

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

# UNIT 03

# STRUGGLES OF FAITH



GENESIS 25–50; JOB



MEMORY VERSE

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb,  
and naked I will leave this life.  
The LORD gives, and the LORD takes away.  
Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

–Job 1:21



# JACOB MANIPULATED ESAU

CORE PASSAGE: GENESIS 25:20-34

## CONTEXT

The second half of Genesis details the fulfillment of God's covenant promise to Abraham through the lives of Abraham's promised offspring. Like Sarah before her, Rebekah, Isaac's wife, was barren for years. Isaac prayed for his wife, and just as the Lord kept His promise with Abraham and Sarah, the Lord gave Rebekah twin sons: Esau and Jacob. The twins' ensuing sibling rivalry highlights a few major themes in the book of Genesis and within Scripture more broadly. God's covenant faithfulness is seen throughout the book as He keeps His promises and sovereignly works to carry out His plan.

## KEY CONCEPT

**God's will and ways are righteous,  
while our ways are sinful.**

As you examine Genesis 25:20-34:

- Evaluate each person's words and actions to determine what was good and what was sinful.
- Consider what this passage teaches us about God's character and His faithfulness to His own promises and unfolding plan.



## TIMELINE

Abraham Finds a Wife for Isaac (Genesis 24)

**SESSION STUDY: Isaac and Rebekah Give Birth to Twins:  
Esau and Jacob; Esau Sells Jacob His Birthright (Genesis 25)**

Isaac Marries Rebekah  
(Genesis 24)

Jacob Steals Esau's Blessing  
(Genesis 27)

Jacob Flees from Esau to Haran (Genesis 28)

### Daily Readings

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 1:</b> Genesis 25:19-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 4:</b> Genesis 27:1-29  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 2:</b> Genesis 26:1-6   | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 5:</b> Genesis 27:30-46 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 3:</b> Genesis 26:7-35  | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Day 6:</b> Psalm 15         |



Scan this QR code  
to access this session's  
Scripture passages.

## PERSONAL PREPARATION

GENESIS 25:20-26

### GOD'S WAYS ARE HIGHER THAN OUR WAYS.

*Highlight the Lord's response to Rebekah, and underline the phrase that runs contrary to human expectation.*

**20** Isaac was forty years old when he took as his wife Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and sister of Laban the Aramean. **21** Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The LORD was receptive to his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. **22** But the children inside her struggled with each other, and she said, "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; two peoples will come from you and be separated. One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger. **24** When her time came to give birth, there were indeed twins in her womb. **25** The first one came out red-looking, covered with hair like a fur coat, and they named him Esau. **26** After this, his brother came out grasping Esau's heel with his hand. So he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born.

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**THE FAMILY:** Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.



At times, waiting on God can feel impossibly difficult. Abraham and Sarah waited twenty-five years, full of faith and mistakes, for the birth of their promised son, Isaac. In Genesis 25, we learn that after Isaac married Rebekah, she remained barren for twenty years (cp. 25:20,26). Isaac prayed for the gift of a child for Rebekah, and the Lord granted their desire (v. 21).

Prayer is appropriate in any and all circumstances, yet biblically and experientially, we know the process of petitioning God is not formulaic. Prayers like Isaac's may or may not yield the gift of children. But it is important to remember that prayers that seemingly go unanswered are not negative reflections on God's faithfulness or His goodness toward His children. God promises to be our God, to be our salvation, to be our comfort, and to work all things for our good in His ways that may not yet make sense to us (Genesis 17:7; Romans 1:16; 8:28; 2 Corinthians 1:3).

**How have you experienced God's faithfulness, salvation, and comfort in response to your prayers?**

Curiously, there is no mention of anything unique or otherwise special about Isaac and Rebekah in and of themselves that caused God to answer their prayer by giving them twins. Rather, God's gift of children to the couple was the next step in God's unfolding plan to bring glory to Himself and salvation to the world. God was orchestrating a lineage as He had promised to Abraham to make him into a great nation (Genesis 25:23; see 12:2).

In addition, God was fulfilling His plan in His own unique way. The struggles Isaac and Rebekah's two sons engaged in inside and outside the womb would illustrate both God's sovereignty and His amazing grace. These sons would become nations, yet contrary to human convention, God foretold the older would serve the younger (25:23), who would receive the blessing of God's covenant with Abraham.

