

SERVICE

WELCOME

Good morning, everyone! Welcome to children's Sabbath. We are so glad that you are here! Today we are celebrating our youngest members with a special service **designed to engage in worship through seeing, hearing and doing together**. We know that Jesus LOVES children! When they ran to him to receive a blessing, Jesus reminded his disciples to let the little children come, and not to hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of God. (Mark 10:13-16) Jesus also instructed us that we must receive the kingdom of God like a child in order to enter into it. (Matt 18:3) It is with these teachings in mind that we invite you to enter into this worship with the heart of a child.

Today, We're going to greet one another a little differently. We are going to learn that God is fiercely faithful, and he always keeps his promises. How many of you remember giving pinky promises when you were little? (Pause and look out at your audience. Smile and nod.) Pinky Promises were a sign between friends that meant your promise was important. Let's use this to remind each other of our focus in worship. Turn to your neighbors and tell them WELCOME! God is faithful! Then give them your best pinky promise. (demonstrate then give time for congregation to greet one another) Great job!

As we think about God's faithfulness and our Pinky Promise, let us remember to always SAY YES TO JESUS. Just as little children, we can always approach the throne of God with wide-eyed wonder, humble curiosity, playful enthusiasm and unwavering love and trust for Christ our Savior.

Please bow your heads with me as we come to our Lord and Savior in pray:

OPENING PRAYER

Note: you may have a child offer the opening prayer to begin the service. They may choose to write their own prayer, or they can use the pre-written prayer below:

Dear father, we thank you for everyone who has gathered for church today. We pray that you will be with us and bless us as we worship together. open our ears so that we may hear your voice. Open our minds so we may understand. Open our hearts so that we may receive your wonderful love. Fill this worship with your presence. We ask this in the holy name of Jesus, Amen.



SCRIPTURE

Note: many of your children will remember the verse from VBS. Invite them up front to do the motions for the scripture. Have 3-4 pre-selected children who are able to practice ahead of time. They will be the ones demonstrating the scripture. Have them do it once for the congregation, then invite the congregation to follow a few times. Make sure the scripture is visible somewhere onstage. You can choose to use digital slides, or have another child hold up a poster with the verse.

Our Bible verse comes from Deuteronomy 7:9. The text gives us more detail about God’s faithfulness. It reminds us just how far His promises will go. Please stand and do the motions with us as we read our verse together. *(Demonstrate, then participate with the congregation)*

“Remember *(Tap temples)*

that the Lord your God is the only God *(Both pointer fingers point to sky)*
and that He is faithful. *(Clasp hands together)*

He will keep His covenant” *(Pinky promise with both your pinkies)*

and show His constant love to a thousand generations.” *(Form a heart shape with your fingers)*

of those who love Him and obey His commands.” *(Prayer hands)*

Deuteronomy 7:9 *(Put hands together like a Bible)*

Isn’t it wonderful to know that God’s faithfulness will always carry on! From generation to generation, His constant love will be with us.

Ahead of time cue up Song 1: Walking by Faith.

SONG 1 – WALK BY FAITH (Medium Tempo)



SKIT 1: WE NEED A LADDER!

Summary: An unsuspecting traveler falls down into a perilous pit. Friends do their best to help out. Can they find the right tool for the rescue?!

Key point: God has promised us Jesus. He will rescue us when we fall.

PROPS:

Sign1: Label Sign "DANGER LOOK OUT FOR PITS" (*place sign on left side of stage visible to congregation*)

Ladder

Sandwich (*in plastic bag*)

work gloves, climbing gloves, or gym gloves.

shovel

yarn

CAST- VERSION 1

Constance

Traveler

CAST- VERSION 2 (*each helper will have a single prop to work with*)

Traveler (T)

Helper 1 (h1) Prop: work gloves

Helper 2 (h2) Prop: shovel

Helper 3 (h3) Prop: yarn

Note: *there are two versions of this skit. Traveler has the most lines in both. . You may want to choose an adult to play this character.*

Version 1 requires two characters. It includes Constance the camel, a familiar character from VBS. If you have a camel costume from your summer program, or you have a limited number of helpers you can use script 1.

Version 2 has an alternate version of the skit with the same message. It requires 3 helpers.

Each helper has a few simple lines, and can be done by children of any age. No matter which version you choose, be sure to practice together a few times in preparation for the service!



SCRIPT VERSION 1 (WITH CONSTANCE THE CAMEL)

T – *(walks onstage with Constance The Camel following behind)*

“Well Constance, it’s been a long long long long day of travel.”

“And... I think we might be lost.” *(Constance nudges traveler and grunts)*

“what’s that Constance? You think we’ll catch up with the rest of the caravan soon?”

