

DAY 1

LESSON GUIDE



BIG IDEA

God always makes time for us.

BIBLE

Jacon's Dream at Bethel: Genesis 28:10–22

ABOUT THIS WEEK

Even the best recipes need time to simmer—rushing it can ruin the flavor! Today, we'll learn how God met Jacob right in the middle of his journey and showed that when God makes time for us, we can slow down and make space too. Even when life feels busy or messy, **God always makes time for us.**

WHAT? What are we talking about?

MUSIC | Flavors of Worship

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Invite kids to worship together with 2–3 songs that you and your kids love! For more music aligned with this VBS, check out [this playlist](#) we made for you!
- Welcome, chefs, to the kitchen! I'm your Head Chef, and this week, we'll be cooking up something amazing as we learn recipes for growing stronger as we grow closer to God. So put on your aprons and toques—those are chef's hats—and prepare to find out *What's Cookin'!*
- **Are you ready?**
- Whoa, hold the salt! We're all chefs here, so from now on, let's address each other as "chef." Instead of just saying "yes" or "yeah" or "mhhh," we're going to say, "Yes, Chef!"
- **So one more time, chefs—are you ready to find out *What's Cookin'?***

ACTIVITY | Mise-en-Place Race

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you'll need three [bins](#) filled with identical sets of 15–20 kid-safe [kitchen items](#) (cooking utensils, mixing bowl, measuring spoons, ladle, small pan, oven mitt, lightweight cutting board, and more). To play, set up a table with one kitchen station bin in the middle for the leader and a bin of identical items at each end for two teams of three kids. The leader places 5–7 items on their station in a specific arrangement. With hands behind their backs, teams get 30 seconds to study the leader's setup. Then, cover the setup. When you say "GO," set a kitchen timer to one minute or cue up the [What's Cookin' countdown video](#) at the 1-minute mark. Teams race to recreate the leader's setup from memory. When time's up, award points for accuracy, neatness, and completeness. The team with the most points wins!



See the Accessibility & Preteen Hacks!



See the Accessibility & Preteen Hacks!

- In this game, you got to practice something called *mise en place* (say it with me: meez-on-plahs). It's a French phrase that means "everything in its place."
 - Chefs do this by getting all their ingredients and tools ready *before* they start cooking. Imagine the chaos if they didn't—the water's boiling, veggies aren't chopped, spices are missing... and suddenly, something's burning!
 - Sometimes, our lives feel like that, too. We're rushing from one thing to the next—school, practice, homework, dinner—and before you know it, it's bedtime! It's easy to forget what matters most: spending time with God
- Today's Bible story is about someone who was caught up in his own plans, but even then, God showed up in a powerful way.
- **Chefs, are you ready for your next job in the kitchen?**

ACTIVITY | Kitchen Climb

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, you'll need marshmallows, toothpicks, and plates or bags. Divide kids evenly into teams of no more than 10 each. Give each team a plate or bag of marshmallows and toothpicks. Show kids how to build one rung of the ladder with two side rails: Place a marshmallow at each end of a toothpick to form the rung, then connect another toothpick to the outside of each marshmallow, pointing upward, to start the side rails. To play, have the first player from each team build one rung with two side rails. The next player adds to the next set, and so on until a team completes their ladder. To win, the ladder must be sturdy enough to lean against a wall without collapsing.*
- In just a moment, we'll see that a ladder (or stairs) plays a big part in today's Bible story.
- In some kitchens—especially big, busy ones—chefs sometimes need ladders to reach the highest shelves, grab secret ingredients, or hang pots and pans. But today, you're going to build your own kitchen ladder using only marshmallows and toothpicks!

QUESTION | What is the yummiest food you can dream up using this ingredient?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Choose one fun ingredient, like marshmallows, cheese, bananas, pickles, sardines, or even discarded bread crusts! Ask the question, and invite kids to imagine creative, nonexistent foods with the chosen ingredient. For added fun, consider having kids draw a picture of their creations or write the ideas on a whiteboard or poster "menu board" for your kitchen.*
- Those were some of the most creative dishes we've ever imagined!
- Chefs love to dream up tasty dishes, but sometimes real cooking comes with obstacles. In the kitchen, you don't always have the perfect ingredients, the best tools, or even much time. Sometimes you end up with something surprising or unexpected instead of what you planned.
- Today, we're going to hear a story about a man named Jacob. He met with God in a time and place he wasn't expecting. Was it real... or was it just a dream?
- **Are you hungry to hear the story, Chefs?**

SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

See the
Preschool Hacks!

