



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## LESSON 3

### *Jacob and Esau*

*Two stories from Genesis make up today's story.*

#### **Summary of Today's Story**

Rebekah, Isaac's wife, gives birth to twins, Jacob and Esau. Esau grows up to be a hunter, loved by Isaac, while Jacob grows up in the tents, loved by Rebekah.

One day, when Esau comes home hungry, Jacob gives him some bread and stew in exchange for Esau's birthright (the rights of the firstborn).

Later, when Isaac is dying, Jacob claims this stolen birthright by deceiving Isaac into thinking Jacob is Esau and thus blessing Jacob, the second-born, instead of Esau, the true firstborn. Jacob then has to flee to escape Esau's violent anger.

#### **Where You'll Find Today's Story**

##### **In the Bible**

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version* Bible.

**Genesis 25:19-34**

**Genesis 27:1-45**

##### **In Children's Bibles**

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today's story in the space below.

##### **In Our Sunday Lectionary**

Today's story is told in church on the following Sunday:

Year A: Proper 10 (RCL)

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## Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

We feel sorry for Esau, an affable man with thoughts only for his present needs. Esau is dearly loved by his father, Isaac, and is clearly a genial figure, who loves and cares for his father. But it is Jacob who receives his father's blessing, although Jacob is a liar and deceiver, crafty and easily manipulated by his mother. Some of us can't help wishing it were the simple Esau that wins out in this story of sibling rivalry. Jacob does not deserve the blessing that Isaac gives, the blessing of Israel. But neither do we! And how much blessing do we receive from God, though undeserving, as dishonest and crafty in our daily lives as Jacob!

Let us look at Jacob and Esau.

Jacob strives for the blessing, and for the right to bear God's promise. He had fought for it since his own birth, trades for it when he can, and then scrambles for it at the end. His desire is for that higher meaning in his life that God offers.

Esau, on the other hand, gives up his destiny on his own. He trades his birthright—and the rights due to the eldest son—when he hungers for the stew Jacob was cooking. This careless disregard or unconcern for his own destiny, and thus for the destiny of his descendants, lost him his blessing. Unlike Jacob, Esau had not cultivated the habit of searching for God and listening to God.

So Isaac could give to Esau the blessing of his affection and love, but now he could never give the full blessing of the destiny that Esau had himself denied. Esau had laid judgment on his own life, which Isaac could not alter.

Later, God extended the blessing of the People of God, the Hebrews, to include all people of God, through the life and work of God's Son, Jesus. Then, at last, Esau and his descendants receive God's promise. God stays with us, no matter what, even when we deny him. For we are God's people.



## The Episcopal Thread

Again, blessings from God!

Because the Anglican and Episcopal faith is such an incarnational faith, seeing God in all of daily life, including the rhythm of time and seasons, there is an openness to noticing God's blessings in all things. The Prayer Book is full of thanksgiving for blessings, as are the hymns in the *Hymnal 1982*.

As a liturgical and sacramental church, the Episcopal Church has distinct orders of ministry and service: bishops, priests, deacons and laity. In this order, the bishop and the priest may offer blessings to the people. At the end of the Holy Eucharist and other services, there is a Blessing. This is always performed by either the bishop, if present, or by the priest.

The Holy Eucharist, celebrated each Sunday, begins and ends with blessing. So like Jacob, we too strive for blessing and the right to bear God's promise. Baptism, our inclusion into the household of God, is both the sign and the receiving of that promise.



## Gathering

As the children enter the room, engage them in a simple activity that relates to today's

lesson.

This may be a paper activity such as a picture to color or a puzzle. Or you may play some music on tape, or sing some familiar hymns or songs. For additional ideas, see Gathering Activity Ideas in the Appendix (also downloadable).

Allow the older children to visit with one another for a few minutes. This brief social time at the beginning will encourage bonding and fellowship among the learners so that the rest of the time together can be devoted to the lesson.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer, such as:

- Almighty God, we thank you for this day when we can learn about you and about your love for us as your people. We thank you for all who are here today. Bless us all, and bless those who cannot be here with us. [You may want to name here those who are absent.] Now let your Spirit open our hearts to this lesson about you. We pray this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Or you may use any prayer from the Prayer Book or from any book of prayers, or make one up yourself.



## Telling the Story

Read aloud today's story from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, tell the story in your own words, or read from the version of the story we provide, found on pages 8-12.

