

Jacob Returns Home

Genesis 33

Level D | Lesson 7 | Teacher Overview



Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men.... Then Jacob crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

Genesis 33:1,3,4

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. Explore: Letting Love Lead
3. Explore: Seeing the Face of God

Talk About It

Reading: Genesis 33

Jacob comes towards Esau, humbly bowing to the ground seven times as he approaches. Esau, rather than being revengefully angry, looks on Jacob with compassion and love. The brothers joyfully embrace. Esau tries to refuse Jacob's gifts, saying that he has plenty, and he blesses Jacob. Esau proposes that they journey together but Jacob lets him go ahead saying that his group will need to travel slowly because of both the children and the flocks. Esau leaves and Jacob travels to Shechem where he buys land, builds a house and sets up an altar.

1. Jacob bowed down seven times before Esau. In what ways might you bow to others, including the Lord? (Hopefully the young people can think of examples of humility e.g. honoring parents, honoring a friend's wish, putting the Lord's laws above your own desires, etc.)
2. Why is humility important? (To go to heaven we must submit ourselves to the Lord's will. Without this we cannot enter heaven. A person who feels above others is ruled by self-love and does not care about what is Divine (see *Arcana Coelestia* 4347).)
3. Jacob bowed down seven times before meeting Esau. What other stories in the Word feature the number seven? (e.g. days of creation (Genesis), seven seals (Revelation), etc.) Numbers in the Word have special meanings. What clues do these examples give about the meaning of the number seven? (Seven means what is holy; a complete state. Jacob bows seven times in complete submission; for us this represents a state in which we are willing to submit everything to the Lord—to truly acknowledge “Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever” (see *Arcana Coelestia* 4347).)
4. What did Jacob see in Esau's face? (the face of God; Genesis 33:10) What qualities of the Lord do you think Jacob saw in Esau? Describe a time when you saw the Lord's face in another person's face.
5. What pleases the Lord? (when we do what He teaches in His Word, e.g. help others, practice honesty, stop before saying something unkind, etc.)
6. Is the Lord ever unhappy with a person? (The Lord loves us so much that “He is not even able to turn His face away from a person and frown upon him” (*True Christian Religion* 56e).)
7. Esau invited Jacob to go forward with him—but Jacob told him to go on ahead. What did this show Esau? (that Jacob put Esau above himself) Give an example of a way in which you can put others first (e.g. let another person have their wish, offer a choice to someone else first, listen instead of speaking, etc.)
8. Jacob put the Lord first in his life by building an altar as soon as he settled. In what ways can you put the Lord first in your life?

Explore:

Letting Love Lead

At a Glance:

Students will read selections from the Heavenly Doctrine describing the appearance of angels and devils and draw a cartoon depicting their spiritual qualities.

Teacher Background:

After years of separation Jacob and Esau are finally reunited. The brothers represent two parts of the human mind—the power of reason and the desire to act.

At the start of life a person tends to think about and love himself. To become heavenly a person must learn true ideas from the Word and then consciously live according to them. As these ideas are willingly put into action the person is in the process of being regenerated or made new by the Lord. They Lord will gradually give the person new motivations that re-structure his or her thinking.

After death people appear to others as a form of what they love. People who love the Lord and others appear in the beautiful form of the marriage of goodness and truth and become angels. People who love themselves and worldly possessions appear in the ugly form of the marriage between selfishness and false thinking.

Supplies Needed for Each Student:

- blank paper
- pen or pencil
- *Angels and Devils* page
- one copy of sample drawings page to show the class

Directions:

1. Read each of the following statements. Ask students to tell you whether each statement is true or false.
 - When we are alive in the natural world we do not necessarily act the way we think. (T)
 - After death, once we go to heaven or hell we will not necessarily act the way we think. (F)
 - After death we will only act the way we think. (T, once a person has left his first state of mind in the life after death—in the world of spirits)
 - After death others will know whether we really believe what we are saying. (T)



