

## **Food for the Curious, Insecure, or Careless Soul.**

### **Genesis 25**

Thesis: Genesis 25 treats three common conditions of the soul: Curiosity, Insecurity, and Carelessness.

God's Word is nourishment for the soul, treating every condition with the perfect medicine. The soul has many conditions, and every treatment is unique.

It's always an adventure to open the Word of God and dig into it. Many people are unfamiliar with the Bible, so it's an adventure because everything is new and they're hearing it for the first time, and they don't know the ending to the stories.

But for some, the Bible is very familiar. Some have been reading it for their entire lives. But here's the thing about the Bible – every time you really study it, you really give it some attention, you get overwhelmed by the richness and power of the Word. The Bible is written by God, and it's the most remarkable book. It's like taking your soul to a buffet, and you eat until you're full, and then you come back, and it's like you haven't even dented the supply. It's just amazing.

So this morning as we work through Genesis 25, I want to point you to three specific dishes, prepared for three specific souls, the curious, the insecure, and the careless.

#### **I. A Comforting Word to the Curious v. 1-11**

*Thesis for this section:* When we die, we will find ourselves in the company of those who have died before us.

One very common question I receive – “Will we know each other in heaven?”

We're curious about life after death. We've never been there. Some people claim to have been to heaven, and they come back and write books about it, and people by the millions buy those books. Not because of their literary quality, not because they're insightful books, but because we're really terrified about what's on the other side of the grave.

We get just a little hint to the answer to this question in v.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.” Genesis 25:8*

When you read that phrase, Abraham was “gathered to his people,” doesn't that have a comforting ring to it?

When someone we love is dying, we have to say ‘goodbye!’ But doesn't the thought of being with our people sound like something we'd be okay with?

And that's no doubt what this phrase is meant to do – to say look, when you die, you're gathered, not to a strange world full of strange people, to be changed so much you don't even recognize yourself, but to say when you die, you go to your people.

Someone might say, "Oh, that's not spiritual enough! Heaven is all about Jesus, and if there's only you and Jesus in heaven, that's all you need!" And I have to say, sure, that is all you need.

But the Bible doesn't say heaven is just you and Jesus. Death is about being gathered to our people. And that's comforting.

David's infant son was dying, and he spent three days in prayer and fasting, begging God for the life of his son. His son didn't even live long enough to be circumcised. He died. How did David respond?

*2 Sam 12:19 But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David understood that the child was dead. And David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" They said, "He is dead." 20 Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the LORD and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate. 21 Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." 22 He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, Who knows whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' 23 But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."*

When David says, "I shall go to him," do you think that's David comforting himself? Some people say, "Oh, David just means he's going to die too, and he's going to join his son in the grave." That's not comforting. You don't go from desperate prayer to a cheerful disposition thinking about the fact that you're going to die.

Matthew Henry was one of the most insightful commentators in the English language, and he said this more than three hundred years ago:

*"Death gathers us to our people. Those that are our people while we live, whether the people of God or the children of this world, are the people to whom death will gather us."*

Two truths about life & death:

- A. Because you can't separate Christ from his people, you can't separate his people from each other.

Paul's love of the phrase "In Christ"

The Thessalonians were really hoping Jesus would come back, and while they were waiting, their friends and loved ones started dying. And they got really worried that they'd never see them again.

So Paul wrote this to comfort them:

*1 Thess 4: 13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep... 16 the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

Paul comforts the Thessalonians: "God will bring with him *those who have fallen asleep... we'll be caught up together with them...*" You're going to see them again. So he says, "*Encourage one another with these words.*"

Jesus knows our fears. He even understands the ones that don't make a lot of sense. He knows our reservations about heaven. He understands our curiosity. So he puts this wonderful comfort in the Bible to assure us that when we die, we'll be gathered to our people.

But he also understands that our love for our people can be so strong that for many of us, an eternity in hell with our people sounds better than an eternity in heaven without them. So he gives us very powerful indications of what that experience is like.

- B. Those who live without Christ, die without Christ, and are cast into "outer darkness."

*"I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 8:11-12*

We wonder if those in heaven will "see" their loved ones. Isn't it interesting that we don't wonder primarily if we'll hear their voices, or smell them, or touch them. We want to see them. You're not really and truly with someone if you can't see them.