Visual aids such as *flannel boards* or other more technologically advanced tools would help illustrate the differences between the twin brothers. You will

need pictures or models of the brothers as babies and as young men.

One suggestion for bringing the story to life is to have *props* for the various parts of the story, for example, the lentil stew and bread and a hunting weapon for the story of Esau giving away his birthright, and a piece of fur for the story of Jacob being blessed by Isaac. See page 18 in the Activities section for a lentil stew recipe.

Or try a *responsive story*. Have children respond to each name in the story whenever that name is mentioned, with certain character phrases. In advance, prepare cue cards that you will hold up each time the name is mentioned, to remind them what to say:

Jacob: *Blessings to me*

Esau: *Woe is me*

Rebekah: *I'm so clever*

Isaac: *So old*

God: *Almighty*

To tell the story in this way, instruct the children: "Whenever I say the word *Jacob*, you are to say *Blessings to me*. Whenever I say the name *Esau*, you will say *Woe is me*. . . I will hold up these cue cards to remind you. Now, here's the story. . ." If you wish, divide the group into the various characters saying the lines, or have all the children say all of the lines.

After telling the story, proceed directly to the worship time without trying to analyze or talk about the story or its meaning. Allow the power of the story to sink into the hearts and minds of the children for now, letting the questions and the discussion come later. While having snacks, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it and explore its message.



## Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your room.

### Materials:

small table with a cloth to cover it  
2 candles, or a single large Christ candle  
matches  
Bible  
cross  
flowers, if desired

Have the children set up the prayer area. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read a verse from today's scripture from a Bible so that the children connect the story they heard with the Bible, which is the word of God. If working mainly with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

Suggestions for the reading:

*For younger children:* Genesis 25:34

*For older children:* Genesis 27: 27-29 and 39-40  
(the blessing of Jacob and of Esau)

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

*Reader:* A reading from the book of Genesis:  
(*Read the selected passage.*)

*Reader:* The word of the Lord.

*All:* Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Invite children to bring to the Lord their prayers of intercession and thanksgiving. Ask if they can see where God has been present in their lives during the past week, in big or small ways. Encourage the children to think of how they have been guided by God and to thank God for these times.
- Ask for any prayers for those in need, either for themselves or for their family or friends.
- Recognize any birthdays or any other special occasions and give thanks to God for these special times.
- End the prayer time by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



## Sharing

Pass out snacks. A meal of lentil soup and bread would be

perfect for this lesson! Before serving the food, say a simple grace, such as:

- For the food which is set before us, and for the hands that prepared it, we give you thanks, O Lord. *Amen.*

Or invite the children to share a favorite grace from home.

While sharing the snack, invite any reactions to the story the children have just heard. What a family! What an amazing story!

- What do you think about Jacob's deceitful way of receiving a blessing from his father?
- How is God present in this story?

With older children, invite them to discuss:

- When are we like Esau and when are we like Jacob?
- What qualities does Jacob have that set him apart as one of the people of God?
- In what way(s) is he working for God?

The story shows how much Jacob desired—craved—God's blessing, while Esau did not care. Surely it makes a difference whether we care and actively seek God! There are many times when we act like Esau, giving up our opportunities to be blessed by God's gifts to us. And in these times, we, like Esau, give up our access to God's gifts.

Or like Jacob, there are many times when we act less than perfect, even when our goals are right! And in these times, we, like Jacob, do not deserve God's gifts.

But God does not give up on us! And we know that, as part of the *family of God*, even when we are not perfect, we receive God's blessing for us. We can always go back to God in trust and receive his promise.







## Memorization

There is no memorization associated with this lesson.

Encourage the children to continue to memorize the Old Testament books, and guide them in learning the worship responses.

- Suggestions for ways to help the children with their memorization can be found on page 15 in the Appendix (also downloadable).



## Weaving the Family of God

Weave together the different parts of the lesson into a coherent whole for the children so that they can say easily and briefly

what the lesson has been about. You may encourage them to think about the focus of the lesson by asking questions that draw out their own learning, such as:

- Who did we learn about today?
- How would you describe Jacob? How would you describe Esau?
- What did Jacob get that belonged to Esau?
- What qualities does Jacob have that mark him as one of the people of God?