“Oh... I hope so! We’ve been separated for a few days now.” *(looks around in the distance squinting.)*

(Constance turns in circles looking around)

“but I don’t see them anywhere. Hmm... maybe they are just over the next trail.” *(begins to walk away)*

(Constance grunts frantically)

“What is it girl?” *(Constance grunts and points to DANGER sign)*

“That? It say’s danger, look out for pits on it.” *(Constance nods)*

“Oh don’t be silly Constance, there’s nothing to worry about. The trail doesn’t look dangerous...”
(continues walking around. Constance stays behind)

See? There’s nothing here... that sign is nonsense. There’s no pits any...WHERE!”

“AAAAAAAHHHH” *(pretend to fall offstage move to a lower part on the ground, or you can sit on the ground/be on your knees. You should be lower than the other actors at this point)*

“Oh no! I’ve fallen. *(tries to climb)* I can’t get out. Oh no!”

“Constance, why didn’t you warn me about the hazards on this trail!!!”

(Constance shakes head)

“What will I do? *(tries to jump)* it’s too steep and too deep. I’m stuck.... Constance?”

(Constance grunts)

“Listen girl, you’ve got to go get something to help ok?”

(Constance grunts, nods and runs offstage, returning with some gloves and tosses them to T)

T – “What did you bring me? *(holds up gloves)* Deluxe, ultra durable... climbing gloves?”

“You want me to climb out using these?”

(Constance nods)

“Ok they look really strong *(puts gloves on and tries to climb out again)* *(huffs and puffs)*

“The walls are too slippery. *(phew!)* Hmmmm... maybe we could try something else. Do you have any other ideas?”

(Constance nods and runs offstage returns with a shovel and tosses it to T)



T – “A shovel? That’s brilliant! I’ll try to dig a mountain of dirt and climb on top of that!”

(attempts to dig with shovel... strains and taps shovel on the hard ground. Drops shovel)

“I can’t dig through, the ground is too hard! Do you have any other ideas?”

(Constance thinks a moment) hmmmmmm.... (runs offstage. Returns with some yarn)

T – “is... is that a piece of yarn? *(Constance nods)* let me get this straight... you want me... To hold on to that... and you think you can pull me out?”

(Constance nods)

“ummm... are you sure this is going to hold me?”

(constance jumps up and down)

T – *(doubtfully)* “ok... if you say so...” *(grabs hold of one end of the yarn Constance pulls on the other end)*

T – *(stands on tiptoes)* “hey!!! I think it’s working!”

(Constance continues to pull until yarn snaps. Both fall over)

T – “So close! But... I’m still stuck. Oh dear, what will I do?”

(constance grunts)

“Whats that? You don’t want me to give up?”

(Constance jumps up and down)

“okay girl... let’s think some more.”

“Hmmmm.... gloves didn’t work to help with climbing... but what if there was something that could be climbed? and a shovel didn’t help with digging a mound for height, but what if we could find something that lifted someone higher? and the yarn wasn’t sturdy or strong enough to pull me out, but what if we found something that could support a person?”

(constance jumps up and down and grunts)

“You have an idea girl? That’s great! What is it?”

(constance runs offstage, returning with a ladder)

T – Of course! A ladder! Its sturdy... and strong... and helps me climb... great idea!

(Constance lowers ladder. T climbs out of pit)

“wow! We did it!”

(Constance jumps up and down)

“thank you so much Constance! You’re the best caravan camel ever! And look... look over there!! *(points offstage)* its our caravan!!! We found them. Lets catch up.” *(begins to run offstage...)*

(constance grunts. T slows down)

“yes of course... lets take the ladder... just in case!” *(Constance and T carry ladder offstage)*

SCRIPT – VERSION 2 (WITH HELPERS)

T – (walks onstage) “wow! What a cool walking trail! I think I’ll go explore it.” (walks around briefly onstage. Notices sign on the left side of stage)

“What’s this? A sign? What does it say?” (looks closely)

“Danger” (looks around) well the trail doesn’t look dangerous. It should be alright.” (continues walking around. Notices sign on right of stage)

“another sign? What does this one say? (looks closely) Hmmm....Look out for pits... (shrugs) I’m sure it will be fine... (walks around briefly onstage) See? There’s nothing to worry about.”

“There’s no pits any...WHERE AAAAAAAAHHHH.” (pretend to fall offstage move to a lower part on the ground, or you can sit on the ground/be on your knees. You should be lower than the other actors at this point)

“Oh no! I’ve fallen. (tries to climb) oh no! I can’t get out. Oh no! if ONLY something had warned me about the hazards on this trail!!! What will I do? (tries to jump) its too steep and too deep. I’m stuck!”

(calls out) “Help! Help! Is anybody there? Can anyone hear me?”

H1 – (walks onstage)

T – “Hello? Hey! Can you hear me?”

H1 – (looks around and scratches head)

T – “Down here! I’m in the pit below you!”


