

General Church Education



Family Lesson: Genesis 24 Jacob and Esau

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Family Lesson 1 - K

Jacob and Esau
Genesis 25

Family Talk:
JACOB and ESAU

The Good That Comes From the Most Difficult Experiences

Rev. Donald Rose

We have here a story of two brothers, both of whom have very different things they have to go through in life. Esau had the hardest time at first, but it seems that in the long run Jacob went through longer and more difficult trials.

We sometimes stop to think of people who have had particularly hard times in life. We think of people who have had serious injuries or handicaps. We think of people who have known pain and difficulties. Do you think that those who have such hard times gain any benefit from them? Perhaps you have noticed that people like that develop such admirable characters that they are an inspiration to other people. Perhaps you notice that they seem to learn through their own difficulties to be sympathetic and understanding of others in such a way that they are able to help others very effectively.

One thing we do know, and it is such an important thing to know, is that the Lord never allows something unless some good can come from it. This is taught in the Writings (*Arcana Coelestia* 6489). It is put very strongly that **“not one whit is permitted...by the Lord, except to the end that good may come of it”** (*Arcana Coelestia* 6574).

As the story of Esau and Jacob begins, we see Esau really suffering. He is so weary and hungry that he feels he is about to die. When the Writings tell us about this suffering, they note that sometimes people are very “hard” and unfeeling, but that the experiences of life finally “soften them.” This kind of hardness is selfishness, **“contempt for others in comparison with self...self-glory and also hatred and revenge”** (*Arcana Coelestia* 3318). After difficult times, people can be **“gifted with another nature; being made mild, humble, simple and contrite in heart”** (*Arcana Coelestia* 3318). This means that instead of saying, “I’m better than anybody else,” or “I think other people are nothing compared to me,” they find themselves more humble, and instead of scorning the problems others have, they feel sympathetic towards them.

The weariness and hunger Esau went through was followed by a more inward kind of suffering. This time he wasn’t feeling hurt in his body, as he had when he came in hungry from the field. He was really hurt as to his feelings and hopes, and he gave one of the bitterest cries that we read of in the Word. His

father's blessing had been taken from him, and he cried, **"Have you not reserved a blessing for me?...Bless me, also, O my father! And Esau lifted up his voice and wept"** (Genesis 27:36-38). At first he felt anger and revenge towards his brother. But years later, when Esau had much experience of life, Jacob returned to him wondering if now Esau would hurt him. Instead, Esau embraced him. This was so touching to Jacob that he felt that he had looked into the face of God (Genesis 33:10).

But let us see what Jacob experienced in life. He had been a selfish grabber and had wrongly taken his brother's birthright and his blessing, but this did *not* lead to enjoyment. How often is this same story told? People do things that are wrong, thinking that it will be the road to happiness, and they find instead that it brings them a lot of misery.

One of the things experienced was fear, just as so many people who steal experience. If you steal and are dishonest in order to find success, you have to carry within yourself constantly the fear that you are going to be found out and caught.

Jacob knew the fear of Esau's anger, and then he knew the terrible experience of going on the run, off by himself. He found himself all alone with no possessions or home. That is when he really needed the assurance that he received in a dream in which he saw the Lord at the top of a ladder. When he awoke from that dream, he hoped and prayed that **"God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on"** (Genesis 28:20).

He reached the land where Rachel lived, and isn't it interesting that he became the victim of a trick? The one who outwitted his brother was now to be outwitted himself. Laban made him work for seven years, and then seven more years, and finally for a total of twenty years, and those were hard years. We know this from what he finally said to Laban:

"These twenty years I have been with you...There I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus I have been in your house twenty years...and you have changed my wages ten times...God has seen my affliction and the labor of my own hands"

(Genesis 31:38-42).

Jacob knew the fear of being chased by Laban when he finally left that land; and then after all those years, when he came near to the land where he had been born, he really felt a fear of what his brother Esau might do to him.

It is said: **"Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed"** (Genesis 32:7). We hear

him pray to the Lord, and we see him not only afraid, but humble in a way he had not been before. The prayer was:

“O God of my father...I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me”

(Genesis 32:9-11).

At last the time came for the two brothers, Esau and Jacob, to meet again. And now Jacob bowed himself to the ground before his brother. He had brought great presents for Esau.

