

Experience the Word

Experience the Word is an experiential storytelling framework which begins in Sunday morning children's faith formation and carries into worship as the Bible reading for the day.

In Sunday School, we begin in a room around tables with chairs. The introduction remains the same for each Experience the Word, and we review the words and motions for this. After that, children and youth who are readers read through the story together, taking turns line by line. If the children are too young to read on their own, we talk about what we know about the story (we often watch a short video of the story during the opening gathering time) and try to put it in order. Then, we wonder together what characters and props we might need to tell the story.

Next, we move to another room that has a completely cleared floor with plenty of room for movement. Each person volunteers for a part (there is always room for everyone who wants to participate), and sometimes we have two of the same character. Each character receives their simple costume, props, and starting place. Then, the narrator slowly reads the story while the story facilitator uses the questions and stage directions in italics to help each character use their body to show the story. At the end, we move back to the first room and ask, "What can we learn about God from this story?"

During worship, we let the whole congregation peek in as we tell the story again. We include everyone who wants to be a part of the story (even those who weren't in Sunday School with us that day), and encourage the congregation to respond with gestures (such as raising their hands at certain parts) and spoken responses of "the crowd" (like "Amen!"). After we Experience the Word together in this way, the pastor preaches a sermon on the same story, tying Sunday School and worship together in a way that includes and reaches all ages.

Included in this file are the full script, the introduction on its own, and the story which the children and youth read.

God's Story: Rebekah and Isaac

characters:

Isaac
servant
God
Rebekah
water helpers
Rebekah's family

props:

head scarf for Isaac
head scarf for Rebekah
head scarves for Rebekah's family
prayer shawl for God
rope belt and towel for the servant
satchel full of sparkly gifts (crown, bracelets, necklaces, etc.)
pitchers, buckets, or bowls for the water helpers
a well (we used a large clean trash can)
a trough (we used a long empty tote)
a bunch of buckets or containers for pretend water

(The narrator reads from the lectern. Isaac and the servant begin on one side. God up in the pulpit. Rebekah and the well in the center. Water helpers seated around the well. Rebekah's family on the opposite side)

(The narrator begins:)

Today, we are going to experience one of God's stories together.

God's story is big: *(everyone stretches arms out wide)*

it begins before the beginning of time, *(everyone stretches to the right)*

it continues today in our lives, *(everyone returns to the center)*

and it extends beyond the end of everything. *(everyone stretches to the left)*

God's story is about people:

old people, *(old people raise hands)*

young people, *(young people raise hands)*

and folks somewhere in the middle, *(everyone else raises hands)*

women and girls, *(women and girls raise hands)*

men and boys, *(men and girls raise hands)*

rich and poor, people from cultures we do not understand

and our neighbors right next door. *(shake hands with someone nearby)*

God's story is about love:

God's love for us, *(everyone points to themselves)*

love for everything God has ever created, *(everyone gestures outward)*

love for the whole cosmos, *(everyone gestures upward)*

and God's story is about us *(everyone points to themselves)*

learning to love God *(everyone points up)*

and one another, too *(everyone points at all the other people)*

God's story is a very important story, perhaps the most important story, and today we are going to be a part of one part of it.

In this part of God's story, we meet a servant. Hello, servant!

*(**wave**)*

This servant's job is to travel far, far away from home and to meet a person, a very special person, that person is going to be the wife of Isaac, his master Abraham's son.

(What does it look like to leave home?)

Now the servant started traveling,

(What does it look like to travel?)

along with ten camels and gifts for the people they would meet, but they didn't know just who they were looking for. They decided to turn to God for advice.

(Servant: What does it look like to pray? God: What does it look like to listen to a prayer?)

"Dear God," the servant prayed, "will you help me figure out who I am supposed to bring home with me? Maybe, I will go to the well in town and ask for a drink. Whoever gives me a drink and waters my camels will be the one you choose to be Isaac's wife. Thank you, God!" And all God's people said, *(Amen!)*

After a long trip, the servant finally arrived at the town where he had been sent.

He went to the well

(go to the well)

and asked a woman named Rebekah for a drink. She said, "Yes!

(how do you show Yes?)

I will give you a drink, and bring water for your camels also. You are very welcome here!"

Did you know that camels drink A LOT of water? They drink so much water that it is a VERY BIG job. Should we help Rebekah show hospitality to the servant and make them feel welcome by helping with this big job?

(Organize a fireman's chain from the well to Rebekah to the servant at the trough. Count off giving a drink to 10 camels, one at a time. Invite water carriers to be seated again.)

After this big job was done, the servant gave Rebekah many expensive gifts.

(give gifts)

Then, Rebekah took the servant home to her family.

(go to family's house)

The servant explained his job, and his prayer to God, and asked Rebekah to come home with him to marry Isaac, the son of Abraham, his master. Her family was sad

(how do you show that you are sad?)

and would miss her, but Rebekah was ready to go. She knew that God had chosen her for an important job, and that she could use her gift of welcoming others even in a new land. She traveled with the servant

(what does it look like to travel?)

all the way back to Isaac's home

(How can Isaac welcome Rebekah?)

where she served God as Isaac's wife, as the mother of Jacob and Esau, and as a woman full of welcome, all the days of her life.

And that's a part of God's story!

(Hooray!)

God's Story: Introduction

Today, we are going to experience one of God's stories together.

God's story is big: it begins before the beginning of time, it continues today in our lives, and it extends beyond the end of everything.

God's story is about people: old people, young people, and folks somewhere in the middle, women and men, rich and poor, people from cultures we do not understand and our neighbors right next door.

God's story is about love: God's love for us, love for everything God has ever created, love for the whole cosmos, and God's story is about us learning to love God and one another, too

God's story is a very important story, perhaps the most important story, and today we are going to be a part of one part of it.

God's Story: Rebekah and Isaac

In this part of God's story, we meet a servant. This servant's job was to travel far, far away from home and to meet a person, a very special person, that person is going to be the wife of Isaac, his master Abraham's son.

Now the servant started traveling, along with ten camels and gifts for the people they would meet, but they didn't know just who they were looking for. They decided to turn to God for advice.

"Dear God," the servant prayed, "will you help me figure out who I am supposed to bring home with me? Maybe, I will go to the well in town and ask for a drink. Whoever gives me a drink and waters my camels will be the one you choose to be Isaac's wife. Thank you, God! Amen."

After a long trip, the servant finally arrived at the town where he had been sent. He went to the well and asked a woman named Rebekah for a drink. She said, "Yes! I will give you a drink, and bring water for your camels also. You are very welcome here!"

Did you know that camels drink A LOT of water? They drink so much water that it is a VERY BIG job, but Rebekah wanted to show that the servant was welcome, so she was up to doing it.

After this big job was done, the servant gave Rebekah many expensive gifts. Then, Rebekah took the servant home to her family.

The servant explained his job, and his prayer to God, and asked Rebekah to come home with him to marry Isaac, the son of Abraham, his master. Her family was sad and would miss her, but Rebekah was ready to go. She knew that God had chosen her for an important job, and that she could use her gift of welcoming others even in a new land.

She traveled with the servant all the way back to Isaac's home where she served God as Isaac's wife, as the mother of Jacob and Esau, and as a woman full of welcome, the days of her life. And that's a part of God's story!