

Jacob's Flocks

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

Level D | 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. Take Action: Respecting Boundaries
3. Look Closer: Power for Change

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 partially 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 heap of stones as a witness between them.

Note: Several stories are included in this week's readings. Select discussion questions that focus on your main lesson topic.

1. Are you wealthy? What kinds of wealth are there? (Draw out ideas e.g. truths from the Word, friends, family, possessions, money, knowledge, etc.)
2. What riches did Jacob's have? (Streaked, spotted and speckled animals—his wages from Laban. Animals correspond to what we love and take delight in. Different animals represent different loves. Work animals—such as oxen pulling a cart—picture loves that motivate us to stick to a task and get it done. Jacob's sheep and goats represent a willingness to be led by the Lord.)
3. Jacob's animals were not pure in color. They picture states when good and evil loves or true and false thinking are mixed in our minds e.g. we may want to do the right thing partially because we believe it is right and partially so others will see how good we are, instead of doing the right thing because it is what the Lord wants us to do.
4. Why did Jacob leave Laban to go home? (The Lord told him to go in a dream) In what ways does the Lord tell each of us to return home? (Returning "home" involves moving towards the Lord, or leaving old habits and making a fresh start.)
5. Why did Jacob sneak away from Laban instead of leaving openly? (He was worried Laban would stop him; Laban had talked him into staying before—just as our old habits might tempt us into not making healthy spiritual changes.)
6. How did Laban react when he found out? (He and the men of his family went after Jacob and caught up with him.)
7. What did Jacob and Laban promise? (to leave each other alone)
8. What was built as a boundary between Jacob and Laban? (a heap of stones that stood as a witness of their covenant; stones stand for true ideas)
9. List as many kinds of boundaries as you can. (draw out ideas of boundaries—sports (out of bounds), behavioral (quiet in a library), personal space (keep hands to yourself), property fences, national boundaries, etc.)
10. In what ways can a boundary or witness help us when we want to change?

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

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. I will then come and interview you one at a time and ask what you are thinking.
4. 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: Power for Change

At a Glance:

As he tended Laban's flocks Jacob watched to see when the strongest animals came for water. He put sticks with the bark partially peeled off into the drinking troughs at that time. As a result they gave birth to speckled and spotted young, which were his wages. Walking sticks, staffs or "rods" feature in many stories in the Word and always symbolize power. Students will read about these staffs and then discuss sources of power in our lives.



Supplies Needed for Each Student:

- *Power for Change* readings
- *Power in the Word* chart
- Word or Bible
- pen or pencil
- *optional*: a variety of objects to lift—e.g. items that are in the room

Directions:

1. *Optional*: Ask students "Who will volunteer to lift this object?" Ask the volunteer questions such as "How heavy is it? What part(s) of your body are you using to lift it?"
2. Where does physical strength come from? What about mental strength?
3. In our story today, Jacob placed sticks with the bark partially peeled off in the drinking troughs when the strongest animals came to drink. This act had the power to make the animals produce spotted and speckled offspring that would belong to Jacob.
4. Read *Power for Change* aloud with the group and then discuss it.
5. Distribute *Power in the Word* charts. Assign each student a different incident when walking sticks, staffs or "rods" were used for powerful acts. Pick a few if you have a small group. Have students complete the chart using the Word or Bible.
6. Share answers and discuss the following:
 - In what way is doing the right actions and giving credit to the Lord different from doing the right actions and taking credit for ourselves?
 - The land of Canaan corresponds to heaven. Is it possible for people to go to heaven if they take credit for their good actions? Why or why not?
 - How can we access the Lord's power in our lives?
 - In what ways can accessing the Lord's power make us a stronger person?

Power for Change

Jacob became a wealthy man. After he finished working for Laban's daughters, Jacob asked for Laban's streaked and spotted animals as his wages. When the strongest animals approached the drinking troughs, Jacob placed sticks with the bark partially peeled off inside the troughs. As a result the strongest animals gave birth to speckled and spotted young. Eventually Jacob owned most of the strong animals, and Laban owned most of the weak animals. Once Laban's sons realized what had happened, they were deeply resentful of Jacob and felt he had taken their father's wealth.