Alternatively, give them a brief synopsis of the story, using the Summary of the Story on page 1.

Encourage the children to remember the key word from the story and the key theme in this lesson about the *family of God: blessing*.



## Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into

the church worship service or back to their homes with God's love and blessing. The prayer can be very simple, such as this one:

- O God, we thank you for being present with us here today. Send us back to our families with your blessing, that we may love and serve you as you love us. We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen*.

End your time together with:

- Let us bless the Lord.

The children respond:

- Thanks be to God.



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## Genesis 25: 19-34 (Esau trades his birthright); 27: 1-45 (Isaac blesses the wrong son)

### Twins!

Isaac is now grown up. He marries a woman named Rebekah.

Now Rebekah is going to have a baby—two of them. But the twins are heavy in her, and they fight inside of her. Rebekah is very uncomfortable. She could feel the feet of the babies kicking inside her womb, and it hurts. It is hard having one baby inside, kicking and squirming, but when two babies kick, she can't sleep.

Rebekah prays to God. “Why is this happening?” she wails. “They’re not even born yet, and they’re already a bunch of trouble!”

God says, “That’s because your sons will be two nations, and they will be at war with each other. The younger one, the one who comes out last, will win. They will fight each other, and they are practicing inside of you.”

Finally, it is time for the two babies to be born. The first one is Esau. He comes out all red and hairy. Then the second one comes, holding on to Esau’s heel with his tiny hand. That’s Jacob.

Esau grows up to be a hunter. He loves to be outside. He loves to hunt deer and other animals and bring them home to his family to cook. Jacob doesn’t like the outdoor life so much. He likes to stay inside the tent and help his mother Rebekah. You won’t find two more different twins.

Esau is Isaac’s favorite, but Rebekah loves Jacob the most.



## **Esau Stops Being the Older Brother**

Esau is older than Jacob—by around three minutes. What does he get by being the oldest? Maybe he gets a bigger piece of meat for dinner. Maybe he gets to be first to pick the chores he needs to do, or first to go hunting with his dad.

But most important, being the oldest means that he gets his family's land when his parents die. And he gets the honor of being blessed by his father. With that blessing comes a wonderful future. That is called "birthright"—the oldest son's right to favors, just by being born first.

But Esau's birthright doesn't fill his stomach when he's hungry. And Esau is hungry today. He has been hunting all day without a bite to eat.

When he comes back to the big family tent, he can smell a wonderful smell. Food! Delicious lentil stew! Jacob is at the stove cooking.

Esau stumbles into the tent. "I'm starving! Give me some of that red stuff you're cooking there!"

Jacob's answer is a surprise. "Sell me your birthright. I'll trade my stew for your birthright."

What's a birthright when you're so hungry? "Who cares about that?" Esau says. "I'm about to faint and you're talking about some birthright. Take it!"

Jacob says, "Promise."

"I promise! Give me a big bowl!"

Jacob smiles and ladles out a big bowl of yummy lentil soup for Esau—who has just become his younger brother. Jacob is the older brother now. He even gives Esau a piece of bread to soak up the gravy.

## **Isaac Gives His Oldest Son a Blessing — But Who Is That?**

After many years, Isaac's eyes have gone bad, and now he is going to die soon. But first, he wants to give his oldest son a blessing. He does not know that

Esau gave away his place as the oldest, trading it for a bowl of stew, and that, really, Jacob counts as the oldest even though he is younger.

So Isaac sends for Esau. “My dear son Esau, go hunt a deer and bring it home, and make my favorite dish for me. You know how to cook it the way I like. After I eat, I will give you a special blessing.”

So Esau goes out into the woods.

Rebekah is listening. Rebekah loves Jacob best, and she wants Jacob to have Isaac’s blessing. She goes to Jacob’s tent.

“Jacob,” she says. “Esau is out hunting. He is going to make your father’s favorite dish and then he will get your father’s blessing. I want you to have that blessing instead. Hurry and make a stew that tastes like what Esau makes. When it’s ready I will tell you what to do next.”

Jacob is not sure, but he does what his mother tells him to do. When the stew is hot and ready, he goes to his mother Rebekah. She is waiting for him, holding a piece of animal fur in her hand.

“What is that?” Jacob asks.

“This fur is what you will use to pretend to be Esau. You are going to be Esau when you go to your father. But he will never be fooled if he manages to touch you. Here, tie this furry skin around your arm and you will be hairy just like your brother.”

