

Jacob and Esau

Genesis 25:20-34; 27:1-41

Level C | Lesson 1 | Teacher Overview



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...”

But Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright....”

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

Genesis 25:29-32

For Teachers

This lesson has several activity options. You may wish to choose 2-3. Reading through all of the options will help you identify the activities that are best suited to your group’s size, student mix, available supplies, and the time you have to prepare. You may also want to mix and match activities from other age levels.

Activity Options

1. Talk About It
2. Illustration: Selling the Birthright
3. Illustration: Stealing the Blessing
4. Take Action: Head or Heart Role Play
5. Look Closer: Canaan’s Peaks and Valleys

Talk About It

Reading: Genesis 25:20-34; 27:1-41

This story features Esau and Jacob, twin brothers who struggle even before birth. Esau, the firstborn, is hairy, and red. He becomes a hunter. At birth, Jacob grabs Esau's heel. He is mild, living in tents. Today's stories include Jacob and Esau's birth, Jacob buying Esau's birthright, and Jacob stealing Esau's blessing. The Talk-About-It compares the characteristics of the brothers and explores their relationship to qualities in us.

1. Which of Isaac and Rebekah's sons was the eldest? (Esau) What did Jacob do to Esau as he was being born? (grabbed Esau's heel)
2. Compare Jacob's looks and personality with Esau's. (Esau: red and hairy, skillful hunter, man of the field, impulsive, despised his birthright; Jacob: smooth, mild, lived in tents, scheming—he took advantage of Esau's hunger, close to Rebekah his mother)
3. Like other characters in the Word, Esau and Jacob are not role models we are to follow. They picture two mental powers: will (desire, intention, purpose) and understanding (reason, judgment, intellect, discernment).
4. Together Esau and Jacob picture the will and understanding working together. In today's story they are young men, and they picture what our mind is like when we are starting out in life.
5. Which brother represents the will? (Esau) Why? (He is impulsive, acting from desire. Young children are sometimes like this. They find it hard to wait for things they want and make a fuss if they do not get them right away.)
6. In what ways is Jacob like the understanding? (thinks ahead, makes plans, takes advantage of Esau, disguises himself)
7. Jacob was wrong to take advantage of Esau's hunger. Esau was wrong to give up his birthright to satisfy his appetite. People sometimes use the expression "selling your birthright for a mess of pottage." What does this mean? (sacrificing something important, like our ideals, for the sake of something quite worthless, like worldly satisfaction.) Like Esau, we may sometimes think that something is really important but in several weeks we might wonder why we even wanted it.
8. Jacob pretended to be Esau. Sometimes we pretend to be the person we wish we were, e.g. we might pretend to like someone even though we struggle with their personality. The Lord blesses us even when He knows this is the case. He can use our good behavior to help us form healthy habits, so that gradually we can come to love doing what is right.

Take Action: Head or Heart Role Play



At a Glance:

This activity takes a look at conflicts between the heart and head (or the will and the understanding). Esau rushes headlong into action, while Jacob carefully plots his path. Role play scenarios and a follow-up activity and discussion help students identify and think about these forces at work in their daily lives.

Supplies Needed for Each Student:

- *Head or Heart Scenarios* page
- *Head or Heart?* response page
- pen or pencil

Directions:

1. Organize the class into groups of two to four.
2. Distribute *Head or Heart Scenarios* pages.
3. Give each group one scenario to role play. *Note:* If your group is small consider having the entire class be a single group and role play several different scenarios.
4. The named character in each scenario indicates the central character.
5. Allow groups time to plan and practice their scenarios.
6. When everyone is ready to start, distribute *Head or Heart?* response page. Read the directions together.
7. Call one group at a time to act their scenario for the class.
8. Groups should announce the central character before they start.
9. Acting stops when the teacher calls “Freeze.”
10. Students complete the *Head or Heart?* response page after each scenario. Students will check the box to show whether desire or reason has the greatest influence over the character’s actions. Students should select one or the other, even though it will be challenging.
11. When all groups have finished, discuss *Head or Heart?* response page answers.



Head or Heart Role Play Continued

Discussion:

1. Look at the mindset word bank. Which of the words there reflect desires or feelings? (angry, manipulated, etc.)
2. Which of the mindset words reflect thoughts or reasoning? (calculating, ignorant)
3. Look at your response and mindset words for the Expert scenario, in the top line.
4. Compare the mindset words you have written with the power of the central character's desires or reasoning. Are they both words of the heart or head? (Perhaps not! Students may have chosen reasoning and embarrassed.)
5. What might this tell you about how our will and understanding work? (It may be hard to separate thoughts from actions.)
6. Which are easier to change: thoughts or desires? (For example, many people know that smoking damages their health. They smoke because they want to have a cigarette.)
7. In what ways can changing our thinking help us change our desires? (Thinking about what's best can help us change our habits by choosing better habits. In time our desire to do something that's not good becomes less and less.)
8. How can thinking about our heart and head change the way we act?

Head or Heart Scenarios

Scenario 1—Expert

Characters:

John—wants to feel helpful

An older person, possible bystanders

Scenario:

An older person is having difficulty with a piece of equipment (e.g. computer, lawnmower, motor, etc.) John volunteers to help, saying that he has lots of experience with that particular problem. In reality, he does not really know what to do. This becomes apparent.

Scenario 2—Friends

Characters:

Shirley—has no friends

A group of friends who value worldly things e.g. thrilling experiences

Scenario:

A group of friends is making plans to do something together. Shirley asks if she can be included. They tell her she can come, but only if she will prove she is part of the group by shoplifting an item they want. Although torn, Shirley shoplifts to gain their friendship.

