Jacob and the Midnight Wrestle

GOD GIVES ME PEACE AND HELPS ME TO MAKE PEACE WITH OTHERS.



MEMORY VERSE

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called Sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Word of the Week—Peace:

The feeling of quiet, calm, safety, and contentment in our hearts. God's love, protection, and care can give us peace no matter what trouble we face. Peace is also a time without fighting. God can help us make peace with others we may have quarreled with or hurt.

This week's lesson is based on Genesis 32; 33; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 195-203; *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 94-99; and *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 405-411. **Extra Reading:** *The Bible Story,* vol. 2, pp. 32-39.



MISSION CHALLENGE: Invite a friend to help you be a secret helper this week. What undercover acts of kindness can you share together?

SUNDAY

SPECIAL PROTECTION

DO: Walk around your home/neighborhood and enjoy the memories you have of particular places. You might like to take some photos or draw special spots. Alternatively look at family photos.

Jacob and his big family journeyed away from Mizpah with a sense of peace. Uncle Laban, who had tricked Jacob so many times, had agreed to never make trouble with his family again. Jacob must have smiled to himself many times as he remembered Laban's final blessing.

But now, as Jacob neared his family home in Canaan, his peace slipped away. He thought of how he had lied and tricked his brother and father long ago. He remembered Esau's scary last words: "I will kill my brother" (Genesis 27:41). Jacob's stomach must have knotted with fear. *Would Esau still want to hurt him?*

God understood Jacob's fear, as God always does. He sent a special reminder that He was always with Jacob. He would give Jacob protection and peace.

Suddenly Jacob looked up from the dusty road to see an army of angels! He must have blinked and rubbed his eyes with surprise. Shining angels hovered in front of him. He spun around, and there were more angels behind his big family. Every adult, every child, and even the tiniest lambs were protected by angel guardians.

God promises to send angels to protect you too, just as he did Jacob.

READ PSALM 91:11. When we are fearful, or have sad and painful memories, we can remember that our loving God and His angels are with us, even though we can't see them.

Jacob remembered God's ladder of angels that had given him hope when he had run away from Canaan. And now 20 years later, God's protecting angels were guiding him safely home. "This is God's camp," said Jacob, in awe (Genesis 32:2). He praised God and named the place Mahanaim, which means "two hosts" or "two camps": Jacob's on the ground and God's above. He would always remember how God had given him peace instead of fear in this special place.

THINK . . . THEN TALK ABOUT IT:

- *Angels are always with us. Why did God let Jacob see them?*
- *How can you creatively make Psalm 91:11 a special text to remember and share?*

PRAY: Close your eyes and imagine God's protecting angels around you. Praise God for them.

MONDAY

Kind Words

God's peace settled over Jacob like a warm blanket. But he still worried as he walked. Could he make peace with his brother? Jacob had let God forgive and change him; he was a different man than when he'd left home. What would it take to show Esau he was truly sorry?

He had an idea! He would send several servants to find Esau and give him a kind message. What did his message say? *Read Genesis 32:4, 5.*

God's Word says, "Let your speech always be with grace" (Colossians 4:6). Jacob had been freely forgiven by God. He didn't earn God's forgiveness and blessings, that was God's gift of grace. Now Jacob would show grace to his brother with kind, respectful, peaceful words. He had said, "My lord Esau" and "Your servant Jacob" to show that he wanted Esau to be more respected than him. His words told Esau that he would not claim or expect any of the family inheritance. He simply longed for forgiveness from his brother.

Jacob waited nervously for Esau's reply. Would it be friendly too? His servants huffed and puffed as they returned. Then they sadly shook their heads. There was no message for Jacob. But there was news to share—frightening news! Esau had already heard of Jacob's return and was approaching with 400 strong men!

Terror filled the camp, and Jacob's heart pounded with fear. He had tried to be a peacemaker; now he had to prepare for the worst. He quickly divided his unarmed and helpless tribe into two camps. That way, if one was attacked, the other may have time to escape. He had now done all he could.

When God's forgiveness fills our hearts, He helps us to want to make it right with those we have hurt or quarreled with. Our words will be respectful and gracious as we try to make peace.