So Jacob goes into Isaac’s tent holding a bowl of spicy stew and wearing a furry sleeve. He does not look much like Esau. Will Isaac be fooled?

“Here I am, father,” says Jacob, opening the tent door. Isaac is lying in bed, just like he always does since he has gotten old and blind.

“Who are you?” says Isaac.

“I am Esau, your son.”

“You don’t sound like Esau,” says Isaac. “Come here and let me feel you.” Jacob holds out his right arm, the one with the animal fur stuck to it. Isaac feels the fur. Esau is very hairy today! “So it *is* you, Esau. Did you bring my favorite dish with you?”

Jacob gives Isaac the bowl of stew. Isaac gobbles it up. Then he says, “You don’t sound like Esau, but I guess you are Esau. Come here, and I will give you my blessing.”

So Isaac says to Jacob, “May God give you the riches of heaven and earth. People will serve you and bow down to you. Your brother and all nations will do that. Everyone who curses you will be cursed, and everyone who blesses you will be blessed.”

Then Jacob runs out of the tent. Esau will be here soon.

### **Does God Only Have One Blessing?**

As soon as Jacob disappears, Esau comes into the tent. In a booming voice, he says, “Here I am, father, with your favorite food!”

Isaac is surprised. “What? I just *ate* my favorite food! And I just gave you my blessing! Did you forget? Or did you come back for more?”

Now Esau is confused. “Father, I just got back from hunting the deer, and I just finished making this stew that you asked me to make. What is going on?”

Isaac says, “Then who just fed me? Who did I just bless?”

Esau’s eyes narrow. He closes his hands into a fist. “It must be my brother Jacob,” he growls through his gritted teeth. “That Jacob! But Father, will you give me a blessing, too?”

“But I cannot,” says Isaac. “I gave my one blessing to the firstborn son. What do I have left?”

“Father, please!” Esau starts to weep. “Please! Have you only one blessing? Is there not another blessing for me?”

Isaac sighs. “It will not be the same.”

“Father, please!” says Esau, weeping.

Then his father says, “Your home will be away from the riches of heaven and earth. You will live by your sword, and you will serve your brother and bow down to him. But there will be a time when you will no longer have to serve him.”

### **Esau Is Angry**

Esau walks out of the tent, steaming. He says out loud, “That Jacob! He took my blessing! I hate him! If I see him, I’ll kill him! I’ll kill him!”

Rebekah stands near Isaac’s tent, hiding from Esau. She hears him, and runs to find Jacob.

“Quick, you need to run away from here! Esau will kill you if he sees you! He means it!”

Jacob grabs a coat and a bag of food, and he runs. Now there is only a family of three, and one is dying.



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## MIRROR IMAGES

**for Primary, Elementary**

In this game children pretend they are twins, like Jacob and Esau.

### **Directions:**

1. Designate a wall or another spot to be the finish line. Put masking tape across the room, about 10' away, as the starting line.
2. Divide the children into two groups. Assign one group to be *Jacobs* and the other to be *Esaus*.
3. The two groups line up at the starting line, facing the finish line. One *Jacob* should be matched with one *Esau* to form a team of two people.
4. The first *Esau* moves across the room from the starting line to the finish, using different moves. The *Jacob* opposite this *Esau* tries to mirror *Esau's* moves. *Esau* should move slowly so that *Jacob* can mirror the moves.
5. When the first *Esau/Jacob* team reaches the finish line, the second team begins, until all have had a turn.





# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## JACOB AND ESAU

for Preschool, Primary

Children make Jacob and Esau figures and the bed they share as twin brothers.