SCRIPTURE | Genesis 28:10–22 (Jacob's Dream at Bethel)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the passage and retell the Bible story using the Scripture segments and talking points provided below. To tie in your storytelling with the theme, consider wearing a [toque](#) (chef's hat) and [apron](#) as you take on the persona of a head chef! As you are teaching, encourage kids to respond to you by saying "Yes, Chef!" or "No, Chef!"
 - You can take the theme further in your teaching by introducing a "secret ingredient" as an object lesson during the Bible story.
 - Place the secret ingredient (a bag of flour) under the [serving dome](#) on the table ahead of time and get ready for a dramatic reveal as part of the lesson. ([Here's some inspo!](#)) Cue dramatic stinger music, like [this](#), for the big reveal, "Iron Chef" style.
- What's Cookin' in the kitchen, chefs!? Are you ready to discover a juicy story from the Bible?
 - **Before we begin, let's find out today's secret ingredient. Today's secret ingredient is...** (*Lift the serving dome to reveal*) **flour!** We'll find out how this secret ingredient works into today's story.
 - Now, working in a real kitchen can be intense, especially during the dinner rush. You'll have to work non-stop to get all the orders out in time, prepping one dish after another. It's busy!
- In today's story, we'll meet Jacob, who left his family and set out on a long journey that his father told him to go on.
 - You see, before this, he had made some not-so-great choices and had upset his older twin brother. So when we meet him in Genesis 28, he was in the middle of running away to his uncle's home.
 - **Genesis 28:10–11 tells us what happened next.**
- Jacob was traveling alone. It was getting dark. And he was out in the wilderness, so there was no hotel, no sleeping bag. Just a rock for a pillow!
 - He must have been so exhausted that he fell asleep, and the verses don't say the whether or not he said his prayers first. **But did God forget him?**
 - **Let's read Genesis 28:12.**
- In his sleep, Jacob had a dream about a stairway between heaven and earth where angels were going up and down. God was showing him that no matter where he went, he could always reach God.
 - **Who do you think was at the top of the stairway?**
 - **Let's read Genesis 28:13–14.**
- God was standing at the top of the stairway in Jacob's dream, telling Jacob to keep going on his journey, because something big was ahead!
 - Long ago, God made a promise to Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, that their family would grow and grow. It would grow so big that it would be like the dust of the earth, getting everywhere—like today's secret ingredient, flour!
 - Have you ever baked something and gotten flour all over the counter... or your hands... or your clothes? Flour gets everywhere, just like dust. But it's

also important because it gets used in all kinds of dishes. **What are some things made with flour?**

- Flour is in everything—from appetizers to desserts. And that's kind of like what God was saying about Jacob's family. They were going to spread out across the world and bless all people. And here's the really cool part: everyone who trusts in God becomes part of that family!
- **Let's read Genesis 28:15–16—it's the main part of today's recipe!**
- God said, "I am with you and will watch over you... I will not leave you." God *didn't* say, "Only if you're good." Or, "Only if you talk to me first." God is always with us, wherever we go, even when we forget.
 - Jacob wasn't at church when this happened. He was sleeping on a rock in the dirt! When he woke up, he realized that God was always with him!
 - **So what did Jacob do next? Let's read Genesis 28:17-22.**
- Jacob didn't forget the dream. He knew that was a special place because God made time for him, and he decided to trust in God. To remember this moment, he turned his rock pillow into a pillar and named that special place Bethel, which means "House of God."
- And that's it from our kitchen today! Remember, whether you're baking, mixing, or even just resting on a rock like Jacob, you can always spend time with God. See you next *time*, chefs!



See the
Preschool Hacks!

BIG IDEA | God always makes time for us.

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, you'll need small pieces of paper or tape, a marker, [lightweight cookware](#) (pot, pan, lid, bowl, colander—feel free to reuse the items from "Mise-en-Place Race"), a few extra decoy items (optional), and a whiteboard or wall space. Write each word of today's Big Idea on paper or tape and attach them to the different kitchen items. Feel free to add a few silly decoy items with unrelated words to make the reveal more fun. Set everything out at the front. One at a time, kids lift an item and read the word aloud. As words are found, write them on the board or on index cards. When all words are revealed, challenge the group to rearrange the words to uncover the Big Idea.
- No matter how busy things get or how far we feel from what matters, God never forgets us. Just like Jacob discovered in today's story, even in the middle of nowhere, even when things felt uncertain, God showed up. And God still does.
- **God always makes time for us!**

VIDEO | A Clip From *MasterChef Junior*

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As a teaching tool, play a [short clip](#) from [MasterChef Junior](#), or something similar, where Gordon Ramsay encourages a young contestant who thinks she's failing the challenge.
 - View the clip beforehand to ensure it's a good fit for your context. [Read this](#) for more information on legally using copyrighted material for educational purposes.
- You know how Gordon Ramsay, the head chef in this video, made time to encourage Coco when she was feeling overwhelmed? He didn't yell or criticize



See the Accessibility
& Preteen Hacks!

her for struggling with or crying about her salty mashed potatoes. Instead, he took the time to come over and speak kindly to her.

