

Genesis 25:19-28. “Rebekah: The Mother of Esau and Jacob” (p.18)

Ajax Alliance Church. Mother’s Day. Sunday May 12th, 2024.

Genesis 25:19–28 ¹⁹ These are **the generations of Isaac**, Abraham’s son: Abraham fathered **Isaac**, ²⁰ and Isaac was **forty years old** when he took **Rebekah**, the daughter of **Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram**, the sister of **Laban the Aramean**, to be his wife. ²¹ And Isaac **prayed** to the LORD for his wife, because she was **barren**. And **the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived**. ²² **The children struggled together within her**, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. ²³ And the LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.” ²⁴ When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵ The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name **Esau**. ²⁶ Afterward **his brother came out with his hand holding Esau’s heel**, so his name was called **Jacob**. Isaac was **sixty years old** when she bore them. ²⁷ When **the boys grew up**, **Esau was a skillful hunter**, a man of the field, while **Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents**. ²⁸ Isaac loved Esau because **he ate of his game**, but **Rebekah loved Jacob**. (ESV)

Mother’s Day can be difficult at the best of times. **There are those who have** miscarried, aborted, lost **a child to illness or accident**. **There are those who cannot** or have chosen **not to conceive**. **There are those** who are **alienated** from their children and those who just **can’t** seem to get through. **There are those who weep** over unsaved children and those who **weep** over backsliding children. With **so many challenges** to motherhood **should we even have a time** to celebrate it? Naturally, **it’s appropriate to honor what God has established every day**. The **Bible even calls us to** “**Outdo one another in showing honor**” (Romans 12:10). We find **numerous examples** of particular individuals who exemplify what God loves and they are singled out for honor in which to emulate or as **examples of action** in which to **avoid**.

Rebekah, as recorded in **Genesis 25**, **struggled** with **infertility**, family **conflict** and **the future for her boys Esau and Jacob**. **Starting from the point** of God’s apparent **abandonment**, **well beyond** her childbearing years, **she wondered** how God would fulfill His promises to her family. **Even when God did seem to grant her prayers** that her husband brought before the Lord, **God did so**, in a way that seemed to just bring more **trouble**. So much **trouble** that **she wondered why this was all happening to her**. **God’s answer to her plight** only seemed to bring more **confusion**. **Her story** is a story of struggle, faith and **mistakes**. **It is such a real story** that we can see ourselves in the struggle.

Rebekah’s story should cause us to ask real and tough questions of ourselves. **How do we properly respond** when things **don’t** seem to be progressing? **What do we do** when **difficulties** only seem to get **worse**? **How do we learn from past mistakes**, and **what do we do to avoid** falling into the same trap? **Rebekah’s story shows the reality of motherhood** in all its **struggles, conflict** and **pain**. But it **is a story of God’s faithfulness** even when everything seems

to be going **wrong**. **It should direct us**, encourage us and **cause us all to be awed** in the wisdom, workings and majesty of God.

Rebekah the Mother of Esau and Jacob, is a lesson in struggling through: First, **1) A disappointed home** (Genesis 25:19-21), **2) A distressed home** (Genesis 25:22-23) and **3) A divided home** (Genesis 25:24-28).

Rebekah the Mother of Esau and Jacob, is a lesson in struggling through:

1) A Disappointed Home (Genesis 25:19-21).

Genesis 25:19-21. ¹⁹These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham fathered Isaac, ²⁰and Isaac was forty years old when he took **Rebekah**, the daughter of **Bethuel** the Aramean of **Paddan-aram**, the sister of **Laban** the Aramean, to be his wife. ²¹And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and **Rebekah** his wife conceived. (ESV)

Barrenness in those days was a real reproach for the couple but especially for the woman. And **for Isaac and Rebekah** it was also a real test of their faith, **for God had promised Isaac** that the promised seed (**Christ the Messiah** would come through him [**Genesis 21:12**]), but **without** any children **that promise** seemed **impossible** to fulfill. (Butler, J. G. (2008). *Analytical Bible Expositor: Genesis* (p. 238). Clinton, IA: LBC Publications.)

- **Life is often full of disappointments.** But it is **faithfulness through these challenges** that the Glory of God shines. **Real faith** is **not** getting everything we want when we want it, but **trusting God** to give us what is good, in **His timing**. **The faith of Rebekah** stands as an example of **perseverance** through temporal **disappointment**.

