

Know and Change! Jacob in God's Story, Genesis 25-28

In our kids program downstairs, they have just begun walking through God's story presented in the Bible, which starts out in the book of Genesis- Genesis being related to a Greek word meaning "beginning." In the book of Genesis, we learn about the *beginning* of God's story- there we see that God created the heavens and the Earth, everything from the stars in the sky to everything on the Earth- the trees, the land, animals, people. And concerning people, Genesis says that we were made in God's image- in others words, we are designed in a way that is like God. We are designed to love like He loves, to be creative like He is creative, to do things that are good and right. And God wanted to have a close relationship with us humans, but what we read in Genesis is that the first humans (Adam and Eve) chose not to trust Him. They disobeyed God and sinned- doing what was against what God had said.

Sin always has consequences, and the consequence of that first sin was that a curse came upon the Earth. This curse affected everyone's heart and caused the friendship between God and people to be damaged. Not only was the relationship between God and people damaged, but the curse of sin also brought pain, sickness, sadness, and death into the world. I don't recommend spending tons of time watching Disney movies, but probably most of you have seen a Disney movie in which a curse came upon the land. Anyone seen a movie like that? (Aladdin, Beauty & the Beast, Frozen, the Little Mermaid, Lion King) Right, something bad happened, and as a result, everything became a little darker, sadder, lonelier. That's the reality of the world we live in, even those who don't yet follow Jesus who are making movies know it deep inside. But God doesn't want the curse to be the end of the story for us. God loves people and wants us to be close to Him in good friendship with Him. And so what we see in the book of Genesis is that after the curse happened, God began to bring about a great rescue plan for those who wanted to be close friends with Him. God chose a man named Abraham and his wife Sarah to be a part of that rescue plan. God told Abraham that through his family, all the families of the the earth would be *blessed*. Being "blessed" is kind of like saying the curse would be broken, and good things would happen for people of the earth instead of bad things. And in order for all the families of the earth to be blessed through Abraham, Abraham would need to have children, and yet Abraham and his wife Sarah were very old and God had not yet given them any children.

But Abraham trusted God, he had faith in being sure of what God told him to hope for, Abraham remained sure of God's promise that he did not yet see. Abraham was living out the memory verse for this month: **Hebrews 11:1** (NIV) ***"Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being sure of what we do not see."*** You guys say that with me... And God rewarded Abraham's faith- eventually giving him a son named Isaac. When Isaac grew up, he married a woman named Rebekah, and together they had twins, Esau and Jacob. And this is where our story begins today.

Although they were twins, Esau and Jacob grew up to be very different from each other. Esau was a guy who loved being outside, he was hairy and tough, and loved to hunt. Right- he probably liked throwing rocks and sticks, and chasing squirrels, building forts outside. Are there any of you who like those type of things? In contrast, Jacob was a guy who preferred to stay at home, he had smooth skin, and helped his mom cook. He probably was into baking cookies, and art projects, and video games if there had been video games during this time. Anybody like those type of things? But what these brothers had in common for a while is that they both did wrong things and lived in selfishness, instead of living in a way that honored God. And in Genesis 25 there is a passage that describes to us clearly just how these two were both doing things that were wrong and dishonoring to God. Let's look at that passage together... **(Gen. 25:29-34) *One day Jacob was cooking some stew. Esau came in from the open country. He was very hungry. 30 He said to Jacob, "Quick! Let me have some of that red stew! I'm very hungry!" That's why he was also named Edom. 31 Jacob replied, "First sell me the rights that belong to you as the oldest son in the family." 32 "Look, I'm dying of hunger," Esau said. "What good are those rights to me?" 33 But Jacob said, "First promise me with an oath that you are selling me your rights." So Esau promised to do it. He sold Jacob all of the rights that belonged to him as the oldest son. 34 Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. Esau ate and drank. Then he got up and left. So Esau didn't care anything at all about the rights that belonged to him as the oldest son.***

In a few other places, the Bible tells us that Jacob had a problem with being a sneaky trickster type of person. And here we definitely see that- Jacob was being sneaky in trying to convince his brother Esau to give him something that was way more valuable than what Jacob was giving him. Have any of you tried to

fool your brother or sister into giving them 2 \$1 dollar bills in exchange for just 1 \$5 dollar bill? Ever tried to trick someone into trading a little tiny not cool toy for a bigger cool toy? Jacob was doing something wrong in being sneaky like this, but what then was *Esau* doing wrong?