- This reminds us of how God made time to go to Jacob to encourage him when he was alone and afraid. When we're feeling down or facing tough situations, it's easy to rush or get frustrated when things don't go perfectly or as planned. But God reminds us to slow down, take a breath, and trust that there is a right time for everything.
- We can take the time to spend with God because **God always makes time for us.**

OBJECT LESSON | Open and Closed Sign

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this object lesson, you'll need a double-sided open and closed sign like [this](#) (or make or print your own) and an easel to prop it up on. Prop up the sign showing the "Closed" side when you talk about closing up the kitchen. Flip it over to the "Open" side when you talk about how God's heart is always open.
- When the day is over, we close up the kitchen and put up this "Closed" sign. Sometimes, our own kitchens—or our hearts—feel just like that: closed.
 - We don't put up an actual sign, but maybe we're busy, tired, or upset, and we don't want to talk or spend time with anyone.
 - It could show up in grumpy moods, eye-rolling, snappy or short answers, or just not wanting to play or join in. These things tell others not to bother coming over. We shut them out when we're closed.
- But look what happens when I flip the sign. **It's more welcoming, isn't it, chefs?** This side reminds us of God's kitchen—God's heart—which is always open. God is never too busy or too tired to listen to us, comfort us, and help us, no matter how we're doing.
- When we remember that God is always open to us and loves spending time with us, it helps us want to open our hearts more, too. Even when it's hard or we feel overwhelmed, God is there, waiting to spend time together.
- **God always makes time for us.**

VIDEO | Teaching Video (Day 1)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Play today's [episode](#) of Grow TV.

NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?

REFLECTION | Simmer Down

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Create a quiet space where kids can sit or lie down comfortably, or take a walk outside to a garden. Consider playing soft instrumental worship music or [kitchen ASMR sounds](#) quietly in the background to help kids wind down. Ask the questions below to get them started in a conversation with God.
- Chefs, food needs to simmer down—and so do we! Simmering is how flavors grow rich and deep, and slowing down is one way we can do the same with God.
- Sometimes, God talks to us in quiet ways—like in dreams or in our thoughts—when we slow down and listen. Let's take a moment to practice spending time with God. Close your eyes gently, take a deep breath in, and let it out slowly. This is your special place to talk with God.



See the Accessibility
& Preteen Hacks!

- Think about what you might want to say to God right now. Maybe it's a thank you, a question, or something you're worried about. Here are some questions that can fire up a conversation with God in your hearts:
 - **What's one thing that I'm thankful for today?** Thank God for it.
 - **If I could ask God one question, what would it be?** Go ahead and ask God!
 - **What's something amazing or surprising about God that you learned today?** Let God know how you feel.
 - **Is there anything that's been worrying me lately?** Imagine putting it on a plate and handing it to God.
- Take a deep breath, and imagine God listening to you, ready to celebrate with, help, comfort, or guide you. When you're ready, open your eyes, knowing that **God always makes time for us.**

RESPONSE | Recipe Box

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this activity, each kid will need a "recipe box," a copy of today's [handout](#), scissors, a glue stick, and writing utensils. Their recipe box can be an [index card box](#), an [envelope](#), or a [small gift box](#) that will be reused throughout VBS.*
 - *To prepare today's "recipe card," have kids fold the paper lengthwise (hot dog style), then glue the two halves together. Then have them fold it again widthwise (hamburger style) to create a quarter-page card with the "Spend Time With God" tab on top. With the paper still folded, have kids cut out the shaded area to create a tabbed edge.*
 - *Next, encourage kids to write or draw their responses to the prompts. If there is extra time, provide them with markers, [stickers](#), and [wash tape](#) to decorate their "Recipe Box." You can choose to let kids take their cards home each day or collect them in their boxes to take home at the end of VBS.*
- Many chefs keep their best recipes in a box. This week, you'll build your own Recipe Box—not for food, but for how to grow with God. Each day, you'll write or draw what you learned and how you can live it out. At the end of our time together, you'll have a whole collection of spiritual recipes to take home!
- Today's recipe will help us remember that **God always makes time for us.**
- **Ingredients.** Every recipe starts with the right ingredients. Let's get thinking about what we need to practice today's Big Idea.
 - **What are some ways you can spend time with God?**
- **Steps.** Recipes also have steps to follow. This helps us plan how we'll actually live out what we learned today.
 - **Choose one way you want to spend time with God this week.**
 - **Pick a time during the day to spend time with God.**
 - **Describe a space where you can spend time with God.**
- **Stir-Ups.** Sometimes recipes get messy! We can take note of what might stir up challenges and think about how we can keep going.
 - **List some things that might distract you from spending time with God.**
 - **How can you make sure that your time with God is free from these distractions?**



See the
Preschool Hacks!



- **Taste Test.** Chefs taste their food to see how it turned out. After you spend time with God this week, you can look back at what you tried and write notes about it.
 - **What did you notice or feel about your time with God?**
 - **What will you remember for next time?**
- Don't forget that spending time with God is the main dish... you don't want to miss out on what God's preparing for you. Now that's *What's Cookin'!*

MEMORY VERSE | Psalm 34:8 (NIV)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Learn the memory verse together using any combination of the resources provided: [memory verse coloring page](#), [sign language motions](#), or choose from [this list](#) of our favorite memorization techniques!*
- **"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him."**

PRAYER

- God, thank you for your love for us. You care about us and always make time for us. Help us remember to make time for you so that we can spend more time together. And thank you for making me part of your family. Amen.