

Title: Isaac for “Dad of the Year”?  
Date: June 18, 2017  
Subject: Prayer, rivalry, deceitfulness and grudges  
Scripture: Genesis 25:19-28

READ Genesis 25:19-28

I. The first insight to glean is the importance of prayer. Previously, Abraham’s servant sought direction from the Lord for finding wife for Isaac (Genesis 24). He’d been instructed by his master to go back to the old country, to his father’s people to get a wife for Isaac. He didn’t want a Canaanite woman. The servant made the 500 mile camel trip. You can imagine how long it would take, up and down, up and down.

When the servant arrived outside the town he stopped at the well. He prayed that the girl he asked to give him a drink would give him one and offer to get water for his camels. It would require a lot of effort to quench the thirst of ten camels. The Lord answered the prayer immediately – “before he finished praying” (Genesis 24:15), Rebekah was coming to the well. She did as the man had prayed. When he popped the question for his master, she agreed to marry Isaac who wound up marrying his father’s grandniece.

In the passage that was read we saw that Isaac prayed for his wife to conceive. Ancient cultures stigmatized women who didn’t have children as that was one of their prime duties. We aren’t told how soon after they were married he started praying for a child, but God’s Word informs us they were married for years before she gave birth to twins (Genesis 25:26). Abraham was still around and had to be wondering again how he would become a great nation with offspring as numerous as the stars if the child of promise, Isaac, wouldn’t be able to have kids.

Wouldn’t it be great if the Lord always answered prayers quickly like the servant and not Isaac? A woman talked to her pastor about some things she felt the Lord was telling her to give up. She told him she heard testimonies from people who said they were instantly delivered from sin or bad habits when they became believers. She wondered why that hadn’t happened to her. The pastor told her that, yes, sometimes the Lord does instantly remove sins and destructive habits. Let’s put that story on “pause.” Last week I mentioned two office equipment people who stopped by. The woman stopped back this week to get more information. Last week I mentioned her response about the time spent reading the Bible, “YES.” I found out more. She is a new follower of Christ, about 3 months. She shared that she had been delivered from heroin. She had tried other methods but He did it. Back to the woman and the pastor. The pastor explained to the woman that the Lord often allows people to struggle with things so that they depend on him daily. Keep on praying.

II. Rivalry. Rebekah tried to understand what was happening inside her. The babies jostled each other. Talk about competitive natures. The Lord told her she was carrying two nations. I imagine it can feel that way to a pregnant woman.

The Lord further told Rebekah that the two nations would not be equal. The older would serve the younger. Sibling rivalry was nothing new to Biblical characters. We saw it at its worst with Cain hating Abel and killing him. The sons of Abraham -- Isaac and Ishmael -- carried on the tradition. Ishmael was 14 years old when Isaac was born. A few years later when Isaac was weaned, Abraham threw a huge feast (Genesis 21:8). Ishmael, now 16 or 17, mocked the toddler. Sarah bluntly pointed out that Hagar and Ishmael needed to be booted. Abraham was distressed about kicking them out. The Lord promised Abraham he would become a great nation. Previously an angel told Ishmael's mother, "He will be a wild donkey of a man; His hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers" (Genesis 16:12). By the time of his death it's recorded that his sons "lived in hostility toward all the tribes related to them" (Genesis 25:18). His kids wouldn't be able to get along with others. They couldn't play nice. It was his descendants against the world, themselves and especially Isaac's descendants. They become thorns in the flesh for the people of Israel. Sibling rivalry would grow into nation rivalry.

Back to Rebekah. We left the pregnant woman feeling like her womb had become a battleground. Sometime later Hairy Red and Heel Grabber or Deceiver, real names Esau and Jacob, were born.

A. Rivalry fueled by deceit. Jacob fit like a leather glove in the family, carrying on in their footsteps. Grandpa Abraham had twice lied about the identity of his wife to save his skin. When daddy Isaac was asked about the identity of Rebekah, he resorted to lying and said she was his sister because she was beautiful and he was afraid he would be killed. And mama Rebekah would be found to be pretty good at pulling the wool over the eyes of her husband by aiding Jacob in getting.... Let's not get ahead of ourselves. First the story line goes to an incident which moves toward fulfilling the prophecy about the older serving the younger.