### Materials:

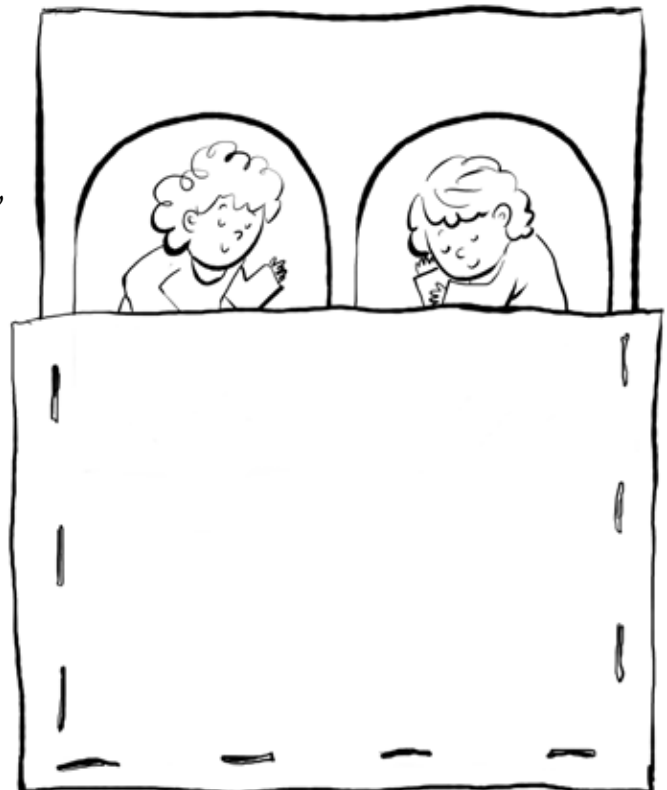
poster board  
fabric  
Jacob and Esau pictures (p. 15)  
scissors  
stapler  
crayons

### Preparation:

Make a copy of the Jacob and Esau pictures for each child. Cut a piece of poster board for each child, around 8-10 inches square. Cut some fabric squares to fit on top of the poster board.

### Directions:

1. Give each child a Jacob and Esau picture. Invite them to color the pictures and cut them out.
2. Staple a square of fabric onto the poster board so that it looks like a blanket on a bed. Staple only three sides, leaving one side free.
3. Put the brothers inside their bed.







# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## MURAL

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children illustrate scenes from the story of Jacob and Esau on a large mural.

### Materials:

sheet of butcher paper, long enough for illustrating three or more scenes from the Bible story  
paint or markers  
pencils  
decorative items as desired, such as a “hunting spear,” fake fur, fabric for clothes or yarn for hair  
glue

### Directions:

1. Divide the butcher paper into several scenes that depict the story of Jacob and Esau: their birth, Esau giving away his birthright (this may be more than one scene), the blessing of Jacob and of Esau by Jacob (this also may be more than one scene).
2. Invite the children to draw the scenes, using markers or paint to color the pictures.
3. Embellish the pictures with 3-D decorations such as fabric for their clothes, hunting equipment for Esau, hair for all and the fake fur for the fur that Jacob wore to fool Isaac.
4. Put the mural on a wall in your room or in the hallway where everyone can see it.



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## THE STOLEN BLESSING

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children dramatize the story of Jacob stealing Esau's birthright. See the Activity Ideas, Drama, in the Appendix for ways to dramatize a story.

**Materials:**

props as desired

**Directions:**

1. Have children act out the story of Jacob bargaining with Esau for Esau's birthright, trading the birthright for a bowl of stew. Then they can act out the deception of Jacob to Isaac, to secure the father's dying blessing.
2. Record the show, if you want!



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## LENTIL STEW AND BREAD

for Preschool, Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Children make Jacob's famous lentil stew and some bread, then enjoy some fellowship! You can use canned lentil soup or this recipe.

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup lentils
- 5 cups water
- 1" cube salt pork
- ¼ cup onion
- ½ cup chopped celery
- ½ cup carrots

### Preparation:

Wash and soak the lentils in the water for several hours. Add the salt pork and cook for 1½ to 3 hours. The remaining ingredients can be prepared and added in class, if you start cooking at the beginning of class. Otherwise, make the entire soup at home.

### Directions:

1. If cold, heat the soup until boiling. Add the onion, celery, and carrots and cook for 30 minutes.
2. Serve the soup with bread and crackers.





# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## POT OF BLESSINGS

for Preschool, Primary

Children create a mealtime reminder of the many ways God blesses them.

### Materials:

disposable bowls, 1 per child  
markers  
stickers or magazine pictures  
glue  
scissors  
magnet strips or small round magnets

### Directions:

1. Invite each child to decorate a bowl with pictures of things that God has blessed them with: pets, flowers, family, toys. They may use stickers, magazine pictures or draw their own.
2. On the edge of the bowl, write: "BLESSINGS FROM GOD." Assist the children with writing, as needed.
3. On the bottom of the bowl, attach a magnet. Magnetic strips will be adhesive, but round magnets need to be glued to the bottom. Let dry.



