

Love that Disrupts

Today's readings show us ways in which God enters the world and disrupts it – an elder child will serve his younger sibling, those who value the ways and wealth of the world will have nothing. These texts turn the world upside down and demonstrate that God calls us into a new way of being in relation with God and one another.

Focus scripture: **Genesis 25:19–34**

Genesis 25:19–34 opens with Rebekah and Isaac, who had struggled with barrenness, conceiving twins. The siblings wrestle with one another in their mother's womb, foreshadowing the struggle they will have throughout their lives. Like Cain and Abel, the two children possess opposite character traits. Esau becomes a hunter and Jacob a quiet man of the field. Their parents each gravitate towards a different son. The author highlights these oppositional features and the division of the family to set up a plot twist, a reversal.

In **Psalm 119:105–112**, we hear the psalmist's devotion to the Law. Like a lamp lighting the way, God's statutes provide guidance. While there are adversaries and obstacles in the world that seek to distract and entrap the faithful, the psalmist calls on God to teach and guide according to God's law.

In **Romans 8:1–11**, Paul contrasts life in the flesh and life in the Spirit. Jesus invites us into life in the Spirit. Paul describes a tension between "flesh" and "spirit," not to designate two parts of human nature, but two ways of living. Living "in the flesh" is to focus on the material world. To dwell "in the Spirit" is to focus on God's ways. God's Spirit empowers people to live in harmonious relationships with God and neighbour.

God's generous and surprising and disruptive ways are addressed in Jesus' parable of the sower, found in **Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23**. In this discourse on the reign of God, Jesus opens with a series of agriculturally based parables. In this parable, the yields reaped from seeds sown on varying types of soil illustrate the number of ways people experience receiving God's word. The seed is sown generously among all people. The work of God's realm will yield a certain harvest, despite the tensions and struggles among those who received the word.

Jesus' image of God's bountiful harvest not only attests to the power of God's reign but also stands in stark contrast to the Roman Empire and its agricultural and ecological practices. Rome's unquenchable desire for goods and exotic luxuries led to exploitative practices resulting in barren land, deforestation, animal extinction, and environmental devastations still felt today. God's way produces an abundant harvest, while Rome must use violence and exploitation to secure its harvest.


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The texts this week highlight how God challenges the ways of the world. They ask us to be open to seeing and doing things differently to live more fully into our life with God. How can we lead lives that disrupt injustice and open space for God's love to enter the world?



Focus scripture
Genesis 25:19–34

Additional scriptures
Genesis 25:19–34
Psalm 119:105–112
Romans 8:1–11
Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

 *Seasons of the Spirit*
is based on semi-
continuous readings of the
Revised Common Lectionary.

**Disruptive God,
your ways are
not the ways of
the world. Chal-
lenge us to see the
world according
to your plan. Help
us to seek justice,
instead of resting
in the comfort of
tradition. Guide us
so that we too may
disrupt the world
with your love.
Amen.**

Lection Connection
links current events
with this week's
scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and
click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 5–12

Bickering and tension with siblings or other family members can be a common experience for children. With fairness being defined by an equal distribution of rewards and chores, it is easy for children to argue in an attempt to establish fairness. Siblings aren't always fair; they may play tricks, bully, take advantage, deliberately set out to annoy, and compete for a parent's attention. These disagreements allow children an opportunity to work out what living together means.

The biblical story makes it clear that Jacob and Esau did not always deal fairly with each other and eventually this caused serious conflict. This session provides the opportunity for the children to look at a family struggle,

evaluate it from the viewpoints of both Esau and Isaac, and consider how God's ways of living might be applied to family life. It also offers a chance to explore the long-term impact that people's choices can have.

A word of caution: unfortunately some children do live in dysfunctional families and may be experiencing abuse from a family member. This session might raise some difficult issues for them. If this is the case, they will need help and support. Check your church safety policy so that you know what to do if a child who is being abused confides in you.

Pray that the children will be able to find in this story an assurance that God is with them no matter what.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Genesis 25:19–34, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 43).
- ❑ Set worship space with green cloth; bring candle and Bible with bookmark placed in focus passage.
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 9), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 9), and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Bring song "In God We Live and Move" (p. 24 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #21 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).