H1 – (walks to the “edge” of the pit and looks down.)

H1 – “Oh hello Mister/Miss. Whatchya doing down there?”

T – “I was walking this trail and I fell. Can you help?”

H1 – “Have you tried climbing out yet?”

T – “I have but... (tries to climb) it’s too steep and too deep.”



H1 – “hmmm... I’ve got just the thing to get you out of there. (pulls out gloves from pockets and tosses them down) These are one of a kind, deluxe super durable climbing gloves. Give them a try!”

T – “Ok they look really strong. (puts gloves on and tries to climb out again) (huffs and puffs) The walls are too slippery.” (phew!)

H2 – (Walks onstage)

H1 – “Hey! Can you help? This person’s stuck in one of the pits!”

H2 – “Oh no! This trail is full of pits!”

H1 – “I know! Do you have anything that could help him/her?”

H2 – “hmmmm (pats pockets and pulls out hand shovel) aha! Maybe this will help.”

H2 – (calls down to T) “Hey! Can you use this? (tosses hand shovel into “pit”) try digging yourself a mountain of dirt. it will lift you up higher and then you can climb out!”

T – “A shovel? This might work! (attempts to dig with shovel... strains and taps shovel on the hard ground. Drops shovel) I can’t dig through; the ground is too hard! Do you have any other ideas?”

H1 and H2 – (scratching their head thinking) “hmmmmmm....”

H3 – (comes onstage and walks up to H1 and H2) “Hi everyone. What are you looking at?”

H1 and H2 – (say together) – “There’s someone stuck in this pit.”

H3 – “Oh no! this trail is full of pits!”

H1, H2 and T – “We know!”

H1 – We Were trying to help. Do you have any ideas?

H3 – “Hmmmmmm (pats pockets and pulls out some yarn) aha! Maybe this will work.


H3 – (calls into hole) “Hey mister/miss. Can you hold on to this?” (tosses end of yarn into pit)

T – “is... is that a piece of yarn?”

H3 – “Yep! We’ll try to pull you out. Grab on!”

T – “ummm... are you sure this is going to hold me?”

H3 – “Sure it will.”



T – *(doubtfully)* “ok... if you say so...”
(grabs hold of the yarn)

H3 – “Come on everyone lets pull. *(H1, H2 and H3 grab other end of yarn and try to pull)* Heave ho *(pull)* heave ho *(pull)*”

T – *(stands on tiptoes)* “hey!!! I think it’s working!”

H1 H2 and H3 – “almost there! HEAVE HO!!” *(on third pull snap the yarn in two. Everyone falls backwards)*

T – “So close! But... I’m still stuck. Oh dear. Do you have any other suggestions?”

H1 – “hmm, gloves didn’t work to help with climbing... but what if there was something that could be climbed?”

H2 – “and a shovel didn’t help with digging a mound for height, but what if we could find something that lifted someone higher?”

H3 – “and the yarn wasn’t sturdy or strong enough to pull him/her out, but what if we found something that could support a person?”

H1, H2, H3 – “HMMMMMMmmmm *(thinking a moment. All three say at the same time)* WE NEED A LADDER!” *(go offstage to get ladder, and carry it back)*

H1 – “we got you a ladder! It will help you climb”

H2 – “and help you reach the top of the pit!”

H3 – “and its sturdy and strong!”

T – “A ladder? Are you sure it will work?”

(H1 H2 H3) – “Yes! Here it comes *(lower ladder down to T. T climbs out. Everyone cheers)*”

T – “Wow! Thank you SO SO much for all your help!”

H1 – “You’re welcome!”

H2 – “Any time!”

H3 – “We’re glad we could help. Say, do you want to walk the trail along with us this time?”

T – “Sure! That would be great! Maybe with all 4 of us looking, we’ll be able to avoid all those pesky pitfalls! Oh.... *(sheepishly)* Lets take the ladder... just in case.”

(All 4 people pick up the ladder and carry it offstage)

SKIT SUMMARY (to be shared after skit performance)

I'm glad our traveler was able to get out of that pit, Aren't you? This simple story introduces us to an important part of our service today. Our traveler could not climb out of the pit themselves using gloves, nor could he/she dig him/herself out. When a weaker thread of yarn was used, it broke. The only thing that DID help was a strong, sturdy ladder.

In the story of Jacob, God gives him a dream of a ladder with angels going up and coming down from the ladder. This dream came with a promise. *"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you"* (Gen 28:15) God was reminding Jacob of the covenant he had given to him, his father Isaac, and his grandfather Abraham.

You'll hear the word **COVENANT** a lot today! That is the word used for God's forever promise. God promised that if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would follow Him, and keep his commands, He would always be with them. He would be their God and they would be His people.

