



Applied Faith Men's Bible Study

South Hills Baptist Church

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Jacob the Deceiver

Lesson #1

Genesis 25:21-28

Jacob is a troubling character in the Old Testament. He is conniving and he is spiritual too. He has moments of strong faith as well as of fear. His family is sometimes in disarray, and yet at the end he is the one who sets it straight.

Jacob, whose very name suggests "deceiver," is renamed by God as "Israel" -- "one who has struggled with God." And an entire nation is named after this patriarch -- the nation of Israel.

Jacob is a bit too much like us -- with very human strengths and weaknesses, but a man with a striving for spiritual things. From this imperfect man we learn important lessons of faith. Especially, we learn about God's grace.

The events described in Jacob's story comprise most of Genesis chapters 25-49. If you haven't read the Old Testament much, you'll be pleased to find that God can speak to you here -- loud and clear. The culture is vastly different, but you'll quickly learn that the people and their problems haven't changed much. The story of Jacob is a great opportunity to learn important lessons about ourselves and our God.

This is not the kind of Bible study for the faint of heart. We'll be looking at some issues that don't have nice, neat answers. But life is like that. My prayer is that you'll grow through this process. That you'll become closer to, more sensitive to, more obedient to God. And that you'll learn to study your Bible in a new way.

The Life of Jacob- A Timeline

2006 BC	Birth of Jacob and Esau	Genesis 25
1991 BC	Death of Abraham	Genesis 25:5
1978 BC	Esau sells his birthright	Genesis 25:29
1977 BC	Isaac and Abimelech	Genesis 26
1929 BC	Jacob Gets Isaac's Blessing	Genesis 27
1928 BC	Jacob Flees to Laban	Genesis 28
1928 BC	Jacob's vision of a ladder	Genesis 28:10
1928 BC	Jacob Serves Laban	Genesis 29
1921 BC	Jacob Marries Rachel	Genesis 29:28
1921 BC	Jacob and His Sons	Genesis 30
1916 BC	Rachel Bears Joseph	Genesis 30:22
1908 BC	Jacob Leaves for Canaan	Genesis 31
1906 BC	Jacob Wrestles with God	Genesis 32
1906 BC	Jacob Settles in Shechem	Genesis 33:18

1906 BC	Shechem Defiles Dinah	Genesis 34
1906 BC	Jacob Returns to Bethel	Genesis 35
1906 BC	Jacob Named Israel	Genesis 35:10
1906 BC	Descendants of Esau	Genesis 36
1903 BC	Rachel Dies	Genesis 35:18
1886 BC	Seven Years of Plenty Begin	Genesis 41:47
1875 BC	Famine Begins	Genesis 41:53
1875 BC	Joseph's Brothers Sent to Egypt	Genesis 42
1875 BC	Simeon Detained by Joseph	Genesis 42:24
1875 BC	The Return with Benjamin	Genesis 43
1875 BC	Benjamin and the Silver Cup	Genesis 44
1875 BC	Joseph Reveals His Identity	Genesis 45
1875 BC	Joseph Sends for Jacob	Genesis 45:9
1875 BC	Jacob and Family to Egypt	Genesis 46
1875 BC	Jacob to Goshen	Genesis 47
1859 BC	Jacob's Illness	Genesis 48
1859 BC	Jacob's Blessing and Death	Genesis 49
1859 BC	The Burial of Jacob	Genesis 50

The Lies of Jacob

Jacob Pretends To Be Esau!

In cooperating with the scheme, Jacob was only obeying his mother, but he could have refused and suggested that they just face the situation honestly and confront Isaac. But once Jacob put on Esau's clothes and took the savory meal in his hands, the die was cast and he had to play the part successfully. See how one lie led to another, for

deception can be defended only by more deception. Jacob was weaving the tangled web.

He Lied About His Name

Then Jacob went to his father and said, “Father!”

“Yes,” he answered. “Which of my sons are you?”

Jacob answered, “I am your older son Esau; I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of the meat that I have brought you, so that you can give me your blessing.”

Genesis 27:18-19 (GNT)

This whole episode is riddled with lies and deceit. It is unthinkable, as some have suggested, that this was ordered by God so that the blessing of Abraham would pass on to Jacob instead of Esau. Rebekah didn't have to use lies and deception to obtain God's blessing.

The Lord had promised the greater blessing to the younger of the twins, and God would have gotten it to Jacob somehow. God's blessing came on Jacob later, as recorded in Genesis 28:10-15.

