

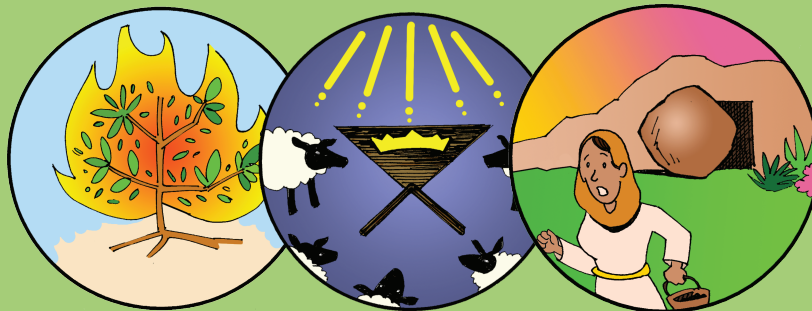
**CROSS + GEN  
EDUCATION**

**LESSON  
#2-3**

**SAMPLE  
DISPLAY COPY**

# **LIVING THE WORD**

**Narrative Lectionary**



**Exploring God's Story Together**

**CROSS + GEN EDUCATION**

**Leader's Guide**

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## Lesson #2-3

# *Jacob Wrestles*

Genesis 32:[9-13] 22-30



**Key Verse:**

Then the man said, “You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.”

Genesis 32:28

**The Point:**

God changes us.

**Making Connections:**

God Creates Family

**Bible Nuts & Bolts:**

Israel’s Origin Stories

**Spiritual Practice:**

Prayer



# Activities a la Carte

## Activities

## Supplies

### Into the Story

#### *The Struggle*

Play a competitive game.

10 min.

- † Pick up sticks or thin bamboo skewers
- † Poster board
- † Optional: computer with projection

### Bible Nuts & Bolts

#### *Israel's Origin Story?*

Create a story together.

10 min.

- † Bibles
- † Optional: paper and pens or pencils

### Making Connections

#### *Made to Be in Relationship*

Connect to our families of origin.

15 min.

- † Activity Sheet #2-3.A
- † Pens or pencils

### Learning the Story

#### *Jacob Wrestles with God*

Tell the story with life-size puppets.

20 min.

- † Bible

### Living the Story

#### *Blessings*

Create blessings for various people and situations.

10 min.

- † Slips of paper
- † Pens or pencils
- † Bowl or basket

# Activities a la Carte

## *Additional Activities*

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### *Blessing Acrostic*

Work together to write a poem.

10 min.

- † Paper
- † Crayons or markers

### *Tug of War*

Compete to test strength.

10 min.

- † Rope
- † Objects to mark boundaries

### *Sending the Story*

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5 min.

- † Sharing God's Story @ Home



*Cross+Generational Ministry* has at its core the concept that faith is passed on from generation to generation (back and forth) through meaningful relationships, and through finding our place in God's story by exploring that story in community.

Effective cross+generational experiences are:

- experiential**
- interactive**
- engaging**
- story-centric**
- home-based**
- equalizing**

all of which promote an **encounter with God**. All of the activities included in this worship guide are intended to engage these principles, through intentional cross+generational interaction and active, creative activities that bring the Bible story to life in our lives.

We pass on the faith through worship, and weaving teaching and learning moments into worship experiences reinforces the understanding that we are an active part on an ongoing story of God's work in the world.

# *Background for Leaders*

## **Making Connections**

The narrative of this season's readings reveals a God who is focused on relationship. Genesis is the beginning of the story that is woven throughout the rest of the biblical narrative, demonstrating a God who created humans, set limits for them, made promises to them, and wrestles with them through their struggles. Today's story reveals a new side of the divine-human relationship: one of physical struggle and life-changing blessing.

## **Story Summary:**

### ***Jacob Wrestles***

Jacob, the central character in today's story, is the son of Isaac and his wife, Rebekah. This is a very strange story that includes many odd things. While traveling with his family, Jacob is met by a stranger while he is alone. This stranger then proceeds to wrestle with Jacob through the night, striking Jacob's hip and causing it to become disjointed. However, Jacob does not stop fighting.

When it is dawn, Jacob is asked by this stranger to stop wrestling. Jacob refuses to stop unless he receives a blessing. The stranger then changes Jacob's name to Israel, or "one who prevails with God," revealing that Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed. This blessing changes Jacob, and he gives the place where he wrestled God the name Peniel, stating that he has seen God's face and has still lived.