The reference in verse 20 to 'Bethuel', the father of Rebekah and Laban (25:20), **takes us back** to Isaac's marriage to **Rebekah** and **prepares us for the account** of Jacob's journey to Padan Aram. **Isaac was forty when he took/married Rebekah.** According to the rabbis, **men normally took a wife/married** before they were twenty. **Verse 26** gives us the added detail that **Isaac** was 'sixty years old' when his wife first gave birth (25:26). Not only did he **marry** twenty years later than most men, but he was **married for twenty years** before they had children. **The reality of our faith** is daily put to a multitude of little (and not so little) tests. Of course, when what **God has promised** **doesn't** seem to be materializing, **Satan** is immediately on hand offering us **deceptive** shortcuts that seem at first sight to bring us to the same point. **For Abraham and Sarah**, as the years of waiting dragged on, he presented the shortcut of Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian maidservant (**Gen. 16**). **It seemed to human wisdom** a practical way of bringing about the desired result. **The result**, however, was **disaster**. The child who was produced by this strategy was **not Isaac**, the child of promise, but Ishmael. (Duguid, I. M. (2002). *Living in the Grip of Relentless Grace: The Gospel in the Lives of Isaac and Jacob*. (T. Longman III & J. A. Groves, Eds.) (pp. 3-4). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.)

Rebekah had left her father's home with the blessing of having many children ringing in her ears (24:60). It was a **miserable** position for any woman from the ancient Near East to be in; how much more so for **people who believed the divine promises** concerning many descendants! This is almost a rerun of the **problem** that confronted **Abraham and Sarah**. **Isaac and Rebekah** could have gone in for the ancient equivalent of **surrogate motherhood**, but they did

not. **Isaac** may appear to have been a rather **passive** figure, but in his favour it must be said that he did **not** make the **mistake** of his parents. He did **not** seek to force God's hand. It was a **real test of faith** as the years went by and they remained **childless**. **In carrying forward his plans God also trains His people**. **His apparent delays are for their good**. **The husband and wife** may have been specially selected to be participants in the program for God's chosen people, but **they had to wait** for God to open the womb. (Redford, D. (2008). *The Pentateuch* (Vol. 1, p. 102). Cincinnati, OH: Standard Publishing.)

- **This Mother's Day** may **not** be **the grand family celebration** that we would have liked. **The story of Rebekah** is **not** that God guarantees children, but that **His apparent delay** has a purpose. **He will bless** those who faithfully wait on Him.

Isaac and Rebekah waited twenty years for a family, but **no** children came. **The entire Book of Genesis** emphasizes the sovereignty of God and the wisdom of His "delays." **Abraham and Sarah** had to wait twenty-five years for Isaac to be born; **Jacob** had to labor fourteen years to obtain his two wives; and **Joseph** had to wait over twenty years before he was reconciled to his brothers. **Our times are in His hands (Ps. 31:15)**, and **His timing is never wrong**. **Like Abraham, verse 21** notes that **Isaac** was a man of prayer; so **he interceded with the Lord** on behalf of **his barren wife**. **Isaac** had every right to ask God for children because of **the covenant promises** the Lord had made to his father and mother, promises **Isaac** had heard repeated in the family circle and that he believed. Therefore, **the recurring motif of barrenness** in the family of God's promise may serve as a **generation-by-generation reminder** that the children finally born to these women were **born because of the intervention of the Lord** (Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (p. 48). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.)

Please turn to Genesis 12 (p.8)

Apply the passage at this point, particularly if you are going through a barren period or are **not** prospering. **Has your career** reached a dead end? **Has it been years** since God moved in your life in any dramatic way? **Have you been left behind** while others have surged ahead? This does **not** mean that God has abandoned you, or even that you are less well off than others. **God is teaching you to depend on him**. **He is showing you** that he is **more interested** in what is happening inside you **than** what is happening around you (Boice, J. M. (1998). *Genesis: an expositional commentary* (p. 732). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.).

Rebekah and Isaac were pleading with God based on His promises in **Genesis 12**

Genesis 12:1-3. Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (ESV)

Isaac wasn't praying selfishly. **He was concerned about** God's plan for fulfilling His covenant and blessing the whole world through the promised Messiah (**Gen. 3:15; 12:1-3**). **True prayer** means being concerned about God's will, **not** our own wants, and claiming God's promises in the Word. **Isaac** does for his bride what **our Bridegroom** does for us. He **doesn't** pout. He **doesn't** pity himself. **He prays** (Hebrews 7:25). **The best thing a person can do if he's aware**

of his own or another's spiritual barrenness is to pray (Courson, J. (2005). *Jon Courson's application commentary: Volume one: Genesis-Job* (p. 122). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.)