To his great joy Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and they both wept, not for sorrow, but for joy. Esau said that Jacob did not need to give him a present, but this made Jacob all the more eager to give it to him.

“Please take my blessing that is brought to you.”

(Genesis 33:10,11)

That good scene of two brothers and the unselfishness brought out in them, shows one example of this truth: that hard things may happen, but the Lord provides that good may come of them.

Jacob and Esau

Genesis 25

LEVEL 1 – JACOB AND ESAU WERE TWINS

MATERIALS NEEDED

Red Crayon

Sharp Pencil

ESAU and JACOB were TWINS

Esau and Jacob were twins. They had the same mother and father, named Rebekah and Isaac. Rebekah and Isaac were married for a long time before Esau and Jacob were born. They waited twenty years for these two little boy babies. Think how happy they were! After wanting children for so long, they had not just one baby, but two babies!



Have you ever seen twins? Twins are special because they are together in the mother's body from their very beginning. They are born on the same day so they even have the same birthday.

Sometimes twins look exactly the same. Sometimes they look so much the same they are called "identical". People don't know which is which!

But even though Esau and Jacob were twins, they were not identical. They were what we call "fraternal" twins. They did not look the same.

Esau was born first. He was red and hairy. He was called Esau because it means "hairy". Jacob was born second. He was smooth. He was called Jacob because it means "supplanter". He took Esau's birthright. He supplanted (took the place of) Esau. And as they grew older, they loved different things.

They were twins. They were brothers. But they were not the same.

Projects

1) Color the picture on the next page.

OR

2) Make the booklet about Jacob and Esau.

- a. Color page 2 of the booklet very red with a crayon.
- b. Trace the picture of Jacob on page 1. Use a sharp pencil. A red picture of Esau will appear on page 3.
- c. Finish the pictures:

Open the book (so you don't get more red crayon on Esau).

Jacob was "a mild man, dwelling in tents."
Draw a robe on Jacob. Put a staff in his hand.
Draw a tent in the background.

Esau was "red" and "like a hairy garment all over."
Make Esau's clothes hairy. Make Esau's body look hairy.
He was a hunter. Put a spear in his hand.

- e. Fold the page again to make a book.

Esau and Jacob





Jacob

2

3

Color this page red.

Esau

Jacob and Esau
Genesis 25
LEVEL 2 – VERY DIFFERENT PEOPLE

MATERIALS NEEDED

Glue
Scissors

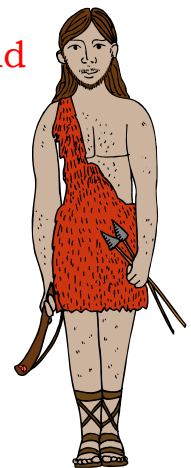
**JACOB and ESAU:
Very Different People**

In today's story you learned that Abraham and Sarah had a baby boy when they were very old. They named him Isaac. Isaac grew up, and the Lord gave him a beautiful wife whom he loved. She was Rebekah. Isaac and Rebekah had not only one son, but *twin* boys, Esau and Jacob.

Some twins are very much alike. They look alike, they like the same things, and other people sometimes can't tell them apart. Esau and Jacob were not this kind of twins. They were very different. Read what the Word tells us about them.



“So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. And the first came out all 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 he bore them. 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.”



(Genesis 25:24-28)

Project

Cut out the words below. Decide if a word describes **Esau** or **Jacob**. Then paste the word in the correct column on the next page. Do the same for all the words.

red	smooth	hairy
hunter	dweller in tents	man of the field
loved by Isaac	loved by Rebekah	mild
born first	born holding his brother's heel	born second

ESAU

JACOB

Jacob and Esau
Genesis 25

LEVEL 3 – ESAU AND JACOB AND THE BIRTHRIGHT

MATERIALS NEEDED

Pencil or pen

ESAU and JACOB and the BIRTHRIGHT



In the story of Esau and Jacob, you read about a “birthright.” What is a birthright? It is something — even many things — that are ours from the Lord. Those wonderful things are yours from the time you are born. These special gifts, loves and talents are given or promised by the Lord because you are a special person created by Him. Of course, we *all* have birthrights from the Lord. Many are shared by all of us, but some are *only yours*.

Can you think of what might be *your* birthright? What has the Lord given you or promised you? Make a list of a few things you can think of. After you have made your list, look at the list on the back of this sheet. Let’s see how much alike the two lists are.