Engage

- ❑ Bring resource sheet "[A Tricky Trade](#)."
- ❑ **Art group:** sheets of paper and art supplies
- ❑ **Drama group:** no additional materials needed

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ❑ **Story zone:** different colours of construction paper, white paper, poster board, instructions from resource sheet "[Story Gallery Project-1](#)" (p. 110)
- ❑ **Music zone:** recording and lyrics for song "The Peace of the Earth" (p. 36 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #10 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9)
- ❑ **Craft zone:** copies of resource sheet "[Peace Signs](#)," art and craft supplies listed on resource sheet
- ❑ **Game zone:** paper cut into squares, copies of resource sheet "[Choices Game](#)"
- ❑ **Drama zone:** two copies of section "[What Would You Do?](#)" (p. 47)

Bless

- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song, "As Long As We Follow/*Na Nzela Na Lola*" (p. 25 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #17 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).



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Scripture

Genesis 25:
19–34

FOCUS To ponder what the story of Jacob and Esau can teach us

Gather

Welcome the children and introduce any newcomers. Share stories and experiences from the past week.

Opening ritual

Gather in the worship space and invite a volunteer to light the candle as you say:

This candle reminds us
of God's presence with us.
In this space, we hear stories
about God and God's people.
(Place Bible beside candle.)
In this space, we know God's Spirit
is with us.

Sing or listen to, if possible, the song "In God We Live and Move" (p. 24 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #21 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).

Pray (Invite children to repeat each line after you.)

Loving God,
thank you for this place
where we can learn and share.
May we be open to the work
of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to name some of the things that can cause a disagreement between brothers and sisters, or between friends. Encourage those who wish to share some of their own experiences of disagreements.

- **What caused the disagreement?**
- **What happened because of the disagreement?**

Explain that this week's Bible story is about two brothers who didn't get along.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship area and use the bookmark to open it to the book of Genesis. Help children to recall last week's story of Rebekah choosing to leave her home and travel to another town to marry Isaac. Rebekah and Isaac had two children, twin boys named Jacob and Esau, and this week's story is about some choices that they had to make.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "[A Tricky Trade](#)" to present the story based on **Genesis 25:19–34**. Explain that in biblical times the first-born son was given everything and had all the status.

Wondering questions Use some or all of the following questions to wonder together:

- **What were the choices for Esau? For Jacob?**
- **Why do you think each brother made the choices he did?**
- **If Esau were telling this story, what do you think he would say?**

Exploring the story further

(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to their interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)

Art group This group will have the opportunity to reflect further on the biblical story. Invite the children to imagine how Esau felt as he thought about the tricky trade (guilty, sorry, sneaky, scared, worried, etc.). Distribute paper and invite children to draw their own images showing some of the emotions in the story.

Drama group This group will have the opportunity to act out some possibilities of things that might have happened next in the story. Have

them take on the roles of Jacob, Esau, Rebekah, and Isaac and imagine what they might have said and done when the parents find out about Esau's swap with Jacob.

Reporting Invite the art group to share their drawings and invite the drama group to act out a scenario.

The Bible story and us

Invite the children to think about their own families or good friends.

- **What struggles do we sometimes have with families or friends?**
- **What do you think is God's way to relate to our families?**

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- **Story zone: Story gallery** *(Option: ongoing project)* Jacob and Esau learned that our choices can bring us together or tear us apart from each other. Follow the instructions for this week on the resource sheet "[Story Gallery Project-1](#)" (p. 110) for making torn paper images to express the feelings in this week's story.

- **Music zone: Song meditation** In the midst of discord we sometimes need a word of peace. Listen to a recording of the song "The Peace of the Earth" (#10 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9). Then lead the group in learning the song, one line at a time (p. 36 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9). Encourage them to hum the song during times of stress.

- **Craft zone: Peace symbols** Relationships between siblings or friends sometimes aren't very peaceful. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Peace Signs](#)" and invite children to choose from the supplies to make one of the options. These peace symbols can be displayed at home as reminders to get along together.

- **Game zone: Choices game** Each choice that Jacob and Esau faced had the possibility of creating more kindness in the world. Help children follow the instructions on the resource sheet "[Choices Game](#)" to make a "flip-flap" and play with it to explore kind actions.

- **Drama zone: Problem solving** *(for older children)* Jacob and Esau had problems in their relationship. Form two groups and give each a copy of the section "[What Would You Do?](#)" (bottom of p. 47). Have each group choose a scenario and discuss the problem using the questions, and then act out a solution that would restore peace to the situation.



Bless

Gather around the worship area and light the candle again.

Sing or listen to, if possible, the song the song "As Long As We Follow/*Na Nzela Na Lola*" (p. 25 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #17 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).

Pray Lead the children in the following prayer, inviting them to repeat each line after you:

We pray that we can make
wise and careful choices that will
add more kindness to our world. Amen

Blessing Offer the following blessing: "(Name), follow God's ways of love."