Explore: Letting Love Lead continued

2. Today's story about Esau and Jacob pictures a time in our lives when what we believe is truly and honestly reflected in how we act.
3. This story follows a period in Jacob's life when he worked hard for Laban and became a wealthy man. This is similar to the work it takes to learn and live according to what the Lord teaches in His Word. The spiritual "wealth" we gain from this conscious obedience allows the Lord to form a new mental framework in our minds. As we delight in the truth and put it into action in our life, our new will develops and grows. From this new will the Lord gives us a "new understanding." People who choose this path become angels after death.
4. People who choose not to open their minds to higher spiritual thoughts remain in worldly and false ways of thinking. If false thinking goes hand in hand with selfishness or a love for worldly possessions a person is choosing a path that leads to a life in hell after death.
5. Hand out *Angels and Devils* student page. These passages from the Heavenly Doctrine describe the power and beauty of angels and the poverty and distortion of the selfishness of devils.
6. Read the passages. Choose whether you wish to focus on the qualities of angels or devils. Draw a cartoon to illustrate these qualities. Some cartoon examples are included for you to look at.
7. Encourage students to discuss their work and share it with others.



The Form of Angels and Devils

We read that human beings were created in the image of God, according to His likeness (Genesis 1:26-27)...A likeness and image of God is clearly apparent in angels, for love shines from within in their faces, and wisdom in their beauty, beauty being the outward expression of their love (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 358).

For a person to be in the form of heaven he must be taught the laws of Divine order from the Word. To the extent that a person knows and lives according to these because it is the Lord's will, his internal person is opened and the order of heaven is formed there. When the Lord forms a person anew (regenerates him), He arranges all things in him in accordance with order or into the form of heaven (see *Heaven and Hell* 202).

Angels are given clothes according to their intelligence or the Divine truth they have received from the Lord. The garments of some angels blaze as if with flame and those of others glisten as if with light. Some have garments that are a radiant white and others have garments of various colors (see *Heaven and Hell* 179).

