



Topic

God's will

Theme

God expects us to seek His will instead of trying to impose our own.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will evaluate whether he has treated God as a bystander and will determine how he will seek God's will this week.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 12

Will vs. Will

LESSON 10

Scripture Focus

Genesis 24; 25:20–27:45

Summary

Isaac and Rebekah had twin boys, Esau and Jacob, but they were hardly alike. Isaac favored Esau, while Rebekah favored Jacob. Although God had promised to bless Jacob above Esau, Rebekah and Jacob schemed to trick Isaac into giving the birthright blessing to Jacob. Earlier Esau had bartered his birthright to Jacob for a meal, but Jacob's sudden possession of the birthright infuriated Esau. None of the family members considered God's will in their decision making. They all acted selfishly and treated God as a bystander.

Outline

I. Sensitivity to God's Will (24)

- A. Abraham's God-directed instructions (24:1–9)
- B. The servant's God-directed decisions (24:10–67)

II. Insensitivity to God's Will (25:20–27:45)

- A. Jacob connives to ensure God's will (25:29–34)
- B. Isaac ignores God's will (26:1–27:4)
- C. Rebekah demands her will (27:5–13)
- D. Jacob claims God's will (27:14–29)
- E. Esau seeks to destroy God's will (27:30–45)

Memory Verse

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

GETTING STARTED

Infomercial-Off

Bring to class three or four objects from around your house that are not easily identifiable (e.g., odd cooking utensil, unusual tool, or spare part from something).

Organize the learners into three or four groups. Give each group one of the objects you brought to class. Give the groups five minutes to create a use (real or fictional) for the object and prepare a short infomercial for it. They can involve as many people as they want in the actual presentation of their product. Encourage them to be outlandish in their claims with the purpose of getting their viewers to buy their product.

Let each group do its commercial for you. Then pick which one sounded the most convincing.

ASK: What makes infomercials so appealing? (Q1) *They present their cases so convincingly that you just have to buy the product.*

ASK: Have you ever bought something based on an infomercial only to be disappointed when the product arrived? Explain. (Q2)

Infomercials are actually based on neuroscience. The goal is to raise the viewer's dopamine level by creating an emotional roller coaster. By the end of the commercial, the viewer feels like he must buy the product. However the dopamine rush lasts only five or six minutes after the commercial is over. So the infomercial will give the viewer only three more minutes to buy. BUY NOW! Operators are standing by!

The Bible account for today includes a production that is just as deceptive as an infomercial. And it was intended to influence a major decision. It, along with a positive account, will help us consider knowing and following God's will for our lives.

Disguise Guise

Come into class wearing a disguise and introduce yourself with a fictional name. Tell your class you will be filling in for their regular teacher, who is actually you. Go on about how great their regular teacher is and how wonderful he does at presenting the lesson each week. When the learners start to groan, stop the charade and ask them what's wrong.

ASK: Have you ever been fooled by a disguise?

ASK: Why might people wear disguises today?

The Bible account for today involves a person wearing a disguise in order to trick someone into making a decision against his will. The decision that he made was according to God's will, but the way it went down was all wrong. In fact no one involved in the decision even considered consulting God. This lesson will help us consider whether we have been seeking and doing God's will for our lives.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. Sensitivity to God's Will (24)

A. Abraham's God-directed instructions (24:1–9)

Like any father, Abraham wanted his son to marry a good woman and enjoy a wonderful marriage.

Abraham was well advanced in years, but he was not senile. At 140 years old he showed some signs of aging, but he lived another thirty-five years, eventually remarrying and fathering six more children. *The LORD had blessed Abraham in all things* (Gen. 24:1). Abraham had put God first, and everything else had been added to him (see Matt. 6:33). Abraham had not sought health first, but he was healthy. He had not sought possessions, but God had given him an abundance. He had not sought greatness, but God had made him great. His closing years were full of contentment, spiritual joy, and blessing.

The Abrahamic Covenant, which guaranteed the ultimate possession of Canaan by Abraham's descendants, was to be established through Isaac (17:21). Because of his faith in that covenant, Abraham proceeded to make arrangements for a suitable wife for Isaac. He summoned the servant who managed his household (24:2). The Bible doesn't identify this servant, but it may have been Eliezer (15:2).