- **The strength of a godly mother is enabled in encouraging prayer.** The strength of a mother is **not** in how much she can bear, **but in how much** she surrenders. **She often will willingly surrender** her time and energy but finds it **hardest** to surrender her burdens. **God has designed the family** to encourage others to intercede. **The most effective intercession** is to petition God to be faithful to His promises. **He delights in showing how His will** is **not** accomplished by the most capable, or busy, but **by the most submissive** to Him and His plan.

In terms of the promises of God, in Genesis 25, if Rebekah remained barren, how could Abraham's seed multiply as the dust of the earth and the stars of the heavens? How could **Abraham's seed** become a blessing to the whole world? (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:16; 15:5; 17:6) It has well been said that **the purpose of prayer** is not to get our will done in heaven **but to get God's will done on earth.** Even though **every Jewish couple** wanted children. **Confronted by 20 years of his wife's barrenness** (vv. 19, 26), **Isaac** rose to the test and **earnestly turned to God in prayer,** obviously acknowledging thereby God's involvement and timing in the seed-promise (MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed., p. 50). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.)

The Lord granted/answered Isaac's prayer and **enabled Rebekah to conceive.** **God uses our prayers** to fulfil His purposes. In salvation history, **the conception and birth of children** is a divinely ordained event that has **significant consequences.** **This was true of the birth** of Isaac (chaps. 18, 21), the twelve sons of Jacob (29:30-30:24), Moses (Ex. 1), Samuel (1 Sam. 1-2), David (Ruth 4:17-22), and our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:4-5). **Conception, birth, and death are divine appointments, not** human accidents, **a part of God's wise and loving plan** for His own people (Pss. 116:15; 139:13-16). **Just as God orchestrated Isaac's own conception and birth, so also the conception and birth** of Isaac's sons will be possible only through **divine (action)** (Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Ge 25:21). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.) **The people of God do not exist by natural birth but are born of the Spirit. They exist because God brought them into existence as his people.** (Ross, A. P. (1998). *Creation and blessing: a guide to the study and exposition of Genesis* (p. 438). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.)

Illustration: The Spiritual Impact of a Mother

A London editor submitted to Winston Churchill for his approval **a list of all those who had been Churchill's teachers.** **Churchill** returned the list with **this comment:** "You have **omitted to mention the greatest** of my teachers—my mother."⁹¹⁴ (Michael P. Green. (2000). *1500 illustrations for biblical preaching* (p. 251). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.)

- It is **not** uncommon to find **behind the greatest men, a mother** who had a direct, life changing impact on her son **guiding his spiritual development to become** a man who changed the world.

Rebekah the Mother of Esau and Jacob, is a lesson in struggling through:
2) A distressed home (Genesis 25:22-23).

Genesis 25:22–23. ²² The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. ²³ And the LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.” (ESV)

Here we see how one problem soon led to another, because **Rebekah’s pregnancy** was a **difficult** one: **The babies in her womb struggled together within her.** The Hebrew word means “to crush or oppress,” suggesting that **the fetal movements** were **not** normal. **The pregnancy is so painful** that she wonders if there is any point going on living. **After they had grown up,** Rebekah had similar thoughts (27:46; cf. Job). “What **a unique conflict** we have here! **A conflict of twins** which rages even in the womb and so vehemently that **their mother is driven to despair.** ‘Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity’ **a psalmist says,** but to Jacob and Esau any room is too small when they are together. **Their first battlefield** is their mother’s womb. How **cruelly** the sweet expectations of children, the greater **after twenty years of hope and despair,** are **dashed** for Isaac and Rebekah! **As early as the pregnancy** their parental happiness is **threatened.** **‘What shall I do?’** Rebekah wonders in **despair”** (Wenham, G. J. (1998). *Genesis 16–50* (Vol. 2, p. 175). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.).