Reflect

In what ways did the children identify with the story of Jacob and Esau? How were they able to consider choices in relation to their own lives?

What Would You Do?

Read one of the problems below and discuss with these questions:

- **What is the problem? Who is feeling hurt? What are the options for each person?**

Chore trickster Jenny wants to meet friends one Saturday and asks her brother to do her chores. She promises to do Will's chores for him the next Saturday, but when that day comes she claims she never made the deal.

Broken promise David promises to take his little sister Anna to the movies on Saturday. But on that day he is invited to go for a hike. When Anna says, "But you promised," he replies, "But I didn't say which Saturday."





A TRICKY TRADE

based on Genesis 25:19–34

As you describe the twins, try to keep your voice neutral, not favouring one man over the other. Allow the children to draw their own conclusions.

Jacob and Esau were twins. Some twins look alike. But Jacob and Esau did not. They looked totally different. Jacob liked to help his mother Rebekah. He was thin and tall. His skin was soft and smooth. He preferred quiet activities. Now Esau liked to hunt. He often brought meat he had hunted to his father Isaac. Esau had strong muscles and his arms and legs were covered with hair.

Another important difference between them was that Esau was a few minutes older than Jacob. If you know any twins, they can probably tell you which one is older. Who was the older was very important to Esau and Jacob. In those days, the oldest son in the family got double what the next son received as an inheritance when the father died. The oldest son then became the head of the family. Everyone knew that Esau would be the head of the family some day.

Jacob, being just a few minutes younger, was not happy about this arrangement, even though every family they knew operated this way. It didn't seem fair to him that Esau should get so much more than he would. Their mother regretted this, too.

One day Esau went out to hunt. He hunted a long time because the animals were hard to find. Esau wanted to get some fine meat for his father Isaac. When Esau finally hunted down some animals and returned home, he was famished. It would take a long time to cook the meat, and Esau was really, really hungry right now.

Jacob was cooking a pot of bean soup. Oh, but that soup smelled good to Esau.

"Please, Jacob," Esau begged, "give me some soup. I am starving!"

This was the moment Jacob had been waiting for. "I will give you some soup, Esau, if you will give me your share, the first-born son's share of the inheritance."

Esau was so hungry, he said, "Yes."

Esau agreed that when their father Isaac died, all that the oldest son in the family gets would go to Jacob. Everything! So Jacob gave Esau a bowl of soup. Jacob smiled because he was pleased that he had made a tricky trade with his twin brother.

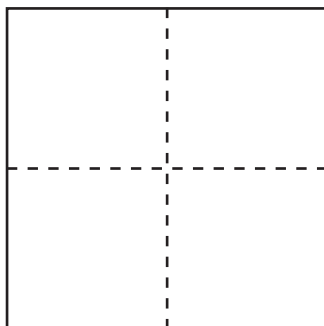


CHOICES GAME

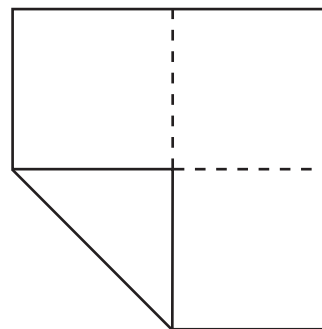
Building instructions:

1. Place a large square on the table and invite children to gather around.
2. Follow the step-by-step instructions below to make a flip-flap.
3. Colour the four outside squares a different colour and write the name of the colour on the square.
4. Number the inside triangles "1" through to "8."
5. Ask the children for suggestions of actions we can choose to add kindness in the world. Write all the suggestions down.
6. Choose eight suggestions and write one idea in each of the triangles.

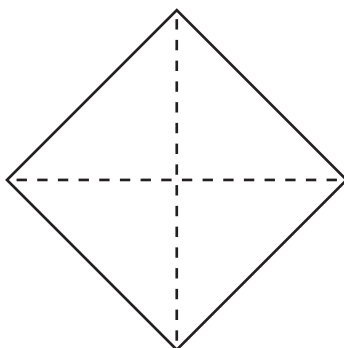
1. Fold to crease and find centre



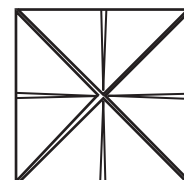
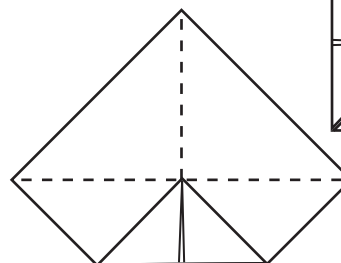
2. Fold each corner into the centre



3. Turn it over



4. Fold each corner into the centre



5. Fold in half



Playing instructions:

1. Have one child place the flip-flap on their fingers.
2. The play begins with someone choosing one of the colours on the outside square.
3. The child holding the flip-flap opens and closes the flip-flap for each letter in the colour that was chosen. For example, three times for red and four times for blue.
4. Repeat this three times. On the third time, someone chooses one of the numbers showing on the open flip-flap.
5. The child holding the flip-flap opens the flap with the number named and reads the kind action that corresponds with the number chosen.