READ: Genesis 24:2–4. **ASK:** How seriously did Abraham take God's will for a wife for Isaac? (Q3) *He made his servants swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that he would not take a son from the daughters of the Canaanites.*

If Abraham had been influenced by worldly considerations, he might have preferred that Isaac marry a prominent Canaanite who would gain him acceptance and influence in the land. However, Abraham would not compromise his family by an unholy alliance. He would not arrange a union with a pagan. Isaac's bride would have to be a believer in Jehovah.

The servant wondered if he should take Isaac to Mesopotamia (from where Abraham had come) in the event that no suitable bride would make the journey from Mesopotamia to Canaan (24:5).

READ: Genesis 24:5, 6. **ASK:** Why would Abraham adamantly forbid the servant to take Isaac to Abraham's homeland? (Q4) *Perhaps he wanted to ensure that Isaac stayed in the Promised Land. He didn't want Isaac to go to there and not return.*

Canaan was the land the Lord swore to give to Abraham's seed. Abraham said that an angel would prepare the way for the servant and that his mission would be successful. The servant would be free of his obligation to Abraham if the woman would not follow him, but he did not need to envision failure because this was God's will. Abraham wanted the servant to share his confidence in the Lord (24:7, 8). When we doubt, we influence others to doubt; when we trust God, we encourage others to do so.

B. The servant's God-directed decisions (24:10–67)

Abraham successfully strengthened his servant's faith. With a caravan of ten camels and all sorts of his master's valuables, the servant journeyed four to five hundred miles to Haran. The long and grueling trip would have made it very tempting for the servant to just pick a wife from Canaan. But he honored his master's request.

READ: Genesis 24:12–14. **ASK:** What did the servant do to make sure he would know God's will? (Q5) *He was very specific with God about how to let him know which woman God had picked for Isaac.*

The servant stopped at a well just outside of Nahor. Rebekah was just leaving the well with her water when Abraham's servant came running to meet her. They were strangers to each other, but it was God's guidance that brought them together (24:15–17).

The servant's sign that he requested of God would be something of a test of the young woman's character qualities. He would ask her for a drink of water. How would she respond? How would she treat a travel-weary stranger? Would she be the kind of person to volunteer water for ten camels (with their remarkable ability to hold water)? Would she be that energetic and gracious?

The woman responded with hospitableness. She quickly lowered her pitcher to give the servant a drink and then offered to draw water for his camels too. While Rebekah was watering the camels, the servant silently observed her, wondering if God was even then fulfilling his search (24:18–21).

READ: Genesis 24:19–21. **ASK:** Put yourself in the servant's place, if you saw a beautiful woman serving as hard as this woman was, would you even bother asking whose family she was from? (Q6)

The servant didn't get overly anxious. He still needed to ask the woman about her heritage. He could not base his decision on how good a worker she was. He wanted to honor God's will. So he asked the woman whose daughter she was. To the servant's delight, she said she was of Abraham's kindred (24:22–24).

READ: Genesis 24:26, 27. **ASK:** How would you describe the servant's response to God when he learned God's will? (Q7) *He was very appreciate, worshipful, and joyful.*

The servant worshiped the Lord for His mercy and truth. He had prayed for guidance; he had trusted God for guidance; and God had granted it.

Rebekah ran and told her mother's household what had happened. Her brother, Laban, ran out to the well to meet the servant. He invited the servant to lodge with the family, calling him *blessed of the Lord* (24:31). This name does not mean Laban believed in Jehovah; later events tend to indicate that he did not; but he and the father, Bethuel, were convinced by the servant's account of all that had happened that God's will was being plainly dictated. They said, *The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good* (24:50). God had

spoken; this was His doing; there was nothing more to be said. So they permitted Rebekah to marry Isaac.

TESTIMONY: Share a time when you were so convinced of God's will that you felt the decision was already made. (Q8)

Rebekah's brother and mother would have delayed Rebekah's departure, but the servant insisted that he leave promptly, *seeing the Lord hath prospered my way* (24:56). Rebekah agreed. Her decisiveness must have come from her faith in God, knowing that His will was plainly evident (24:58).

The long trip back to Canaan must have been filled with excitement and suspense for Rebekah. Finally she reached her destination and saw Isaac alone in the field meditating (24:63, 64). As Isaac approached Rebekah, the servant told her who he was. She put a veil on herself before Isaac arrived to greet her (24:65). The two were strangers when they married, but their love developed and grew strong.