## **The Point**

### **God Changes Us**

Just as God gave Jacob a special blessing, we receive special blessings from God, too. God provides us with the things we need to survive and live. God heals us when we are sick. God is revealed to us through people and experiences. These blessings change us and help us see the face of God in our lives, just as Jacob saw the face of God.

## **Bible Nuts & Bolts:**

### *Israel's Origin Stories*

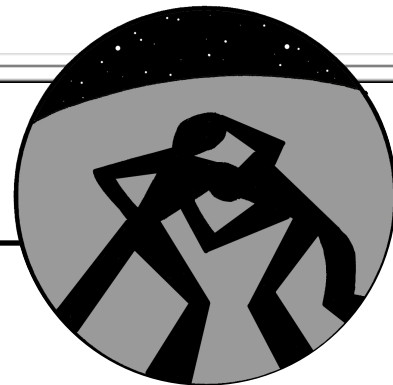
Origin stories are a type of stories that explain how something came about. Sometimes the stories show how God is interacting with the world. Stories like today's reading tell the Israelite people who they are as a nation and where they came from. Genesis is an origin story. It begins with the origin of the world. Then it addresses the origin of the people of Israel. It focuses on four generations, beginning with the call of Abram (Abraham) and ending with his great-grandson Joseph and the move to Egypt. Today's story is also an origin story as it tells the origin of the name "Israel."

## **Spiritual Practice: Prayer**

A blessing can be seen as a type of prayer in which we ask God to look upon us with favor and kindness. Jacob wrestles with an angel (God), and in the end, finally asks that the angel bless Jacob. Jacob wanted the favor and kindness of this stranger to be given to him. When we seek God's blessings, we are asking for special gifts from God.



# Lesson Plan



## Into the Story (10 minutes)

### The Struggle

Play a competitive game.

*You will need:*

- † Groupings Guide
- † Materials for chosen cross+generational grouping
- † Pick up sticks or thin bamboo skewers
- † Poster board
- † Optional: computer with projection

*Before class:*

1. Determine how you would like to group participants at their tables (in a cross+generational grouping), using the Groupings Guide.
2. Prepare the materials indicated in the Guide.
3. Create a set of about 25 pick-up sticks for each table. Place one set of sticks on each table.
4. Copy questions onto poster board or make slides to project.

*During class:*

1. Welcome the class and instruct them to group themselves cross+generationally according to the method you have selected from the Groupings Guide.
2. **If someone is sitting alone, please introduce yourself, and invite them to join you. Young children who are not comfortable leaving their families should sit at a table with someone in their family. Figure out how to “grow your family” to be five to eight people, if it is not that size already. You can also invite pairs of people or other families to join you. This is exactly how we organized ourselves last week, but feel free to find new people for your family to sit with.**



3. Once you are situated at your table, you should begin the game of pick-up sticks. If you have not played pick-up sticks before, the goal is to be the person with the most sticks at the end of the game by removing sticks from the pile without moving or disturbing any other sticks. If you move another stick during your turn, that turn is over, and the next person gets to go.
4. The youngest person at your table gets to go first, and then you should rotate clockwise, each person taking a turn until the sticks have all been taken.
5. While you play, you should answer the following questions. Each person should answer each question. If you take more times around the circle than there are questions, go ahead and add your own questions. You may want to display the questions on poster board or Power Point so groups can access them at their own pace.
  - What was the best part of your week last week?
  - What was the worst part of your week?
  - What does it mean to you to struggle?
  - Can you tell about a time when you struggled?
  - Have you ever wrestled with someone? Who won?

## *Bible Nuts and Bolts (10 minutes)*

### *Israel's Origin Story*

Create a story together.

