

Jacob Gets Esau's Birthright

(Genesis 25:21-34)

Introduction

Have you ever been tricked? How does it feel when a friend tricks you or lies to you? What happened to your friendship?

Today we've got a lesson about how one brother tricks another into selling something of great value. And we are going to learn that God always wants us to forgive people who sin against us.

Opening Prayer

Lord, sometimes it is hard to forgive someone when they have wronged us. Help us to remember how much You have forgiven us so that we might have the grace to forgive them. Open our spiritual eyes and ears this morning so that we might learn more about how wonderful You are. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

Deceit fills hearts that are plotting evil; joy fills hearts that are planning peace! (Proverbs 12:20)

Lesson

Last week we learned about how Abraham found a bride for his son, Isaac. To review let me ask you some questions:

1. Abraham didn't want Isaac to marry a woman from the land of Canaan. Why was that? (He didn't want Isaac to marry a woman of another faith. He knew that if Isaac married one of the local Canaanite girls who worshiped idols, Isaac might be lead away from the only true God.)
2. So Abraham sent his servant back to his homeland to find a wife for Isaac. How did the servant know which girl was the one for Isaac? (He prayed to God, "When I ask a girl for a drink and she

says, 'Yes, certainly, and I will water your camels, too,' let her be the one who will become Isaac's wife." Then, Rebekah came out with her pitcher on her shoulder... so it happened just as the servant asked of God!)

God led the servant to the right village, the right well, and the right girl. God leads and guides each of us every day, too. But what do we have to do to get His direction? (Pray, ask, listen, and obey)

So Isaac and Rebekah were married. But, just like Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah were not able to have children. We'll pick up the story at the point where they had been married for 20 years and still God hadn't given them any children.

Genesis 25:21

Isaac pleaded with the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was unable to have children. The LORD answered Isaac's prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins.

Like Sarah, Rebekah couldn't have children. So, Isaac begged the Lord for a child. And, God answered their prayers. Rebekah had not one baby, but two! She had twins.

Genesis 25:22

But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. So she went to ask the LORD about it. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked.

Rebekah asked the Lord why the babies inside her stomach felt as if they were at war with one another. Listen to what God told her:

Genesis 25:23

And the LORD told her, "The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son."

God told Rebekah that the two sons that would be born to her would become two enemy nations. One would be stronger than the other; and the older shall be a servant of the younger! This is a very important prediction that the Lord gave. And the meaning of it will become clearer to you as we go on with the story. But, notice that

God said this was going to be true so we know that it would happen. God never lies and He's always right. He never makes mistakes.

Genesis 25:24-26

And when the time came to give birth, Rebekah discovered that she did indeed have twins! The first one was very red at birth and covered with thick hair like a fur coat. So they named him Esau. Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

Esau was hairy and Jacob was smooth-skinned. Let's read on...

Genesis 25:27-28

As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

So you see, Isaac favored Esau because he liked to go hunting and would bring home good meat for him to eat. And, Rebekah favored Jacob. He probably helped his mother around the house with the cooking.

One day Jacob was cooking up a delicious meal when Esau came in from hunting, and Jacob tricked Esau into selling him something of great value. Let's see what happens....

Genesis 25:29-34

One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!" (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means "red.") "All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son." "Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?" But Jacob said, "First you must swear that your birthright is mine." So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left. He showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn.

A birthright was a special honor given to the firstborn son. It meant you got twice as much as the others of the inheritance money when your parents died. It also meant you had the responsibility of becoming the family leader. With privilege comes responsibility!

All of this Esau gave up because he wanted something to eat "right now." He just didn't appreciate the value of his birthright.

Esau sold something that would have lasted for a lifetime for some food that would last only for a few hours! Someday he would be very sorry he didn't stop and think about what he was doing. He acted too quickly and suffered for it.

Let me give you an example that might help. [Teacher, hold up a giant-sized candy bar.] What will you give me for this? [Let the bidding begin!] Keep in mind, I stopped at the store and purchased this for \$2.50 on my way to Sunday school. [Try to keep the bidding reasonable! Once you've established the value of the candy bar, continue...] OK, who has a really nice bicycle at home? Would you trade me your bicycle for this candy bar? Your bicycle will last you for years, maybe even a life time... but the memory of eating this candy bar will be gone in an hour or so!

