

## A Covenant People

The purpose of Sunday School is to inspire class members to learn, teach, and live the gospel of Jesus Christ every day.

“The Latter-day Saints are a covenant people. From the day of baptism through the spiritual milestones of our lives, we make promises with God and He makes promises with us” (Henry B. Eyring, “[Witnesses for God](#),” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 30). As we increase in our understanding of God’s dealings with His covenant people anciently, we can strengthen our commitment to make and keep our covenants.

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### Prepare

As you study [Genesis 25–35](#), consider asking yourself:

- What do I learn from the accounts of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob about the Lord’s dealings with His children? How might these accounts encourage class members to keep their covenants?
- How do my covenants influence my decisions and priorities? What can I do to keep my covenants more fully?
- What covenants have class members made? What covenants are they or their families preparing to make? What could they share about these experiences?
- How will I inspire class members to learn and teach about covenants and live by the covenants they have made?

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### Encourage personal and family scripture study

Each week you have the opportunity to encourage class members to have meaningful scripture study, individually and with their families. For instance, you might choose to do one or more of the following:

- Invite one or more class members to explain how they teach the gospel in their families. You could also familiarize them with the website titled [My Role in the Work of Salvation](#), which includes resources to help youth prepare for priesthood ordination and temple covenants.
- Invite class members to share how they have acted on impressions they received during a previous class or during their personal study.
- Ask class members to share and explain verses in [Genesis 25–35](#) that they find particularly meaningful. You may want to extend this invitation in advance. This activity could take the majority of the time in class.

#### Teaching in the Savior’s Way

In every setting, Jesus was an example and mentor. He taught His disciples how to pray, love, and serve by the way He lived. What can you do to be a good example to those you teach?

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### Learn together and invite to act

Follow the guidance of the Spirit as you select one or more of these activities or create your own based on the scriptures in this outline and the needs of your class.

- **How can we prepare for and receive the blessings of being a covenant people?**  
Class members could silently review [Genesis 26:2–5](#); [28:3–4](#), [10–15](#), looking for the covenants the Lord made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Why is it important for Latter-day Saints to know about these covenants? To help answer this question, class members could review “Abraham, Covenant of” in the Bible Dictionary. What can parents do to help their children prepare for covenants they will make? You may want to ask class members to share experiences they have had as they or their families have prepared for and made covenants.

- **How does Jacob’s dream relate to the covenants we make?**

As a class, you could sing or read the words of “[Nearer, My God, to Thee](#)” (*Hymns*, no. 100). Then you could read the account of Jacob’s dream in [Genesis 28:10–22](#), inviting class members to look for and discuss phrases from the hymn that relate to the scripture account. To help class members understand the symbolism in Jacob’s dream, you could share President Marion G. Romney’s commentary in “Additional insights” (below). Class members could then discuss how their covenants help them draw nearer to God.

- **How can we show that our covenants are valuable to us?**

Invite class members to think of people they know who value their covenants. What do class members observe in these people’s lives that shows that they value their covenants? Ask class members to read [Genesis 25:29–34](#) and share their impressions about how Jacob and Esau valued the birthright. What in our lives could be compared to a “mess of pottage” that we mistakenly value more than eternal things? You could share the quotation by Elder Dallin H. Oaks in the “Additional learning resources” section and invite class members to ponder what they can do to show they value their covenants and other things of eternal worth.

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### Learning and living the gospel every day

Encourage class members to think about what they learned and felt today. What do they feel impressed to do? For instance, they could:

- Share with their families something from today’s discussion.
- Continue studying this doctrine and act on what they learn.
- Participate in temple work.
- Help someone prepare for his or her baptism, priesthood ordination, or temple covenants.

During the coming week, you could send class members suggestions for home study in preparation for next week’s discussion. Encourage them to consider using one of the ideas listed under “Basic Scripture Study Strategies” or “Family Study Ideas” as they review these resources.

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### Additional learning resources

- [2 Nephi 30:2](#) (the role of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ in becoming part of God’s covenant people)
- Elder Russell M. Nelson, “[Children of the Covenant](#),” *Ensign*, May 1995, 32–35
- Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught:  
The contrast between the spiritual and the temporal is ... illustrated by the twins Esau and Jacob and their different attitudes toward their birthright. The firstborn, Esau, “despised his birthright.” ([Gen. 25:34](#).) Jacob, the second twin, desired it. Jacob valued the spiritual, while Esau sought the things of this world. When he was hungry, Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. “Behold,” he explained, “I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?” ([Gen. 25:32](#).) Many Esaus have given up something of eternal value in order to satisfy a momentary hunger for the things of the world (“Spirituality,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 61).
- Sister Linda K. Burton, “[The Power, Joy, and Love of Covenant Keeping](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 111–14
- Video: [Who Is the Seed of Abraham?](#) (1:15)
- [Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel](#) (2003), 83–90

### Additional insights

- What does God promise His covenant people?

“This covenant with Abraham was . . . a call to leadership. Therefore, it has been interpreted to mean that Abraham and his descendants were chosen to conserve in purity and to advance on earth the eternal plan for human salvation. Consequently, the seed of Abraham are often spoken of as the chosen or covenant people” (John A. Widtsoe, “Why Are We Called a Covenant People?” *Improvement Era*, June 1945, 349).

- What is the meaning of Jacob’s dream about a ladder to heaven?

President Marion G. Romney taught: “When Jacob traveled from Beersheba toward Haran, he had a dream in which he saw himself on the earth at the foot of a ladder that reached to heaven where the Lord stood above it. He beheld angels ascending and descending thereon, and Jacob realized that the covenants he made with the Lord there were the rungs on the ladder that he himself would have to climb in order to obtain the promised blessings—blessings that would entitle him to enter heaven and associate with the Lord.

“Because he had met the Lord and entered into covenants with him there, Jacob considered the site so sacred that he named the place Bethel, a contraction of Beth-Elohim, which means literally ‘the House of the Lord.’ He said of it: ‘. . . this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’ (Gen. 28:17.)

“Jacob not only passed through the gate of heaven, but by living up to every covenant he also went all the way in. Of him and his forebears Abraham and Isaac, the Lord has said: ‘. . . because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.’ (D&C 132:37.)

“Temples are to us all what Bethel was to Jacob. . . . They are also the gates to heaven for all of our unendowed kindred dead. We should all do our duty in bringing our loved ones through them” (“Temples—the Gates to Heaven,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1971, 16).