*You will need:*

- † Bibles
- † Optional: paper and pens or pencils

*Before class:*

1. This activity can be done verbally if children are too young to write. For older groups, the stories can be written.

*During class:*

1. **How do all of the best stories start? With “Once upon a time,” of course! But not all stories start that way, do they? And some of these other stories are very important stories.**
2. **Today we are going to do some storytelling. Choose one person at your table to start. That person is going to say (or write) one sentence to begin your story. Then the person to their right will tell (or write) the second line of the story, and the third person will add the third line, and so on. Continue until you have gone all around the table. If groups are writing, have one person read the completed story.**
3. **Is your story finished? Did it make sense?**
4. **The story of God’s people is told in the Bible. Sometimes it seems like it does not make much sense, and some people might think that it had an ending when Jesus was crucified—but we know that the story goes on and on through our own lives.**
5. **Today we are hearing the story of the beginning of the people of Israel. They are a very important group in the Bible, and their story is a part of our story, too.**



## Making Connections (15 minutes)

### Made to Be in Relationship

Connect to our families or origin.

*You will need:*

- † Activity Sheet #2-3.A
- † Pens or pencils

*Before class:*

1. Make enough copies of Activity Sheet #2-3.A for one per family, plus one per participant.

*During class:*

1. **This fall we will read stories of people who lived out God’s calling for their lives through the relationships they had with God and with other people. Genesis, the first book of the Bible, holds many stories of God’s relationship with humans and their relationships with one another. Does anyone remember what stories from Genesis we have already heard?** [*Creation, and Abraham and Sarah’s promise of a son.*]
2. **Jacob is the grandson of Abraham, and the son of Isaac and his wife Rebekah. In the events that follow today’s story, Jacob will become the father of twelve sons. How many of you boys and men have eleven brothers? Do any parents here have twelve sons? Jacob’s twelve sons became the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel, the first nation stemming from God’s covenant with Abraham, and one of them was the direct ancestor of Jesus.**
3. Hand out one copy of Activity Sheet #2-3.A to each family unit.
4. **Our families give important clues to who we are, and who we are to become. As families, fill out one copy of your Activity Sheet, talking about each of the people as you fill them in. Remember, families are not limited to those who are genetically related to each other. Adopted family members, stepfamilies, and those with whom you share other important relationships are parts of our family trees, too. Begin in the bottom oval, with the youngest generation present. Include all siblings in that oval. On the next level up, list parents; then, above them, grandparents. This can be done as a family, as couples,**

or by yourself. **Just make sure you begin with the youngest person in your family who is in the room. If you know the meaning behind people's names in your family, share that, too.**

5. Give families time to fill out the worksheet and share with each other. If you see singles or couples who are finished before the larger families finish, encourage them to tell their family stories to each other or to you.
6. When everyone has finished, hand out a second copy of Activity Sheet #2-3.A to each person.
7. **Your family is not the only thing that determines who you are and what you will become. Your interests, abilities, and experiences are important to who you are, too. Fill out this second Activity Sheet, but this time, instead of including your family, include the history of something else that has helped make you who you are. Maybe it is a list of teachers you have had over the years or a list of books that have helped you understand the world at different ages. Be creative. Share when you are done. Please help a person next to you come up with their list if they are stumped.**

## Learning the Story (20 minutes)

### Jacob Wrestles with God

Tell the story with life-like puppets.

*You will need:*

† Bible

*During class:*

1. Choose four volunteers to help you act out the story as you read it. Two will be Jacob and God. The other two will be their puppeteers. The volunteers will need to move each other's limbs or assist in having their limbs moved.
2. **I need two volunteers to play the parts of Jacob and his adversary as I read the story.** Select two people. **I forgot to tell you two that you cannot move on your own. You are puppets, and I need two more people to be your puppeteers.** Select two more people. **You two are the puppeteers. You must move the puppets limbs for them, because they cannot move on their own.** Make sure volunteers understand their roles.
3. Read Genesis 32:22-30, pausing when necessary for the actors and their puppeteers to get in position as they depict the story. When you have finished, encourage a round of applause for the actors and their puppeteers.
4. **What were some strange things that happened during this story? Sometimes we do not understand everything that we read in the Bible, and the stories seem strange. What is important is that we learn something new about God and about ourselves by reading these stories.**
5. **In the story, what does Jacob ask God to do? [To bless him.] Does God do this? [Yes.] How do you think Jacob felt after God blessed him? [Surprised, happy, loved, etc.] Do our encounters with God change us? [Yes!]**
6. **Jacob met God through a strange experience, but that encounter changed him. Not only did his name change, but he also knew that God would be with him and that God would always keep promises. When we meet God, we are changed too, even if our meeting seems strange or unexpected.**

## *Living the Story (10 minutes)*

### *Blessings*

Create blessings for various people and situations.

