

Sibling Rivalry

Nothing brings out the worst in us like a RIVALRY! It is oftentimes fueled by our pride and when it is left unchecked it can divide and destroy the most intimate and valued relationships we have. It has been known to sever marital relationships. It has the potential for dividing entire families by pitting siblings against one another and creating divisions even between parents and their own children. It can even divide the church into separate factions causing a church to split into two distinct congregations. And if you were ever privileged enough to have a sibling of your own you know all too well the rivalry that can naturally be stirred up when we are competing for the affection or attention of our parents.

This week, as we continue through the Bible we come to another defining moment in the story of God's redemptive plan that is going to set the table for the next part of our journey as we go from looking at specific families and individuals to the birthing of a nation that God is going to use to bring about the promised ONE of **Genesis 3:15**. So far the PROMISE God gave to Abraham in **Genesis 12** is to be passed on to Abraham's son Isaac as we have seen the last couple of weeks. And today, we are going to be introduced to one more son with whom this PROMISE will be passed before our focus turns to the NATION God will use to reveal to the world her SAVIOR.

At the end of last week's reading in **Genesis Ch. 25** you should have read about two son's being born to Isaac and Rebekah. These two boys were twins which the LORD had revealed to Rebekah were going to represent two nations that would come from her womb. In fact, here is exactly what God revealed to her regarding these two sons.

Genesis 25:23 (NIV) The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

This revelation from God had to do with who was supposed to receive the PROMISE given Abraham that was passed on to Isaac, their father. Because there are two sons being born, only one can be the son and nation from which God will bring the promised ONE. And because God is sovereign and this is his redemption plan, God chooses the younger son who will be born as the one who will receive the promise as He says to her, **one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.**"

When we come to verse 26 we are told what his name will be. **Genesis 25:25-26 (NIV)** The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. **26** After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob.....

Before they are born God chooses Jacob to be the one who will carry the promise of the grandfather Abraham and their father Isaac. Oftentimes we wonder why God chooses who he

chooses? And while we don't know for certain all the reasons why God chose Jacob in this particular instance. We can rest assured of three fundamental truths regarding His choice:

- 1) **It wasn't because Jacob was more righteous than Esau!** As we are going to see, and I hope you have already seen so far, God does not choose people based on their own merit. And here is why, none of us has anything good to offer God!

Romans 3:10-12 (NIV) 10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; **11** there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. **12** All have turned away, they have together become worthless there is no one who does good, not even one."

God doesn't look at us the way we look at each other. We look at the outside of a person. But God always looks at the heart. We see this very clearly in how God chose David to be the King of Israel. **1 Samuel 16:7 (NIV)** But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Heck, even their own parents showed favoritism based on their individual merits.

Genesis 25:28 (NIV) 28 Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Probably because of what God told her about him being the son of promise. But as far as God was concerned both Esau and Jacob have their struggles in the flesh. They were both sinful men and unworthy of the promise. In **Genesis 25** we see Esau willing to exchange His birthright in order to feed his hungry belly.

Genesis 25:29-34 (NIV) 29 Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. **30** He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.) **31** Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." **32** "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" **33** But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. **34** Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

What was the significance of the birthright? As the elder son, Esau was entitled to a double portion of the inheritance and to be considered the spiritual leader of the family upon his father's death. He was willing to let all that go (which had to do with a future inheritance) in order to receive instant gratification in the present. **How many times do you and I sacrifice a future blessing for an immediate gratification of our flesh now?** This was the heart of Esau.

Jacob on the other hand, wasn't much better! He was a liar and a cheat! In fact, his very name **Jacob means, "deceiver"** He took advantage of Esau's weakness and exploited his father's poor eyesight with the help of his mother in a calculated effort to steal his father's blessing from Esau which was supposed to be tied to the promise given to Isaac by his father Abraham.

Genesis: 27:1-10 (NIV) When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, “My son.” “Here I am,” he answered.

2 Isaac said, “I am now an old man and don’t know the day of my death. **3** Now then, get your equipment—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. **4** Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.”

5 Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, **6** Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, **7** ‘Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die.’ **8** Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: **9** Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. **10** Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.”

So Jacob does as his mother instructs him. After disguising himself to feel like and smell like his brother Esau he takes the food his mother prepared to his dad.