Jacob wasn't perfect, and he didn't always keep God's commands. We're going to see that he goes through a lot of mistakes and challenges. But even though Jacob is unfaithful at times, God continues to be faithful to him. Even more than that, God gave his covenant to bless Jacob and his family for generations and generations by making a way for them to be forgiven when they did make mistakes.

This promise isn't just for Jacob. We are going to learn how God has also made a way for us. And his covenant is still a part of our generation today. We will be reminded that God's words are sturdy and true. He is fiercely faithful, and He will ALWAYS keep his promises.

Ahead of time cue up Song 2: Fiercely Faithful

SONG 2: FIERCELY FAITHFUL



SERMON PART 1: JACOB'S BIG LIE

Supplies: bandanas for blindfolds.

Setup:

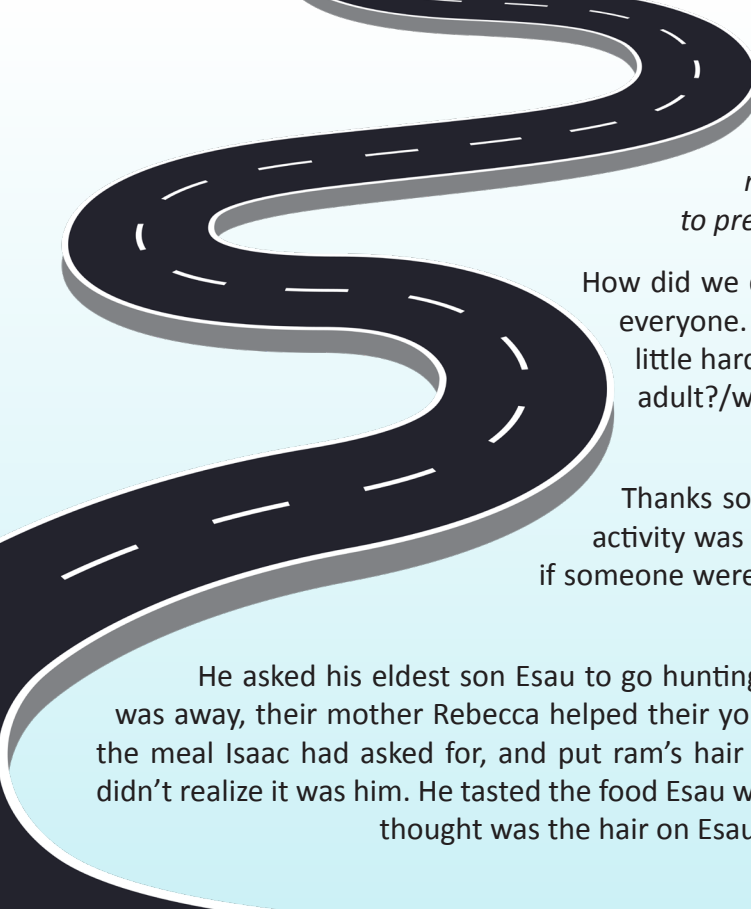
1. Choose 3 children and their 3 adults (parent, grandparent, guardian). You can also add 3 other random adults such as pastor, elders, deacons, etc.
2. Give your 3 child volunteers blindfolds.
3. Instruct your adults to line up onstage when prompted.
4. Explain the activity ahead of time. Each child will be feeling the hands of the adults. They will try to find their adult only by touching each person's hand. They will stand by the person they think is their adult.

How good are you at telling people apart? Can you recognize someone you love by just the sound of their voice? How about only by touch? Close your eyes tight and feel your own hands. Are they different than another person's hands? Do they have anything unique about them? Are your fingers longer or shorter? Is your hand rough or smooth? Do you have any scars or bumps? How long are your nails? What do the lines on the front of your hand feel like? Can you feel your fingerprints?

That's how Jacob's and Esau's father Isaac used to tell his two sons apart. As he got older, he lost his vision, and many of his other senses. So, he would ask them to come up to him and he would feel their hands, arms, and neck. Esau was hairy, and Jacob was smooth.

It was tradition back then for a father to bless his sons in his old age before he died. The time of that blessing was coming closer, but Jacob knew that Esau was Isaac's favorite son, and it was very possible that Esau would get the bigger blessing. So, he and their mother Rebecca came up with a plan. They were going to trick his father into thinking that **he** was Esau.

Let's have our volunteers come up. We're going to have some grownups line up here in the front. Let's see if our volunteers can recognize their family members by feeling their hands (*blindfold volunteers*,



mix up the adults, then have the volunteers feel the hands of each adult and choose one they think is their family member. You may need someone to help guide each volunteer to prevent tripping. When everyone is ready, continue the sermon)

How did we do? Let's take a look! *(Pause to wait for reaction)* Great job everyone. Some of you were able to find your adult. Others found it a little harder. Let's ask our volunteers, what helped you recognize your adult?/what made it hard for you to find your adult? *(Ask the children for their answer)*

Thanks so much everyone for all your help! *(Dismiss volunteers)* That activity was hard, with no tricks at all. But imagine how hard it would be if someone were pretending to be the person you were trying to find. That's what happened to Isaac.

