

Family Matters

Genesis 25

Go ahead and turn to Genesis 25 in your Bibles. Who enjoyed that show? Growing up, my family and I LOVED that show. They don't make shows like that anymore do they? No, they don't. Why did we love those shows so much? Were the families perfect? Not at all! They had problems, problems they always conveniently solved in about 25 minutes every weekend. Sometimes they even applied a MORAL to fix the problem! Imagine that, TV shows that taught a moral. They'd cue the cheesy music, and one or more family members would be INTENTIONAL in word or deed to overcome whatever the issue was.

I get it, though. The problems were often exaggerations of mundane issues from day-to-day life with OVERSIMPLIFIED solutions. In this sin-broken world, we understand that family matters can be messy; they usually take more than 25 minutes to solve. The Bible makes no attempt to sugarcoat the difficulties of life. God portrays mankind for who we really are, "warts and all," but He also extends to us the hope of redemption as well. When we read the Bible, we don't just read a book about people and their problems, we also watch God work in and through them for His own glory. We glean lessons and learn from examples regarding how to lead and love a family the way God intended. Some argue that the Bible doesn't talk about everything we face, but I disagree. I would argue that we see every KIND of issue or problem we face, and tonight we'll see lots of issues (and a few problems) at play in this family's life. So, picking up in verse one, we read...

Genesis 25:1-6

1 Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. 2 She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. 3 Jokshan fathered Sheba and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. 4 The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. 5 Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. 6 But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country.

Family dynamics. We see our first one of the night: remarriage. In this case, it's Abraham remarrying after his wife had passed. Abraham had buried Sarah and married-off Isaac, so where did that leave him? ALONE. After God made Adam, He pronounced that it wasn't good for man to be alone, and finding himself thus, Abraham married Keturah. Her name means *incense*, and incidentally, several of the names of her children are associated with tribes in what you'd call the Syro-Arabian desert who were involved in the lucrative SPICE trade. Who was she? She might've been someone he met at he sojourned on without Sarah, or perhaps she was one of his maid-servants, perhaps the highest ranking. Either way, two things would've been accomplished by this marriage: it effectively ended his loneliness, and it yielded opportunity for greater fulfillment of God's promise of innumerable descendants. Yes, Abraham was already a hundred when Isaac was born; that alone was a miracle. At this point, he

would've been more than 140 years old, but to quote Matthew Henry, ***"The strength he received by promise still remained in him, to show how much the virtue of the promise exceeds the power of nature."*** God wasn't done with Abraham.

There are several names in this brief genealogy that are familiar as we continue to study the Bible. Bear in mind that Genesis is a book of EXPLANATIONS; through it, God tells us how things came to be and why they are the way they are. MIDIAN stands out the most. His sons likely became the Midianite tribes who lived in the Negev and Sinai, on the outskirts of the land of Israel. Moses found refuge in Midian after he fled Egypt, and even took his bride, Zipporah, from the Midianites, but they were also a RIVAL to God's people. Because they intentionally sought to corrupt Israel and incite God's wrath upon them, a successful plan hatched by the pagan prophet BALAAM himself (Numbers 22-24; 31:8, 16), they along with Balaam were committed to destruction. Scholars have connected several of these names with people and places in ancient texts (we won't dive into those tonight), but through these children, we see how God fulfilled His promise that Abraham would **"be the father of a multitude of NATIONS" (Genesis 17:4).**

Now, the text says Keturah was Abraham's wife, but more specifically, she was a CONCUBINE; 1 Chronicles 1:32 specifies as much. SECONDARY "wives" were CONCUBINES. Therefore, we understand that Abraham had TWO concubines. Keturah was Abraham's SECOND concubine; his first concubine was Hagar. A concubine was usually a woman who did not possess a dowry, and therefore their children had no primary claim to any inheritance unless such was designated by their father. As he did with Ishmael and Hagar, Abraham sent the children of his concubines AWAY FROM HIS SON ISAAC while he was still living, most likely in an effort to prevent them from challenging him for any inheritance later. It's the father's prerogative to designate THE HEIR, but he was still responsible for providing for his other children. Given that Abraham was 137 when Sarah died the oldest child could've been 37 years old, at most (my age) at Abraham's death. The Bible continues...