Genesis: 27:18-29 (NIV) **18** He went to his father and said, “My father.” “Yes, my son,” he answered. “Who is it?” **19** Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.” **20** Isaac asked his son, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?” “The Lord your God gave me success,” he replied. **21** Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not.” **22** Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” **23** He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he proceeded to bless him. **24** “Are you really my son Esau?” he asked. “I am,” he replied. **25** Then he said, “My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.” Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. **26** Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come here, my son, and kiss me.” **27** So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. **28** May God give you heaven’s dew and earth’s richness—an abundance of grain and new wine. **29** May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed.”

As you can imagine this is now a family very much divided especially once Esau and Isaac find out what has been done **Genesis: 27:41 (NIV)** Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”

They both have issues of sin they are having to overcome and neither are worthy of the promised blessing. **But the promised blessing is not based on merit.** One of the reasons I believe the Bible to be the Word of God and not the creation of man is because of the people it

talks about. They are all jacked up. We have stories of murder, incest, men laying with maidservants, lies being told for manipulation of our circumstances, etc. If I was writing this I would make everyone look better than they were. Clean it up a little! Leave out the bad parts and make them sound more godly. But God's word doesn't do that and the reason why is because God wants to show us that **He is not limited nor is He hindered by our insufficiencies!** In fact, **God uses sinful man to accomplish His purposes!** God's plan is never hindered because we are sinful. We might miss out on the blessing of God being able to use us to accomplish His will but in the end His will is never hindered by our inadequacies. God's promise will be fulfilled and our insufficiencies will not hinder it from being so. **God doesn't need us but he chooses to use us.** **Truth #1 - It wasn't because Jacob was more righteous than Esau!** But notice the second truth.

- 2) **This is God's Plan and He KNOWS what is needed to carry it out!** God is all powerful (see the creation account in Genesis 1-2)! He is all knowing! He discerns hearts and He knows how we are going to respond in given situations (See 1 Samuel 16:7) Btw, God doesn't just see the heart that exists now, He knows the heart that will come. So I think it is safe to say that God can choose whomever He wants or whomever He thinks will have the heart of humility and faith that will be required to accomplish His divine plan. And God chooses Jacob despite all of the manipulation and sinful human effort of His parents and his own deception. As he is on his journey to Haran to flee from his brother's wrath God confirms that he is the son who is to receive the blessing.

Genesis 28:10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. **11** When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. **12** He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. **13** There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. **14** Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. **15** I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Abraham was far from perfect but he did strive to walk with God. Issac wasn't any better. But he did trust God with his life. When it comes to Jacob he is certainly not without sin but he does seem to have an interest in the birthright and blessing of his father. He does seem to have a heart for God. After receiving two wives from his uncle Laban and after God blesses him with 11 sons of his own. God calls Jacob to return home to Canaan the land promised to his fathers and to him..

Genesis 31:3 (NIV) Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

At the end of the day **God is looking for the humble heart that will trust Him by faith** This is why God chose David to lead Israel after the people chose Saul. This is why God chose Joseph and Mary as the ones who would be entrusted with providing and caring for Jesus as an infant child. This is why God chose the Apostles upon which to build the church. And this is why God will choose you and I. So we see that **It wasn't because Jacob was more righteous than Esau! This is God's Plan and He KNOWS what is needed to carry it out!** But there is a 3rd truth we need to see:

- 3) **Just because God chooses Jacob doesn't mean Esau couldn't serve Him too!** The problem is, will Esau's pride allow him to serve God if he is not the son of promise? He didn't have to be the son of promise to serve God. He could have pursued a relationship with God whether there was a promised blessing or not. Certainly, just like Jacob, he too has heard the stories of how God called Abraham and how there was a promised ONE to come that would break sin's curse on our lives. Certainly he has heard the stories of faith and how God provided for and protected both Abraham and his father Isaac through the years. Certainly he had to know that it was to his advantage to have a personal relationship with God than it was to try and live life on his own. Despite all of that Esau chose a life apart from God. Could it be that for Esau he was more concerned about making a name for himself than He was about glorifying God. Was he more focused on his own will than He was about God's will?

At the end of the day is it about your name or is it about His NAME? Your will or God's WILL? As Jesus taught us to pray and He himself prayed in the garden before being arrested on the night of His betrayal. **Luke 22:42 (NIV)** "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

At the end of the day God is not looking for a PERFECT vessel, He is looking for a WILLING vessel. The difference between Esau and Jacob was Jacob was a willing vessel who didn't just seek the HAND of God but he was one who sought the FACE of GOD. I want you to see the progression of Jacob's relationship with God as compared with Esau.

