

Jacob's Flocks

Genesis 30:25-43; 31:1-55

Level C | Lesson 5 | Teacher Overview



Laban said, “What shall I give you?” And Jacob said... “If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks: Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and these shall be my wages.

Genesis 30:31-32

For Teachers

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

Activity Options

1. Talk About It
2. Illustration: Jacob and His Flocks
3. Take Action: Respecting Boundaries
4. Look Closer: Dreams and Visions

Talk About It

Reading: Genesis 30: 25-43; Genesis 31:1-55

Jacob wanted to leave Laban after Joseph was born but Laban asked him to stay and agreed to give him the speckled, spotted and streaked livestock as wages. Jacob became a wealthy man by placing sticks with the bark peeled off in the drinking troughs in front of the strong animals. They gave birth to speckled, spotted and streaked babies, which belonged to Jacob. Laban's sons became upset at Jacob's increasing wealth. The Lord came to Jacob in a dream, telling him to go home. Jacob and his family left while Laban was away shearing sheep. When Laban discovered it, he chased Jacob and caught up with him. Laban and Jacob set up a boundary pillar as a witness between them.

Note: Several stories are included in this week's readings. Select discussion questions that talk about what you plan to focus on with the children.

1. What does it mean to be rich? (draw out ideas about different kinds of riches: money, possessions, a happy family, good friends, knowledge, truths from the Word, etc.)
2. Jacob became rich. What were Jacob's riches? (animals paid as wages by Laban—streaked, spotted and speckled sheep and goats. Jacob's family was nomadic and lived in tents. The animals were a vital source of food and clothing.)
3. Which animals were stronger—Jacob's streaked and spotted animals, or Laban's animals? (Jacob's—he put sticks with peeled bark in the troughs when the strongest animals drank, and the animals had speckled and spotted young.)
4. Why did Jacob leave Laban? (the Lord told him to go in a dream)
5. Have you ever tried to sneak away from someone? What was it like?
6. Why did Jacob sneak away from Laban? (he was worried Laban would stop him)
7. Was Jacob right? Give evidence to support your view. (Laban went after Jacob when he found out)
8. What did Laban ask about? (He was especially offended that his household gods—small statues or idols—that were missing. Laban would have used these images to get answers from God (see *Arcana Coelestia* 4111:5).)
9. Who had taken them? (Rachel) Did Laban find them? (No, Rachel sat on them when Laban searched her tent and successfully hid them from Laban.)
10. What is a boundary? (draw out ideas of boundaries—sports (out of bounds), behavioral (quiet in a library), personal space (keep your hands to yourself), fences (around personal property, national boundaries))
11. What promise did Jacob and Laban make? What did Jacob and the others build as a boundary to remember this promise? (a heap of stones; stones stand for true ideas)
12. How can boundaries protect us? What does “crossing a boundary” mean?

Take Action: Respecting Boundaries

At a Glance:

This activity explores boundaries in our lives and ways in which we might remove or cross others' boundaries. Students will be divided into pairs. Each pair will be given a set of cards to act out and demonstrate a boundary being crossed. After a few moments of acting, the teacher will say "freeze". The actors will freeze. The teacher will then "interview" them (pretending to hold a microphone) where they are standing to find out what is going on inside their minds. Discuss the implications of the boundary-crossing with the class after each incident.



Teacher Background:

Following the Lord's instructions to leave Laban, Jacob took off with his family and possessions in the middle of the night. Three days later Laban took off in pursuit after him. To settle their quarrel Jacob suggested that they set up a heap of stones as a boundary marker and witness between them. Neither of them was to cross the boundary and get close to each other. The Old Testament states "you shall not remove your brother's landmark" (Deuteronomy 19:14). A landmark was an object that marked the edge of a person's property. This is a command to respect others' boundaries.

Supplies Needed:

- activity cards

Preparation:

- Cut cards apart.
- Choose scenarios that will work for your group.

Directions:

1. What are personal boundaries?
2. Have you ever been upset because someone crossed your boundaries?
3. Laban and Jacob set up a boundary between them—it was a pillar or heap of stones. Their relationship was protected by this boundary.
4. The Ten Commandments are boundaries of truth that protect our spiritual lives.