He asked his eldest son Esau to go hunting and cook his favorite meal before his blessing. While Esau was away, their mother Rebecca helped their youngest son Jacob dress in his brother's clothing, she cooked the meal Isaac had asked for, and put ram's hair on his arms and neck. Jacob came to his father, but Isaac didn't realize it was him. He tasted the food Esau would have prepared, smelled Esau's clothes, and felt what he thought was the hair on Esau's hands and neck. So, he blessed Jacob thinking it was Esau.

It wasn't until Esau came later that he realized what had happened. You can read it in Genesis 27:30-36

Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of his father Isaac, that his brother Esau came in from his hunting. Then he also made a delicious meal and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me." His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." Then Isaac [n]trembled violently, and said, "Who then was he who hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate from all of it before you came, and blessed him?"

Both Isaac and Esau wept bitterly, for they knew that Jacob had lied to them. He had stolen what wasn't his. What a terrible day that must have been for the entire family. Isaac had to face the consequences of his actions. He had broken his father's heart and betrayed his brother. His mother had to send him away. She told him "stay with your uncle for a while to give your brother time to cool his anger"

Sadly, Jacob never saw his mother or father again. They died before he could return. Jacob left his family broken and brokenhearted. **But Jacob's story doesn't end in this sad place!** God was about to do a mighty work in Jacob's life. He was about to reveal to Jacob, how he would continue to remain faithful to his promises.

PART 2 – GOD DREAM PROMISE



Supplies:

Pipe Cleaners

plastic baggies

angel costume (*white gown or homemade wings*)

Large Stone (we used a cinderblock)

Note: if you have a larger congregation, you will want to make multiple tissue box altars.

Setup

1. Cut your pipe cleaners. Cut pipe cleaners in half for the sides of the ladder. Cut pipe cleaners in quarters for rungs of the ladder. Place 2 longer pieces and 4 short pieces in each plastic bag. Prepare one baggie for each member of the congregation (or one per family)
2. Place ladder from skit at the center of the stage. Place large stone beside the ladder
3. You will have two children participating. One will play Jacob, and one will play an angel. Help them know when to come onstage and what to do when it is their turn. (Instructions below)

In order to get safely to his uncle Laban's home, Jacob had to travel almost 500 miles through dangerous lands that had wild animals, robbers, and rough terrain. He left so quickly that he didn't even have a pillow to lay down his head.

The Bible tells us that when he was finally able to rest, he was so tired that he used a stone as a pillow. (*Child holding stone comes onstage, lays down with head on stone as a pillow. Ask the child, "how does your pillow feel?" And let the child answer. After answering, the child may sit up*)

A stone pillow is definitely not comfortable! But it was all Jacob had at the time. That night, God gave Jacob a special dream of a ladder (*point to ladder onstage*) This ladder was so tall that it went from earth, all the way to heaven. On that ladder, there were angels coming up and going down (*child in angel costume climbs on first rung of ladder sits and waves*)

God spoke to Jacob in that dream. Let's look at what God said in Genesis 28:13 and 15. (ICB)

The Lord said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, your grandfather. And I am the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are now sleeping. ¹⁵ I am with you, and I will protect you everywhere you go. And I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Jacob knew when he woke that God had been with him. this is what Jacob said *(child playing Jacob will shout excitedly)* “The Lord Is Here! He is in this place and I didn’t even know it”

Jacob wanted to remember the promise from his dream, so he took the stone he had used as a pillow, stood it up on its end like a pillar, and poured olive oil on the top as an offering.

(child playing Jacob will stand stone upright. Child playing Jacob and angel may then walk offstage)

Given all of the events that had passed, Jacob likely had a lot of thinking to do on this journey. Jacob must have been feeling very anxious about his situation. But God stepped in to reassure Jacob that He was still with him!

First, he reminded Jacob that he was the same God his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham had worshipped. Then he gave Jacob the same covenant promise he had given to his father and grandfather,

“You and your family will be my people, and I will be your God. I will bless you and be with you.”

God was revealing to Jacob something that happens all the time: Despite anything that we might do, God will always be at work, making a way for us to stay connected with him. Although Jacob didn’t deserve it, God sent him a special message of encouragement directly from him.

This reassurance is good news to us, who may find ourselves making mistakes or going through times that are scary. God has promised to be faithful to those who follow him. He reaches out to us. He forgives us, provides for us, and sustains us.