Genesis 25:7-10

7 These are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years. 8 Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. 9 Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, 10 the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife.

I taught the passage that contains the Bible's first recorded funeral, Sarah's, and tonight I'm covering the second, her husband's. Funerals are painful to be sure. Even for believers burying believers, it's still "Goodbye FOR NOW," and our hearts hurt because we know we can't call or visit our loved ones for a time. You know what else funerals are? AWKWARD. They throw us together with family members with whom we may not be all that close, in a VULNERABLE time that's really best suited for those with whom we're especially CLOSE, that is, if we're going to process what's going on in any meaningful way. This funeral had to be more than a little awkward with Ishmael. What a HUMBLING moment this had to have been for him. You remember how he essentially bullied Isaac. He laughed at him, and as Paul

reveals, persecuted him. He was so confident in his sonship; he just knew he was the heir. THEN HE WAS BASICALLY DISOWNED. Sarah told Abraham, "**Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman**" (Galatians 4:30), and he didn't. Isaac inherited EVERYTHING, including God's blessing. Having come back together to bury their father, both boys knew where they stood.

The Bible tells us Abraham's sons buried him in the burial plot that he bought for Sarah. This is a PICTURE OF REUNION, at least for those who are of the FAITH. There are no sweet reunions in hell; being buried with a saved spouse doesn't ensure entrance into heaven. And for those who are saved, we know that, as Jesus taught, we aren't married to anyone in eternity EXCEPT HIM. We won't be married to one another, which is a challenging notion to many, but that's what Jesus said, and I trust He knows best. Still, knowing this, it does our hearts good to see a husband laid to rest with his beloved wife. Abraham was with Sarah again. Scripture reveals that...

Genesis 25:11

After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac his son. And Isaac settled at Beer-lahai-roi.



I don't think anyone can definitively say where Beer-lahai-roi was located exactly (see the question mark), but most maps I've seen place it around the same spot as this one. Now, the tidbit about Isaac's living arrangements after his father's death and burial FASCINATES me. He settled at Beer-lahai-roi...

...NOT Shechem, where Abraham built his first altar...

...NOT Bethel, where Abraham and Sarah lived and built another altar...

...NOT Hebron, where Abraham and his family seemed to live the longest...

...NOT Salem, where his father encountered the Priest King Melchizedek

...NOT Gerar (not yet anyway)

...NOT Beer-sheba, where Abraham and his family lived after making a covenant with Abimelech...

...NOT Moriah, where the LORD provided a sacrifice in place of Isaac after the LORD had commanded Abraham to sacrifice him as a burnt offering...

No, Moses was inspired to include the fact that, after Abraham's death and burial, Isaac went to live in Beer-lahai-roi. What happened there? YEAH, it's the place where Hagar fled when she was pregnant with Ishmael and Sarah was dealing harshly with her. There **"the angel of the LORD"** found Hagar by a spring as she fled from her mistress and encouraged her to return to her. Therefore, the place was called Beer-lahai-roi, **"the well of the Living One who sees me."** El-roi means *the God who sees me*. As one NET Bible commentator noted, that scene and the Name of God we learn from it carries the significance that God takes up the cause of those who are oppressed.