PRAY: With your Bible open, place your hand on Colossians 4:6 and thank God for helping you to speak with grace.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *How would you have felt at this point in the story if you were Jacob?*
- *How easy or hard do you find it to make things right with your siblings/friends after you have hurt or quarreled with them?*
- *Read* ***Ecclesiastes 10:12****. What gracious and respectful words could you use when you are seeking forgiveness?*

DO: With permission, pour some salt onto a table. Read **Colossians 4:6**. Use the salt to shape the word "grace." Leave it there through the family mealtime to remind you and your family to speak respectfully.





☐ TUESDAY

PRAYER AND PRESENTS

As Esau and his band of fighting men marched closer, Jacob gave his fear to God. He prayed and prayed, for he fully believed promise to bless him.

What did Jacob pray for? *READ GENESIS 32:9-12.*

Jacob's humble prayer showed how close he had grown to God during his long, hard years with Uncle Laban. It also showed how much he trusted God and how grateful he was for God's blessings. God is helping you to grow closer to Him too.

After his prayer Jacob wanted even more desperately to have peace with his brother. So he focused on what else he could do to soften Esau's hatred. He chose five gifts. What were they? *READ GENESIS 32:13-15.*

The gifts trotted down the road with his servants. Each group of male and female animals was a very valuable gift that would keep on giving as the animals had babies. Jacob's gifts would help Esau become a much richer man. Once again Jacob sent his servants to pass on a kind, gracious message as well. Oh how he hoped the gifts would be accepted . . . and that he could soon be friends with his brother again.

Our gracious God loves to hear us pray and claim His promises, especially when we are in deep trouble like Jacob. God promises us in His word: "God is our protection and our strength. He always helps in times of trouble" (Psalm 46:1, ICB).

THINK . . . THEN TALK ABOUT IT:

- *Romans 14:19 says, "Let us pursue the things which make for peace." How well does this verse apply to Jacob?*
- *How could you put this verse into action for someone in your family? Could you do something kind for someone you have hurt? Could you give them a gift?*

PRAY: You may like to include some of the ideas from the "DO" activity in your prayer.

FOR YOU, PARENTS: "Jesus assures His disciples of God's sympathy for them in their needs and weaknesses. Not a sigh is breathed, not a pain felt, not a grief pierces the soul, but the throb vibrates in the Father's heart" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages,* p. 356).

DO: Read Jacob's prayer in **Genesis 32:9-12** again. In a journal, write the words from his prayer that match the ideas below:

1. Claiming God's promises
2. Being humble before God
3. Thanking God for His blessings
4. A request

WEDNESDAY

A Nighttime Struggle

No kind words came back from Esau. There was nothing but silence.

Jacob sent his whole camp across the Jabbok River while he stayed alone to pray. Night fell. Still he prayed alone in the dark. He felt scared and guilty. He knew it was his sin that had put his innocent family in danger.

Strong hands suddenly seized Jacob in the midnight blackness. Terrified, he wrestled with the stranger for hours, trying to get free. At the same time, a battle raged inside him. Guilt for his past sins fought to crowd out God's promises and peace.

Sometimes the battle rages in our hearts too. Past sins weigh us down with guilt, and we feel as if we've been too naughty for God to love. But this is a big fat lie! For Romans 8:38 says, "I am sure that nothing can separate us from the love God has for us" (ICB).

At daybreak the wrestling stranger touched Jacob's hip. Instantly it popped out of its joint and the muscle shrank. What power! Suddenly Jacob realized that this was no ordinary man! He knew it was God's Son, Christ, sometimes called "the Angel of the covenant." Jacob clung to the Angel, Christ, pleading for a blessing: "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" (Genesis 32:26). God had clung to Jacob as they wrestled; now Jacob clung to God. The long nighttime wrestle didn't look like a battle anymore. Instead it was a beautiful picture of our loving God holding on to helpless Jacob, and Jacob desperately clinging to his faithful God.

What did God do next? **Read Genesis 32:27-29.**

What a wonderful way for the battle to end! Jacob's new name suited him perfectly because he had clung to God and not let go. The blessings of forgiveness and peace were now fully his.