Ahead of time cue up Song 3: Comfort

SONG 3 – COMFORT

(After story of Jacob’s Ladder)



PRAYER TIME – PIPE CLEANER LADDERS

CHILD PRESENTER 1 (INTRO AND ENDING)

Today we will also be remembering God’s promise in our prayer time. *(Hand out bags with pipe cleaner pieces. Give one to each person)*

Each of you will receive a bag with the parts to make a ladder. The two longer pipe cleaners are for the sides of the ladder, and the four short pieces are for the rungs *(hold completed pipe cleaner ladder up for everyone to see you may also put a picture of the ladder up on a screen)* .

The Bible tells us that God hears us when we call out to him: in John 5:14 it says “This is the confidence we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he will hears us and answer. Let’s build our ladders together as we pray and call out to God.”

CHILD PRESENTER 2 (ASK FOR HELP)

Twist your first rung onto your ladder *(demonstrate)*

As you do this, think of something that you might need help with. Maybe you need help with something you need to do, maybe you need help finding something that is lost, or you need help making a choice. Take a moment to talk to God about how you need help.

I’ll give you time to pray by yourself or with your family, then we will pray together. *(Pause and allow time before praying. You may prepare a prayer yourself or use the following prayer)*

“God we call out to you today asking for help. We pray that you would take care of us in our time of need. Thank you for answering according to your will, Amen.”

CHILD PRESENTER 3 (SHARE YOUR FEELINGS)

Twist your second rung onto your ladder. As you do this, think of how you are feeling. Maybe you are very happy to be here today. Maybe you are feeling sad or missing someone. Maybe you are feeling angry because something has hurt you. However you feel, take a moment to talk to God about those feelings. Speak to him honestly. I’ll give you time to pray by yourself or with your family, then we will pray together. *(Pause and allow time before praying. You may prepare a prayer yourself or use the following prayer).*

God we call out to you today sharing the feelings that are on our heart. We pray that you comfort us when we are sad, rejoice with us when we are happy, give us peace when we are afraid. Thank you for knowing and hearing all of our feelings, Amen.



CHILD PRESENTER 4 (PRAY A BLESSING)

Twist your third rung onto your ladder. As you do this, think of someone whom you care about.

Maybe you are thinking of someone in your family.

Maybe you are thinking of a friend.

Maybe you are thinking of a leader.

Maybe you know someone who is sick and needs healing.

Maybe you know someone who may need encouragement. Take a moment to ask a blessing for that person.

I'll give you time to pray by yourself or with your family, then we will pray together.

(Pause and allow time before praying. You may prepare a prayer yourself or use the following prayer)

“God, we call out to you today to pray for those whom we care about. We pray that you would heal those who are ill, protect those whom we love. And be with those who need you the most. Thank you for taking care of them. Amen.”

CHILD PRESENTER 5 (GRATITUDES AND PRAISES)

Twist your fourth rung onto your ladder. As you do this, think of everything you are grateful for. Maybe you are thankful for God's blessings, Maybe God helped you through something challenging, Maybe you are thankful that God has given you a safe home, Maybe you are thankful for your health. Take a moment to thank God for all that you are thinking of.

(Pause and allow time before praying. You may prepare a prayer yourself or use the following prayer)

“God we call out to you today to thank you. We thank you for all you have given us. We thank you for taking care of us. We thank you for loving us. You are an awesome, wonderful, amazing God. We praise you today. Amen.”

CHILD PRESENTER 1 (INTRO AND ENDING)

After Jacob lifted the stone and poured oil on it to remember what God had done, He named the place Bethel. Bethel means house of God. Jacob understood that God was now with him, so Jacob continued on his journey, in full confidence of God's faithfulness.

Take your prayer ladder with you. You can put it in your bible or place it in your pocket, and keep it as a reminder. God is always with you on your journey. He hears your prayers and will be with you wherever you go.

SERMON PART 3- LABAN'S LABOR

Jacob went to live with his Uncle Laban for 20 long years. He agreed to work for him as a shepherd, but Laban kept changing the rules.

First, he agreed to allow Jacob to marry his youngest daughter Rachel if he worked for 7 years. When those 7 years passed, Laban tricked Jacob, telling him that his eldest daughter Leah had to be married first. Then he asked Jacob to work another 7 years to marry Rachel. Jacob's family continued to grow. Before long he had 13 children! Jacob had been planning to move away, but Laban saw that God was blessing Jacob's work. He didn't want Jacob to leave, so he changed the rules a third time. The story is found in Genesis 30 starting at verse 27. Let's read some of it together:

Laban said to him, "If I have pleased you, please stay. I know the Lord has blessed me because of you. Tell me what I should pay you, and I will give it to you."

Jacob asked that he be allowed to keep certain sheep from Laban's herds as payment. (*hand out sorting sheep cards*)

Each of you have received your own herd of sheep. You have white sheep, speckled sheep, striped sheep, and black sheep. Turn your sheep over and mix them up. I will pretend to be Laban and you will pretend to be Jacob.