The sticks or "rods" that Jacob used symbolize power. This is also true of other rods and staffs mentioned in the Word:

A "rod" is frequently mentioned in the Word, and always signifies power, both from its being used by shepherds to exercise power over their flocks, and from its serving to support the body, and as it were for the right hand; for the "hand" signifies power. As this was the signification of a "rod," rods were used by kings in ancient times, and so the royal badge was a short staff, and also a scepter. Rods were also used by priests and prophets such as Aaron and Moses, and their rods signified the power that belonged to them. This was the reason why Moses was frequently commanded to stretch out his rod, and at other times his hand, when miracles were being performed; for Divine power was signified by the "rod;" and by the "hand." It was because a "rod" signifies power that magicians in Egypt used rods when they performed their magical miracles; and it is from this that magicians are now represented with wands in their hands (see *Arcana Coelestia* 4013).

The power that moves a staff is the power of a human hand—most often a person's right hand. Our hands do what our minds want—they serve, build, write, cook, comfort, play musical instruments, etc. Our hands are extensions of our mind that enable us to do what we intend.

When our hands do what the Lord wants, they act from the power of His love. We are not consciously aware that this power is from the Lord because He wants us to experience our actions *as if* they are our own (see *Divine Love and Wisdom* 68). As we grow spiritually we begin to see that all power is the Lord's. We acknowledge this as we say "Thine is the...power, and the glory, forever" (Matthew 6:13). We also ask for the Lord's power when we pray, "Thy will be done" (Matthew 6:10). Just as the rods in the Word gave power over nature and animals, the Lord's power enables us to put aside our selfish thoughts and emotions and welcome heavenly ones.

Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, but he was not allowed to enter the land of Canaan because of one miracle he did with a rod:



Moses took the rod from before the Lord as He commanded him. And Moses and Aaron ... said, "Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out and the congregation and their animals drank. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." (Numbers 20:9-13)

Moses could not enter Canaan because he claimed to have done this miracle by *his own* power, and not the Lord's power. The actions for which we claim personal ownership come from self-love, which is in direct opposition to the Lord's love.

Power in the Word

Many stories in the Word feature walking sticks, staffs or rods being used to demonstrate power. Use a copy of the Word to look up the following incidents and find out what happened.

Reference	Who used the rod?	Who owned the rod?	What happened as a result?
Genesis 30:37-43	Jacob	Jacob	He became wealthy because the flocks and herds produced speckled and spotted animals.
Exodus 7:8-10			
Exodus 7:11-13			
Exodus 14:21-29			
Exodus 17:1-7			
Exodus 17:8-13			
Numbers 17:1-8			
Psalm 23:4			
Isaiah 11:4 (see also 11:1-3)			
Revelation 19:11-16			

Power in the Word

Teacher Copy

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Genesis 30:37-43	Jacob	Jacob	He became wealthy because the flocks and herds produced speckled and spotted animals.
Exodus 7:8-10	Aaron	Aaron	The rod became a serpent.
Exodus 7:11-13	Pharoah's wise men & sorcerers	Pharoah's wise men & sorcerers	Their rods became serpents.
Exodus 14:15-16, 21-29	Moses	Moses	First, the Red Sea parted, so the children of Israel could cross over on dry land. Then the Sea returned to its full depth, so the Egyptians drowned.
Exodus 17:1-7	Moses	Moses	Water came out of the rock.
Exodus 17:8-13	Moses	Moses	When Moses held up the rod the Israelites prevailed over the Amalekites.
Numbers 17:1-8	Moses	Aaron	The rod blossomed and produced almonds when placed before the tabernacle.
Psalms 23:4	The Lord	The Lord	The speaker is comforted even when facing scaring and hard issues (the valley of the shadow of death).
Isaiah 11:4 (see also 11:1-3)	The Lord	The Lord	This prophecy describes the Lord's battles against hells during His life in this world.
Revelation 19:11-16	The Lord	The Lord	The Lord will rule all nations.