Take Action: Respecting Boundaries continued

5. There is a law in the Old Testament that states “you shall not remove your brother’s landmark” (Deuteronomy 19:14). Literally this law prohibited people from removing the boundary stones that were set up. Spiritually it involves not violating spiritual boundaries that could cause harm.
6. Today’s activity explores many different kinds of boundaries. You will be divided into pairs. Each pair will act out two sides of a boundary that is being tested. Once we have the general picture, I will call out “freeze.” You will freeze where you are.
7. I will then come and interview you one at a time and ask what you are thinking.
8. We will then discuss the situation as a group and identify the boundary that is being tested and the implications of crossing the boundary.

Boundary Freeze Cards

<p>A1 GIRL You are angry because your friend's obnoxious brother just said something nasty to you. You text your friend and tell her you think her brother is stupid.</p>	<p>A2 GIRL You are shocked. You and your younger brother are close to each other, although other people don't like him. You feel protective of him. Your friend has just texted you to say she thinks your brother is stupid.</p>
<p>B1 BOY You are cramped because you are forced to sit in a row of chairs that are too close together, along with other students your age. You push the person sitting next to you over and sit on part of their chair.</p>	<p>B2 BOY You are feeling cramped by sitting close to others in a row of small chairs. The person sitting next to you suddenly shoves into you, leaving you with nowhere to sit.</p>
<p>C1 GIRL/BOY You are sitting with a friend in a crowded bus. You leave your backpack and jacket on the seat while you get up to go and talk to a friend for a minute. When you come back, someone else is sitting in your seat.</p>	<p>C2 GIRL/BOY There are not enough seats on the bus. You have had to stand for most of the journey. You see a seat that nobody is sitting in with a backpack and jacket on it. You move the stuff to the floor and sit down. The person returns.</p>
<p>D1 EVIL SPIRIT A hungry person sees food on a table. It is not his/hers. You are a voice in their mind telling him/her that it's fine to take it. Give reasons to support this idea.</p>	<p>D2 GOOD SPIRIT A hungry person sees good food on a table. It is not his/hers. You are a voice in that person's mind saying that he/she should not take the food without asking. You believe it is stealing. Give reasons to support this idea.</p>

<p>E1 GIRL You cannot find the right clothes to wear. Your sister has a lot of clothes you like. You go to her closet and start trying on outfits.</p>	<p>E2 GIRL Wearing nice clothes is important to you. You work hard, buy your own clothes and take good care of them. You don't like it when your sister comes and helps herself. She's careless and has spoiled some of your favorite things in the past.</p>
<p>F1 SON You need black socks to match your outfit. You have none. You go to your father's drawer to borrow his.</p>	<p>F2 FATHER You need black socks for work each day. You plan ahead and take care of your laundry so that you always have the socks you need. You are annoyed when your son takes them, because he doesn't return them and leaves you with no socks for work.</p>
<p>G1 GIRL/BOY You want to go to a party with friends. Everyone is going. Your parents have said you are not allowed to go. They are concerned about how far away it is, who will be driving, whether adults will be there, etc. You think they should trust you.</p>	<p>G2 FATHER/MOTHER Your son/daughter wants to go to a party with friends. You are concerned about both the party and person who will be driving. You do not give permission for your son/daughter to go out of concern for their safety.</p>
<p>H1 STUDENT A teacher has given you a low grade on your essay. You think it's unfair. You think he/she is punishing you because you skipped class to get the assignment finished. You talk to the teacher.</p>	<p>H2 TEACHER A student has submitted an essay late. It was due at the start of class—and the student was not even there. He/she has done a hurried job that didn't meet your expectations. He/she has come to talk to you about the grade.</p>
<p>J1 BOY/GIRL You are not sure what to do. A friend of yours keeps telling you to skip school. He/she wants you to go to a concert in town with him/her. The concert sounds like fun, but you like school and really don't want to do this because you care about doing well.</p>	<p>J2 BOY/GIRL You hate school. Your favorite band is coming to town. You really want to see them, but the concert is during school hours. You don't want to go by yourself, so you are looking for someone who will go with you.</p>