One of the awful realities of hell is that it's terribly dark. Jesus calls it "Outer darkness." Those in hell won't be able to see anyone. Many people will be there.

Jesus said that too. And they'll be in the same place, together. But they'll be together in the dark. And it gets worse.

Those in hell will be angry, and in dreadful agony of body and soul. They'll be unsympathetic, self-centered, completely given over to their sinful impulses. They have no reason to want to do good.

In short, you can't really be with them in a meaningful way. You can't see them, and any experience of their company will only add to the misery.

So to those curious about what happens after death, Genesis 25 gives us a comforting word about Abraham being gathered to his fathers.

## II. A Calming Word to the Insecure v.19-27

Now I want to talk to the insecure. And by "insecure" I mean those people who are often worried about what's going to happen to them when they die. Those people who don't feel as if God could truly love them.

I'm talking about those who so keenly sense their unworthiness before God, they're so overburdened by a sense of guilt for their sin, their faith is weak, they think, "I just don't know if God could really forgive someone who's screwed up as bad as I have," or they think, "I'm pretty sure I believe in Jesus, but do I *really*?" and they're so insecure about the state of their soul, they can't enjoy the Christian life.

Those are the people I want to speak to. And there are many of them, many of you fall into that category right now, and I think all of us do sometimes.

So here's how the story goes:

Beginning in v.19 we read the story of the birth of twins.

For the first twenty years of their marriage, Rebekah is unable to conceive. Remember Pastor Bob talking about how big a deal it was to go find the perfect wife for Isaac? The ol' hand under the thigh oath and the camels and the water and the rings in the nose?

Pretty romantic, in a way. She's obviously the perfect woman. She was God's choice. God's gift to Isaac.

But for twenty years, she can't get pregnant. That's a problem.

Isaac prays for his wife, v.21. And what do you know? She gets pregnant.

But it's a doozy of a pregnancy. She has twins. Now some people are pregnant with twins and they don't know it until the first one is born and they're like, "Somehow, we're not done yet!"

But in Rebekah's case, she knows she has twins, because they're constantly fighting. Now brothers fight, that's just a reality, but these brothers are fighting before they're even born. They weren't born to fight, they were born fighting.

So Rebekah goes to the Lord in v.22, to see what's going on, and here's what the Lord said to her in v.23,

*"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 war in the womb was indicative of a continual conflict between these two boys. These were the fathers of two nations that would always be fighting.

Esau is born, v.25, *"red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau."* They named him Red. And he's hairy. Imagine what his baby pictures must have looked like.

Jacob, on the other hand, is born, v.26, *"with his hand holding Esau's heel."* Even when they're being born they're fighting, and Jacob is fighting dirty. He's trying to trip up his brother – and Esau isn't even walking yet! So they named him Jacob – it means heel-grabber, or deceiver, or cheater.

In v.27, we find that Esau grows up to be *"a skillful hunter."* Esau's a manly guy. He looks the part, plays the part.

Jacob is *"a quiet man, dwelling in tents."* He's an indoorsman. He's a quiet guy. A sneaky, quiet guy.

So that's the two boys. A man's man and a mama's boy.

And this what God says to Rebekah all the more surprising, notice that last line there in v.23, *"the older shall serve the younger."*

That's backwards. The older is supposed to be the heir. He's supposed to be the stronger one, the blessed one. Esau is the older one. He's the more obvious choice. He seems to be the stronger one.

God says the younger, Jacob, is going to come out on top. Why?

The answer is this: God is going to make Jacob the stronger one. God's favor is with Jacob. God is going to bless Jacob. God has chosen Jacob, not Esau, to be the son of Abraham like Isaac was, and Esau is going to be a son kind of like Ishmael was.

The question I want to ask this morning is Why? Why did God do it that way? Why did God choose the heel-grabber over the hunter?

And there's an answer to this question for us in the New Testament, let me take you to Romans 9.

In the context here, Paul is explaining why, even among God's people, many disobey God and reject Jesus. That's odd, isn't it? That God's people would reject him?