When we see something we want, our first impulse is to get it. But immediate pleasure often loses sight of the future. We should think before we act! Esau didn't appreciate the blessings he had. He was too quick to trade the most valuable thing in his life for a bowl of stew.

There's a lesson here for us: If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, God has given you a birthright. You now are "born again" and get to live forever and ever in Heaven when you die. Don't treat your birthright lightly! Appreciate it with all your might. The things of the world are going to look very appealing to you as you go through life, but don't sell out! Don't trade your birthright for something as worthless as Esau did.

What are some ways that you and I can disregard or disrespect our birthright as Christians? [Teacher, let the children respond.] Jesus died on the cross so that you and I could have our sins forgiven.

When we deliberately sin, it is as if we have slapped Jesus in the face. When we grumble or complain, it is as if we have said that what Jesus did for us on the cross wasn't good enough. Anytime we say anything, or do anything, or even think anything that is not God-pleasing is disrespecting our birthright.

To bring it back to our lesson this morning, one way we can show God that we appreciate all He has done for us, is to forgive people that sin against us.

Esau sinned against God by disregarding his birthright. Because he didn't cherish the value of it, he was willing to sell it for a bowl of soup. But, Jacob sinned against Esau by tricking him into selling his birthright. If you have ever been tricked or lied to, God wants you to forgive that person, just like he forgives you of your sins.

We're going to learn more about how Jacob and Esau finally forgive one another in a few weeks. But next week we will continue the story of Jacob and Esau and we'll discover that things get even worse. Their mother takes matters into her hands and really does some bad things, too. But, in spite of their sins, God blesses Jacob and makes of him a great nation, just as God promised. It just goes to show that God's blessings come to us not because we've done good things; it comes to us because He chooses to bless us. He loves us with an everlasting love. And, nothing we do or don't do can change His mind about us.

CLOSING PRAYER

Help us, Lord, to always be truthful. Don't let us follow Jacob's example of being a deceiver. Father, we are so glad You are loving and forgiving. Thank You for sending Jesus who has taken the punishment for our sins when He died on the cross. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

CRAFT CORNER

Create a Family Tree (See example on next page.)

GAME CENTER

Nerf Dodge Ball. Have the children stand in a circle. Throw a Nerf ball at a child. If he gets hit, he must answer the review question for a piece of candy. Then that child gets to throw the ball at another child. And so forth until all the children have had a chance to win a piece of candy for answering a review question.

Review Questions

1. Tell me the names of Abraham's descendants that we've learned about so far. (His son, Isaac, married Rebekah and they had two sons, Esau and Jacob.)
2. What did God promise Abraham? (His descendants would become a great nation.)
3. What did God promise Rebekah concerning her sons? (They would become enemy nations and the younger one would rule over the older.)
4. Which one of the twins was hairy? (Esau)
5. Why did Isaac favor Esau? (Because he liked to go hunting and would bring home good meat for him to eat.)
6. Why did Rebekah favor Jacob? (Because he liked to help her around the house.)
7. How did Jacob trick his older brother? (Esau came in from hunting and was really hungry. So, Jacob said he'd give him something to eat if Esau would sell him his birthright.)

8. What is a birthright? (A special honor given to the firstborn son which entitled him to twice as much inheritance as his siblings.)
9. What was Esau's sin? (He sold something of great lasting value for food to satisfy for only a few hours.)
10. What can we learn from Esau's sin? (Don't be impulsive. Think before you act. Also, he didn't appreciate the privilege he had of being the firstborn son.)
11. What was Jacob's sin? (He tricked his brother into selling the birthright to him. He didn't need to be crafty to help God fulfill His promise. It's not good to take matters into our own hands.)
12. What can we learn from Jacob's sin? (Don't trick people into doing something they shouldn't do. Let God fulfill His great plan for your life in His time and in His way.)
13. What's our memory verse for today? (Proverbs 12:20)

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