Were any of our ideas the same? It would not be a surprise. But since we are all special and different from each other, you probably have listed some special things as your very own—your “birthright.”

SOME GIFTS FROM THE LORD

The Lord has promised to you (and all people) **a beautiful life forever in heaven.**

The Lord has promised you in the Heavenly Doctrines of the New Jerusalem (the Writings) that you will have a **wonderful husband or wife in heaven.**

The Lord has given you **special loves, talents, and abilities.** You can use them during life here and then in heaven.

The Lord has given you **“an heritage”** of those who love Him—parents and teachers who love the Lord's teachings and love to tell you about Him.

Esau and Jacob

Genesis 25

LEVEL 4 – ESAU AND JACOB

THE BIRTHRIGHT

What was this “birthright” that Esau gave away? As the firstborn, Esau would be the leader of the family after his father’s death. He gave away this right to Jacob.



THE BLESSING

Later, Jacob would steal the blessing— he would become the spiritual leader of the family— which was Esau’s right as the first-born. Now Jacob would be the leader of the family both in worldly matters and in spiritual matters.

ESAU GIVES UP HIS BIRTHRIGHT

Esau returned from hunting tired and hungry. When he saw the stew that Jacob was cooking he wanted it very badly. He wanted it so much he was willing to give away something very important to get it—his birthright.



Esau was hungry. That was what he was feeling right then. He wanted food. That was what he wanted right then. His birthright was something that would matter in the future, after his father died. It was probably a long time away. Esau didn’t consider what he would feel like when that time came and he couldn’t have his birthright. He wanted to satisfy the feelings he had right now.

WILL WE GIVE UP OUR BIRTHRIGHT?

This is a problem we all have to deal with. We want what we want now. Putting things off for the sake of future benefits takes self-discipline. We can so easily ignore long-term consequences for short-term gain.

It is important to work at developing the ability to think of future consequences before we act. It is important to give some thought to what will be important to us later in our lives—and learn to give up things now that may cause serious harm to our future. Sometimes we call this “short-term pain for long-term gain.”

APPLICATION

Spend a little time thinking about your own life, and ways in which there is the temptation to do things now that could be hurtful to your future success or happiness.

- 1) On page 3, write about some of your ideas. (Use the back of the page if you need more space).

OR

- 2) Have a family discussion. Dinnertime is a wonderful time to talk together. Talk about ways family and real friends can help each other to make good choices *now* that will be a foundation for the future.
- 3) On page 2 is a recipe for lentil stew. Perhaps you could make this “pottage” for your family for supper and have the discussion while you are eating it.

JACOB MAKES POTTAGE FOR ESAU

Pottage is a thick stew of vegetables or vegetables and meat.

Read again the story from Genesis 25, verses 29-34.
Imagine Esau's hunger, Jacob's boiling the stew, Esau's eating of it. Then make some stew like it for your family.

Here is a 3,500-year-old recipe for Lentil Stew:

1. Pick over carefully and wash 1 cup of lentils. Soak overnight in 1 cup of water.
2. Next morning, put the lentils in a saucepan and add 5 cups of fresh water.
3. Add 1 onion, chopped, and a "bouquet garni" composed of 1 bay leaf, 8 sprigs of fresh parsley and 1 sprig of thyme (or the dried equivalent of these), and salt to taste.

Note: You may also add chopped carrots, potatoes or stewed tomatoes to add variety.

4. Gradually bring the soup to the boiling point and simmer gently for 1½ hours or until the lentils are tender.
5. About 4 or 5 minutes before serving, stir in 3 tablespoons of finely chopped parsley and 5 or 6 fresh mint leaves.
6. Serve with bread or crackers.

Jacob and Esau

Genesis 25:19-34, 27

LEVEL 5 – THE NAME JACOB

Word Discovery on the Name “Jacob”



It was in relationship to his brother, Esau, that Jacob demonstrated the characteristics that fit so well with the name he was given.

The naming of Esau

When the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah were born, they were named after their parents saw them. The first one was a red hairy baby. They gave him the name that means “hairy.” In Hebrew this name is “Esau.”