READ Genesis 25:29-34. Jacob was well on his way to becoming a master of deception and not the kind used by magicians. He could have said, "Bro, you do look famished. I'd be glad to share some stew with you." Instead he took advantage of a person in his hour of need. Jacob connived his way into a better position. He was the kind of guy who could enter a revolving door behind you and exit before you.

B. Trading the best for the momentary. Esau exaggerated his condition just a wee little bit. He could have gotten a best Actor Award. "I'm famished. I'm about to die." also was godless (Hebrews 12:16). He wasn't interested in having God in his life. That doesn't justify Jacob's actions. There isn't one set of procedures for way we relate to those who are godly and a different one for those who are godless. The end of Romans

12 has a bunch of relational commands – “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Share with God’s people in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Live in harmony with one another. Don’t repay evil for evil. Live at peace with everyone. Don’t take revenge.” And then it explains how to kill your enemy, not literally, but with kindness. “If your enemy is hungry, feed him” (Romans 12:10-20).

Esau could have said the price for some lentil stew was too high. He wasn’t really that hungry. He could make it a few more minutes. He had a misplaced value system and sold his birthright and the accompanying rights to a double inheritance portion. He ate, drank and went on his way. He despised his birthright. He didn’t care about what mattered most. He lived for the moment and was willing to sell the best for fleeting pleasure.

In the marshmallow test a researcher gives a choice to a 4-year-old. “I am leaving for a few minutes to run an errand and you can have this marshmallow while I’m gone, but if you wait until I return, you can have two marshmallows.” A dozen years after Stanford conducted the first part of the experiment they restudied the same children and found that those who had grabbed the single marshmallow tended to be more troubled as adolescents. It’s caused by their desire for instant gratification, for what is needed or wanted NOW.

Stephen Cole, “Every day you’re trading your life-your soul-for something. The question is, *For what?* When it’s all over and you’ve cashed in all the time and abilities which have been allotted to you, what will you have to show for it? If you trade it in for fleeting pleasure, to gratify your immediate needs, you’ll come up empty. But if you trade your life for God’s kingdom and righteousness, to fulfill His purpose, you’ll be satisfied with that which no one can take from you. If you trade your soul to satisfy your flesh, you’ve made a bad deal. Living for instant gratification will rob you of spiritual blessing” (Trading Your Soul – For What?, bible.org).

C. Pile on the deceit. The pattern of scheming is next seen in Genesis 27. Daddy Isaac feels he is getting old and that death could be around the corner. It probably was 40 years in the future. He calls in his oldest son because he wants to give the “fatherly blessing” to him. He instructs Esau to go hunting and prepare some of the tasty food he likes. When the meal is completed, the blessing will be given to Esau.

D. Favoritism. The parents’ sin of favoritism supplied some of the fuel for the sibling rivalry besides creating conflict between spouses (Genesis 25:28). Jacob and Esau were still responsible for their choices. Isaac loved the more adventurous Esau. He vicariously lived through his son’s hunting exploits, his adventures out in the wild. Rebekah loved the homebody Jacob. There’s nothing wrong with having a natural connection to one child over the other. What’s wrong is the favoritism shown and preference expressed to one over the other.

James Dobson in his book, *The Strong-Willed Child*, lists suggestions as cures for sibling rivalries in the home. One is “Don’t inflame the natural jealousy of children.” He adds that there are three areas in which

parents should never compare their children. 1) *Physical attractiveness*. If Sharon, for instance, hears you say, "Betty is going to be a gorgeous girl," the very fact that her name was not mentioned automatically establishes a rivalry and causes her to assume that she is ugly. Beauty is the most significant factor in self-esteem in western civilization. 2) *The child's intelligence*. Never compare how smart one is to another because everyone is different. 3) *The child's athletic ability*. This area is also so diverse that it is unfair to compare one against another.

E. More deceit. Back to our story. Mama Rebekah hears the conversation. She was eavesdropping. She schemed with Jacob to get the blessing for mommy's favorite little boy. The younger son agrees to the deceit. They literally pull the wool over the old man who is blind. Jacob covers his hands and neck with goatskins because he was smooth skinned, puts on Esau's clothes and takes in food that mommy prepared.

