaven or to hell.

Young Children

The Lord looks after everyone who dies.

A person's spirit lives forever.

All good people go to heaven.

ANSWER SHEET

What Happens to People when They Die?