

A Good Shepherd Sacred Story

Jacob's Ladder

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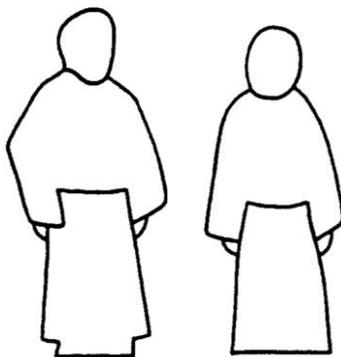
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JACOB'S LADDER MATERIALS

- medium wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden figure of Jacob
 - wooden ladder
 - 2 wooden figures of angels
 - stone



Jacob



Angels

JACOB'S LADDER ••. GENESIS 28:6-22

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story from the shelf. Return to the circle and sit down, placing the story next to you.

Gently stroke one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children during the silence.

Place the Jacob figure in the center of the storytelling area.

Touch the Jacob figure as you speak.

Move the Jacob figure a few inches to the right.

Move one hand down from about eye level to the floor.

Place the stone next to Jacob and lay him down on it.

Hold the ladder in place with one hand next to Jacob.

Trace the ladder from bottom to top and emphasize the word "all".

Move each angel from the story basket; down, then up the ladder; and back into the story basket. Do not hurry. Allow the movement to stand on it's own.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

All of the words to this story are inside of me. If you will make silence with me I can find all the words to share this story of god's people with you.

Much earlier you heard a story about Jacob and Esau when Jacob stole the blessing that belonged to Esau.

After Jacob tricked his father and stole the blessing from Esau he decided to run away.

He was afraid his brother was so angry he would kill him.

So Jacob left his home to go live with his Uncle Laban.

The first night Jacob stopped when it became dark as the sun went down.

He was very tired. He found a stone and used it as a pillow, sleeping there.

As he slept he dreamed. He dreamed that there was a ladder on earth.

And the ladder reached all the way to heaven.

And angels of Yahweh walked down and up on the ladder.

Place your empty hand at the top of the ladder with your fingers closed, then open them quickly as you say "Yahweh".

Touch the floor as you speak of "land", then touch Jacob as you speak of blessings.

Nod your head as you emphasize the word "forever" and touch Jacob once again.

Place the ladder in the story basket. Stand the Jacob figure upright; emphasize the word "Surely".

Move the stone to one side and touch it reverently.

Touch the Jacob figure, emphasize the words "if" and "then".

Move Jacob farther to the right.

Then he dreamed that at the top of the ladder stood Yahweh.

When Yahweh spoke he said, " I am the God of Abraham and Isaac and I will give you the land on which you lie. You will have many children and you will be blessed. "

Then Yahweh promised to be with Jacob and keep him safe forever and to bring him back to the land on which he was laying.

When Jacob woke up he said, "Surely the Lord was in this place and I didn't know it."

Then Jacob took the stone he'd slept on and set it up like a pillar. He called the place Bethel, which means "House of God".

Then Jacob said, "If God is really with me as God promised and keeps me safe, then Yahweh will be my God and this stone shall be God's house and I will give Yahweh one tenth of everything I have. "

Then Jacob continued on his journey.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder how it feels to sleep on a stone?

I wonder what the angels looked like?

I wonder if Jacob was afraid to hear and see Yahweh?

I wonder if Yahweh kept the promises to Jacob?

Carefully place all the figures back into the basket.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to the shelf. Return to the circle and sit down.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Be sure all children have an opportunity to choose their activity before you dismiss them to their work.

I wonder what you will make your work today? Let's go around the circle and decide.

JACOB'S LADDER TEACHER HELPS

Again the J source* brings us a wonderful story that seems so unlikely to our western minds. How dare Jacob say that he has seen and heard God? In light of his tricking both Isaac and Esau, how could God have chosen him to receive the blessing? But that's part of the J source. The one thing the J source Yahweh never does is judge the moral value of people. Abram was not judged for prostituting Sarai in Egypt and Jacob is not judged for tricking his brother.

Then we have Jacob. Jacob, who has just been given a personal interview with Yahweh. Jacob, who has seen the hosts of heaven coming down to earth as no one else had. Jacob, who has been promised protection, land, wealth and descendants. And what does Jacob do? He reminds Yahweh that IF Yahweh does this and IF Yahweh does that, THEN he, Jacob will claim God as his own and will give him one tenth of all he has. The incredible moxie of the man must be admired. And yet we shake our heads. Jacob is the kid who never went to Sunday School, because he was always hiding behind the church smoking. Yet this is the one Yahweh chose to carry the blessing-- to have a nation's name.

The wondering questions begin with a simple one. When we wonder how it feels to sleep on a stone we enter into Jacob's life. He must have been exhausted to fall asleep with a rock for a pillow rather than his cloak or branches from a tree.

The second question gets to that which we all want to know. What do angels look like, for that matter, what does God look like? There are no answers in the text, but it is a marvelous time to wonder. Sometimes I ask children to describe what they think God looks like. If time allows, consider it.

The third question deals with Jacob and Yahweh. When we ask children to think about this, we are asking if they are afraid of God. Most young children will respond that Jacob was

not afraid, although those who have developed a conscience, a deeper understanding of right and wrong, may believe that Jacob would have felt guilty about how he treated his father and Esau.

The final question leaves the story open. Again God has promised. Again we wonder if God will keep those promises. The children will respond out of their own experience as they share their understanding of consistency in their lives. Those who know about "kept" promises will be some steps ahead of those who have not had that trust building experience.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Have you ever had a dream that was so real you remember it even now? What was it?

Some people believe the ladder was for the angels/God to get close to or make contact with the people. Others say that it was Jacob who wanted to be close to God or with God. What do you think? Do you think God ever wants to be close to God's people.

The story says that Jacob fell asleep using a rock for his pillow. Think of a time when you were so tired you fell asleep in a strange place or position. How did you rest?

Jacob had just tricked his brother and lied to his father. He was running away from Esau because he thought Esau would try to kill him. Why would God choose to give a blessing to someone who had done things that were bad?

* The Old Testament is made of several different sources. They have marked differences, while also containing some similarities. The J source (standing for Jahwhist as in Y[J]ahweh) brings us a God who seems very human. This God talks with others; comes down from heaven to check things out; has worries and concerns about power; intervenes with personality, though not always logic; and remains always bound to God's people. The J source never explains away this everyday God, but rather accepts that it's God's choice to be however God chooses to be. (The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible; edited by Charles Laymon, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987) (The Book of J; translated by David Rosenberg and interpreted by Harold Bloom, New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990)