

# Jacob and His Brother Esau

Genesis 25:19-34; 27:1-41

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## Bible Memory Verse

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 NIV

*Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.*

## Bible Story

Isaac and Rebekah were married when Isaac was forty years old. Rebekah, however, was not able to have children “because she was barren” (Genesis 25:21). Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife’s womb and the Lord answered his prayer. Rebekah became pregnant. It was a very unique pregnancy though. Inside Rebekah there were two babies that “jostled each other within her” (Genesis 25:22). Rebekah asked the Lord what was going on and the Lord said:

“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” (Genesis 25:23).

This prophecy from the Lord would prove to come true in the coming years of these two boys’ lives.

When the twins were born: “The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob” (Genesis 25:25-26).

The boys were very different from each other. Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the wilderness country. Jacob, the other, was more quiet and he stayed among the tents. Their parents favored one over the other. Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game. Where Rebekah loved Jacob, who stayed around her more often.

*“Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, ‘Quick, let me have some of the red stew! I’m famished!’*

*Jacob replied, ‘First sell me your birthright.’*

*‘Look, I am about to die,’ Esau said. ‘What good is the birthright to me?’*

*But Jacob said, ‘Swear to me first.’ So he swore an oath to him, selling birthright to Jacob.*

*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” (Genesis 25:29-34).*

Birthright meant that the oldest son had the “right” to inherit his family’s property and good name. It looks like the prophecy about the older serving the younger was coming true.

Some time later, Isaac was getting old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see. He called Esau in and asked him to go and hunt and kill some wild game for him so that they could eat and that he could give the blessing to him. Esau left to go run that errand. Meanwhile, Rebekah heard what Isaac had said to Esau. Thinking that this was Jacob’s chance to get the blessing instead of Esau, Rebekah told Jacob a sinister plan:

*“Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for you father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies” (Genesis 27:8-10).*

Jacob agreed to the plan after his mother said she would take on whatever curse would come of this scheme. So Rebekah got some of Esau’s clothes and put them on the younger Jacob along with some goatskins to cover his smooth hands and neck. She also cooked some very tasty food exactly the way she knew Esau would make it for Isaac. And then Jacob went in to his father. At first Isaac was a little leery because Jacob sounded like Jacob! But then Jacob let his father feel his hands and then Isaac was convinced that it was Esau.

Isaac received the meal that he thought Esau had prepared and afterward he gave Jacob the blessing:

*“[Jacob] 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. May God give you of heaven’s dew and of earth’s richness—an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and people 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’” (Genesis 27:27-29).*

Thus Isaac blessed Jacob.

Almost as soon as Jacob had left his father's presence, Esau returns from hunting for his father's meal. When Esau approached Isaac and told him to eat what he had prepared, "Isaac trembled violently and said, 'Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him—and indeed he will be blessed!' (Genesis 27:33). Esau was floored! Jacob, his brother, had deceived him a second time! Esau begged his father for any remaining blessing, but Isaac had none left.

The prophecy the Lord spoke before the twins were born was now true. The older would indeed serve the younger.

*"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'" (Genesis 27:41).*

And so Jacob ran away from the anger of his brother, Esau.

## Life Application

Jacob brought about his position over and above his brother through deception and lies. Maybe Jacob was trying to make the prophecy the Lord spoke come true. As if God needed any help making His will come to pass. One thing that this story teaches us is we can force certain things to happen if we want. That is not how God wants His will to come to pass, but He lets these things happen.

Think about it. God does not stop us when we make bad choices. He lets us. We then suffer the consequences for those actions—could be getting grounded or a spanking or being sent to our room. The amazing thing is that God still works in our lives regardless of the choices we make. He continues to forgive us when we ask.

However, this is not the way of wisdom. God wants us to choose wisdom, what is right in God's eyes, not our own. God wants us to make good choices and suffer good consequences, not bad choices and bad consequences. Either way, God is a forgiving and restarting afresh kind of God.

Because what usually goes around, comes around. What you dish out, you usually receive back.

## Review Questions

1. What did Isaac and Rebekah name their twin boys? Esau and Jacob.
2. Which twin was the oldest? Esau.
3. Which twin was the deceiver, or the liar? Jacob.
4. What two things did Jacob steal from his older brother, Esau? His birthright and his blessing.
5. Why do you think the Lord allowed Jacob to continue to steal from his brother?

## Coloring Sheet

Next page



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