Jacob starts out with an interest in the promised blessing of His father but without an understanding that it was a promise given by God. It is not until he has his own personal encounter with God after leaving his mother and father that God appears to him in a dream.

Genesis 28:10-16 (NIV) **10** Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. **11** When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. **12** He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. **13** There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. **14** Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. **15** I am with you and will watch over you wherever you

go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” It seems that for the first time Jacob is becoming aware of God’s presence in a way that he wasn’t aware of before. The next morning Jacob makes a vow to God.

Genesis 28:20-21 (NIV) 20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear **21** so that I return safely to my father’s household, then the Lord will be my God. Jacob goes from thinking about God as just a God of his fathers, to seeing God as his own personal God. **Some of us need to stop living off of the faith of our parents and make Jesus our personal Lord and Savior.** Others of us need to stop trying to encounter God through the faith experiences of your pastor and start having your own personal experiences with God. God wants to be your GOD!

I want you to notice the maturation of Jacob’s personal relationship with God. After serving his uncle Laban for 20 years God calls Jacob back to his family and the land of promise. The first order of business was for him to reconcile with his brother Esau whom he had wronged. **Maybe you need to do the same!** Before God can use you, you have a relationship you need to make right. I wonder how many of us are keeping God from using us because we have some relationships that we need to mend. Now, before Jacob confronts his brother he has to overcome his fear and anxiety about meeting his angry brother. He is fearful of what his brother’s response will be so Jacob seeks God’s assurance and protection before he does so. But it appears that Jacob is after more than just the blessing of God. As Jacob pursues God’s assurance, notice what he finds.

After praying for God’s protection and sending his family ahead to meet Esau the Bible says that Jacob was all alone and wrestled with a man.

Genesis 32:24-30 (NIV) 24 So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. **25** When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. **26** Then the man said, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.” But Jacob replied, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” **27** The man asked him, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he answered. **28** Then the man said, “Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.” **29** Jacob said, “Please tell me your name.” But he replied, “Why do you ask my name?” Then he blessed him there. **30** So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.”

It is believed that the man Jacob wrestled with was none other than Jesus prior to Him being revealed in human flesh. As we read through the OT we are going to encounter a mysterious figure sometimes referred to as the Angel of The Lord while other times referred to as a MAN as we see here in **Genesis 32**. Other places we see this mysterious man is when the three men appeared to Abraham prior to God bringing judgment on Sodom. Three come to Abraham but

only two go to Sodom and Lot's house in **Genesis 18-19**. The man in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in **Daniel 3**

Whatever happened on that evening I want you to notice Jacob's response? "I saw God face to face." Jacob wasn't just after a blessing He was after a personal intimate relationship with God. That is why Jacob asked the Man for his name. A name is personal! It prepares the way for intimacy. Jacob didn't just want a blessing without the intimacy of a relationship with the one who blesses. And this is what God desires from all of us. Do you want just a blessing from God? Or do you want to know God intimately?

Esau on the other hand was more interested in what he could get from God than he was with God Himself. Notice the cry of Esau when he found out his father wasn't going to bless him.

Genesis 27:38 (NIV) Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!" Then Esau wept aloud.

When we focus more on the blessing of God more than we do the face of God we tend to walk away from Him. We see this with Cain. We see this with Ishmael. And now we see it again with Esau. Notice the path Esau takes in comparison with Jacob's

Genesis 36:6 (NIV) Esau took his wives and sons and daughters and all the members of his household, as well as his livestock and all his other animals and all the goods he had acquired in Canaan, and moved to a land some distance from his brother Jacob.

Esau becomes the father of the Edomites who become an enemy of Israel. Esau chose to take wives from the land of Canaan and as a result separated himself and his family from God as he gave himself over to the influence of the false gods of the Canaanites. In the end Esau rejects the God of his father as he moves away from His brother Jacob.

If we don't get what we want from God will we reject Him too?

Worship Team Comes Back Up

Invitation:

Do we get jealous of the blessings God gives to others?

Are we just after the blessings of God or the face of God?

Have you let your past failures keep you from following God and allowing Him to use you. He is not after perfection He is after the willing heart?

How many of us are willing to be real with God and wrestle with Him? God is not trying to defeat us He is trying to get us to a place of submission