<p>K1 BOY/GIRL You are watching a great movie on TV. An advertisement interrupts the movie. You find the advertisement demeaning and insulting to the body the Lord gave you. Should you watch, turn the sound down, leave the room, or stop watching the movie?</p>	<p>K2 TV ADVERTISEMENT You are a TV actor advertising a product that some may find insulting and upsetting, e.g. a product for bad breath, skin care, weight loss, etc.</p>
<p>L1 BOY/GIRL You meet someone new. You ask a series of very personal questions about his/her family.</p>	<p>L2 BOY/GIRL You have recently moved because your mother died. You are a shy person and getting to know new people is hard for you. Questions about your family are especially difficult to answer.</p>
<p>M1 BOY/GIRL You are sitting in a class. You have not silenced your mobile phone and it goes off in the middle of class.</p>	<p>M2 TEACHER You have a “no mobile phone” policy in your classroom. Just as you are explaining a difficult concept, a student’s mobile phone rings. You lose your train of thought and the class all turns to look.</p>
<p>P1 BOY/GIRL You struggle with being late for events even when you try to be on time. Your friends have invited you to join them for a movie and once again you are late. Everyone missed the trailers.</p>	<p>P2 BOY/GIRL You are always on time. You hate it when people are late. It’s so inconsiderate. You have invited a friend to watch a movie and told him/her how important it is to be on time. He/she is late. You have not missed the movie, but you did miss the trailers.</p>
<p>Q1 BOY/GIRL You are really angry about something. You start shouting at friends/family.</p>	<p>Q2 BOY/GIRL You are sitting quietly when someone starts shouting at you for no reason.</p>

Look Closer: Visions and Dreams

At a Glance:

Students will look at a variety of dreams in the Word and reflect on the part both night-time and waking dreams can have in our lives.



Teacher Background:

Jacob was directed by the Lord to leave his father-in-law Laban and return to his family in a dream. His dream started a long chain of events and a long journey. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that there are three types of dream that can be significant: prophetic dreams (dreams in the Word that take place during sleep and telling a person what will happen or what he/she ought to do), visions (dream-like spiritual experiences that the Lord used for instruction), and the dreams people have while they sleep today.

Unlike prophetic dreams in the Word, which came from the Lord through heaven and formed the basis of Divine revelation, our dreams come from spiritual companions who are with us. Some have significance and some are more or less pure fantasy. We also talk about another kind of dream which is a personal dream, hope or vision for our future. We can envision ourselves being better people, helping our community or the world. Dreams like this are an important part of our spiritual lives, enabling us to see ourselves differently—and so take a new path in life.

Supplies Needed for Each Student:

- *Visions and Dreams* reading page
- *Visions and Dreams in the Word* chart
- Word or Bible

Directions:

1. Would you take action on the basis of a night-time dream? Why or why not?
2. List the ways in which dreams we have for our lives are different from night-time dreams.
3. Distribute *Visions and Dreams* reading page and read aloud with the students.
4. Distribute *Visions and Dreams in the Word* charts. Assign each student a different dream to look up, or pick a few of the dreams to focus on if you have a small group. Have students complete them, using a Word or Bible to find the answers.

Look Closer: Visions and Dreams continued

5. Share answers and discuss.
6. Discuss the following questions:
 - Where do our night time dreams come from? (Spirits who are close to us while we sleep (see Arcana Coelestia 1976).)
 - How are our dreams different from dreams in the Word? (Dreams in the Word came from the Lord, through heaven (see Arcana Coelestia 1976) and are a reliable part of Divine revelation to guide human beings throughout all time.)
 - Can we know for certain if our night-time dreams are from good spirits or evil spirits? (Not necessarily.)
 - Why is dreaming (visualizing the future) important? (It can help us think positively about changes we can make in our lives, and inspire us to act on these ideas.)
 - Is it important to evaluate your dreams (goals) by comparing them to what the Lord teaches us in His Word? Why or why not?
 - Give an example of a true idea that inspires you to change your life and become a better person. You can also give an example of a person who inspires you in a similar way.