The naming of Jacob

When they saw the second baby come out, his tiny hand was clutching the heel of the first. That is why they chose a very unusual name—the Hebrew word “Jacob,” which simply means “grabber” or “heel-grabber.”

To realize what a strange name this was, think of someone being named “grabber” or “heel-grabber.” Isn’t it remarkable that this name became such a common name in this world? Jacob had his name eventually changed to Israel, but still the people descended from him—the children of Israel—continued to honor his first name. Two of the Lord’s disciples were named after “heel-grabber” or “Jacob.” (More about this later.)

Jacob the Supplanter

How does one translate into English the verb that means “to grab by the heel”? One translation says “cheater,” and another “deceiver,” but the usual word in English translations is “supplanter.” A dictionary definition of “supplant” is to take someone else’s place, “especially through force or plotting.”

Knowing this translation for the Hebrew “Jacob,” you can appreciate the dismayed and angry exclamation of Esau:

“Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing.”



(Genesis 27)

The name Jacob has become very common. In the original Greek of the New Testament we see that two of the disciples were named Jacob, but through a

gradual change of word sounds the name has become “James” in English. Someone once had the theory that translators of the Bible changed “Jacob” to “James” in order to please the king, James, who authorized the King James version of the Bible. It was an interesting theory, but it is not valid, as the name “James” occurs in English Bibles before King James was born.

The desire to be greatest

The wish to be the most important! This is a common human tendency. Even the Lord’s disciples occasionally strove or argued among themselves as to which would be the greatest (e.g. *Luke 9:46* and *Luke 22:24*).

Two of the disciples in particular showed this strong ambition to get ahead of the others. We read:

Then James and John....came to Him, saying, Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.
(*Mark 10:37*)

James (or Jacob), and John were asking to be ahead of the other disciples, and the other disciples were upset by this.

“...they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.”
(*Mark 10:41*)

This heel-grabbing tendency to want to supplant or get ahead of others is one we often see in ourselves and in others. It is in a way comforting to know that even the Lord's disciples had to deal with it.

What does the Lord teach about being the greatest?

A) In the New Testament

Notice two of the beautiful ways in which the Lord handled this “heel-grabbing” tendency:

Once when the disciples were caught up in the spirit of who would be the greatest, the Lord changed the situation by calling to Him a little child. Setting the child in the midst of them, He said,

“Whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”
(*Matthew 18:4*)

This happened more than once. What did the Lord do when a dispute arose among the disciples about who would be the most important?

“Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him.”
(*Luke 9:47*)

The other dramatic way the Lord dealt with this tendency was on the occasion of the Last Supper. The disciples started to argue about who was the greatest. On this occasion the Lord actually went to each one of them and washed their feet. It was an unforgettable demonstration that greatness is not in putting oneself above others, but in serving them. When He had washed their feet, He said:

“Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet...I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” (*Luke 22:27*).

B) In the Writings

The Lord showed in His example that He wanted to serve others. We learn in the Writings that the best of the angels are those who want to be of the most service to others:

“...nor do they make themselves greater than others, but less, for they put the good of society and the neighbor in the first place, and put their own good last.”
(*Heaven and Hell 218*)

The true concept of being “greater”
is the idea of being useful.

Read the passages below from *Heaven and Hell* about usefulness and service:

“In uses all the delights of heaven are brought together and are present, because uses are the goods of love and charity in which angels are; therefore every one has delights that are in accord with his uses, and in the degree of his affection for use.”
(*Heaven and Hell 402*)

“One who rules from love towards the neighbor wills good to all, and loves nothing so much as...serving others; which is...performing uses, either to the church, or to the country, or to society, or to a fellow citizen. This is his love and the delight of his heart.”

(*Heaven and Hell 564*)

Using what you have learned

Think about a time when you have done something just because you wanted to help someone and make them happy. Also think about a time when you have done something, not really because you wanted to be useful, but because you would get some benefit or advantage from it.

Here are some choices for you:

- a) Write some ideas about “uses” that can be done with the motive of being useful, or for selfish reasons. Would the useful things be done differently depending on the motive? Would the person doing them feel different?
- b) Discuss this subject with your family. Dinnertime is a wonderful time to share ideas.
- c) Volunteer for some useful service to your family, school or community.
- d) Make a poster of cut-out pictures showing people involved in as many different useful activities you can find. Maybe you will discover unusual and fascinating “uses” you never thought about before.