



Parkway Fellowship

Family Feuds • Jacob vs Esau: Lies Rip the Fabric of the Family • Genesis 25,26, 33 • 10/28/2018

Main Point

God desires to bring peace and restoration to families, even when sin has brought conflict for generations.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is one thing you were taught or learned by example from your parents about handling conflict?

When you were growing up, did you parents show any favoritism or were they always impartial and fair-minded in their dealings with you and your siblings?

Did you ever have a period of time in childhood when lying was a regular behavior for you?

Did you parents know, and if so, what did they do about it?

In a broken world, even the most "functional" families face situational and relational conflict. That's why we must commit to pursuing peace. Sinful attitudes and behaviors like favoritism, jealousy, and deceit will rip our families apart and have long-lasting impact. In today's study of the lives of Jacob, Esau, and Isaac, we'll see the effects of generational sin and how God longs to bring restoration.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 25:5-6, 21-28.

What had Isaac learned from his dad about how to parent?

Abraham loved Isaac most because he was the child God had promised and blessed him with in his old age. Isaac was the son of Abraham's wife, Sarah. Because he and Sarah hadn't trusted the Lord to give them Isaac, Abraham had fathered other sons through concubines. Isaac grew up knowing he was more loved by his father than any of his siblings. Rather than deciding to parent his own family differently, Isaac followed suit. He favored Esau over Jacob, but for no other reason than he liked his personality better.

What happened in Rebekah's womb? How did she react to the turmoil?

What would you think if you received the same message as Rebekah? How would you prepare to parent the two kids?

Which verse do you think best explains the reason for the problems Isaac's family had, verse 27 or verse 28? Explain.

The two boys fighting inside of Rebekah's womb was a precursor to what would happen later. The struggle was so great it prompted Rebekah to go to God in prayer. God's news revealed the future division of the brothers, and Jacob and Rebekah took sides. The favoritism they showed may have been unintentional at first, simply a result of learned behavior from their own parents, but the effects were a growing measure of competition, comparison, and selfishness for all involved.

Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 26:6-10; 27:6-7,18-23,41-44.

What do Isaac's actions in 26:6-10 tell you about his view of family?

What did Isaac's actions say to the Philistine Abimelech about Isaac's view of the God of Israel?

Isaac reasoned in the same way Abraham did in protecting his life by telling others that his wife was his sister (12:11-13; 20:11). This happened on two occasions with Abraham, once in Egypt and once in Gerar. Abimelech was king of the pagan Philistines, and even he was aghast at Isaac's deception. Still, as with the earlier Gerar incident, Abimelech (likely a title referring to a ruler from the same family line) responded positively after discovering the truth and pronounced blessing on the patriarch. God was faithful to Isaac to protect him and preserve His promises, even in spite of Isaac's sin of deceiving Abimelech.

What do Rebekah and Jacob's actions in 27:6-7,18-23 reveal about their view of family? Of their relationship with God?

How did their deception affect the family?

Deception marked their relationships both outside and inside the family. A family where lies and deception are part of the structure of relationships will be torn apart. From Abraham to Sarah to Isaac to Rebekah to Jacob to Esau and to the generations that followed them, God allowed them to face the consequences of their sinful attitudes and actions, and He also extended His grace as He taught them to trust in Him.

| Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 33:1-11.

Many years had passed since Jacob and left home to go live with his uncle Laban. The two brothers had gotten married and now had families of their own when they finally saw each other again.

Knowing what you know about what had transpired between the two brothers, how can you account for the love they showed each other here?

Have you ever experienced restoration in a relationship that once looked hopeless? How did that restoration come about?

God had used time, space, and circumstance to teach the two brothers about Himself and about the importance of peace in earthly relationships. Jacob wanted to restore his relationship with Esau. Esau wanted to restore his relationship with Joseph. Restoration is something God longs to give us; when we ask Him, He will provide a way. We can take heart in knowing our past sins don't disqualify us from God's love or from the fulfillment of His promises.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What sinful tendencies in your family do you worry might bring about difficulty? Are you hopeless to just watch it happen? Explain.