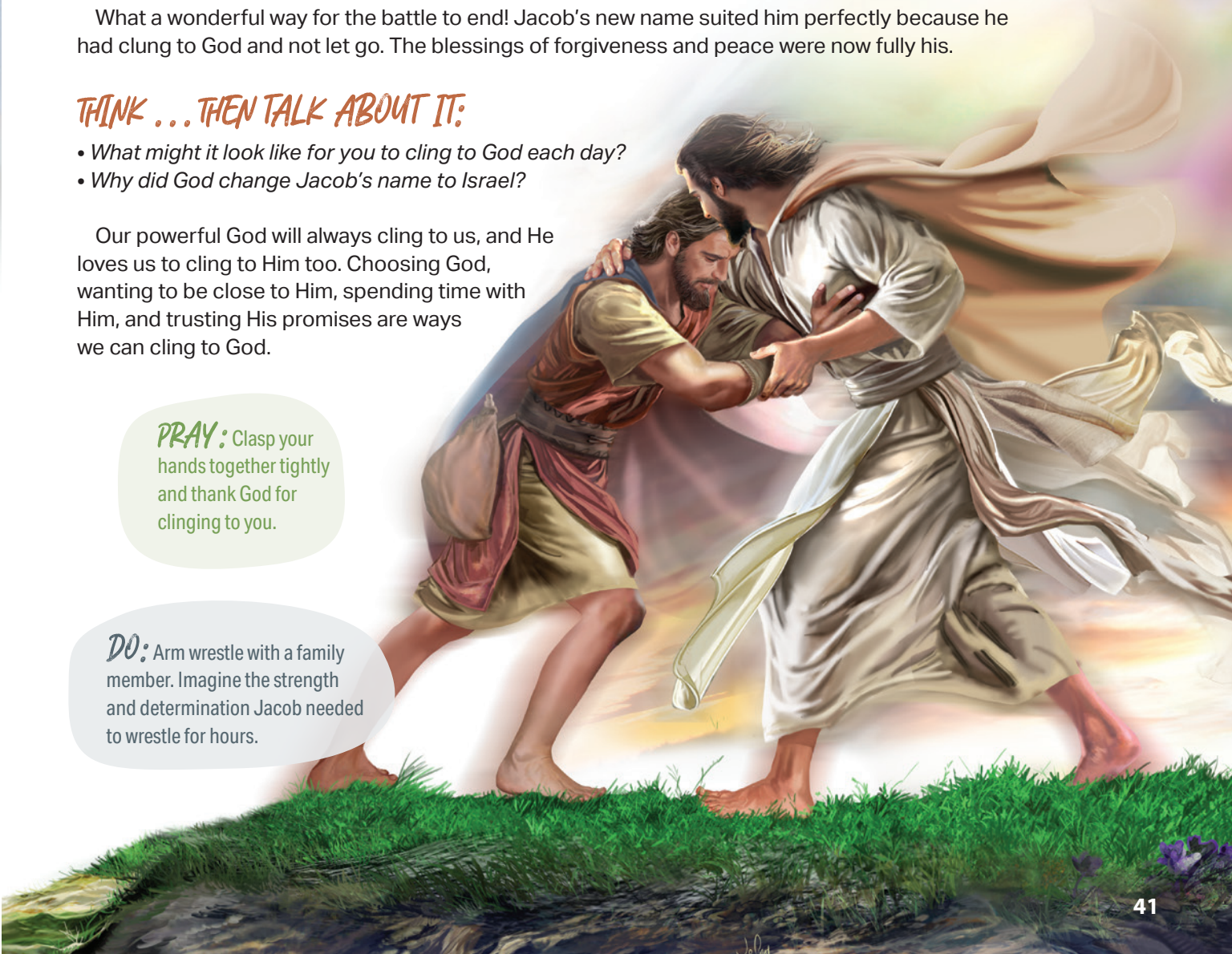
Think . . . Then Talk About It:

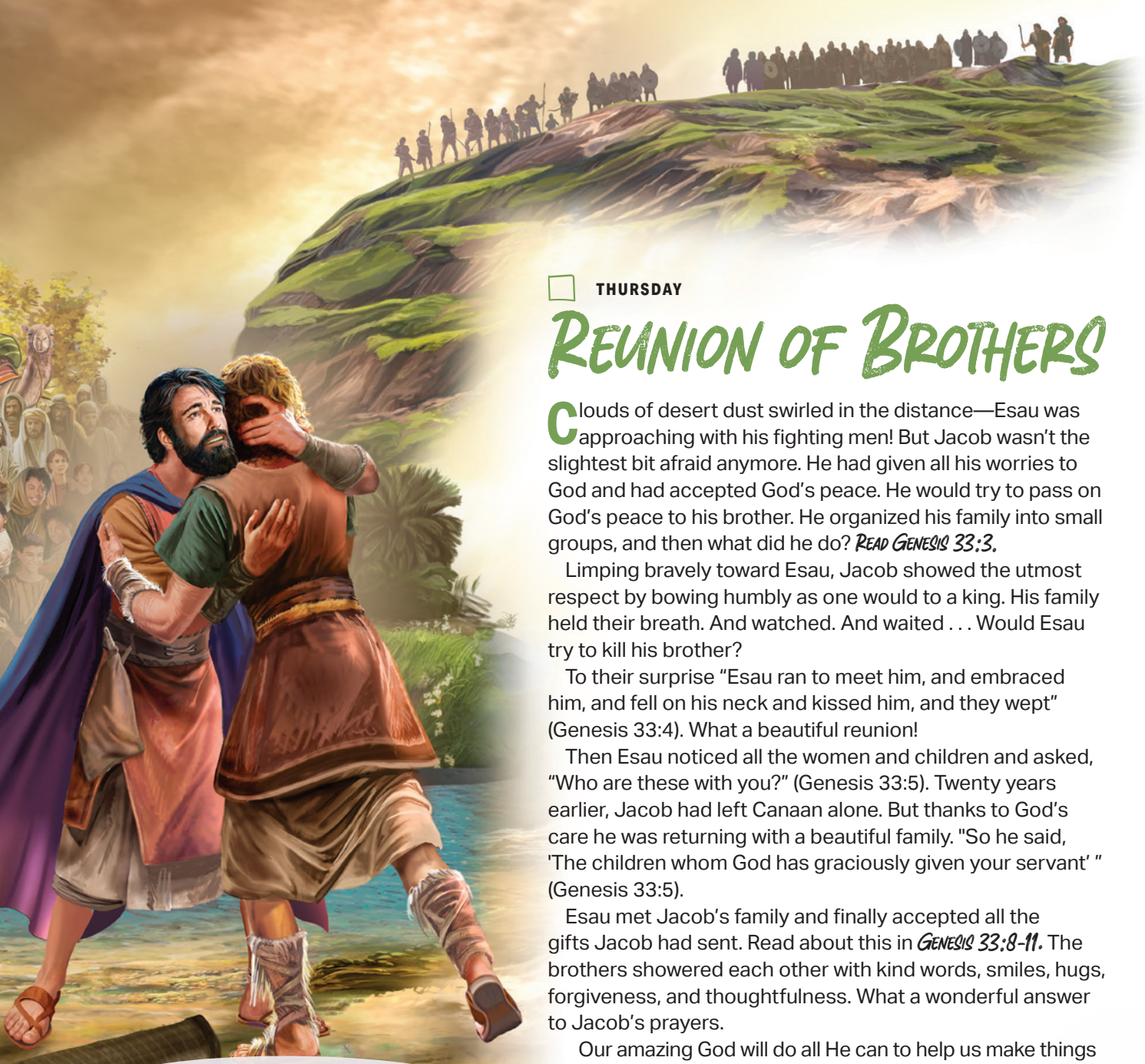
- *What might it look like for you to cling to God each day?*
- *Why did God change Jacob's name to Israel?*

Our powerful God will always cling to us, and He loves us to cling to Him too. Choosing God, wanting to be close to Him, spending time with Him, and trusting His promises are ways we can cling to God.

Pray: Clasp your hands together tightly and thank God for clinging to you.

Do: Arm wrestle with a family member. Imagine the strength and determination Jacob needed to wrestle for hours.





THURSDAY

Reunion of Brothers

Clouds of desert dust swirled in the distance—Esau was approaching with his fighting men! But Jacob wasn't the slightest bit afraid anymore. He had given all his worries to God and had accepted God's peace. He would try to pass on God's peace to his brother. He organized his family into small groups, and then what did he do? **Read Genesis 33:3.**

Limping bravely toward Esau, Jacob showed the utmost respect by bowing humbly as one would to a king. His family held their breath. And watched. And waited . . . Would Esau try to kill his brother?

To their surprise "Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept" (Genesis 33:4). What a beautiful reunion!

Then Esau noticed all the women and children and asked, "Who are these with you?" (Genesis 33:5). Twenty years earlier, Jacob had left Canaan alone. But thanks to God's care he was returning with a beautiful family. "So he said, 'The children whom God has graciously given your servant' " (Genesis 33:5).