Think about it, though. WHAT CONVERSATIONS, WHAT BRIDGE-MENDING PERHAPS TOOK PLACE AT DAD'S FUNERAL THAT LED TO ISAAC SETTLING IN A PLACE SO RICHLY SIGNIFICANT TO ISHMAEL??? Of course, the significance of this place wasn't lost on the original readers. From this place and Hagar's time there, we receive one of God's most precious Names, *El-roi*, "the God who sees me." We all need to be reminded of that fact from time to time, don't we? Such knowledge drives us to live right, knowing He's always watching, but it also encourages and gives us hope. No matter what we're going through, we're not alone. HE SEES US. That thought astounds me, that the perfectly holy God of eternity watches me. *"His eye is on the sparrow,"* right? Jesus said as much, *"and I know He watches me."* He sees you sitting in THAT pew tonight; He sees where you've been and where you're going. He sees EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU—your desires, your worries, your circumstances, your weakness—and He cares. That was the point for Hagar that day by the well. Perhaps after having buried both parents, Isaac needed to FEEL and be REMINDED that God saw him. Yes, he had Rebekah, but he was grieving loss. His parents had always been there for him, and they were gone; however, they weren't the only ones who had always been there for him. The LORD had always been there too, and he hadn't lost Him.

[Ishmael seeing Isaac's grief] *"You know, mom used to tell me about the time when she ran away from your parents. She was pregnant with me, afraid, upset. She didn't know where she was going to go or what would happen next. As she was fleeing for Egypt, she stopped at this well to refresh herself and maybe get her wits about her, but instead, she met God. I KNOW! It's crazy! She said He told her what to name me just as He told dad what to name you. He told her to GO BACK, that THINGS WERE GOING TO BE OKAY. She couldn't say enough about that place, about that moment. She couldn't find the words to describe the PEACE she felt in that moment and afterward. All she could say was, 'He saw me.' God wasn't oblivious to her struggle; He met her in it. I don't know...I just felt like you needed to hear that."*

Who knows if such a conversation took place, but the significance of that place wasn't lost on him. SOMETHING impressed Isaac to settle for a time in Beer-lahai-roi, and literally live in the knowledge that God saw him. God sees YOU too. Well, as the book of Genesis tends to do, the reference to the place that returned Ishmael to the story naturally flows into a brief EXPLANATION of his descendants...

Genesis 25:12-18

12 These are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant, bore to Abraham. 13 These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael; and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 14 Mishma, Dumah, Massa, 15 Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. 16 These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by

their villages and by their encampments, twelve princes according to their tribes. 17 (These are the years of the life of Ishmael: 137 years. He breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.) 18 They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria. He settled over against all his kinsmen.

Genesis is a book of ORIGINS and explanations, and through Moses, the LORD regularly "tidies up" our understanding of why things are the way they are. Here he essentially says, *"While we're talking about Ishmael, let's talk about what became of him."* Now, think back to the time when the LORD told Abraham that his innumerable descendants would be numbered through Isaac, NOT Ishmael. Abraham didn't understand; he even pled for the LORD to work through Ishmael, but the LORD told him...

Genesis 17:20-21

20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. 21 But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.

This passage, this brief genealogy is God's way of telling us, *"See! I keep all My promises."* Several of the names of Ishmael's descendants stand out as well. For instance, scholars believe Nabaioth to be the ancestor of the Nabateans of Petra, and Kedar is referenced throughout scripture. Twelve princes descended from Ishmael, just like God said, and Ishmael died at the age of 137, the age of Abraham when Sarah died. ISAAC WOULD OUTLIVE HIM BY 43 YEARS, and his own dad by five, the only patriarch to live longer than his dad. Finally, we're told that Ishmael **"settled over against all his kinsmen,"** the fulfillment of God's word to Hagar when He revealed to her that Ishmael...

Genesis 16:12

**He shall be a wild donkey of a man,
his hand against everyone
and everyone's hand against him,
and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.**

Well, after this explanation, it's like Genesis says, *"We now return you to your regularly scheduled program, already in progress,"* because while Ishmael's life significantly impacts the rest of scripture AND history, it's through Isaac that THE STORY OF THE AGES advances.

Previously, we only hear mere mentions of Isaac—his birth and weaning, something he said when his father was about to sacrifice him, the first time he laid eyes on his wife. Though he lived longer than his famous father Abraham and his famous son Jacob, only a handful of chapters are dedicated to his life. He doesn't even get a whole verse's mentioning in Hebrews 11. Nevertheless, he lived a life of faith like the rest of the patriarchs, and in what I would say is the really FIRST scene that's truly ABOUT HIM and his family, that faith is on full display. We read...