- **The past few years in Canada has resulted in a drastic drop in pregnancies.** **Yes pregnancy** can mean **financial worries, anxiety** considering if they are up to the task, or **medical complications.** But there is no one better than **a mother** that has gone through it to **not** scare expectant mothers, but **help them through the realities** of what is going on. **Simplistic** assurances do little to alleviate the **burdens.**

Since **Rebekah wondered if the Lord was trying to say something to her, she went to inquire.** Isaac was blessed to have a wife who not only knew how to pray but who also wanted to understand God’s will for herself and her children. **The struggle** was a particularly **unpleasant** and **painful** experience, so **that Rebekah cried out in anguish, ‘If this is thus/If all is well, why is this happening to me/why am I this way?’** **Her words suggest** that she began to **despair** of life. **The initial joy** of realizing they were to have a child had been **turned into despair.** This was **not** what they expected. **Any child of God** when encountering **difficulties** **begins to ask** questions of God. **The struggle of these two boys,** which began before their birth, represents **the struggle** which still goes on in the world today. There is a **struggle** between **light** and **darkness,** between **good** and **evil,** between the **Spirit** and the **flesh.** **Every child of God knows** something of this struggle (McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 1, p. 106). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.)

Sometimes God’s answers are **not** what we imagined and **we begin to wonder what God is doing.** **It throws us back on the Lord.** This is what **Rebekah** did. **‘She went to enquire of the LORD’** (25:22) **and He indicated in verse 23,** **what was happening in her womb.** ²³ And the LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.” **The first part of the oracle emphasized the promises made to Abraham** (Gen. 17:16). **Knowing what was happening inside her** would have helped her to bear the **discomfort** with more fortitude. But imagine **Rebekah’s surprise** when she learned that the two children would **struggle with each other all their lives!** **Each child** would produce a nation, and **these two nations** (Edom and Israel) would compete, but **the younger** would master the older. **Israelites and Arabs**

basically comprise the two nations. The fact that **two nations** were predicted would delight Rebekah, for it said indirectly that **her boys would have many descendants** (Butler, J. G. (2008). *Analytical Bible Expositor: Genesis* (p. 240). Clinton, IA: LBC Publications.).

Just as **God had chosen Isaac**, the second-born, and **not Ishmael**, the firstborn, so **He choose Jacob**, the second-born, and **not Esau**, the firstborn. **God's choice of Jacob (the younger) over Esau (the older)** is a paradigmatic **example of divine sovereign election** (Rom. 9:9–13, 18–23). **God deals justly with all**, but **He has mercy on some** (Matt. 20:1–16) (Whitlock, L. G., Sproul, R. C., Waltke, B. K., & Silva, M. (1995). *The Reformation study Bible: bringing the light of the Reformation to Scripture: New King James Version* (Ge 25:23). Nashville: T. Nelson.)

Please turn to Romans 9 (p.889)

As for the choice of the younger over the older, another biblical principle shines out. **God's blessings** are **not** by natural right. **Membership of God's family** is **not** due to any claims we may think we have on God. **It is due solely to God's grace**. Paul uses this passage in **Romans 9:10–13** when discussing the purposes of God in election.

Romans 9:6–16. ⁶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” ⁸ This means that it is **not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.** ⁹ For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.” ¹⁰ And not only so, but also when **Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac,** ¹¹ though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— ¹² she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³ As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.” ¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” ¹⁶ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. (ESV)

- **Unlike** Ishmael and Isaac, **Esau and Jacob** were twins, having the same mother and father. Yet, **despite** the fact that **Esau came out of the womb first**, **God bypassed** Esau and chose Jacob. **Paul refers to Genesis 25** in his epistle to the Romans, to illustrate the truth that **God's election** is an election of **grace (v.11, 12)**. The fact that **back in eternity God chose us** as his dear children, before we had done anything good or bad, before we were ever born or had come to faith, **is traceable** only to the grace of God (Jeske, J. C. (2001). *Genesis* (2nd ed., p. 212). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House.).

Illustration: Years ago, a mother was **walking across the hills of southern Wales** carrying her baby when she was **overtaken** by a **blizzard**. **When the storm subsided**, her body was found beneath a mound of snow. Before she **died**, however, **she had taken off** all her outer clothing and wrapped it around her baby. **When unwrapped**, the baby boy was found alive and well. **Years later**, that child, **David Lloyd George**, became the prime minister of Great Britain and one of England's greatest statesmen. (J. John and Mark Stibbe, *A Box of Delights* (Kregel, 2001))

There are **so many** that see **motherhood** as **giving up** your life. But **the service of one's life in the fulfillment of God's promises**, epitomizes the Kingdom of God and is a beautiful picture

of grace. **Those who joyful fully serve as mothers** show the world of the greatness that can be accomplished in the service of another.

Finally, Rebekah the Mother of Esau and Jacob, is a lesson in struggling through:

3) A divided home (Genesis 25:24–28).