Isaac wonders how his son had found success so quickly. Jacob lied by saying the Lord did it. Isaac was suspicious about the identity of the person. He gives the touch test. He was still confused. "The voice is the voice of Jacob but the hands are the hands of Esau. Are you really Esau?" Jacob lies, again. Isaac eats the food and then asks his son to come near him to give him a kiss. Isaac gives the young man the sniff test. Jacob smells like Esau. Isaac gives the blessing to Jacob which is reminiscent of the one given to Abraham.

Like any good suspense story, Jacob barely leaves the tent before Esau enters with the food he has prepared. Isaac trembles when he realizes that he has been tricked and the blessing that had been spoken was legally binding. Esau seeks some sort of blessing, hoping his dad has more than one and weeps over what he has missed. The blessing sounds more like a curse. READ Genesis 27:39, 40.

F. Grudge. How does Esau respond to Jacob's actions? READ Genesis 27:41. Esau held a grudge. What a statement about his condition. I could give other illustrations of people who held grudges, even silly ones. Let's cut to the chase. Here are some of the harmful effects of holding a grudge from the Mayo Clinic – "Bring anger and bitterness into every relationship and new experience. Become so wrapped up in the wrong that you can't enjoy the present. Become depressed or anxious. Feel that your life lacks meaning or purpose, or that you're at odds with your spiritual beliefs. Lose valuable and enriching connectedness with others." Mayo Clinic is doing some preaching. They do give some medical issues. Reverse them from what they say happens when forgive. When hold a grudge and don't forgive, there's more anxiety, stress and hostility; higher blood pressure; more symptoms of depression; weaker immune system; worsened heart health. Holding a grudge hurts the body, heart, relationships and ages the person.

G. Still more deceit. More scheming is on the way. Mommy has heard about Esau's plans. She wants to get her boy out of town. She tells hubby that she doesn't like the women there as suitable marrying material for Jacob. Older brother had previously married two Hittite women who were a source of grief to Isaac and

Rebekah (Genesis 26:34, 35). Isaac sends his younger son away and doubles down on the blessing invoking the name of his father Abraham. Only after Jacob leaves in search of a non-Canaanite wife does Esau wake up to the displeasure he brought to his parents. He marries a third wife (Genesis 28:9).

Jacob travels to his mom's home area. There he engages in deceit and is himself deceived. It's 20 years before he returns home with 4 wives, 12 kids – 11 boys and one girl. Hanging over his head is Esau's desire for revenge. He sends messengers ahead to tell big bro that he's coming home. The messengers come back with news that big bro is coming to meet them. Jacob is more scared. He prepares a gift from his herds and sends them ahead with the hope that they will assuage the hot head. That night Jacob has a spiritual encounter in which he wrestles with the Lord (Genesis 32). He is again blessed and his name is changed to Israel.

That morning Jacob sees Esau approaching. Little bro walks ahead of his family to meet big bro. How does brooding and vengeful Esau respond? READ Genesis 33:4. Seems like time has changed him and Jacob. They both weep. It would be interesting to know that part of the conversation. What we have is Esau's refusal of Jacob's gifts and Jacob's pleading for him to take them. Esau eventually does but only after Jacob –READ Genesis 33:10, 11.

Esau wants Jacob to move back home. Jacob says he will after the women, children, flocks and herds rest but doesn't. He goes to a different town. Still deceiving.

They could have taken a better page from Grandpa Abraham when his herdsmen had a quarrel with Lot's herdsmen. "This isn't fitting for people who are brothers, and part of God's family" (Genesis 13:8).

The Lord didn't need Jacob's conniving and deceit to work out his plan for the promises made to Abraham to be fulfilled. All Jacob did was create more heart ache for him and those around him. He did rebound and become a changed man but only after more time elapsed. He came to the place where he cleaned house. He gave the command to his household and all the people with him to get rid of the foreign gods they had been worshipping (Genesis 35:2-5). Then Jacob built an altar to the Lord. He is listed among the hall of faith in Hebrews 11. Esau just kind of vanishes from the pages of history. He's mentioned in Hebrews where we are told to not be like him as he is godless (Hebrews 12:16).

Repeat from the end of Romans 12 – "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Share with God's people in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Live in harmony with one another. Don't repay evil for evil. Live at peace with everyone. Don't take revenge." And then it explains how to kill your enemy, not literally, but with kindness. "If your enemy is hungry, feed him" (Romans 12:10-20).