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.

There are several things to point out here, so many FAMILY MATTERS, so many POINTS OF INTEREST, one of which being that these events are OUT OF ORDER. Remember, Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. That means he was 140 when Isaac and Rebekah were married and 160 when the twins were born. ABRAHAM LIVED TO SEE JACOB AND ESAU, but we can lose track of that because we're told of Abraham's death before we're told about the conception and birth of the twins. I mean, they would've been 15 years old at his death! Why not emphasize that in some way? Well, again, I remind us all that, in Genesis, God tidies up events, which in this case meant putting a PERIOD on Abraham's story before moving on to the details of Isaac's life and that of the boys.

The couple waited 20 YEARS to have a child and wound up having two. Like Sarah, Rebekah was BARREN. However, instead of betraying his wife by laying with another woman to have a child by surrogacy, ISAAC PRAYED FOR HIS WIFE. In the midst of Isaac and Rebekah's agony over their childlessness, I can almost hear Abraham telling Isaac, "*WAIT. Just wait on God; don't try to force anything. Trust me. It won't go well.*"

God "**granted**" Isaac's prayer for Rebekah to bear a child, answering with a DOUBLE PORTION, two sons. Isaac had the peace of knowing that he was praying according to the will of God (1 John 5:14) because God had already promised Abraham, "**through Isaac shall your offspring be named**" (Genesis 21:12). He knew it was God's will to give them children, and it was that faith that enabled him to wait 20 YEARS for its fulfillment. Through passages like this one, we understand that God is intimately involved in conception. The Bible says that God is the one who opens and closes the womb (Genesis 20:18; 29:31; Isaiah 66:9). When you look at the literal Greek or Hebrews 11:11, we understand that God not only

overcame Sarah's barrenness, but as we saw with Keturah, He gave ABRAHAM the ability to procreate. The Bible says that children, the **"fruit of the womb,"** are a gift from God (Psalm 127:3-5), and we see that Sarah and Rebekah are part of a long list of women whose wombs were opened by God including Leah (Genesis 29:31), Rachel (Genesis 30:22), Samson's mother (Judges 13), Hannah (1 Samuel 1), and Elizabeth (Luke 1).

However, just because God answered Isaac and Rebekah's prayer, it didn't mean that everything would be smooth sailing. The Bible says that the children **"struggled together within her,"** and the Hebrew word used to describe what was happening inside Rebekah indicates a VIOLENT, OUT OF THE ORDINARY STRUGGLE. This was way more than the generic pregnancy discomfort of having knees and elbows in your ribs and having to make emergency trips to the bathroom. No, the boys were KICKBOXING inside Rebekah. They had a pro wrestling ring with umbilical cords for ropes, and they were throwing themselves against them and clotheslining each other. Somehow they'd gotten a tiny, baby-sized chair in there. Every night was fight night, RUMBLE IN THE TUMMY, and because of it, Rebekah wasn't so sure she wanted to be pregnant after all! That's the sentiment of her question when she asked, **"If it is thus, why is this happening to me?"** or more literally, **"Why do I live?" (Genesis 25:22).** Such activity in Rebekah's womb was unheard of, probably quite painful, and definitely alarming, so **"she went to inquire of the Lord."**

When **"the children struggled together within her,"** Rebekah *followed her husband's lead* and inquired of the LORD about it. Remember, she came from the same pagan family as Abraham, but she had clearly embraced the God of Abraham and Isaac. In this series, "passing the baton of faith" is a major theme. Pastor Dale reiterated that it's a core element of our church's DNA, but that isn't limited to parents and children; this a picture of how fathers not only shepherd their children, but how a husband shepherds his wife. She is part of his responsibility as the spiritual leader of his home. He is responsible for **"[sanctifying] her, [cleansing] her by the washing of water with the word" (Ephesians 5:26).**

In response to Rebekah's inquiry, the LORD answered and revealed that she was carrying the progenitors of TWO NATIONS in her womb, and that the older would serve the younger. The LORD chose to accomplish His ends through Jacob, but He also knew that Jacob would choose Him, valuing spiritual things unlike his brother.