Esau met Jacob's family and finally accepted all the gifts Jacob had sent. Read about this in **Genesis 33:8-11.** The brothers showered each other with kind words, smiles, hugs, forgiveness, and thoughtfulness. What a wonderful answer to Jacob's prayers.

Our amazing God will do all He can to help us make things right with others, even when we have knowingly chosen to do something hurtful. He knows how much better we will feel when forgiveness is given and friendships are mended.

PARENT FAITH TALK: Share about a time that God helped you to be a peacemaker.

THINK . . . THEN TALK ABOUT IT:

- *Why was Jacob able to meet his brother peacefully?*
- *Read or sing your memory verse. Why do you think Jesus said we will be called "Sons of God" when we make peace with others?*

DO: Look back through the lesson and make a list or talk about each of the following:

- The things *God* did to help Jacob and Esau make peace
- The things *Jacob* did to try to make things right with Esau
- The things *Esau* said to show that he had forgiven Jacob (Read **Genesis 33:8-15**.)

PRAY: Ask God to help make your family and friendships peaceful.

FRIDAY

Home at Last

The happy brothers hugged goodbye with nothing but peace between them. Then Jacob and his tribe slowly made their way across the Jordan River and into the land of Canaan. He was back in his homeland at last!

Jacob bought a large piece of land and settled in the lush valley of Shechem, where Grandfather Abraham had camped when he arrived in Canaan 180 years before. And just as his faithful ancestor had done (Genesis 12:7), Jacob worshipped God with a grateful heart. How did he worship? **Read Genesis 33:20.**

Jacob had so many reasons to worship God! He had left with nothing and returned with much. His sins had been forgiven, guilt had turned into peace, fear was replaced by trust, troubles had turned into blessings. And best of all, God had changed the brothers' hearts so they could have peace.

Jacob called the place "El Elohe Israel," for it means "The mighty God is the God of Israel." It would always be a special reminder of how our mighty God had been with the runaway Jacob for 20 years and brought him home at last.

Worshipping our mighty God is a natural thing to do when our hearts are filled with gratitude for all He has done for us. Like Jacob, we can call Him "The mighty God."

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Have you ever made up with a friend or family member after a quarrel? What happened and how did you feel?*
- *Did you remember to thank God for helping you make peace? You can always do so now.*

Friday Night

Share and Praise

What praise songs come to mind when you think of the themes in this week's lesson? Sing several together, including "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 499).

Family Journal

- What have you learned about peace and forgiveness in this story?
- Finish the sentence: Remembering this story will help me when I . . .