RESOURCE: Display resource 12. **ASK:** Finish this statement: Humbly seeking to know and do God's will leads to . . . (Record or reveal answers.) (Q9)
Perhaps blessings, contentment, and joy.

II. Insensitivity to God's Will (25:20–27:45)

Isaac, forty years old when he married Rebekah, confidently awaited the birth of an heir (25:20). Many years later he was still waiting. He knew God had promised the land of Canaan to his descendants. But when would he see the birth of his first descendant? He therefore prayed to the Lord on behalf of his childless wife (25:21). He prayed in faith, confident that the Lord would be true to His promise to Abraham.

God would prove to Isaac what He had proved to Abraham, that the fulfillment of His promises is completely a matter of His grace and power.

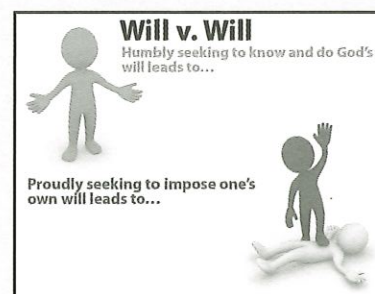
When Rebekah was pregnant, she felt such unusual movement within her that she asked the Lord what it meant. The Lord told her that the twins she was carrying would become two nations that would be separate from one another. He also told her that the elder would serve the younger (25:21–23).

The parents named their firstborn son Esau, which means *hairy*. They named the second son Jacob, which means *heel-catcher* (his hand was grasping Esau's heel when he arrived). Esau became a skillful hunter, living in the open fields, while Jacob developed into a quiet man, living in tents (25:27).

The manner in which Isaac and Rebekah related to their sons launched the family into a dysfunctional existence. Isaac was partial to Esau, and Rebekah favored Jacob (25:28).

A. Jacob connives to ensure God's will (25:29–34)

One day Esau came in from a hunting trip just as Jacob was boiling some red pottage. He asked for some of the pottage because he was faint with hunger (25:29, 30). Crafty Jacob asked Esau to sell him his birthright. Apparently Jacob appreciated spiritual values, but he attempted to gain the right thing in the wrong way. He should have waited for God to grant him the birthright in His own time and in His own way.



READ: Genesis 25:31. **ASK:** What does Jacob reveal about his understanding of God? (Q10) *God must be helped in order for His will to come about, or God doesn't care how His will comes about.*

Jacob used conniving to get what God had promised to him, as if gaining the birthright was a game he was playing.

Esau said his birthright would be worthless since he would die if he didn't eat right away. That is highly unlikely unless he had been on the hunt for weeks. Esau overstated his problem and then *despised his birthright* (25:34); he did not think it was worth much (25:32). For this reason Hebrews 12:16 calls him a profane person. Profanity is the sin of treating lightly and casually what ought to be treated seriously and highly. Esau's whole life was profane; he lived as though spiritual matters were of little value.

Jacob must have thought he had settled the matter of the birthright. God's will was for him to have the birthright, and he had just secured it.

B. Isaac ignores God's will (26:1–27:4)

When another famine hit the land, the Lord appeared to Isaac and told him to stay in the land and to refrain from going to Egypt. While Egypt was the logical place to go, God didn't want Isaac there. He would provide for him in the land. Apparently the land of the Philistines, specifically Gerar, qualified as in the land. God also restated the Abrahamic Covenant to remind Isaac that His plan included Isaac's survival (26:1–6).

While in Gerar, Isaac told Abimelech, another king of the Philistines, that he and Rebekah were siblings. Rebekah was beautiful. Isaac thought someone in Gerar might kill him to get to Rebekah if they knew they were married. But the king caught Isaac treating Rebekah as his wife. The king confronted Isaac and expressed his anger at the danger he had put his people in (26:7–11).

ASK: Genesis 26:7. **READ:** What motivated Isaac to use deception with Abimelech? (Q11) *His fear, which was a symptom of his lack of trust in God.*

God prospered Isaac in Gerar so greatly that the people kicked him out (26:12–16). He then had trouble with herdsmen from Gerar, disputing with him over wells. But God provided for Isaac. He went to Beersheba, where God appeared to him again and told him to fear not. God again reassured Isaac that He would multiply his descendants. Isaac responded by building an altar and calling on the name of the Lord (26:17–25). Abimelech then came back on the scene to renew a covenant with Isaac. The original covenant was between another Abimelech and Abraham (26:26–33).