Genesis 25:24–28. ²⁴ When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵ The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. ²⁶ Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. ²⁷ When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. ²⁸ Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. (ESV)

When **Rebekah gave birth, the prophecy was confirmed: 'Behold/Indeed there were twins in her womb'** (25:24). **Esau and Jacob** were born ca. 2005 B.C. (MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed., p. 50). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.)

The way they were born prepared for all that was to follow in **verse 25**. **The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau.** **This information is important for what happened later (27:11).** **The reference to his coming out 'red' points us towards Esau's other name, 'Edom', which sounds like the word for 'reddish' (25:25).** **Esau probably means "hairy."** **He also had the nickname "Edom," which means "red," referring to his red hair and the red lentil soup Jacob sold him (vv. 25, 30).** **The word red/ruddy when used to describe a male in the Bible** refers to one who is quite handsome, e.g., David (1 Sam. 16:12; 17:42, cf. Song of Sol. 5:10). The hair, *se'ar*, relates to the name Esau, *'esaw*, although that equation is not very close. **The closer equation with hairy** is to Seir, one name for the Edomite region (Gen. 32:3). (Roop, E. F. (1987). *Genesis* (p. 170). Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.)

- **It's quite easy to be particularly fond of a child** because of association. **They may remind you** of an ethnic heritage, a beloved relative or a fond region. As we will see progressing through this story, **the favouritism brings conflict.**

His twin brother came out with his hand holding/clutching Esau's heel (25:26). **The names of the two boys were given for birth reasons.** While **Esau** was named after his appearance, **Jacob** was named after his action. **Esau**, which means "hairy," was given because of **Esau's** appearance when he was born. **Jacob** means "heel-gripper." **This describes one tripping up another, a "supplanter"** which **Esau** later called **Jacob** (Genesis 27:36) (Butler, J. G. (2008). *Analytical Bible Expositor: Genesis* (p. 240). Clinton, IA: LBC Publications.)

As **verse 27** indicates, **Esau** was **an out-of-doors person—'a man of the field'**. **His home was in the uncultivated areas, with the wild animals.** **'Esau was a skilful hunter', a man of adventure,** who got his excitement from hunting down food in the wild. **Jacob** was quite the **opposite**. He remained **in and around the campsite**, in the cultivated part, with the domesticated animals. That **Jacob** was described as **a quiet man**, may suggest that **Jacob** was a more self-contained character than his brother. Whereas **Esau** needed the open countryside to gain satisfaction and 'a kick out of life', **Jacob** was more placid and level-headed. The name "**Jacob**" comes from a **Hebrew word (yaaqob)** that means "may God protect"; but because it **sounds like** the words *aqeb* ("heel") and *aqab* ("watch from behind" or "overtake"), **his name became a nickname: "he grasps the heel" or "he deceives."** **Before birth, Jacob and Esau had**

contended; and **at birth**, **Jacob** grasped his brother's heel. **This latter action was interpreted to mean that Jacob would trip up his brother and take advantage of him. The prediction proved true. Jacob has faith's far sight to value the inheritance but tarnishes it by his bartering to advantage himself at his brother's expense** (Waltke, B. K., & Fredricks, C. J. (2001). *Genesis: a commentary* (p. 362). Zondervan.).

This description of the two young men becomes symbolic of their spiritual state. It suggests that **Jacob** belonged to the people of God whereas **Esau did not**. **The Garden of Eden** was separated off from the uncultivated, open field where **the non-domesticated animals** roamed. Later, **the tents of the Israelite camp** were separated off from the **unclean**, open area outside the camp. **Jacob** belonged with his people in the camp, **'dwelling in tents'**, but **Esau** belonged outside. **Jacob**, like Abraham and Isaac, 'sojourned in the land of promise ... **dwelling in tents'** (Heb. 11:9). The fact that **God had already determined to give the covenant blessings to Jacob didn't** absolve anybody in the family from **their obligations** to the Lord. **They were all responsible** for their actions, because **divine sovereignty doesn't** destroy human responsibility. In fact, **knowing that we're the chosen of God** means we have a greater responsibility to do His will. **Unlike Esau, Jacob** became a man of faith. **God's promises** meant more to him than physical pleasures. **Jacob is announced as a visible expression of God's remarkable graciousness** in the face of conventional definitions of reality and prosperity. **Jacob** is a scandal from the beginning. **The powerful grace of God** is a scandal. It **upsets** the way we would organize life (Brueggemann, W. (1982). *Genesis* (p. 217). Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press.).