**How is God's unfolding plan both unexpected and a great comfort to us?**



## PERSONAL PREPARATION

GENESIS 25:27-34

### OUR WAYS ARE NOT GOD'S WAYS BUT SINFUL.

*Underline the ways these family members expressed sinful thoughts and actions.*

**27** When the boys grew up, Esau became an expert hunter, an outdoorsman, but Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home. **28** Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. **29** Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field exhausted. **30** He said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, because I'm exhausted." That is why he was also named Edom. **31** Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." **32** "Look," said Esau, "I'm about to die, so what good is a birthright to me?" **33** Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to Jacob and sold his birthright to him. **34** Then Jacob gave bread and lentil stew to Esau; he ate, drank, got up, and went away. So Esau despised his birthright.

#### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Isaac and his family proved themselves to be sinners by their selfish and self-centered actions. This is the natural way of humanity. But God was sovereignly orchestrating events and redeeming this family's sin to accomplish His promise to Abraham to make him into a great nation through Isaac and Jacob, which would ultimately lead to Jesus, who fulfilled the need of humanity for salvation from sin.

**Key Concept:** God's will and ways are righteous, while our ways are sinful.

The contrast between Esau and Jacob could not be clearer. Esau was an avid outdoorsman and was loved by his father, Isaac. Jacob was quiet and preferred to stay home, where he was loved by his mother, Rebekah. Yet despite his reserved demeanor, Jacob was both crafty and deceitful.

In the text, Jacob found Esau in a weak position, exhausted from hunting and famished. Jacob took advantage of the situation, manipulating Esau into selling his birthright for a bit of bread and a bowl of stew—all in all, meager compensation in a wildly lopsided exchange.

Jacob's actions cannot be explained away or justified—his interaction with Esau here was just plain sinful. The God who created us would have us give freely to our brothers in need (James 2:15-17) and love our neighbors as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18). Yet we see through this passage how God is able to carry out His plan and purposes in spite of humanity's obstinacy and sin.

**In what ways are you tempted to circumvent or take a shortcut around God's ways to accomplish your own ends?**

Jacob took advantage of Esau's weakness and manipulated the circumstances before him to get what he wanted—Esau's birthright. But Esau was not a mere victim of Jacob's ploy. We read that he “despised his birthright” (Genesis 25:34).

In the time and culture in which Esau and Jacob lived, birthrights of the firstborn entailed both ongoing leadership and significant status within one's family as well as all the material benefits of familial blessing and inheritance. Yet none of that mattered to Esau in the heat of a moment when he was hungry. Esau, focusing only on the temporary hunger pangs in his stomach, made the deal with Jacob. For a simple meal in the present moment, Esau forsook his entire future. He then ate, drank, got up, and went away, as if the whole ordeal were no big deal.

This is why the author of Genesis said Esau “despised” his birthright (v. 34). The author of Hebrews goes so far as to say Esau was “immoral” and “irreverent” for his part in this exchange (Hebrews 12:16-17).

**What lesser things do you pursue instead of embracing God's will and timing in your life?**



## GROUP EXPERIENCE

# THE CONTRAST OF GOD AND MAN

*Based on Genesis 25:20-34, identify the ways God displayed His righteousness versus how Isaac's family displayed their sinfulness.*

### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

### THE SINS OF ISAAC'S FAMILY

How could the members of Isaac's family have followed God's ways and reflected God's righteousness instead of acting sinfully?

**Key Concept:** God's will and ways are righteous, while our ways are sinful.



## HEAD

What do the events in Genesis 25 teach us about God's character and His faithfulness to His own promises and plan?

**PRAYING SCRIPTURE**

Read Psalm 15, considering how Isaac's family, and yourself, would stack up to this description of faithfulness to God. Then pray through the psalm, confessing your sins and praising God for His amazing grace to sinners and His faithful provision of Jesus, in whom we will never be shaken.



## HEART

With faith in Jesus, how do you need to forsake sin and seek God's righteousness in your thoughts, words, and actions?

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



## HANDS

What will you pray for this week in keeping with the righteousness of God?