Well, Esau was the firstborn, and what that meant during this time was that Esau was supposed to eventually receive more of his father's inheritance (that means he would one day get more money, land, animals, clothes from his parents), but with that extra blessing was the understanding that Esau was to become the one responsible for the family- the one who looked out for the other brothers and sisters, the nieces, nephews, grandkids- to see to it that they were taken care of, and that they were protected, and that they had everything they needed. And so what we see here is that Esau didn't care very much about doing what he was supposed to be doing. His actions showed that he couldn't be trusted with the responsibility of caring for his family in the way that he was supposed to be the one caring for his family. He cared more about food in the moment, than the things God wanted him to care about.

And so both of these brothers weren't following God like their father Isaac or their grandfather Abraham had. We see further on in God's story that later in life the two brothers still had problems with these same issues. In Genesis 27, Esau and Jacob's father Isaac is old now and is dying, and Dad Isaac wants to eat one really good last special meal, and after that special meal Dad Isaac was going to officially pass on the leader responsibilities to his oldest son Esau. So Isaac tells Esau to go hunting to get meat to grill for this special meal. Anybody like grilled steak, hamburger, hotdogs? Mmmm, yummy- this was going to be like the best grilled steak/hamburger/hotdog cookout party ever. Well, what I didn't tell you earlier is that not only is Jacob a lying, sneaky trickster person- but his mom Rebekah is too! And here's the bad thing that Mom Rebekah tells Jacob to do after hearing about the special meal Dad Isaac wanted to have. She says to Jacob... **(Gen. 27:8-10) My son, listen carefully. Do what I tell you. 9 Go out to the flock. Bring me two of the finest young goats. I will prepare tasty food for your father. I'll make it just the way he likes it. 10 I want you to take it to your father to eat. Then he'll give you his blessing before he dies.**

Jacob's mom is saying: "trick Dad Isaac so that you (instead of Esau) become the one who is in charge of taking care of the whole family." And so

Jacob agrees to be a part of this trickery, he dresses up like Esau- putting on Esau's clothes, and even puts on some goat hair on his body so that he feels hairy like Esau. His mom helps him make the special meal, can you imagine her grilling the burgers just right, putting the perfect amount of ketchup on them, a little bit of BBQ sauce, a fresh tomato, a nice green leaf of lettuce, some sautéed caramelized onions, fresh baked sour dough buns, maybe some sweet potato fries on the side- and so Jacob brings in this delicious meal to his dad Isaac. Now Dad Isaac is really old at this time and is blind- he can't see very good with his eyes. And so with the clothes and the goat hair, Jacob successfully tricks his dad into thinking he was Esau. Dad Isaac was a little unsure, but Jacob gave some more lies that eventually convinced his father Isaac. Let's look at one of his lies together, in **verse 20**. Speaking of the nicely grilled meal, Dad Isaac asks, "*How did you find it so quickly, my son?*" And Jacob responds by saying "*The LORD your God gave me success.*" Not only is Jacob lying, but he shows us here that the LORD wasn't yet his God. Remember this verse, because we're going to come back to it. And so Dad Isaac unknowingly gives Jacob, instead of Esau, the special responsibility of receiving more money, animals, property with which he was to then use in order to be a responsible leader and protector of the family. Well, Esau later then comes back in from his hunting trip just after this happened and he realizes how Jacob had tricked their dad Isaac- and Esau is so mad that he says he is going to kill Jacob! (Again showing us that Esau also wasn't doing a very good job of acting how God would want him to act).