- Although **there are some** who are physically **unable to bear children, or their spouse does not want children**, it must be said that **the vast majority of women today who refuse to bear children** do so for purely selfish **reasons**. **They fear** that kids will get in the way of career ambitions, financial freedom or lifestyle. **A mother that God honors seeks to fulfill the dominion mandate to "be fruitful and multiply"**.

Up to this moment, everything we have read about Isaac has been positive. **He appears a perfect gentleman and a spiritually-minded man who waited on the Lord until his prayers were answered.** But **the best of gentlemen are sinners** and **here we are told of one of his weaknesses** in **verse 28**, which **clouded** his thinking and spiritual discernment: **'Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game'** (25:28). **Isaac** was **not** content with lamb, goat or beef. **He liked the taste of the wild meat that Esau brought him. Isaac's love of exotic foods made Esau his favourite son and he no doubt made excuses for his undisciplined lifestyle. His love of Esau made him oblivious to his spiritual condition.** The interesting thing is that although **Esau** was very attractive on the outside, **down underneath** he really had **no** capacity for God whatever. If ever there was a man of the world, he is that man. He is **just a physical man** and that is all. That is **all that he lived for**. (McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 1, p. 107). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.)

- **One of the key elements that a Godly mother can have in the household**, even often more effectively than dads, is one of **overall perspective**. **We tend to be laser focused on the immediate issue before us, and often oblivious** as to other issues of concern. **Working together as a team** a **Godly mother and father** can prayerfully discern, use biblical wisdom **and bring a much-needed broader perspective** to situations.

No reason is given why **'Rebekah loved Jacob'**. It may have been because he was around the camp more than his brother. On the other hand, it may have been because **Jacob** was more interested in the promises that God had made to his father and grandfather. **Tragically, Isaac and Rebekah**, who had prayed so long and persistently for offspring, **chose sides**. No doubt each loved both of his or her sons, even while each preferred one over the other. And, of course, their favoritism served to further exacerbate their boys' differences (Hughes, R. K. (2004). *Genesis: beginning and blessing* (p. 336). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.).

- It is a **warning** to parents **not to have favourites**. Treat your children fairly. Take care that some attractive quality in one child does not cloud your mind and prevent you from treating all your children equally.

Please turn to Luke 20 (p.826)

When having a "favorite child", it happens **too often that the mother will take a liking to one child and the father to another**. This does **not** encourage family harmony and spiritual growth. **Concern for the things of God**, and **putting the welfare of others**, specifically our children, first, **reflects the nature of Christ**.

Even the enemies of Jesus knew this of Him:

Luke 20:20–26. ²⁰ So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. ²¹ So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. ²² Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" ²³ But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, ²⁴ "Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." ²⁵ He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." ²⁶ And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer they became silent. (ESV)

- **Jesus was able to detect the insincere compliment in verse 21.** Although it was true, this flattery was an attempt to **deceive** him. **Children need our honesty and love.** They **need to discern** an **insincere** attempt at flattery. That is why, to their question, **Jesus adds a more important command:** people should give to God that which bears his image and likeness, namely, **themselves** (cf. note on Rom. 12:1). (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 2001). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.)
- **Showing favouritism, in one child over another, sets that child up to fail.** **When they are concerned with God's esteem over their self-esteem, then their focus both protects them and sets them up to be truly used by God.**

Godly mothers can have a tremendous impact on a child's holiness, but the story of Rebekah, the mother of Easu and Jacob is a warning of partiality and preference in the midst of a home of struggle. It is **not** a story of defeat, but of faith. **Through their prayers and confidence in God, they saw God fulfill His promises.** **The lesson from Rebekah is a lesson for us all: keep the faith regardless of the struggle. God will fulfill His promises in His way and in His timing.**

(Format note: Outline from Wiersbe, W. W. (1997). *Be authentic* (pp. 11–15). Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Pub. Some base commentary from Eveson, P. H. (20 01). *The Book of Origins: Genesis Simply Explained* (pp. 383–384). Darlington, England: Evangelical Press.)

Closing Hymn: “

Prayer Room Invitation

082 Benediction

May the God Who is our refuge and our strength, Our ever-present aid, **The Lord of Hosts** who is at our side, Though **the mountains slip into the heart of the sea**, And **the earth** should change, **May the Lord of Hosts be with you** and **the God of Jacob** your stronghold. **Through Christ we Pray. AMEN.** (cf. Ps. 46:1-2)