In this week's message, we learned the following ways God breaks the cycle of generational sin in our lives and families: through our confession to Him, by asking forgiveness from our families, asking Jesus to break the cycle, making aggressive and ruthless commitments to stay far away from generational sins, and by teaching the next generation (at age-appropriate times) about our families and God's faithfulness.

What are some practical steps you need to take to promote restoration in broken family relationships?

What do you learn about God, or what encouragement do you gain for your own family from the story of Jacob and Esau?

Pray

Thank God for being the God of peace. Pray that you would model that aspect of His character in your relationships with others.

Commentary

| Genesis 25:5-6, 21-28.

25:5-6. Although Moses introduces Abraham's second family, he leaves no doubt in his readers' minds that Isaac remained the single descendant of promise. Before his death Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac.

25:21-22. The barren condition of Rebekah parallels the Abraham-Sarah narratives (11:30; see also Rachel, 29:31). In both cases, a message from the Lord follows, a promissory call (12:1-3) and a prophetic oracle (25:23). The absence of children contrasts with the success of the search for Rebekah and the hopeful expectation of children (24:60). The verb prayed commonly concerns intercessory prayer for others. Isaac's intercession assumes that the Lord is responsible for human reproduction. That the Lord answered his prayer repeats the same verb, forming a parallel between the two halves of the verse: When Isaac prayed ... the Lord answered his prayer. This rhetorical feature underscores the effectiveness of the patriarch's intercession and the responsiveness of his God. The last clause of the verse presents the evidence that the prayer was realized. This terse report of pregnancy is striking since there was a significant waiting period of twenty years between marriage and conception.

25:23. The first couplet entails a synonymous parallelism, announcing two nations ... two peoples (v. 23) are in her womb. Here, the descendants are substituted for the two children who are the progenitors of Israel and Edom. These two peoples will be separated, recalling the migration of the peoples listed in the Table of Nations (10:5,32), but more important, echoing the parting between Abraham and Lot (13:9,11,14). It was by means of separations that resolutions came to the tensions between Isaac and Ishmael and Jacob and Esau.

The second couplet in the oracle explains that the parting involves the hostile usurpation of the elder brother by the younger and stronger brother (v. 23). The notion of the younger son holding sway over his senior was contrary to custom (29:26; 37:10-11; 43:33; Deut 21:15-17; Job 32:6), although in Genesis it was common for Israel's fathers (27:29, 32-33; 38:27-30; 48:14-20; 49:8). That the older will serve the younger brother recalls the curse and blessing invoked by Noah (9:25-27), and it anticipates the blessing stolen by Jacob at the

expense of Esau (27:29, 37, 40). That the oracle speaks of two nations shows that the prophecy and its fulfillment look beyond the brothers to their descendants. Edom's history reveals repeated submission to the Israelites (e.g., Exod 15:15; Num 24:18; 2 Sam 8:12-14; 1 Kgs 11:14-16; Isa 11:4; Amos 9:11-12; Obad 1:18).

25:24-26. These verses report the second conflict episode in the passage. Verse 24 confirms the first part of the oracle by announcing twin boys and by repeating the word womb, occurring in v. 23. That the infants struggle at delivery corresponds to the oracle's prediction, they will be separated. Unusual pregnancies or strange occurrences at birth may accompany a distinct event (e.g., 1 Sam 4:21) or signal an omen (e.g., 38:27-30). The description of the infant as strikingly red and hairy is not derisive, for a ruddy complexion and the growth of hair were valued (Num 6:5; 2 Sam 14:26; Song 5:11; 7:5; Isa 3:24; 7:20; Jer 7:29). Esau is distinguished especially by the hair over "his whole body," giving the appearance of a "garment"). This latter term is used of an outer covering, such as the prophet's mantle (e.g., 1 Kgs 19:13).