Did Isaac ask for identification because he was hard of hearing? Probably not (v. 22); it's likely he was starting to get suspicious because he didn't expect Esau to return so quickly from the hunt (v. 20). Furthermore, the voice he heard didn't sound like the voice of Esau. That's when Jacob told his first lie: He claimed to be Esau.

This instance teaches great lessons about the power of a blessing, but we should never seek to imitate Rebekah and Jacob's actions. We can't use the devil's methods to obtain God's results.

He Lied About The Food And The Lord

Jacob replied 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 bless me.” But Isaac said to his son, “How did you ever find it so quickly, my son?” He replied, “Because the LORD your God worked it out for me.”

Genesis 27:19-20 (HCSB)

He claimed to have obeyed his father’s wishes (lie #2), and he called the goat’s meat “my game” (lie #3). He even gave credit to the Lord for helping him find it so quickly (lie #4). He not only lied about himself, but he also lied about the Lord! To use the Lord to cover up sin is a step toward blasphemy.

The lies and deceptions Jacob so successfully employed here show that he was not a man of great character at this time. He lied without conscience. He even invoked the Lord in his lie.

He Lied Again About His Identity And About His Love

Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come closer so that I can touch you. Are you really Esau?” Jacob moved closer to his father, who felt him and said, “Your voice sounds like Jacob’s voice, but your arms feel like Esau’s arms.” He did not recognize Jacob, because his arms were hairy like Esau’s. He was about to give him his blessing, but asked again, “Are you really Esau?” “I am,” he answered.

Isaac said, “Bring me some of the meat. After I eat it, I will give you my blessing.” Jacob brought it to him, and he also brought him some wine to drink. Then his father said to him, “Come closer and kiss me, son.” As he came up to kiss him, Isaac smelled his clothes—so he

gave him his blessing. He said, “The pleasant smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed.”

Genesis 27:21-27 (GNT)

Unwilling to trust his ears, Isaac felt Jacob’s hands and mistook goatskin for human hair, and Jacob assured him again that he indeed was Esau (lie #5). How tragic it is to see a son so dishonor his father! After Isaac had eaten the meal, he asked Jacob to kiss him, and that kiss was the sixth lie, for it was hypocritical (Luke 22:48).

Judas comes to mind. A kiss of betrayal. Greed at the heart of it lies all around it.

How could you, Jacob?

How could Jacob claim to love his father when he was in the act of deceiving him?

More to the point, how could you, Rebecca?

You used your son to betray your husband. Only a wife would know how best to deceive the man who loved her, confusing his senses so thoroughly he made the wrong son his heir. Well, wrong from Isaac’s point of view, quite right from Rebecca’s.

Since the smell of the garments finally convinced Isaac that Esau was there, the stage was now set for the giving of the blessing.

The Blessing

May God give to you—

from the dew of the sky

and from the richness of the land—

an abundance of grain and new wine.

May peoples serve you

and nations bow down to you.

Be master over your brothers;

may your mother's sons bow down to you.

Those who curse you will be cursed,

and those who bless you will be blessed.

Genesis 27:28-29 (HCSB)

Isaac blessed Jacob with natural and material wealth, so important to people who belong to the land, but he added political authority with reference to his own people and other nations. Isaac reaffirmed the word God gave about the boys (25:23), and in using plural nouns ("brothers" and "sons"), he looked beyond Jacob's day to the time when Abraham's seed would multiply. During the reigns of David and Solomon, other nations were subjected to the rule of Israel. He assured him not only of God's blessing, but also of God's protection, and he quoted the Lord's original promise to Abraham (12:3).

The deed was done. Isaac couldn't revoke the blessing, and nobody in the family could alter the consequences.

DECLARATION OF FAITH

The Lord is ever with me to bless me. He gives me abundance in every area of my life. Those who curse me curse only themselves and those who bless me are blessed with God's own endowment of abundance.

I pray this declaration of faith in Jesus's name!

The Seven Levels of Lying

J. Budziszewski, author of *What We Can't Not Know*, mentions "the seven degrees of descent." Or they can be called the seven levels of lying:

1. You lie.

A single lie can become a match that lights a bonfire. Unless we confess the truth about our lie, we are probably on our way to Level #2.

2. You self-protect.

That is, you lie about having lied. If you lie about one thing, it is likely you will lie about another. As Budziszewski puts it, "Lies are weaklings; they need bodyguards."

3. You develop a habit of lying.

A liar at this level might, just out of habit, lie about something trivial for no benefit.

4. You self-deceive.

You now believe the lies that you are telling others. We can lie so effectively that we even lie to ourselves. We self-deceive.