Esau, and Ishmael before him, both feature in a list of firstborns passed over for the second. The Lord regarded Abel over Cain, chose Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over all his brothers, and blessed Ephraim over Manasseh. They're pictures of the NATURAL person while their younger siblings represent the SPIRITUAL. Ishmael existed because of a natural attempt at expediting God's will, and Esau, as we'll see, simply had no use for spiritual things (Galatians 4:9; Hebrews 12:16). Ishmael was a slave, born of a slave, born of the flesh (Galatians 4:23), and a perfect representation of how we're born into slavery to sin. Isaac was the CHILD born through the promise. Ishmael was the incarnation of Israel attempting to achieve their own righteousness through slavish adherence to the Law, whereas Isaac is the picture of one justified by faith. As we already saw, the slave doesn't remain in the house, but the son abides forever (John 8:35). Ishmael was sent out with a gift, PHYSICAL blessings to be consumed in

this world (Genesis 21:20), whereas Isaac INHERITED SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS that were brought to bear on his life on this earth and FOREVER AFTER.

The twins' birth was just as extraordinary and full of strife as their time in the womb. The Bible describes Esau coming out red and hairy. I couldn't find any baby pictures of Esau...



...but I found this picture of Esau when he was in high school. He was big into basketball. Jokes aside, Esau was a hairy booger,

ESAU = "HAIRY"

...hence his name: Hairy. The "reddish" description of him is a bit of foreshadowing of what's to come. Jacob was given such a name because he came out of the womb holding onto his brother's heel like he was trying to trip him up. Even from the womb we see their SIBLING RIVALRY begin, another family dynamic, but it also touches on the dynamic of EXPECTATIONS, how kids can get stuck in what their parents think of them. His name said, *"You were a cheat when you were born, and YOU'LL ALWAYS BE A CHEAT!"* It essentially became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Think about it: the first time we see Jacob deceive someone, he was encouraged BY HIS MOM to do so! But he was a CHEAT because he came out holding his brother's heel, because babies aren't known for just grabbing and holding onto things, right? Jacob didn't have to be a cheat, but his parents saddled him with that expectation the moment he was born! They didn't do that with his brother! They named him HAIRY! My point is that we're more than what people in our families and in this world say we are. We are WHO GOD SAYS WE ARE, and the value He places on us far surpasses that of anyone else. Even when He tells us the hard truth that we're sinners deserving of eternal punishment, He does so in LOVE, willing that we would see our need, repent, and call upon Him to save us. In a book that I enjoy going back and reading excerpts out of from time to time, Kenneth Boa fills a whole chapter with scripture describing who we are in Christ. He says...

"Only when we define ourselves by the truths of the Word rather than the thinking and experiences of the world can we discover our deepest identity."

God made Jacob to be Israel. Boa continues...

"The more we embrace these affirmations from Scripture, the more stable, grateful, and fully assured we will be in the course of our lives."

Amen! Our expectations of our kids and spouses are transformative, for good or bad, just as the expectations of others can be upon us. We have to remind ourselves to see ourselves as God sees us and help our family members see themselves that way as well. Think of the life Jacob's youngest son would have had if he'd been left with the name his mother had first given him, "Son of my Sorrows!" His dad couldn't let that stand, so he changed it to something much nobler: "Son of my Right Hand," Benjamin. *"I'm not going to let what happened to me happen to you."*