So Paul says look, Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. One man, two sons. Ishmael – the product of Abraham's very natural efforts, and Isaac, the child God promised, the child that could have only happened if God made him.

So not all Abraham's kids are true children of Abraham, that's his point. There's one man and two sons.

But someone says, "Sure, but the boys had two mothers. Sarah was the true wife." It makes sense that Isaac would be the chosen one.

Fine says Paul, let's go down a generation. One man, Isaac, one woman, Rebekah. And the two sons are twins. Now which child is the chosen one? And we already know don't we? It's Jacob. God told Rebekah right here in Genesis 25 that Jacob would be the blessed one.

So here's what Paul says:

*... 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."*

So let's ask Paul, "Why did God say 'the older will serve the younger.'" Why did God love Jacob, but hate Esau?

Is it because Jacob was good and Esau was bad? That's a very understandable guess.

Paul says, explicitly, *no!* God made this promise to Rebekah *before the boys were born*. They hadn't done anything good or bad.

Why did God say "the older will serve the younger"?

Here's the reason Paul gives:

*in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—*

God chose Jacob over Esau, and God would bless Jacob over Esau, and God would love Jacob over Esau, and God would make Jacob his child and not Esau.

Not because Jacob was better, not because Esau was worse. God did this so that his purpose of election might continue. What does that mean?

Something like this: Nobody tells God who to bless. Nobody tells God who his children are. Nobody makes God do nothing. God isn't not bound by culture or precedent. He's God, and He does whatever He wants to do.

And if the whole world says God should love Esau, and bless Esau, God doesn't care. He's going to love Jacob. Not because Jacob is better, not because he's more worthy. He's going to love Jacob because He's God.

And you hear that, and you say, "That's not fair!"

And Paul hears you:

*14 What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!*

What do you mean, "by no means!"? Cuz it sure sounds unjust to love Jacob and not love Esau. In fact, if anything, Jacob the heel-harming deceiver sounds a lot more like the heel-biting, deceiving snake than Esau! So yeah, it sounds like God is being unjust. Convince me, Paul.

Paul goes on:

*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."*

God will have mercy on whoever he chooses. God will have compassion on whoever he chooses. You can't force God's hand. Paul says that, next verse:

*16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.*

Now let me ask you, what does the "it" there refer to? What doesn't depend on human will or exertion? Answer: God's choice. God doesn't choose those who try the hardest. God doesn't choose those who make themselves worthy. God doesn't choose the best, the

brightest, the strongest. God doesn't choose the ones we would choose. God isn't like the captain of the dodgeball team picking the best players.

And this should be incredibly comforting to the insecure soul. This doctrine isn't meant to scare you. It's not meant to give you the heebie-jeebies. It's not meant to make you afraid of God. It's not meant to make you lie awake at night wondering if God chose you.

Here's what it does: It says look, if you're feeling like there's no way you're worthy of God's mercy, if there's no way you're worthy of God's love, if you're feeling like nobody in the world likes you so why on earth should God love you, if that's what you're feeling, know this:

You're right! You're not worthy of God's mercy, you're not worthy of God's love, you're a dreadful sinner, rotten to the core, deserving of nothing but being cast into utter darkness. You're nobody special!

But you know what... That's exactly the kind of person the Lord chooses. God shows mercy on the humble, the lowly, the unwanted, the unloved. God has compassion on the downcast, the downtrodden, God shows affection toward the outcast. God is the lover of the unlovely.

When Jesus was here walking this earth, how much time did he spend walking the halls of power? How much time did he spend hobnobbing with the influencers, the movers and shakers?

Look at what Paul tells the Corinthians:

*1 Cor 1:26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.*

Why does God choose the foolish, the weak, the low and despised? *"So that no human being might boast in the presence of God."* God will not share his glory, his grandeur. God has no tolerance for anyone who says, "Look at me God, ain't I something?"

If you're insecure – if you're just not sure God could ever love you, if you're loaded down with guilt and shame, if your faith is faltering, I want you to consider Jacob, the heel grabber, chosen by God, blessed by God, and let your heart rest in the incredible goodness of God.

Because here's the thing:



*Thesis for this section:* You can trust God's perfect, gracious love far more than you can trust your ability to make God love you.

