

Jacob And Esau

Genesis 25:19-34; 27:1-46; 33

MEMORY VERSE

HEBREWS 12:14

“Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.”

”WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

As many small bags of marbles as the number of children in your class.

A tennis ball or Ping-Pong ball.

A lunch size paper bag for each child, an assortment of tiny gifts (gum machine size, like little toys, stickers, erasers, etc.), packets of apple cider or hot chocolate, or whatever other small things you may think a child would enjoy.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Who Gets the Marble

Form pairs in your class. Have the two children sit facing each other. Give each group a prize. The prize should be a small bag of marbles. Tell everyone that one person from each team of two will be a winner. Make sure to tell the children to wait so everyone may start at the same time. They also are not to play with the marbles until after every pair has heard how they worked out their problem.

Next, let each pair decide how they will determine who gets the marbles. Make some suggestions; they may want to thumb wrestle, or flip a coin, or play a game of tic-tac-toe and see who wins. After everyone is finished, have the pairs share how they solved the dilemma. Have the winners raise their hands. Ask if anyone just divided up the marbles and shared...wow, what a concept! Explain

that sometimes when we want to work things out peaceably, we might have to make some sacrifices (only getting a few marbles instead of a whole bag). Give bags of marbles to the kids who did not get any. **God wants us to treat each other with kindness.**

LESSON TIME

In today's lesson, we are going to learn about Jacob and Esau. They were two brothers who had a lot of struggle and conflict. Have you ever had a fight with your brother or sister? For Jacob and Esau, their refusal to get along with each other got them into all kinds of trouble.

In today's lesson, we will learn that **God wants us to treat each other with kindness.** As our story is told, think about your friends, brothers or sisters, neighbors, or anybody else you are having a problem loving and consider how God would want you to live with others.

GENESIS 25:19-26

This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac.

Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian.

Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I this way?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger."

So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb.

And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau.

Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

Here we first see Isaac's wife, Rebekah and she is barren, or not able to have children. Isaac went before the Lord in prayer, and the Lord answered Isaac's prayer. It is interesting to note that Isaac's mother, Sarah, was also barren; but God miraculously intervened, and she bore Isaac. God's plans sometimes seem impossible; and sometimes, it seems that nothing can be done to improve a situation. That is when God can intervene and prove His faithfulness! God wants us to trust Him completely.

Rebekah did conceive, and she sensed a struggle within her womb that drove her to seek the Lord. When we sense struggle, we should seek the Lord. God explained the struggle to Rebekah and added that the older child would serve the younger child in a future generation.

This was contrary to Old Testament culture. The older son always had supremacy over the younger; the older, received double the inheritance and the birthright. Many times in scripture, we see the

Lord reversing the man-made order of things. The Bible teaches us that God's ways are higher than man's ways. This struggle in the womb was a prelude to the struggle these children would have in the future.

Soon the twins were born. The first of the twins was red and hairy, so they named him Esau. The second twin was born grasping Esau's heel, so they named him Jacob, which means "one who grabs the heel" or "one who trips up." Now, Isaac and Rebekah named them according to the promise God gave to them (Genesis 25:23). This was just the start of the struggle between these two brothers.

GENESIS 25:27-34

So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents.

And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary.

And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called Edom.

But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day."

And Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what profit shall this birthright be to me?"

Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

As the twins grew, Esau became a man of the field, a hunter; while Jacob became a man of the tents, a quiet man tending the flock. Now, Isaac loved Esau more, because he was a hunter who provided his father with the game he hunted. We read that Rebekah loved Jacob more. One day, when Esau got back from an unsuccessful hunt, he was “starving.” Jacob was making a stew, so Esau asked him for some. Jacob said he would give Esau a portion if Esau would give him his birthright. Wondering what good a birthright would be to a dead man, Esau said Jacob could have it. Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew.

Now Jacob realized the spiritual significance of that birthright, but Esau despised it. Jacob had probably been waiting for an opportunity like this one for a long time. Maybe his mother had told him about God’s promise that the older brother would serve the younger, but it was not right for Jacob to “try” to make God’s promise happen. His craftiness got him into trouble.

When we trust the Lord and follow Him, our relationships with other people will be right. We will want what is best for them, not what we can trick them into giving us. **God wants us to treat each other with kindness.** It would have been interesting to see how God’s promises would have been fulfilled if Jacob had not taken matters into his own hands and acted inappropriately. We know that when God makes a promise, He always keeps it.

Note to teachers:

To fully understand the conflict between Jacob and Esau, read Genesis chapter 27. The comments below are based on Genesis 27. Next week we will study that chapter in more depth.

In Genesis 27, four people stand out: Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob; not one of them is admirable. It seems Isaac, in his old age, is preoccupied with his stomach, anxious for another venison meal before he dies. He also wanted to bless Esau, even though he probably knew God's promises about Jacob; Jacob was the one who should be blessed.