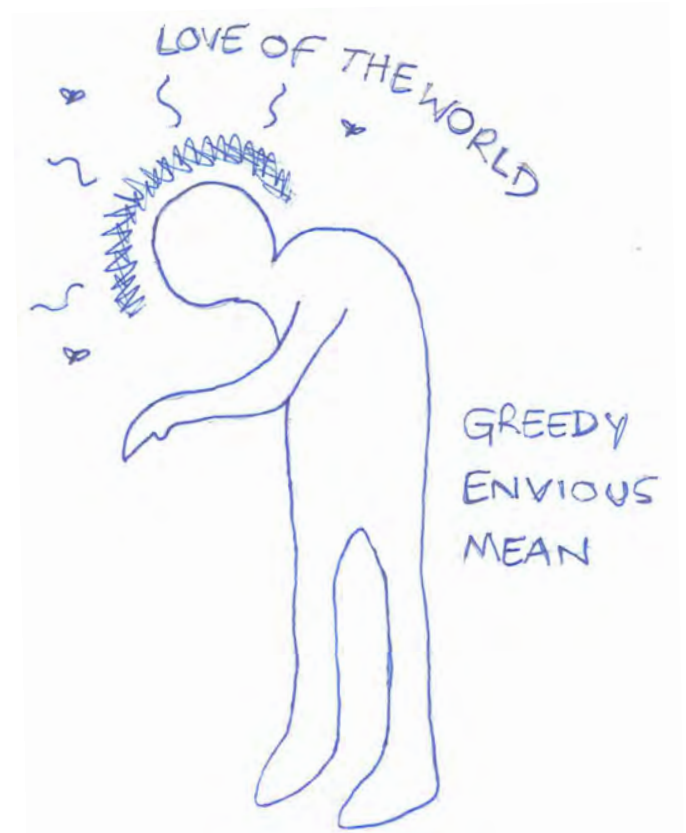
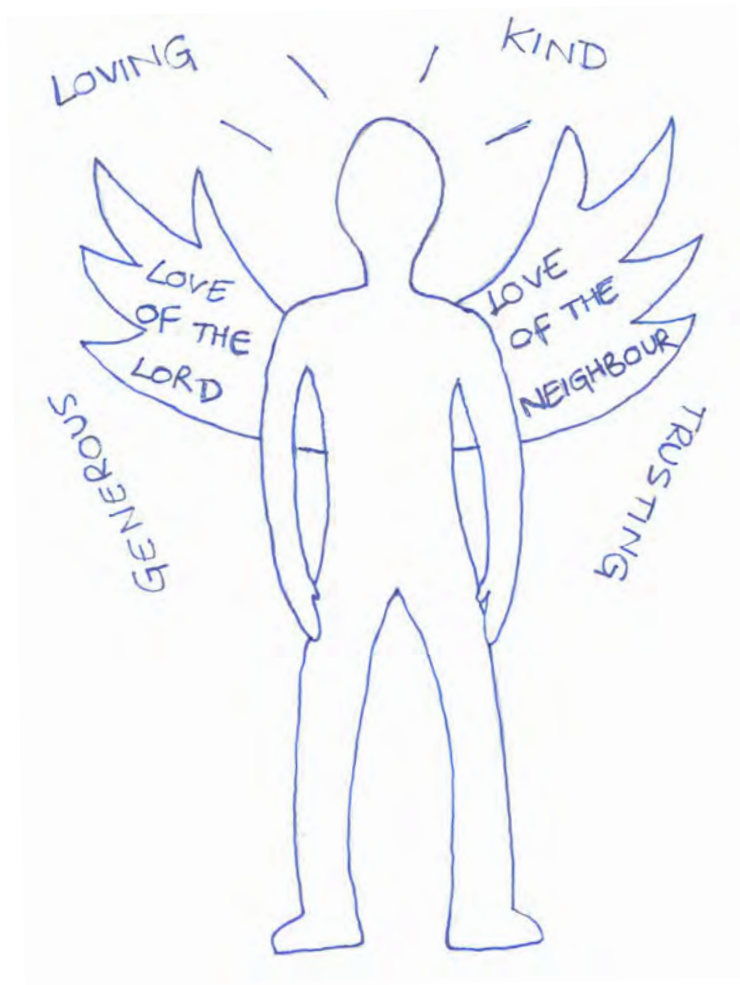
One single angel is more powerful than ten thousands of spirits in hell—not from himself, but from the Lord. He has power from the Lord to the extent that he believes he can achieve nothing from himself. He is able to have such a belief in the measure that humility and a love for serving others exist in him, in other words, so far as he loves the Lord and behaves charitably to others (see *Arcana Coelestia* 3417).

The love of self takes away from others and robs others of all delight, and directs it to itself, for it wishes well to itself alone. The love of the world wishes to possess what belongs to other people. These loves destroy or take away the delights of others and the joys of heaven (see *Heaven and Hell* 399).

People in hell, being the opposite of what is good and true, are horribly ugly, and in the light of heaven do not look like human beings but like monsters (*Arcana Coelestia* 5199).

When love of the world forms the head, a person is merely hunchbacked; while if love of self forms the head, he is not like a man standing on his feet, but like one standing on the palms of his hands with his head down...but if the love of the world or of wealth forms the head, he appears from heaven with a pale face like that of a corpse, and a yellowish circle about the head. And if love of self, or of ruling over others, forms the head, he appears from heaven with a dusky-glowing face and a white circle about the head (*True Christian Religion* 507:2,3).

People are not aware that a spiritual sphere surrounds them. This sphere is determined by what they love. If a person is only interested in external things—from a perverse joy in hating others, revenge and cruelty, contempt for others, greed, deceit—the spiritual sphere which surrounds him stinks like the smell of dead bodies, refuse, and other things like this. Anyone who has been leading a life like this takes that sphere with him after death and lives in hell where such spheres belong (see *Arcana Coelestia* 4464:2).



Explore:

Seeing the Face of God

At a Glance:

When Jacob met Esau he was overjoyed at Esau's forgiveness and recognized the face of God in Esau's face. Students will create a random "ink-blot" shape and look for familiar objects in it. Read *The Lord's Qualities* and highlight the qualities given there. Discuss the importance of knowing His qualities so that we can recognize them in others. Conclude by looking at another person's face (or their own face in a mirror) to see the Lord's qualities shining from within.