So that's a comforting word to the curious, a calming word to the insecure, let's finish with a catastrophic word to the careless.

### III. A Catastrophic Word to the Careless v.28-34

*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.*

Esau is a hunter.

Esau is a hairy hunter.

And he's been out hunting all day, but the mighty Esau hasn't gotten anything. So now, Esau is a hungry, hairy hunter.

He comes home. Jacob's been cooking stew. Red stew, ironically. It's almost like it has Esau's name on it.

Hey bro, how about some stew?

It ain't free. Sell me your birthright.

That's kind of out of left field, don't you think?

What's the big deal about the birthright?

If you go back to the beginning of chapter 25 and starting at the end of v.5, as Abraham is setting his affairs in order, he does this:

*Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. 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. Gen 25:5b-6*

Basically what Abraham did, like was custom in the ancient world, was set up one son really well. That son would carry on the estate, rather than divide and dismantle it. All the sons

would get something, but the oldest would kind of replace the father. That was his prerogative as the oldest. He had the birthright.

In Abraham's case, it all went to Isaac. Ishmael was sent away because Sarah insisted that he not share Isaac's inheritance, do you remember that?

Esau's birthright was unique because he was set to step into the line of Grampa Abraham and father Isaac. And as such, that birthright not only included the stuff Abraham and Isaac had accumulated, more importantly it included the promises and blessings of God to Abraham. The best was yet to come for the offspring of Abraham.

So Esau's birthright was sort of two-dimensional. It had a present dimension – all of Isaac's stuff – and it had a future dimension – all of God's promised blessings to Abraham. Land, offspring, protection, greatness, those things we've looked at many times now.

And it was Esau's birthright. He's the oldest – if only by a few minutes.

But Jacob is the one always trying to trip up his oldest brother. Not a good relationship here.

So Jacob says to the hungry, hairy hunter, "Sure, I got some soup. I'll sell it to you for your birthright." It's gotta be about the worst offer in the history of the world.

But you know what Esau said? "I'm gonna die! And if I die, that birthright is useless to me."

Now, let me ask you this: Did Abraham receive all God's promises before he died? Did Isaac receive all God's promises before he died? Weren't they terribly disappointed in God?

No! Because they were looking beyond the grave. Abraham, Hebrews 11:10 says, "*was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.*" He didn't expect that in this life. Abraham was a firm believer in resurrection. So whatever portions of his promises God did for Abraham in this life, that's great, but whatever God didn't do, Abraham still believed he would. And Isaac would have been the same, we'll see that.

But what does Esau say? "*I am about to die. Of what use is a birthright to me?*" Gen 25:32

So he gave it to Jacob. And they formalized the sale with an oath, and Jacob gave Esau his stew.

What do hunters like to eat? Meat. Big thick slabs of meat. Wave it over a fire, and if it's still mooing, that's perfect. That's what manly, Esau kind of men do – they eat huge quantities of meat.

Notice Jacob's stew – it's lentil stew! Now I don't want to knock lentils, they're fine, and I'm sure it was a good stew, but the hungry hairy hunter trades away the promises of God for a vegetarian soup. It's comical if it wasn't so tragic.

And Moses ends the story with this line, v.34, *"Thus Esau despised his birthright."*

He treated it like it was nothing. He traded it away for a pittance. I don't think he even liked soup. But you know what? That means he really thought his birthright was worthless, doesn't it?

The New Testament speaks of this story, let me take you there as we close to the book of Hebrews, chapter 12, and beginning in v.14.

And notice there's a warning here:

*Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.*

Here the writer says Strive! Work! Labor! Exert effort! What kind of work?

Peace with everyone, and holiness. "The holiness without which no one will see the Lord."

Let me remind you of this once again: nobody accidentally stumbles into heaven. Nobody just wanders their way through life totally absorbed in themselves and their own interests, doesn't care about the things of the Lord, doesn't live for the Lord, doesn't love the Lord, doesn't love his people, then dies, shows up in heaven, and is given an eternal inheritance. No man lives like a child of the devil every moment of his life and sees the Lord in death. Nobody. We must strive for holiness if we would see the Lord.

That's a warning. You'd better take this seriously.