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## SIBLING RIVALRY

for Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

This game requires strong lungs and no hands.

### Materials:

ping pong balls

### Directions:

1. Divide the group into two teams (rival brothers!).
2. Have the teams sit across from each other at the table. A long table would be best for this game, where the teams sit along its length, facing each other.

*Alternatively*, mark two boundaries several feet apart with masking tape running parallel to each other. Have the teams sit on the floor at the edge of the boundaries, facing each other.

3. Give one team some ping pong balls. When you say start, they are to blow the ping pong balls across the table and onto the floor. Children on the other team need to blow the ping pong balls back across the table and onto the floor on the other side. No hands! Only blowing!
4. The team with the fewest balls on their side of the table wins.



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## BLESSINGS FOR FOOD

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make their own playing cards and play a game of choices and chance, food and blessing.

Esau traded his blessing of birthright for a meal, while Jacob traded his food for the blessing that Esau had. Jesus said that the Kingdom of God was like a treasure in a field, found by a farmer who sold everything he had in order to get that treasure.

We have received many blessings from God, including family and friends, creative and physical talents, a good home, pets, the joy of nature and our intellect. Playing Jacob and Esau, let us try to hold onto our blessings, give some away and still get fed!

### Materials:

3" x 5" index cards (without lines), 12 per child

pencils or pens

markers, crayons or colored pencils

### Directions:

#### *Making the Playing Cards:*

Give each child 12 index cards. Invite children to make the playing cards for the game as follows:

1. Hold the cards upright, like ordinary playing cards.
2. Draw a line about 1" from the top of each card for the label.
3. On 9 cards, write the name of a food on the label, then draw that food in the large area. Include food for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and different kinds of food, such as:

cereal	turkey sandwich	pizza	chocolate cake
milk	turkey	spaghetti	grilled cheese sandwich
soda pop	pudding	orange juice	green salad
broccoli	carrots	potato salad	steak
hamburger	fish	roast beef	macaroni and cheese
eggs and bacon	waffles	candy bar	types of fruit

Include parts of a meal, not the entire meal (for example, just mashed potatoes). You can also include such things as butter, sugar, hamburger bun and salad dressing. So if someone has "green salad," they may need to also collect "salad dressing" to complete their salad.

4. On the remaining 3 cards, write a blessing or gift that God offers to us, and illustrate it.

### *Playing the Game:*

The object of this game is to end up with at least three good meals and at least one blessing that you are thankful for. *Directions:*

1. Put all the cards together and shuffle.
2. Deal out 4 cards to each child and place the remainder of the cards (face down) in the center.
3. Taking turns, each person takes a card from the center pile, until each person has taken 4 cards from the center.
4. When everybody has 8 cards in their hand, they are to take 3 cards and pass them to the person on their left. They need to try to keep cards that will make 3 meals, plus the blessing or blessings that they want.
5. When the cards have been passed to the left, then each person will take a card from the center pile again. This time, take turns taking a card until each person has taken 2 cards from the center pile.
6. Now everybody has 10 cards. They are to take 3 cards from their hand and pass them to the person on their left.
7. Each person will take a card from the center pile again, taking turns so that each will have taken 2 cards from the pile. The pile should now be gone.
8. Everybody will now have 12 cards. They are to take 3 cards from their hand and pass them to the person on their left.
9. When this round is over, have everyone put their cards down and see who has been able to make three square meals and have at least one blessing.

### *Variation:*

Let people team up in twos or threes when they have all of the cards, and negotiate with each other, trading food for blessings and blessings for food.



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## CONVERSATION JUMP START: BLESSINGS

for Intermediate

*Blessings as part of God's creation:* Name some blessings that we have just by living on planet earth. Share your ideas.

### ***Blessings as people who live...***

- in the city: \_\_\_\_\_
- in the country: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Blessings as individuals (name your special gifts):***

- I have skill in sports in: \_\_\_\_\_
- I'm good in school at: \_\_\_\_\_
- I can do this really well: \_\_\_\_\_
- I'm good in artistic work: \_\_\_\_\_
- My body is good at: \_\_\_\_\_
- I can use my mind to: \_\_\_\_\_
- I was born with some good things, like: \_\_\_\_\_





## LESSON 3: JACOB AND ESAU



### We Believe . . .

Because the Anglican and Episcopal faith is such an incarnational faith, seeing God in all of daily life, including the rhythm of time and seasons, there is openness to noticing God's blessings in all things. The Prayer Book is full of thanksgiving for blessings, as are the hymns in the *Hymnal* 1982.