Put all your sheep face down. Then flip them over one at a time. If you find a sheep that is speckled, you may keep that sheep. That will be your wages (*give time for families to find speckled sheep*)

Supplies:

Animal Sort Cards (*see handout= 1 for each family*)

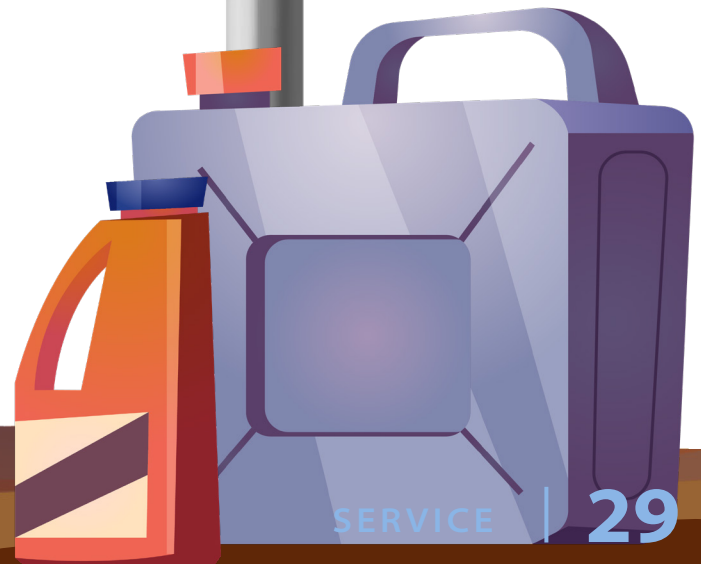
Altar Tissue Boxes (*see photo*)

Red and orange tissue paper

Tissue box decorated as stone.

Setup:

1. Place altar boxes at the front of the church. If you have a large congregation, place the boxes in multiple locations.
2. Give each family a set of sorting cards.



Hmm.... I see that you are getting far too many speckled sheep! Put all the sheep face down again. This time, you can keep any of the sheep that are striped. That will be your wages instead *(give time for families to find striped sheep)*

Hmm... now you have far too many striped sheep! Put all the sheep face down again. This time, you can only keep the black sheep! That will be your wages instead *(give time for families to find black sheep)*

Hmm... now you have too many black sheep! Put all the sheep face down again. This time you can only keep one striped sheep, one spotted sheep and one black sheep. That will be your wages instead *(give time for families to find one of each card)*

How is your sheep sorting going? It's hard to collect the sheep when the rules keep changing. Laban changed the rules of Jacob's wages not once, not twice, not three times, but 10 times! Imagine how hard it must have been to be deceived that many times after working with all your might!

God noticed what was happening, so he gave Jacob another dream. He instructed Jacob to return to his homeland, then reminded Jacob of the promise he had given him at Bethel. "I will be with you. I will be your God and you will be my people"

Jacob was worried Laban would not allow him to leave, so he secretly ran away with his family. Laban caught up with him seven days later. Although he was very angry with Jacob, God warned Laban not to harm him in any way. Laban and Jacob built an altar together, and there agreed to leave one another in peace.

Their prayer is found in Genesis 31:49 -

"May the LORD keep watch between you and me, while we are absent one from another. There they built an altar and burnt a sacrifice on it,"

Maybe there is something you would like to share that has been difficult for you to go through. Maybe someone has hurt your feelings, or something has happened that has been unfair.

Maybe you are facing a big change, like Jacob was.

God understands these things, and he promises to give you peace when you go through them. Choose one of your sheep cards, think about where you may need peace, and bring the card up and place it in the altars up front. You may even use a pen or pencil to write on your card.

(play soft music while congregation places sheep cards in the altars, then say a prayer over the altars. You may say your own prayer or use the example)

Lets pray together.

"God, we pray that you would provide us with peace when we come to times of trouble. We pray that you would watch over us and care for all our needs. Amen."

After making this promise together, the two families had a meal and Laban kissed his family goodbye and giving them his blessing. Both Laban and Jacob recognized God at work. For years, people called that place "Mizpah" which means the place of blessing. What could have been a very dangerous situation, God changed to be a moment of peace.

SERMON PART 4 - WRESTLING WITH GOD



The next part of Jacob's story includes the greatest wrestling match of all time! But before I tell you about Jacob's match, let's have one of our own!

Each of you choose a partner. When I say go, lock fingers like this and try to thumb wrestle. We will time you for 35 seconds. Ready... Set... Go! *(Allow time for thumb wrestling)*

Were any of you able to pin your partner's thumb? Were any of you wrestling with someone who was much bigger or smaller? What would it be like if you were to wrestle like this all night long? Whew!