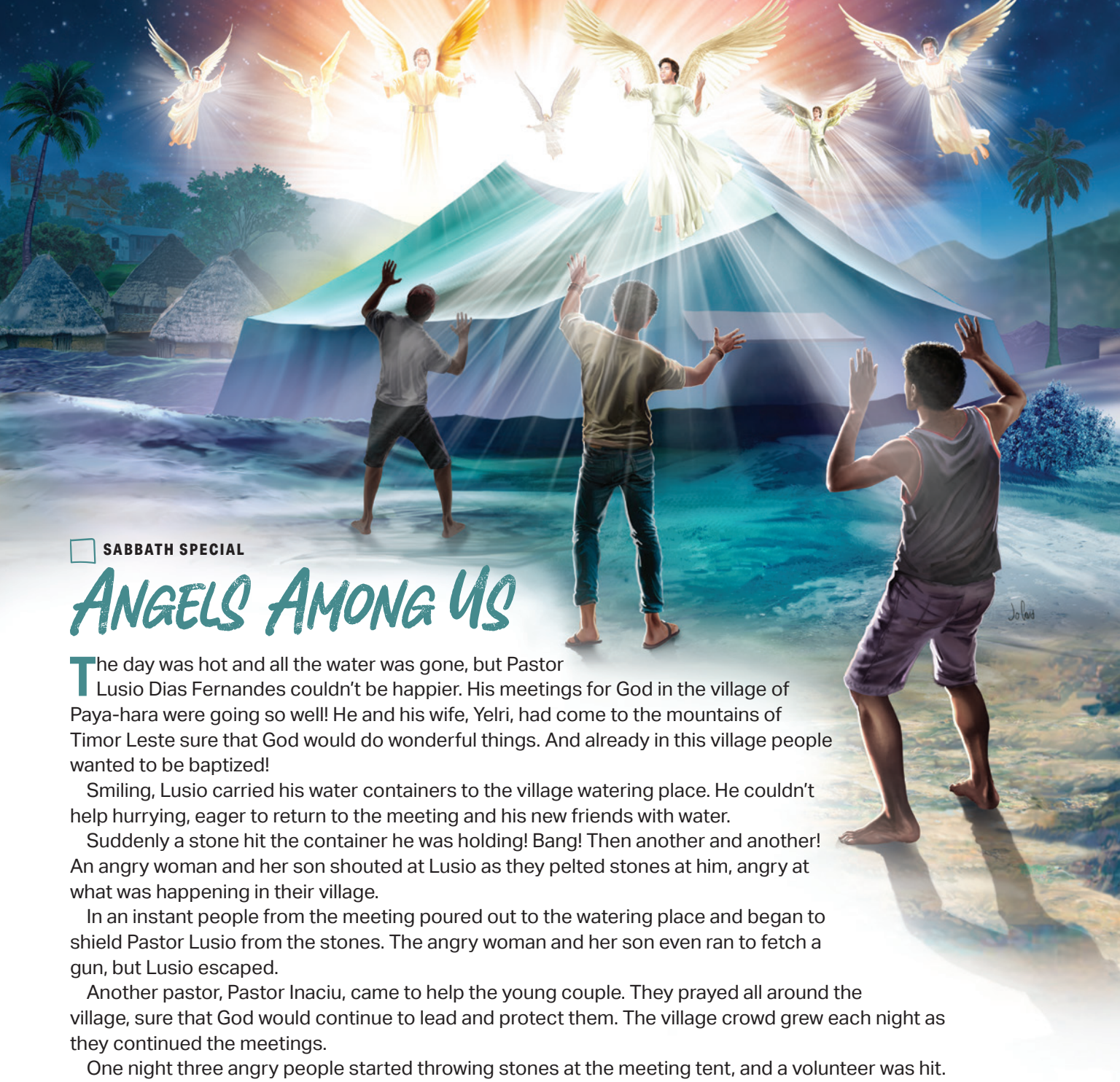
Do

Draw a stone altar. Invite family members to write blessings they have received this week on the stones.

Pray

Make a family circle around your altar and pray. Thank God for what has encouraged you in this week's story. Thank God that He is with you in good times and bad, just as He was with Jacob.





SABBATH SPECIAL

Angels Among Us

The day was hot and all the water was gone, but Pastor Lusio Dias Fernandes couldn't be happier. His meetings for God in the village of Paya-hara were going so well! He and his wife, Yelri, had come to the mountains of Timor Leste sure that God would do wonderful things. And already in this village people wanted to be baptized!

Smiling, Lusio carried his water containers to the village watering place. He couldn't help hurrying, eager to return to the meeting and his new friends with water.

Suddenly a stone hit the container he was holding! Bang! Then another and another! An angry woman and her son shouted at Lusio as they pelted stones at him, angry at what was happening in their village.

In an instant people from the meeting poured out to the watering place and began to shield Pastor Lusio from the stones. The angry woman and her son even ran to fetch a gun, but Lusio escaped.

Another pastor, Pastor Inaciu, came to help the young couple. They prayed all around the village, sure that God would continue to lead and protect them. The village crowd grew each night as they continued the meetings.

One night three angry people started throwing stones at the meeting tent, and a volunteer was hit. Blood streamed down his face, so the meeting and the stone throwing stopped. But later more stones were thrown at people riding on the back of a truck as it took them up the mountain to their homes.

God knew His team of workers and those who attended the meetings were fearful and worried. So that night He sent seven bright shining angels through the campground to encourage them. Three young men saw the marvelous sight. Then the tall angels in shining white began to walk outside the camp, becoming smaller and smaller until they disappeared.

The next day, the three young men told all the villagers about the shining angels. Everyone was encouraged! God had reminded them that He will protect His children.

The next Sabbath, October 19, 2019, a group of 13 young people gave their hearts to Jesus and were baptized. In that happy group of young people were two of the young men who had seen the angels: they knew God and His bright shining angels were very real.

This story is adapted from "Angels Among Us," by Andrew McChesney, *Youth and Adult Mission*, copyright (c) 2022 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®. Used and adapted by permission.