PEACE SIGNS

The peace symbol is universally known as a sign of love, happiness, and positive change

Peace plates

Materials needed:

- ☐ White paper plates
- ☐ Craft materials (sequins, glitter, pompons, craft foam strips, buttons, beads)
- ☐ Yarn or ribbon

Instructions:

1. Draw a big peace sign on the plate, using thick lines.
2. Outline the lines with white glue.
3. Add the chosen craft materials, pressing down to make them stick to form the peace symbol shape.
4. Use a hole punch to make a hole in the top and thread with yarn or ribbon as a hanger.
5. Hang it on a wall at home as a reminder to act in peaceful ways.



Peace CDs

Materials needed:

- ☐ Used compact discs
- ☐ Large paper plates
- ☐ Craft materials (sequins or glitter)
- ☐ Yarn or ribbon

Instructions:

1. Cover the hole in the middle of the disc with tape, placing tape on the printed side; tape a loop of yarn or ribbon onto this side also, at what will be the top of the hanging disc.
2. Place the disc on a paper plate that is larger than the disc.
3. Draw a big peace sign on the other side of the disc, using thick lines of white glue.
4. Sprinkle craft materials over the white glue, then shake excess off onto plate.
5. When dry hang up at home as a reminder to act in peaceful ways.

Story Gallery Project-1

The following projects can stand alone as an activity for that week, or the activities can be part of an ongoing project to create a “gallery” of images based on the stories from Genesis and Exodus. If you choose to do an ongoing project, mount each week’s art pieces as indicated and keep in the meeting room until August 31, when the group can host an “art gallery tour” for the rest of the congregation.

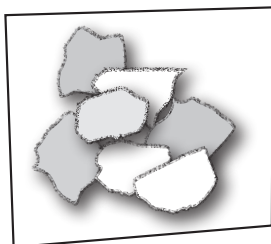
July 5: Clay shapes

Rebekah knew deep down how to live in God’s way and this knowledge helped her to make loving choices (*Genesis 24*). Invite children to play with the modelling clay, moulding it with their fingers as they think about what it means to know something deep inside, and to make loving choices. Then have them make a shape to symbolize God’s presence deep down inside, helping them as they make choices. Display the clay symbols on a tray, adding a title and scripture reference.



July 12: Torn paper art

Jacob and Esau learned that choices can bring people together or tear them apart (*Genesis 25*). Invite children to express the mood of the story by tearing pieces from different colours of construction paper and glueing these onto sheets of white paper. The torn pieces of paper can be layered to create texture and can be glued to form different shapes. Glue the individual creations onto a sheet of poster board, adding a title and scripture reference.



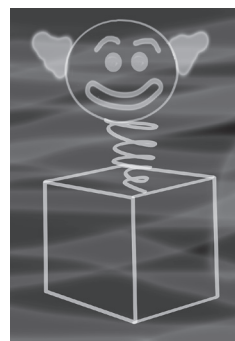
July 19: Rock sculpture

Jacob used a rock to mark a special place where he felt God with him and heard a comforting message (*Genesis 28*). Invite children to talk about how Jacob might have felt in that special place. Then have them paint and decorate rocks with images and words to express those feelings. When the paint is dry, pile the rocks to form a cairn, placing a strip of paper beside it with a title and scripture reference.



July 26: Wax relief painting

Jacob had some surprises in his life, one being when he discovered that he had married Leah (*Genesis 29*). Invite children to make wax-relief images to symbolize the surprises in our lives. Distribute sheets of white paper and have them draw shapes or words using white crayons or candles. Exchange drawings and show children how to brush watercolour paints over the pictures to reveal the surprise images. When the paintings are dry, tape them onto a sheet of poster board and add a title and scripture reference.



August 2: Paper sculpture

In his struggle and in the challenge of getting ready to meet his brother again, Jacob felt God’s presence around him (*Genesis 32*). Invite children to create sculptures by taping ends of strips of paper to a foundation (a piece of poster board). Encourage them to make different shapes with the strips of paper, or twist or loop them through each other, to symbolize the theme of struggle. Make a title strip, adding a scripture reference, to place with the sculptures.