The Holy Eucharist, celebrated each Sunday, begins and ends with blessing. So like Jacob, we too strive for blessing and the right to bear God's promise. Baptism, our inclusion into the household of God, is both the sign and the receiving of that promise.



### Today's Story



#### Genesis 25:19-34; 27:1-45

Jacob strives for the blessing, and for the right to bear God's promise. He had fought for it since his own birth, trades for it when he can, and then scrambles for it at the end. His desire is for that higher meaning in his life that God offers.

Esau, on the other hand, gives up his destiny on his own. He trades his birthright when he hungers for the stew Jacob was cooking. This disregard or unconcern for his own destiny—and the destiny of his descendants—lost him his blessing. Esau had not cultivated the habit of searching for God and listening to God.

So Isaac could give to Esau the blessing of his affection and love, but now he could never give the full blessing of the destiny that Esau had himself denied. Esau had laid judgment on his own life, which Isaac could not alter.

Later, God extended the blessing of the People of God, the Hebrews, to include all people of God, through the life and work of God's Son, Jesus. Then, at last, Esau and his descendants receive God's promise. God stays with us, no matter what, even when we deny him. For we are God's people.



### Words of Faith

*Family of God* – through God's love, God made us God's children

*Blessing* – a prayer requesting God's grace and care; a benediction

***As part of God's family, we also receive God's blessing.***



## Sharing

Read the story of Jacob and Esau from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, or from your family Bible.

The story shows how much Jacob desired God's blessing, while Esau did not care. There are many times when we act like Esau, giving up our opportunities to be blessed by God's gifts to us. Or like Jacob, there are many times when we act less than perfect, even when our goals are right!

But God does not give up on us! And we know that, as part of the *family of God*, even when we are not perfect, we receive God's blessing.

Together, you might discuss:

- What do you think about Jacob's deceitful way of receiving a blessing from his father?
- How is God present in this story?



## WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children



### This Week at Home

- **This is a great, dramatic story to act out** if you have two real-life siblings to take the parts of *Jacob* and *Esau*. Be aware: real-life siblings may bring real-life rivalries to their parts! Use props—stew, hunter's tools, maybe even a tent! After acting out the story, trade roles: the one who played Jacob becomes Esau, and Esau becomes Jacob. Then discuss: How did it feel to be Jacob? How did it feel to be Esau?
- **Create an alternative ending. Re-enact the story, but when Esau** comes in hungry, create a new ending in which both Jacob and Esau come out as winners and recipients of God's blessings. How might they have worked it out together?
- **Create a like/dislike chart for Jacob and Esau.** Draw a four-section grid; label the columns *Jacob* and *Esau*; label the rows *like* and *dislike*. Now fill in the four spaces: What do you admire about each of them? What do you not admire? Emphasize that God continued to be with both brothers despite their failings, just as God continues with us. If you're feeling brave, you could create a similar chart for your family; let each individual fill in the *dislike* section of the chart for him- or herself. Let everyone contribute to everyone's *like* sections!
- **Read together a children's book** about siblings in conflict. Here are several options:
  - *The Lemonade War* by Jacqueline Davies (192 pages; NY: HMH Books, 2009)
  - *Big Red Lollipop* by Rukhshana Khan (40 pages; NY: Viking, 2010)
  - *Gone Fishing: A Novel in Verse* by Tamera Will Wissinger (128 pages; NY: HMH Books, 2013)
  - *Bye-Bye Baby Brother!* by Sheena Dempsey (32 pages; Somerville, MA: Candlewick, 2013)
- What can you learn from these stories?
- **Play a board game for two+ persons.** Then change the rules and try playing the game in different ways. Play competitively, or help each other so that all win. For example, in Monopoly®, instead of playing to get rich and impoverish the others, play instead to help each other by lending one another money to buy property, or paying the "fines" collectively. How would learning how to play cooperatively have helped Jacob and Esau?



## Household Prayer

O God, we thank you for being present with us here today. Help us to love and serve you as you love and serve us. We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