Scenario 3—Free Gift

Characters:

Paul—has no electronic device, e.g. phone, mp3 player, calculator

Group of friends who have electronic devices

Scenario:

A group is sitting around looking at a new electronic device. Paul enters the room with a snack. Seeing the device he considers how to get it for himself and eventually offers his snack in exchange for a turn using it. Once he has the device, he sneaks out.

Scenario 4—Not Me!

Characters:

Sue—a girl who is scared

A group of friends who borrow something

Scenario:

A group of friends borrow something valuable without asking, e.g. electronic equipment. Sue has an accident while using it and afterwards lies about what happened to avoid being found out.

Scenario 5—Distraction

Characters:

Henry—looking for attention

Substitute teacher, other students

Scenario:

A substitute teacher walks into a classroom. Henry is not prepared for class and decides to disrupt the lesson to avoid detection. Other students think it's fun to take advantage of the situation and join in.



Head or Heart?

Immediately after each Head and Heart scenario complete the row in the chart that matches the scenario.

Actions are motivated by both desire and reasoning. After watching each skit:

1. Decide whether you think desire or reasoning has the greatest power over the central character's actions. Indicate your choice in the chart.
2. How might you describe what the central character is thinking or feeling? What is going on in his or her mind? Choose your own words, or use words from the "Mindset Word Bank" and write **at least two** words in the "Central Character's Mindset" column.

Mindset Word Bank

embarrassed	scared	calm	stupid	powerful
ignorant	angry	excited	smart	curious
alone	nervous	attractive	powerless	manipulated
funny	in control	accepted	calculating	superior

	Desire has the greatest power	Reasoning has the greatest power	Central Character's Mindset
Expert			
Friends			
Free Gift			
Not Me!			
Distraction			



Look Closer: Canaan's Peaks and Valleys

At a Glance:

This is one in a series of three map activities about the land of Canaan. This lesson introduces the New Church concept that there is a relationship between the physical features of the Canaan and spiritual ideas. As a whole, Canaan pictures the kingdom of heaven. Its mountains picture states of mind motivated by the highest love—love to the Lord. Its hills and valleys picture states of mind motivated by lower loves—serving others, or the hope of earning money. Students will learn the basic layout of Canaan and the location of selected peaks and valleys.



Supplies Needed:

- *Canaan's Peaks and Valleys* readings for each student
- *Canaan's Peaks and Valleys Teacher Page*
- blank map for each student to complete
- already colored map for the class to use as a sample
- pencils or pens
- colored pencils or markers
- Bibles or Words (students may share)
- *optional*: large contour map of the land of Canaan to show students (not provided)

Directions:

1. Tell the students that today we will look at the land of Canaan where Esau and Jacob lived with their parents, Isaac and Rebekah. Canaan was promised to Abraham, Isaac's father, as an inheritance. Abraham's descendants inherited the land many years later—after the children of Israel were released from slavery in Egypt.
2. Read the Canaan's Peaks and Valleys Student Page with the class.
3. Complete the student page activity using Bibles.
4. Discuss the answers together.
5. Look at the map page. Identify mountains and valleys by comparing the student map with the completed map.
6. Choose a color to identify the mountains. Shade the mountains.
7. Choose a color to identify the valleys. Shade the valleys.
8. At the start of the story of Esau and Jacob they are living together with their family in Beersheba in the south. Mark Beersheba on the map and label it.

Canaan's Peaks and Valleys

The mountains, hills, rocks and valleys in the land of Canaan represent heaven in its entirety (see *Arcana Coelestia* 10438).

If you ask young children where heaven is they often point upwards and say “up there.” Although this is not completely accurate, it is true that heavenly ideas are high up, above worldly thoughts. Older people sometimes use the words “high” and “low” when they are talking about whether something is good or not, e.g. high ideals or low motives. In ancient times people knew that natural objects pictured spiritual qualities.

The relationship or correspondence between spiritual and natural things has been revealed again in the Heavenly Doctrine. Spiritual height is pictured by mountains. We can understand spiritual height by seeing the way mountain peaks rise into the sky. Similarly, the experience of climbing up out of a deep valley helps us understand the hard work that it takes for a person to rise from the “depths” they experience during a difficult time.

Most of the stories in the Old and New Testaments take place in the land of Canaan—the land that the Lord promised to Abraham and his descendants. The Lord also promises us a land, but our inheritance is not physical; it is the kingdom of heaven—which is what Canaan corresponds to in the Word. The struggles the children of Israel experienced to possess their inheritance describe the struggles we experience to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The Word often mentions the fact that events take place on mountains or in valleys. This gives us clues about the hidden spiritual meaning that is within each story. Using a copy of the Word, look up the following stories to find out whether they took place on a mountain or in a valley. Mark your answers in the boxes.

Event	Reference	Mountain	Valley
The Lord called Moses....	Exodus 19:20; 20:1-17		
A certain man went...from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves.	Luke 10:30		
And seeing the multitudes...He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit....”	Matthew 5:1-3		
Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James and John...and He was transfigured.	Mark 9:2		
The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down...and it was full of bones.	Ezekiel 37:1		

Discuss your answers. What might this information tell us about these stories?

In the life after death people are surrounded by landscapes that reflect what they love. Heavenly or celestial angels, who love the Lord, live on mountains. Angels from the spiritual kingdom, who love others, live on hills (see *Apocalypse Explained* 405). People living in valleys have not yet been raised up into heavenly life (*Arcana Coelestia* 10438).



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Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James and John...and He was transfigured.	Mark 9:2	X	
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