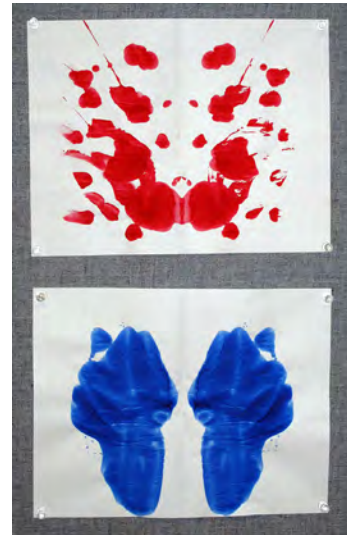


Supplies Needed for Each Student:

- blank paper
- paint or ink
- paintbrush to splatter paint on the page
- *The Lord's Qualities* page
- pencil, pen, or highlighter pen
- *optional*: mirror

Directions:

1. Distribute blank paper, paint or ink and paintbrushes.
2. Invite students to drop a wet paint blob of ink or paint on to the page.
3. While the paint is wet, fold the page in half to spread the ink, and create an interesting shape.
4. Open the page. Look at the shape. What do you see? Encourage students to take their time and look for any possible things they can imagine or see in the shape of the blot.
5. Trade papers with others and look for shapes.
6. Discuss your responses. Did you and others see the same things—either at first, or eventually?
7. Why do we all see different things? In what way does our experience and knowledge change what we see? (e.g. if a person does not know what a rabbit looks like, would they be able to see a rabbit?)



Explore: Seeing the Face of God continued

8. The Heavenly Doctrine calls the face “an index and image of the mind” (Apocalypse Explained 688). When Jacob saw Esau’s face, he said “I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me” (Genesis 33:10). What qualities of the Lord might Jacob have seen in Esau’s face?
9. Distribute *The Lord’s Qualities*. This page gives quotes from the Word that give many qualities of the Lord. Read the page and highlight or underline these qualities.
10. Share your favorite qualities with the group.
11. How can we recognize God’s qualities in others?
12. When do the Lord’s qualities shine through in our lives?
13. Look at another person’s face. What expression(s) would best reflect the Lord’s qualities? *Optional*: have students look at their own face in a mirror or think of the face of someone they know well.
14. In what ways can knowing more about the Lord’s qualities help you see Him more clearly in others?

The Lord's Qualities

The following quotes from the Word name many of the Lord's qualities. As you read the quotes, highlight or underline these qualities.

The Lord is gracious and full of compassion,
Slow to anger and great in mercy.
The Lord is good to all,
And His tender mercies are over all His works (Psalm 14: 8-9).

I am the Lord who heals you (Exodus 6:7).

The Lord's will is to lift all people up to heaven. For the Lord is mercy itself and good itself, and mercy itself and good itself cannot possibly condemn anyone. A person who rejects good, condemns himself (see *Arcana Coelestia* 2335).

I am the Lord, who makes all things (Isaiah 44:24).

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you (John 14:27).

The Lord is my strength and song (Exodus 15:2).

I am merciful (Jeremiah 3:14).

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold (Psalm 18:2).

I am gentle and lowly in heart (Matthew 11:29).

The face of the Lord, is mercy, peace, and all good (see *Arcana Coelestia* 222).

Charity and innocence are from the Lord alone (see *Arcana Coelestia* 1032.4).

The Lord will give strength to His people;
The Lord will bless His people with peace (Psalm 29:11).

I am the light of the world (John 9:5).

You say rightly that I am a king (John 18:37).

The Lord forgives everyone their sins. Sins are forgiven when a person sincerely repents, refrains from evils, and then leads a life of faith and charity to the end of his life (see *Arcana Coelestia* 9014).

The Lord saves those who do good from Him (see *The New Jerusalem* 155).

The Lord cannot be angry or punish anyone. He is not even able to turn His face away from a person and frown upon him (see *True Christian Religion* 56e).