Earlier, I mentioned sibling rivalry, and that's something that can be particularly destructive. Children need to be taught to cooperate and support one another, not vie for attention and affection. Almost ANYTHING could've helped the boys overcome this tendency, but instead, Jacob and Esau's parents did the ONE THING that made it WORSE! Isaac and Rebekah HAD FAVORITES! Dad was a carnivore, so he was most pleased with Esau the hunter, whereas mom liked having a child who was happy indoors with her, so she favored Jacob the INDOORSMAN. Jacob will do the same thing one day with his WIVES and HIS favorite son...Joseph. You know, as Joseph sat in an Egyptian prison, do you think he was glad he was his father's favorite?! I DOUBT IT. I've never seen a child's life bettered from being their parent's favorite. No parent would seriously claim to have favorites; we don't think in those terms. I have to ask myself, "Do I REACT differently to them? Do I have the same level of expectations for all of them? Do I show this one the same patience and grace that I show that one? Do I make the same time?" This is how favoritism manifests. These are vital questions for overcoming favoritism and sibling rivalry. Well, now we come to, quite possibly, the most character-revealing scene in the twins' lives...

Genesis 25:29-34

29 Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. 30 And Esau said to Jacob, Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted! (Therefore his name was called Edom.) 31 Jacob said, Sell me your birthright now. 32 Esau said, I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me? 33 Jacob said, Swear to me now. So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

God chose to operate through Jacob. He had already told Rebekah that this was going to happen, that **"the older shall serve the younger."** Later, God revealed to Malachi, **"Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated" (Malachi 1:2b-3a).** God determined this before the boys were ever born, but seeing all of time at once, He already knew who they'd become. Before they took their first breath, God looked forward in time and saw this scene unfold.

It's quite an interesting scene because of how it's written in the Hebrew. I won't get too deep into it except to say that the words used to describe how Jacob was **"cooking stew"** form a word play that sounds a lot like HUNTING. Though Esau was the mighty hunter, in this moment, it was Jacob who had laid the snare and captured his quarry. No doubt, Jacob had long desired his brother's birthright; he

didn't suddenly come up with this idea. Who knows if he hadn't done something in the field to deliberately sabotage Esau's hunt? Regardless, he knew his brother was starving (and dramatic), so when Esau desperately needed something from him, Jacob POUNCED on the opportunity.



"Jacob! I'm going to starve to death if you don't give me some of that red stuff you've got there! I'm just going to shrivel up and die right here on the ground!"

"Sure thing, bro! Let's see...that'll cost you...YOUR BIRTHRIGHT."

"Are you kidding me?! I'm about to DIE!"

"Oh, yeah, I can see that. Go ahead and make a deal with me, and I'll give you some of my life-saving stew."

And he did! Just like that! The Bible says, "**Thus Esau despised his birthright,**" but in my Bible I've made the note under "thus" that says, "IN THIS WAY." "**IN THIS WAY Esau despised his birthright.**" You see, he didn't despise his birthright because he sold it; HE SOLD IT BECAUSE HE DESPISED IT. Note that JACOB NEVER DECEIVED ESAU. Esau's birthright just wasn't important to him. That's by the writer of Hebrews says to see to it that...

Hebrews 12:16

that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

Another translation for "**unholy**" is GODLESS. Jacob may have been UNSCRUPULOUS in his dealings, grabbing at something he knew wasn't meant to be his, but Esau was GODLESS, and that's why he was quick to give up his birthright, everything that belonged to his father, and in the case of the Patriarchs, the promise inherited from Abraham as well. On the other hand, the inheritance was important to Jacob, that worth just hadn't been passed on to Esau.

Remarriage, death of parents, inheritance, infertility, sibling rivalries, hurtful expectations...we've run the gamut of FAMILY MATTERS tonight, for sure. We've seen the second chosen over the first, the Spirit over the flesh. We've seen sibling rivalries EXACERBATED by parents with favorites, and though Jacob

valued the right thing, we would not be right to emulate the way he gained possession of it. God's sovereignty and grace is on full display as He works good from the bad. There's much to be learned from observing WHAT NOT TO DO, but God would much prefer we just surrender to His way of living and leading our families in the first place. That's why He prefaces His teaching on marriage and the family in the epistles with the command to be **"filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18)**. Surrender YOUR LIFE and YOUR DAYS to the Lord, and THEN you'll be ready to surrender your family to Him as well.