*You will need:*

- † Slips of paper
- † Pens or pencils
- † Bowl or basket

*Before class:*

1. Prepare the slips of paper by writing blessing topics on each, such as people, meals, homes, travel, those who are sick. Have enough for each group to receive one, repeating topics if necessary.
2. Place slips in bowl or basket.

*During class:*

1. **In today's story, Jacob asks God for a blessing. When we ask God for a blessing, we ask God to look on us with favor and kindness. A blessing is a form of prayer.**
2. **What are some of the things for which people might pray a blessing?** [*Food, family, homes, friends, people who are sick, etc.*]
3. **You listed many things on which we might pray a blessing. Now, you will pray one of those blessings as a group. Have one member of each group select one of the slips of paper from the bowl. On the slip of paper, you will find a topic for which we can say a blessing. Each group will say their own blessing quietly, because we will all be doing this at the same time. The trick is that each person can only say one word at a time, going around the circle one after the other to complete the prayer. One example of a blessing is: "God is great, God is good, so we thank God for our food. Amen." But your blessing can go any way your group wants it to. At the point the blessing seems complete, whoever's turn it is should say, "Amen!"**

## *Additional Activities*

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### *Blessing Acrostic (10 minutes)*

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Work together to write a poem.

*You will need:*

- † Paper
- † Crayons or markers

*Before class:*

1. Create a sample by writing the word “Blessings” vertically on a piece of paper, using a different color for each letter.

*During class:*

1. Hand out paper and colored pencils or markers. **Choose a person at your table to be the scribe. Wait until they have done so. Scribes, write the word “BLESSINGS” down the side of the paper, with a different color for each letter. Show the sample. As a group, come up with a word or phrase beginning with each different letter to describe today’s story. Make sure you give everyone a chance to choose a word.**
2. Invite groups to share their work when they have finished. If there is somewhere to display these acrostic poems, consider posting them in a prominent place in your building so everyone can celebrate our blessings.
3. **Jacob was blessed by God and given a new name. We are blessed by God, too, and are able to say prayers of blessings for the many different situations and places in which we find ourselves every day.**

## *Tug of War (10 minutes)*

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Compete to test strength.

*You will need:*

- † Rope
- † Objects to mark boundaries

*Before class:*

1. Find a large, strong rope that is long enough for tug-of-war. Also gather objects to mark boundaries (cones, spot markers, or another long length of rope work well for this purpose).
2. Set up your playing space. Lay out the rope for tug-of-war. Then use the objects to mark a centerline, dividing the rope for two teams, one on either end.

*During class:*

1. **In today's story, Jacob's strength was tested when he wrestled with God. Let's play a game of tug-of-war to test our strength!**
2. Divide the class into two teams. Assign each team one side of the rope.
3. **In a moment, I am going to give you several commands. When I say, "pick up the rope," everyone should pick up the rope. When I say, "go," each team should work together to pull the rope, trying to pull the other team to their side. If you pull the opposite team across the line, your team earns a point.**
4. When you are ready, give students your commands. Once one round is finished, have teams re-set the game and play another round. Continue playing rounds as time allows.
5. After you are finished playing, have teams drop the rope and gather around you. **All of you are very strong, just like Jacob! In our story, Jacob "wrestles" with God. Do you think that people like us could wrestle with God? What might that mean?**



## *Sending the Story (5 minutes)*

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If your congregation is using the “Living the Word: Sharing God’s Story @ Home” insert, remember to hand them out at this point in the lesson.

### **This week...**

- **Talk to a member of your family about your family history. Try to learn something new about your history.**
- **Find something or someone about which or whom to pray a blessing each day. Write some of your favorite blessings down.**
- **Read the daily readings with your family or with a prayer partner, and think about ways in which you struggle with and are blessed by God.**

### *Prayer*

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Encourage participants to hold hands with those in their group, or in a large circle if the entire group is small enough. Begin and end the prayer, but leave enough silence in the middle for people to participate .

### **Loving God,**

**Thank you for the amazing stories that reveal you in the Bible. Thank you for Jacob, our ancestor who struggled with you and was given a blessing. Please be with us in our struggles.** Invite participants to add their prayers here. **Bless us each day as we seek to bless one another. In your name we pray. Amen.**



# Made to Be in Relationship

*Connect to our families of origin.*