Take note: Just because we are deceived—honestly and truly—by the wiles of our own crookedness does not mean we are innocent or exempt from the need to repent. On the cross, Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Jesus' prayer suggests that sins committed unknowingly are still sins in need of forgiveness. Lying is sinful even when we do so subconsciously. It's important to understand that self-deception is self-imposed. To be deceived by someone else or shielded from the full truth is not the same as self-deception. Self-deception is a vice.

Pontius Pilate self-deceived by telling himself that truth is inaccessible. When face to face with Jesus, Pilate guardedly asked, "What is truth?" Pilate had a motive for not wanting to know the truth. Pilate wasn't willing to be seen in the light of the truth of his own cowardice. Pilate's very question was pitted against the truth of his own poor character in contrast to the innocence of Jesus.

At Level #4, a person enters into denial. He stops looking at his internal moral compass and therefore ceases to feel guilty anymore.

5. You rationalize.

Now you not only believe the lies are not lies, you justify the lies as a positive good. Now the lying is not just part of normal life, but a virtue—it helps the company grow, it saves jobs, and so forth. This is the type of thinking that contributed to the scandals at Enron and WorldCom, and to the 2007 subprime housing debacle.

Level #5 lying is especially tempting at the leadership level. One of my mentors warned me to be careful in taking on the deanship at A. W. Tozer Theological Seminary. He said, "The higher up you go in an organization, the harder it is to tell the truth." A lot of times the lie is justified for the sake of the institution or some other larger good.

Level #5 lies happen in the personal realm too: "You don't understand," says the adulteress. "My husband and I never had a real marriage. We have had 30 years of cohabitation and child-rearing, but nothing like what I have with my new lover. He and I are experiencing love for the very first time. This is not adultery. It is love."

6. You develop your technique.

The main technique is to compartmentalize. You start isolating statements, ignoring what was said in other contexts. Level #6 liars are often found in the upper echelons of bureaucracy. A Level #6 liar might smoothly move from one constituent to another, saying each of these things, swearing in each instance that he is telling the truth:

"This institution is going to stay true to our stated core values."

"Please don't pay attention to our stated core values; those were written by a committee who no longer works here."

"Core values reside in people. It really doesn't matter what is stated on paper."

"Don't let those stated values stop you from giving; it's long been public knowledge that I myself disagree with three or four of them."

"I can assure you that our stated core values serve as our guiding compass."

7. You see it as your duty to lie.

Level #7 lying flips duty on its head, making lying mandatory. For example, in a dysfunctional family that operates at Level #7, grown siblings might kowtow to a parent for the sake of keeping dark family secrets hidden. In organizational life, Level #7 executives repeat corporate lies and say to their lieutenants, "Beware of self-anointed whistleblowers; they are critical and self-righteous."

Level #7 liars stone the prophets (John 16:2).

Because people are created in the image of God, we can't simply lie without trying to seem truthful in some way. That explains why Level #5 liars take pains to rationalize their thinking and Level #7 liars assume the pseudo-upright posture of being dutiful.

Truth and the AntiChrist

God's disdain for lying isn't whimsical (Prov. 12:22). Lying is sinful not merely because the Bible says it is wrong. The Bible says lying is wrong because untruth violates Truth. Since Jesus is the Truth, it is antichrist to lie. If everybody lied all the time, there would be only chaos. No community.

God's way is for people to dwell together with each other in community and also in communion with God. When we lie, we breach our connection to other people and violate our relationship with God. God wants us to be truthful as a way of cultivating our closeness not only with him but also with other people we can enjoy.

Pastor Bill Hybels once said something to the effect that pastors who journal don't fall. That statement makes sense to me, because journaling is a means of telling oneself the truth. As long as we don't lie to ourselves, we can manage to stay out of Level #4. But in order to

stay out of Level #3 and Level #2, we need people to confess to when we lie at Level #1—which is what my husband, Jim, and I try to do.

And of course, we can daily seek truth by echoing the prayer of King David: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

Application/Activity

This week's application is between you and God. We ALL need to pray about the lies that we tell. We need to search and recognize the lies we tell in our lives. We need to pray for forgiveness from God and commit to be truthful in all parts of our lives, without regard to the problems it may cause. Lying ALWAYS causes more problems than the truth does. Whether you confess your lies is again, between you, God and the person you have lied to. An excellent start is to simply recognize the lies, find its genesis, and commit to always tell the truth, in every situation.

Christianitytoday.com, stepintothehistory.ca, jesuswalk.com

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