Visions and Dreams



Do you have big dreams or goals for your life? Maybe you can imagine a world without poverty, a crime-free city, or a neighborhood without trash. Maybe you can imagine yourself becoming a skilled musician, a successful athlete or providing important help to a friend or someone else in need. Imagination can lift our minds and enable us to visualize new possibilities. But our dreams for our own future will not become a reality until we take action!

In today's story Jacob had a "prophetic" dream that changed the direction of his life. The Lord appeared to him as he slept and said: "Arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family" (Genesis 31:13). On the strength of this, Jacob took his wives and livestock and started a new life, leaving behind the life he had led with his father-in-law Laban.

Unlike the dreams or aspirations we have for our own lives, prophetic dreams occurred while people slept, while visions occurred while people were awake. The Heavenly Doctrine talks about various kinds of dreams and where they come from:

There are three types of dreams. The first type comes from the Lord through heaven. The prophetic dreams in the Word were like this. The second type comes by way of angelic spirits. This was the source of the instructive dreams that members of the Most Ancient Church had. The third type comes by way of the spirits who are close to a person when he is asleep. These too carry spiritual meanings. Delusory (fantasy) dreams however come from a different source (*Arcana Coelestia* 1976).

The night-time dreams we have today are not like the prophetic dreams in the Word. They occur when our conscious mind is resting and are the thoughts and speech of spirits and angels who are with us (*Arcana Coelestia* 6624). We cannot know where our dreams come from with enough certainty to base our lives on them. If we take dreams to be a sign from the Lord that we have to follow, we will tend to stop using our own best judgment.

No one is reformed by miracles and signs, because they compel...it is of the Lord's Divine providence that a person act in freedom in accordance with his reason (*Divine Providence* 130).

The Lord has created the human mind so that it can be lifted up to spiritual life by learning true ideas, and wanting, seeing and starting a new life based on them. If we are willing to let them, true ideas from the Word can shape our minds so that we can begin a new, heavenly life. We can check out our life-dreams in the light of the Word to be sure that it is the Lord is leading us, and not our selfish desires.

Visions and Dreams in the Word

The Word gives many examples of dreams that changed lives. Look up the following verses in the Word to find out who had a vision or dream, and what changed as a result.

Where	Who?	Vision?	Dream?	What was foretold or changed?
Genesis 31:13	Jacob		X	Jacob took his wives, flocks and herds and left Laban.
Genesis 37:5-10				
Genesis 40:9-13				
Genesis 41:15-36				
Numbers 22:23-32				
Daniel 2:29-45				
Luke 1:26-38				
Matthew 2:13				
Revelation 21:10-27				

Visions and Dreams in the Word

Teacher Copy

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Where	Who?	Vision?	Dream?	What was foretold or changed?
Genesis 31:13	Jacob		X	Jacob took his wives, flocks and herds and left Laban.
Genesis 37:5-10	Joseph		X	His brothers hated him and tried to kill him.
Genesis 40:9-13	Butler		X	He was taken from prison and given his job back.
Genesis 41:15-36	Pharaoh		X	Pharaoh was able to prepare for a severe famine.
Numbers 22:23-32	Balaam's donkey	X		The angel talked to Balaam and he blessed the children of Israel instead of cursing them.
Daniel 2:29-45	Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon		X	A series of kingdoms would follow Nebuchadnezzar's until one arose that would destroy the other kingdoms and last forever.*
Luke 1:26-38	Mary	X		Mary was prepared to conceive and bear Jesus.
Matthew 2:13	Joseph		X	Joseph and his family fled to Egypt to protect the baby Lord.
Revelation 21:10-27	John on the Isle of Patmos	X		The Holy City New Jerusalem descended, prophesying the coming of the New Church.

* This dream foretells the history of the Five Churches: Most Ancient Church, Ancient Church, Jewish Church, Christian Church and the New Church.