Well, what happens is that Jacob runs away so that he won't be killed by his brother. He sets out to go on a long walking trip to a far away place, a far away city, that would take several weeks to get there. He's alone, and probably really scared- not just scared of his brother, but also scared to be outside camping out- remember he was the one who liked just being at home and *not* being outside in the woods. But that first night, probably when he was the most scared and the most uncomfortable- God speaks to him in a dream. And here's what God says... **(Gen 28:13-15) ...I am the Lord. I am the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your children after you the land on which you are lying. 14 They will be like the dust of the earth that can't be counted. They will spread out to the west and to the east. They will spread out to the north and to the south. All nations on earth will be blessed because of you and your children after you. 15 I am with you. I will watch**

over you everywhere you go. And I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.

Here God is telling Jacob about the rescue plan that He had told to Jacob's grandfather Abraham. That through his descendants, through his sons and daughters, through his grandkids, great grandkids, great great grandkids- through them one day all the families of the earth would be blessed (the curse would one day be undone). God says that He would be with Jacob- God was saying that He wanted to be in relationship with Jacob. Instead of Jacob remaining under the curse that happened at the beginning of God's story when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, God instead wanted that curse to be broken and for Jacob and others to stop living selfishly- to stop lying, tricking, being sneaky- to stop living separated from God and instead know that God was there with them, wanting to take care of them. God wanted Jacob and others to start trusting Him and live in a way that showed there was good friendship between them and God. So how does Jacob respond to God speaking to him? Look at what he says in **verses 20-21... *Then Jacob made a promise. He said, "May God be with me. May he watch over me on this journey I'm taking. May he give me food to eat and clothes to wear. 21 May he do as he has promised so that I can return safely to my father's home. Then you, Lord, will be my God.***

Now remember that verse I said we'd come back to? Jacob, when talking to his dad Isaac had previously said "the LORD *your* God." In other words, Jacob had not yet made the LORD *his* God, God was just something that his dad and granddad were into, but he wasn't. But now after realizing that God was there with him and wanting to be in relationship with him, Jacob now basically says if this is indeed true that God is with me and wants to be friends with me, then I will make the LORD *my* God. Jacob says, if God is really with me and wants to be in relationship with me, then no longer will He just be the God of my parents, grandparents- no I'll now make Him *my* God too and I will follow Him. And what we see in the chapters that follow, is that Jacob begins living as someone making better decisions- he starts to take responsibility for things, he starts being more honest, he stops lying, tricking, cheating, stealing, he learns to work hard and care for animals, he learns to respect people around him even when it's hard. He wasn't perfect, some of his old nature slipped in in some moments, but it's

obvious that something in him changed that night after realizing that God was with Him, after deciding to make God, *his* God.

And what I want everyone here today to realize is that God is here with you too! God doesn't *just* want a close friendship with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, your parents- God wants a close relationship with you, and you, and you. This is what breaks the curse. This is the message of the Bible, this is the story of the entire Bible- that God intended to be close friends with us, but we as humans mess that up, and God has provided a way- a rescue plan- to fix what we have messed up and break the curse. That rescue plan that began with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob realizing that God wants to be with us- that rescue plan has been most fully explained in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus was God in human flesh, he came to earth to be with us- Jesus is the person God was talking about to Abraham and Jacob, saying that all the families of the world would be blessed. Jesus is the person who eventually came through the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob- who has the power to break the curse and offer blessing to the whole world. And the Bible ends with talking about how Jesus will one day soon return to be with us as our King. And while we are waiting on Jesus to return to Earth, the Bible tells us who trust in Him, that God is with us by giving us His Spirit inside us. And in *knowing* this, like Jacob, may this understanding *change* us. We don't need to lie. We don't need to worry. We don't need to try to get ahead by making others loose. Why? *Because we can trust God no matter what!* God says that He wants to be with us, and that He *is* with us, and that He will be King for those who trust in Him. He wants to be the LORD God not just for your parents, but He wants to be the LORD God for you too, present with you too! If we follow Jesus, we can trust in Him to work things out right, we can trust in Him to provide what we need, we can trust in Him to take care of us and those around us, we can trust Him even to love us through our mistakes. Will you trust Him enough to *know* that He is with you, and will you let that understanding *change* you? I want us to pray for this next generation, for all these who are entering into this new school year, please join me in echoing in your hearts my prayer for our students. Let's pray...