ASK: Genesis 26:24. **READ:** Why was Isaac not supposed to fear? (Q12) *Because God was with him.*

The assurance of God's presence with Isaac didn't have a lasting effect. For he later ignored both God's presence with him and God's will.

Esau, meanwhile, decided to take two brides from the Hittites. Obviously he

was not concerned with marrying a woman who feared and worshiped God. Not surprisingly, the women caused Isaac and Rebekah grief (26:34, 35).

When Isaac was old and blind, he thought he would die soon, though he was actually mistaken (Gen. 27:1, 2). Preferring Esau above Jacob, Isaac wanted to confirm the birthright blessing to Esau in spite of God's plain pronouncement to the contrary: *The elder shall serve the younger* (25:23). He blatantly ignored God's will in favor of his own will. The fact that Esau married two Hittite wives should have caused Isaac to reconsider his plan. But he went forward with it anyway. He asked Esau to hunt game and prepare him a festive meal, after which he would bless him (27:3, 4).

C. Rebekah demands her will (27:5–13)

Rebekah overheard the conversation and devised her own plan. She commanded Jacob to *obey my voice* (27:8).

READ: Genesis 27:6–8. **ASK:** Whose roll did Rebekah take in giving commands to Jacob? (Q13) *Even though Rebekah was Jacob's mother and had some measure of authority over him, she was playing the role of ultimate authority in his life. That role belonged to God.*

Rebekah loved Jacob, but she was willing to involve him in deceit, distort his thinking, and degrade his character. She contributed to her family's dysfunction. The disruption of her family to get her way betrayed the fact that she loved herself more than Isaac, Jacob, or even the Lord.

Quickly deciding what to do, Rebekah told Jacob to pretend to be Esau to trick his father into bestowing the blessing on him. Jacob's response was disappointing. He said nothing about the plot's being deceitful and sinful. Instead he was a bit cautious, afraid of being discovered in his attempted deception: *I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing* (27:12). He was concerned about consequences, not principles. Rebekah responded, *Upon me be thy curse, my son* (27:13).

D. Jacob claims God's will (27:14–29)

Rebekah disguised Jacob well. He went to his father and said he was Esau, his father's firstborn. But Isaac was suspicious. He wanted to know how Esau could have found the game so quickly. Jacob added a boldfaced lie to his duplicity (27:14–20).

READ: Genesis 27:19, 20. **ASK:** Whose will was most important to Jacob? (Q14) *His mother's will.*

Jacob profaned God's name by telling his father that *thy God brought it to me* (27:20). No doubt he was hoping that claiming God was involved in the process would cause Isaac to stop his line of questioning. Yet Isaac wasn't convinced. That says volumes about how little he trusted Rebekah and Jacob. He believed they would indeed use God to try to trick him. And he was right!

Isaac requested, *Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not*. He observed, *The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau* (27:21, 22). Still not convinced, he asked, *Art thou my*

very son Esau? (27:24). Jacob boldly lied, *I am*. So Isaac blessed Jacob, thinking he was Esau. He promised him prosperity, dominion, and protection (27:28, 29).

E. Esau seeks to destroy God's will (27:30–45)

Jacob had just left his father when Esau came in from his hunting trip. He, too, prepared a tasty meal for his father and invited his father to eat. In startled response, Isaac cried, *Who art thou?* (27:32). The realization of what had happened shook him to the center of his being, causing him to tremble *very exceedingly* (27:33). The nature of the blessing made it irrevocable. It was too late. The blessing could not be reversed. Esau also knew that he had forfeited the blessing and was wrong in trying to obtain it. Esau wept, but *he found no place of repentance; he had no way to change his father's mind* (Heb. 12:16, 17).

READ: Genesis 27:41. **ASK:** What is your reaction when you read that Esau desired to kill Jacob? (Q15)

Esau's plan to kill Jacob was a decision to destroy God's will since Jacob was God's chosen one. Esau's decision is not unlike Cain's decision. They were both guilty of murder, but only Cain had the chance to actually carry out his plans.

