

*What we are after*

We come this week to a very well known part of the Jacob story; where Jacob conspires with his mother, Rebekah, to deceive Isaac and “steal” the blessing Isaac was apparently intending to pray over Esau. Although the account is widely known, it may not be widely applied well. No one in the account seems to come out looking good; everyone seems to be flawed and carrying out personal agendas. Everyone that is, but God. And, throughout this account, we should keep our eyes on the Unseen One behind the scenes who is working out His perfect plan *in spite of the weaknesses and sinfulness of those involved.*

*Talking to your group*

When we interpret and apply Old Testament passages, we must be careful to avoid using the passages inappropriately. Some seek, in every account, an example to follow; but as we have seen in this week's reading, there isn't any good example. Some merely try to “find a principle” and make application from that principle; but it is hard to “principle-ize” every passage if we pay attention to what the account is all about.

The account we explore is no exception; there seem to be no really good examples for us to follow, and there do not seem to be any appropriate “principles” to draw out and build on. So, what are we to make of what is recorded for us here?

Perhaps the way forward is to keep in mind what the “big story” is that is unfolding in the book of Genesis. We can rewind the tape and in so doing revisit Abraham and there hear and see God making promises to Abraham. Promises that included making of Abraham a great nation, and blessing all the nations of the world through him and his descendants, and being God to and for Abraham and his

*“This man [Jacob] became the Prince of God. And if he became so, is there not hope for us, who can trace in him many resemblances to ourselves? If the Almighty Workman could fashion such clay into so fair a vessel, what may He not do for us?”*  
F. B. Meyer

family throughout time. And if we are following along with the story, we will have questions about just how this grand promise of God is going to be carried out.

One of the things that we might do (and it seems very reasonable to do this!) is to find the “best of the best” to be the one through whom these promises are to be carried out. We might be caught up in the story enough to want to know the one or two descendants of Abraham who will be fortunate enough to be “qualified” to be the bearers of the promises. And, it is right there, that we would be surprised!

God has already told Isaac that his older son (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob). Everyone in the family knows this; but nobody seems to rest in what God has said. Isaac seemingly is intent (initially) on circumventing God's plan in his desire to bless Esau. Rebekah wants to “help God out” not being content to wait and see what He will do. Jacob appears to go along with his mother, only after he is convinced it won't cost him. And Esau repeatedly seems to be oblivious to what God intends and desires. Could you find a more *unqualified* group of promise-bearers?!

But seeing this and watching the story in Genesis 27 unfold, what would you be forced to realize? Perhaps it is as simple as this: God is so good at not only making promises but keeping them, that no one gets in the way of God ultimately procuring exactly what He wants.

As you explore with your group the deceit and duplicity, the lack of faith, the manipulation and shallowness portrayed in chapter 27; keep the bigger picture in mind. That will help you understand what the point of the story really is! God, in relentless grace, carries out His plan and blesses people in the process . . . in spite of them!

*How can we take this home?*

There is not a one-size-fits-all application to be drawn from this account. The big ideas anchored to this text have to do with coming into one's own “first-hand faith” and the influence of others on our grasp of the life of faith. Hopefully, those big ideas will generate some fruitful discussion about owning our own faith and being intentional about finding the best possible examples of what it means to walk in faith in relationship with the God of all grace.

*“The point of these reiterations of the effect of the blessing (of Jacob by Isaac) is primarily to underscore the irretrievability of the lost blessing and hence the certainty of the fulfillment of the blessing itself. By showing that the blessing was irrevocable, even by the father who gave the blessing, the writer underscores an important feature of the blessing. It is out of man's hands. It will come to pass, just as it was given.”*  
John Sailhammer

*Questions for Reflection and Group Discussion*

Jacob  
Relentless Grace



*Thinking . . .*

Have you ever felt the need to “help God out” in getting done what He said He would do? When have you been inclined to do so? Why do we do that kind of thing?

What’s the difference between resting in God and doing what He asks us to and trying to “help Him out” when we aren’t sure that what He said He will do will happen?

*Reflecting . . .*

Often, we want to find “good examples” for ourselves in Old Testament stories. Well, this week it will be hard! There really are no “good guys”; everyone seems to have an agenda or a flaw. Read about Isaac and his family in the problem of the “stolen blessing” in Genesis 27:1-28:9.

What can you find that is commendable (if anything) in the four principle characters in this chapter (Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau)?

What do you find to be either inappropriate or reprehensible in the four principle characters in this chapter?

Which outweighs the other? The commendable characteristics or the un-commendable ones? Both as individuals and as a whole, how do you feel about the four?

*Responding . . .*

Given what we read about these four, who could possibly be the “star” of this account? How can you make sense of this account in light of what God is doing in the world? In your own life?

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