

life group study guide

HOW TO HEAL FAMILY BROKENNESS

September 2, 2012



Genesis 32-33 Jacob and Esau

"That's ridiculous. The only point in having enemies is so you can defeat them, kill them, brush them aside."

"Or give them a chance to redeem themselves." (Derek Landy, Death Bringer)

Introduction

It has been said that God is a God of second chances. Many people in the Bible are given a second chance after damaging sin.

Briefly describe each individual and the story of their fall and the second chance they were given:

- David (adultery)
- Jonah (hatred and bigotry)
- Peter (denial)
- Thomas (doubts)

What does this show us about God's forgiveness and His using us as broken people?

What did each of these individuals do to turn back and be used of God?

Our families and others closest to us are also those we can hurt (and be hurt by) in the most painful ways.

The Bible provides a pattern for forgiveness and healing.

Bible Study

Genesis 32-33 Jacob and Esau

First, some background: Read Gen 27:21-24

In these verses, Jacob is in the process of stealing his brother's birthright--which conferred power, prestige and wealth (a double family inheritance). He has conspired with his mother, lied to his father, and stolen from his brother.

- Does Esau have a right to be angry?
- How did Esau contribute to the problem?

Read Gen 27:41

- What is Esau's response?
- Do you think he would have followed through on his desire to kill Jacob?

Jacob flees the situation and is separated from Esau for many years. When he desires to come home and seek reconciliation, the healing process begins.

Gen 32:3-5 Jacob rehearses his words of reconciliation

Gen 32:6-8 Jacob imagines the situation much worse than it is in reality

In the early 1960's, an African-American driving through rural Mississippi had a flat tire. He had a spare but no jack. He could see a farm in the distance and began walking that direction. As he walked, he began to think to himself, "I'm a black man in the South. Alone. There is no way a

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white farmer is going to help me. And here I am asking for a jack! They will assume I'm going to hurt them. These people hate blacks. This is the land of segregation, the KKK. I'll probably get lynched."

By the time he approached the door of the farmhouse, his imagination had run wild as to his fate. When the farm door swung open, an old, white farmer in bib overalls met him with a broad smile and asked, "Hi, neighbor. How can I help you?"

The black man answered, "I'll tell you what-- you can just keep your jack!"

32:9-12 Jacob prays to God, remembering His promises, love and faithfulness

32:13-18 Jacob enlists others, rehearses his words and plan, and plans for contingencies

Genesis 33

Vs 1-3 Jacob faces his fear and initiates the encounter

The result

Vs 4 Esau and Jacob weep with emotion

Vs 5-16 Their conversation is filled with questions, not accusations

They speak with kindness and courtesy. They say "please", defer to each other, offer gifts, and showing concern for the other's personal welfare.

Application

The story above goes from a brother ready to kill the other to a veritable "Chip and Dale" conversation from a Walt Disney cartoon.

The principles outlined above include:

1. Separation for a time
2. Seeking God in prayer
3. A gentle tone
4. Planning and rehearsal of the word and deeds to reconcile
5. An alternate plan to protect innocent family members
6. Generosity and concern for the other's well being
7. Asking questions and listening
8. Putting the plan into action

Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) – how do these apply in a situation such as the strife between Jacob and Esau?

Can you provide an example of the application of any of these 8 principles and their effect on a difficult situation in your life? Share some details.

Does your imagination ever run wild, like Jacob's did, and exaggerate an already difficult situation? How can you take steps to prevent (or lessen) this?

1 Cor 13:1-7 is a familiar chapter describing love. Read these verses in light of the story of Jacob and Esau.

- What are the characteristics of love that can be seen in this story?
- How were they applied in the reconciliation process?

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In Romans 12:17-19 Paul tells us that revenge is best left to God. He tells us that peace with everyone is not always possible, but that the responsibility lies with the Christian to take the steps leading to peace. This is the reason for principle #5 above - to have a plan to protect innocent family members. We can only control our actions, not those of others.

Gift of reconciliation

Jacob and Esau were enemies for a time

- Rom 5:10 - What did God do for us when we were His enemy?
- 2 Cor 5:18 What does Christ's reconciliation provide for the Christian?
- 2 Cor 5:20 What is our role in the reconciliation process today?

Pray for the opportunities and wisdom to use these principles in bringing peace in a difficult family situation, or in encouraging those outside of Christ to be reconciled to God.