Rebekah knew the promise of God for Jacob, but she was not content to wait for the promise. She devised a deceitful plan. Her wrong was not in wanting Jacob to have the blessing, but in how she went about trying to get it for him. Remember that God wants us to trust Him for His promises.

Because Esau sold his birthright, he should never have agreed to Isaac's offer to receive the blessing. He knew that Jacob had the birthright and should be the one to receive the blessing.

There was really no excuse for Jacob's actions; he was no longer a youth, but a man of advancing years himself. Jacob lies twice to his father--first, in saying that he was Esau, and second, in saying the venison was found so quickly because of God's favor.

We must never lie to get something. God knows all things, and He is the one who blesses us. Lying will definitely have a snowball effect. When one seeks to cover the truth, a small lie can turn into a bigger lie. The bigger lie becomes even bigger in an attempt to continue to cover the truth. Soon the lie has become a whopper, and the consequences that result when the truth is found out are much greater. No matter how hard the truth is to tell, it is always easier than the consequences of a lie. God honors the truth.

At the root of many conflicts is our own selfishness. Jacob was impatient and did not want to wait for God to give him what He promised. So, he sinned (lied) in order to get what he wanted. This led to division within the family and between brothers. May we never be so focused on ourselves that we neglect our relationships with others. **God wants us to treat each other with kindness.**

Right after the suspicious Isaac blesses the disguised Jacob, Esau entered the tent with the game he had prepared. Immediately, Isaac and Esau realize they had been tricked. Esau cried out with a loud voice, begging to be blessed; but Isaac realized that God's promise had come to pass and that he would be wrong to try to give the blessing to Esau. The small blessing Isaac did give Esau was of little comfort. Esau realized his descendants would be subject to Jacob.

Esau comforted himself with the thought of killing Jacob. When Jacob's mother discovered Esau's plan to hurt Jacob, she convinced Jacob to leave home and travel to her brother Laban's home. How sad! Even though a person who deceives may seem to get what he wants for a season, he ultimately pays a heavy price. Jacob had to leave home. What was supposed to be a short trip ended up taking twenty years. Two brothers and an entire family were divided. **God wants us to treat each other with kindness.**

Ball Slams

Draw a smiley face on a tennis ball or Ping-Pong ball. Tell the children that each time someone treats us with meanness, we should bounce back with kindness.

Form a line of children and let them take turns throwing the ball against the wall. While you give them an example of meanness, they must try to think up the response that would be pleasing to God.

Examples:

Someone takes the seat you saved for your friend.

You see someone taking cuts in line in front of you.

Your brother gets to watch his favorite show and you don't.

Someone breaks your new toy.

Your sister destroys your favorite Lego creation.

God wants us to treat each other with kindness. Jacob's example is contrary to God's standard for our behavior with others. It would have been interesting to see how God would have accomplished his promises had Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob been faithful.

Now let's jump to the future and take a look at Jacob and Esau's relationship.

GENESIS 33

Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants.

And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last.

Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, "Who are these with you?" And he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant."

Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down.

And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down.

Then Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company which I met?" And he said, "These are to find favor in the sight of my lord."

But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself."

And Jacob said, "No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me.

Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." And he urged him, and he took it.

Then Esau said, "Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you."

But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die.

Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir."

And Esau said, "Now let me leave with you some of the people who are with me." But he said, "What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord."

So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.

And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city.

And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money.

Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.

Jacob has been renamed “Israel” which means “governed by God.” He has become a different man. Now twenty years later, Jacob is a man that follows and trusts God, ready to meet his brother again. He did not know how his brother would respond to their meeting. Would he still be angry? Would he still try to kill him? Esau was coming with four hundred men. Such a large group was usually a sign of hostility.

Jacob separated his family and sent presents ahead to Esau. When Jacob went out to meet Esau he found, not an enemy, but a brother. Jacob presented Esau a gift that was reluctantly taken because Esau had no need. Jacob’s family bowed down to Esau. After they spent some time visiting, they went separate ways.

It was not the humble way in which Jacob greeted Esau that resulted in the peaceful meeting, nor was it the presents he was ready to bestow. It was God who changed Esau’s heart.

How are our relationships with our friends, brothers and sisters, parents, and neighbors? God wants us to show His love to them. Remember that **God wants us to treat each other with kindness.** We represent Jesus to those God has put in our lives. When we have trouble with someone, we need to take it to God in prayer and respond to the situation the way Jesus would. By doing so, we will find both peace with God and peace with men. **God wants us to treat each other with kindness.**

Peace-Pack

Provide a lunch size paper bag for each child, also an assortment of tiny gifts (gum machine size, like little toys, stickers, erasers, etc.), packets of apple cider or hot chocolate, or whatever other small things you may think of.

Tell the children to think of someone they have trouble getting along with (if there is anyone) and make them a Peace-pack.

Give them markers, glue and colored paper to decorate the bag. Let them choose from the gifts and put them in the bag. They may want their bags stapled closed.

Be sure to tell them to give the bag freely to the person they thought of, not expecting anything in return.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to show kindness to others. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity to do so.