25:27-28. The differences between Esau and Jacob, already apparent at birth, became more pronounced as the boys grew up. Esau was a rough-and-tumble hunter and outdoorsman (lit "man of rural regions"); Jacob was quiet and stayed at home (lit "dweller in tents"). The differences between the boys highlighted a division between the parents: Isaac, something of an outdoorsman himself (24:63), loved his rugged son Esau, while Rebekah loved her more domestic son Jacob, even teaching him how to cook.

25:29-34. Esau's impatient, appetite-driven life contrasted sharply with Jacob's shrewd, calculating character. Esau willingly traded his birthright—the right of the firstborn son to a double portion (or perhaps two-thirds) of the inheritance (Dt 21:17)—for the chance to eat some red stuff. Because of his fateful decision, Esau picked up the alternate name Edom ("Red"), which would be carried by the people group stemming from him (32:3). And because Jacob had made him swear to sell his birthright, the decision could not be undone.

| Genesis 26:6-10

26:6-10 Isaac would have had to negotiate with the Philistines to enjoy certain privileges among them. As a result he might have to provide a wife for someone's harem. If the person asked for Rebekah (and she was, after all, the most important female in the clan and a beautiful woman), Isaac might be killed if he refused. Thus Isaac, like Abraham before him (12:13; 20:2), told outsiders that his wife was his sister. Isaac's lie was uncovered when he was caught caressing (lit "laughing/playing with") Rebekah. Abimelech, as the supreme authority in the region, sent for Isaac and demanded an explanation. Isaac patterned his defense after his father's (20:11); he feared he might die on account of his wife.

| Genesis 27:6-7,18-23,41-44

27:6-7. Rebekah, obviously no stranger to cunning and deception, sprang to the protection of "her son." Favoritism had been their parental pattern for many years. We expect Rebekah to confront Isaac, but that's not the way things worked in this family. She explained to Jacob how they could outwit the blind old man. Rather than recoiling at the immorality of the plot, Jacob hesitated only on the grounds that he might get caught and end up with a curse instead of a blessing!

27:18-23. Isaac was blind, but he could still use his other senses in addition to his reasoning. To overcome this, Jacob used at least five different things to deceive his father; goatskins to make his hands seem rough and hairy (v. 23), the cooked goat his mother prepared (v. 25), his brother's clothes in order to smell like Esau (v. 27), alcohol to impair his father's judgment (v. 25), and blatant lies (vv. 19,20,24). Jacob's craftiness paid off since his father blessed him.

27:41-44. For a second time in this chapter, Rebekah intervened to change Jacob's destiny. Her latest plan was for Jacob to stay with his uncle Laban in Haran—hundreds of miles away—until Esau's anger subsided. Otherwise, she feared, she would lose both her sons in one day—Jacob by murder, Esau by capital punishment (9:6). The few days, however, turned out to be more than 20 years (31:38).

| Genesis 33:1-11.

33:1-3. Following his transforming encounter with God, Jacob went from hiding behind his wives and children (32:22-23) to boldly taking the lead in protecting his family. In his encounter with Esau and his 400 men, Jacob went on ahead of the group, arranging his family behind him according to their status. In a display of respect unparalleled in the Bible, Jacob bowed down to Esau seven times as he approached.

33:4-11. Even as Jacob had been changed the previous night, it seems that Esau had changed too. Perhaps he had been warned by God not to harm Jacob, even as other adversaries of the patriarchs had been before (20:3-7; 31:24). The once-estranged brothers hugged, kissed, and wept together in gracious reunion—a scene that anticipated a reunion between estranged brothers in the next generation (45:14-15). Esau, who had three wives and five sons (36:2-5), inquired about Jacob's family. Each of the mothers approached Esau with their children and respectfully bowed down. The fact that Joseph was the only named son in the group and was mentioned ahead of his mother foreshadows his leading role in later narratives.