Jacob's wrestling match was very different from yours, **because he was wrestling with God himself!**

It happened when Jacob was on the move again. He was now on his way home from Mizpah. At Uncle Laban's house he had acquired great wealth, but was still afraid to face his past. Remember, he had lied to his brother and father, stealing his

brother's blessing from him. When he last saw his brother Esau, his brother had been so angry ... so angry Esau wanted to kill him!

Jacob had a plan. While travelling, he sent scouts to see if his brother was near. They returned and told him that Esau was going to meet him with 400 men. Jacob wanted to soften Esau's anger, so he sent a large gift of riches: camels, sheep, cows, and donkeys ahead to his brother. Then Jacob divided his family into two groups. He thought that if one group was captured, the other could escape.

Jacob stayed behind as night fell. While he was alone someone appeared and wrestled with Jacob until morning. He even touched Jacob's hip socket and made it fall out of joint.

Still, Jacob wrestled on. The Man said, "Let me go!"

Jacob, who probably knew by now **Who** he was wrestling with replied, "Not until You bless me!"

The Man asked, "What is your name?"

"Jacob."

The Man replied, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel!"

In the morning Jacob limped across the river and then moved to the front of the family and possessions. He was a changed man! Jacob met Esau first, before everyone else. Esau **ran** to Jacob and they both wept, kissed, and hugged! Jacob and his family were restored. He was finally home.

For the rest of his life, Jacob walked with that same limp, and he carried the name Israel with him as a forever promise that he had wrestled with God, lived and received his blessing.

Ahead of time cue up Song 1: Walking by Faith.

SONG 4: NAMES

SERMON PART 5 - CHRIST OF THE COVENANT

CHILD PRESENTER

After wrestling with God, Jacob was reminded of God's covenant promise. His family would be God's people and he would be their God. He would always be with them. This promise went from generation to generation.

First it was with Abraham, then with Isaac, then with Jacob and all of Jacobs children, grandchildren, and great great grandchildren.

If you follow the full story of Jacob's family in the Bible, you find out that

an entire nation came from him. They were named the nation of Israel, the same name that God gave to Jacob.

But why is that important to Us?

Because we have inherited the same promise that Jacob and his family was given. God can be our God, and we can be his people. He will be with us and he will bless us if we follow Him.

Do you remember the story of the ladder in Jacob's dream? That ladder was meant to show how God would make a way for Jacob to be with him.

What is it that connects us to God now? *(fold a paper airplane)*

Maybe its an airplane that could fly us around. *(move airplane around as if its flying)*

How far could an airplane go? Do you think it could take us to be with God? No... I don't think so.

Maybe we need something more powerful. *(tear paper and show rocket)* How about a rocket? How far could we go? Do you think we could reach God with one?

(3...2...1... blastoff! Move rocket as if it is taking off into the sky) No, a rocket would not be strong enough either.

I think we would need something even more powerful than a ladder, more powerful than a plane, and more powerful than a rocket.

(open up the cross) In John 14:6 Jesus said He is the way, the truth and the life, and those who come to God must go through him.

Jesus died on a wooden cross shaped like this.

Long ago, the cross was a form of punishment for the worst of criminals, but Jesus wasn't a criminal. He chose to come live on earth to show us the truth. While he was here, he never once sinned. Sin is what causes us to be separated from God. It is all that is evil and wrong in the world.

The Bible tells us in Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.

When Jesus was on the cross, he took all of the world's sins on himself, so that we no longer have to be separated from God. He took the penalty of death for us.

The Bible tells us in 1 John 1:9 that

"If we confess our sins, he is FAITHFUL and righteous so that he will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

When we believe and accept that he died for our sins we may always ask for forgiveness. God will be faithful taking away those sins.

Jacob was not a perfect man. We saw that God's faithfulness was with him, and that he changed because of God's love. He lied and stole from his family, **but God forgave him**. He ran away all alone, **but God was with him**. He was cheated by his uncle, **but God provided for him**. He wrestled with his past, **But God gave him a new name**.

Through it all God's promise never faded. "I will be with you wherever you go. I will be your God you will be my people if you follow me"

That is the same promise of the Cross (*have 4 children hold up the letters torn from the pieces of paper. It should spell "LIFE"*)

We are not perfect, **but God is**. We may sin **but God forgives us**. There may be times where we are all alone, **but God will be with us**. We may go through times where we are cheated by others, **but God will provide for us**, We may have made mistakes in our past, **but God gives us new LIFE**.

God and Jesus is the way... the truth and the LIFE.

The same God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all of Jacob's family is the same God we worship today!

I wonder friends and family; will you choose to say YES to Jesus? Will you be forever changed by God's faithfulness? Will you be given new life today and every day? Would you be willing to share his love?

Ahead of time cue up Song 1: Walking by Faith.

SONG 5 - JESUS THE ONE

CLOSING BY PASTOR

Ahead of time cue up Song 1: Walking by Faith.

SONG 6 : JESUS THE ONE