The writer continues in v.15

*15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;*

See to it... Make sure this happens, do not fail in this... Watch out, make certain that no one fails to obtain the grace of God.

What is that, "the grace of God"? It's God's gifts to you. It's all the wonderful things God has promised to his children, not because of anything they've done, but simply because they're his children.

See this striving for holiness, and this making sure we don't fail to obtain the grace of God doesn't mean, and I want to be clear about this, this doesn't mean we are responsible for getting ourselves into heaven. We don't make ourselves worthy of God's grace.

The writer is warning us don't throw away what God has so graciously given to you.

We don't earn God's goodness and God's generosity any more than Esau earned his birthright. That birthright was the most valuable possession on earth – it was like the Arkenstone of Thrain. And it belonged to Esau simply because he was Isaac's son.

And this is on the writers' mind, because he goes on in v.16 to say make sure...

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

All of God's promises to Abraham belonged to Esau – and he threw it away. Why?

Notice what it says about Esau: He was sexually immoral and he was unholy. That's why he didn't care about the birthright.

Esau cared about making sure whatever Esau was hungry for, Esau got. Esau was hungry for sex, so he went out and got it. Not in God's way. When he did get married, he took Canaanite wives. He didn't care that his wives didn't worship God, he wasn't interested in pleasing God.

Esau didn't live for God. Esau didn't worship God. Esau was for Esau. He didn't care about holiness. And because he didn't care about God, Esau didn't give a fig for God's promises. You know what they were worth to him?

Less than a bowl of bean soup. Probably had mushrooms in it too.

Esau's appetite drove him to throw away God's promises for a single meal.

And you know, the same thing can happen to us. How many people have decided God's not worth living for, God's promises really aren't that great, and if something comes along that I want more than the future God has promised, well, I'd be happy to trade for it.

How many young people are willing to trade their relationship with God for a moment of sexual excitement?

How many parents are willing to trade their kids relationship with God for a trophy or a scholarship?

How many people think so lightly of the promises of God that they don't really care if they get them or not?

How much do you really want God's promises? How much do you want heaven? Because I know that whatever you really want, and I mean really, really want, you'll do almost anything to get it. If it's money, if it's power, if it's pleasure, if it's security, if it's love – people trade their soul for this stuff all the time, they really do.

Do I please Jesus, or do I feed my hunger? Esau took the soup. Now there's nothing wrong with soup. It's fine and it's good. Esau loved the soup more than the promises – and that's the problem.

And you know what, he lived to regret it. But here's where the warning really hits home, check this out:

*17 For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.*

Isaac lay dying on his bed. And even though he knew it was against God's design, Isaac really wanted to bless Esau. And you know what, Esau really wanted it too. He'd traded the birthright away for the soup, but you know, that soup was long gone.

And you know how Jacob tricks Isaac, and claims the blessing as well, and here's what Esau says,

*Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!"*

Genesis 27:34

Isaac said this:

*"Behold, I have made him lord over you, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?"*

Genesis 27:37

Isn't that something? "What then can I do for you my son?"

Don't you hate it when someone says that to you, "There's nothing I can do!" And you can feel the angst in Esau's soul, and he goes on to say to Isaac,

*"Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father." And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. Genesis 27:38*

When Esau desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent.

What does that mean? It means even here, in this moment, all Esau cares about is the stuff of this world. Dad, bless me so I can be rich like you! Dad, bless me so God makes my life full of all the things I love the most!

It means the moment was past. Listen to me carefully: Repentance itself is a gift of God. Don't think for a single moment that you can live for yourself today, and switch jerseys and play for team Jesus whenever you feel like it.

This is the warning for the careless soul. The person who cares so little about the things of God is in grave danger. There's nothing but utter calamity down that road. And if God is calling you to himself, even this morning, don't for a single second think you can push him off and take the call tomorrow.

Now is the day to hear, now is the day to follow Christ. Now is the day to pursue peace, now is the day to get serious about your life. Now is the day to set aside sexual immorality, now is the day to set aside holiness. Now is the day to say, "I can't go on living for the bean soup of this world, when God has promised me an everlasting feast and fullness of joy in the next."

Esau was rejected, and his your cries and his your tears just uselessly to the floor. See to it that you're not like that.