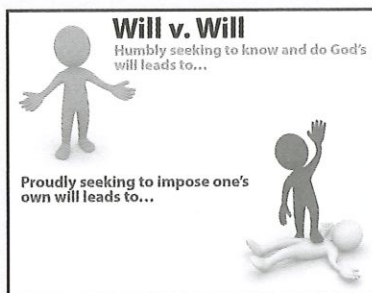
Upon learning that Esau hated Jacob for what he had done, Rebekah reacted by sending Jacob away (27:44). As it turned out, he stayed away for twenty years. Rebekah also taught Jacob to scheme. Instead of encouraging him to trust God, she taught him to get what he could (even good things) by unholy means.

But there was enough blame to go around in Isaac's dysfunctional family. Esau was blameworthy because he sold his birthright so he could gratify his flesh. He had forfeited his father's best blessing, and he had little justification for his bitter cry against Jacob and his tearful pleading for a blessing from his father.

Isaac was certainly not without blame, for he knew that God had appointed Jacob, not Esau, to rule (25:23). Isaac had tried to thwart God's plan because he favored Esau over Jacob (25:28).

In all cases, God was relegated to bystander. All four family members did their own thing without actually consulting God and asking him to intervene.

RESOURCE: Display resource 12. **ASK:** Finish this statement: Proudly seeking to impose one's own will leads to . . . (Record or reveal answers.) (Q16)
Perhaps disharmony, sin, and fear.



MAKING IT PERSONAL

God as Bystander

Abraham and his servant stand in stark contrast to Isaac and his family. Seeking and desiring God's will was the focus of both Abraham and his servant, while everyone in Isaac's family sought to impose their wills on others, including God.

ASK: Have you relegated God to a *bystander* status in your life? Explain. (Q17)

ASK: How often do you purposely seek God's will? (Q18)

Purpose to Seek God's Will

Encourage your learners to take seriously their need to seek God's will. Challenge them to take any selfishness on their part to God as a matter of prayer, seeking His forgiveness and surrendering their will to Him. (Q19)

Most of God's will for our lives is included in His Word. We learn God's will by learning His Word. As we pray, God will direct us in the rest of the important decisions we face that are not specifically spelled out in His Word. He responds to our prayers for direction by giving us peace in our hearts. He may also work through the wise counsel of fellow believers.

ASK: How will you seek God's will this week? (Q20)

Summary and Memory Verse

RESOURCE: Display resource 1. Add a summary statement for lesson 10 or use the following: Seek to know and do God's will.

Encourage learners to memorize Romans 12:2. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.

Responding to God & His Plan				8. Fear God.
1. Understand and enjoy God's revelation of Himself through creation.				9. Expect and accept tests of your faith.
2. Recognize Christ as the only solution to sin.				10. Seek to know and do God's will.
3. Take sin seriously and share God's grace.				11.
4. Submit to God's sovereign plan for your life.				12.
5. Be faithful in response to God's faithfulness.				13.
6. Focus your affections on God.				
7. Trust God for He knows all and can do all.				

Genesis
GOD'S PLAN BEGINS



From Stairway to Altar

Topic

God's presence

Theme

God is present in the lives of those He works in and through to accomplish His will.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will consider how God's presence should impact his life.

Materials

- Resources 1, 7, and 13
- Paper and pencils

Scripture Focus

Genesis 27:41–33:20

Summary

Jacob left home to escape Esau's revenge and to find a wife in Haran. Along the way the Lord promised to be with Jacob, to prosper him, and to return him to his home. Jacob prospered in Haran in spite of deceptive treatment at the hands of his uncle, and after leaving his uncle's ranch to return home, he encountered the Lord. The Lord wrestled all night with Jacob and subdued him. Then Jacob encountered Esau, but instead of facing Esau's wrath, Jacob received his favor. The two brothers reconciled.

Outline

I. Jacob Journeys to Abraham's Homeland (27:41–28:22)

- A. Jacob leaves the Promised Land (27:41–28:9)
- B. God assures Jacob of His presence and promises (28:10–22)

II. Jacob Dwells in Abraham's Homeland (29:1–31:10)

- A. God blesses Jacob with a family (29:1–30:24)
- B. God blesses Jacob with wealth (30:25–31:10)

III. Jacob Journeys back to the Promised Land (31:11–33:20)

- A. God protects Jacob from Laban (31:11–55)
- B. God wrestles with Jacob (32)
- C. God protects Jacob from Esau (33)

Memory Verse

"And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Genesis 28:15).