

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

God and Rival Siblings
Genesis 25:19-34; 27:22-29

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Have pieces of paper and pencils or markers to use in the gathering time activity.

Bible Study Leader:

You, too, will need paper and pencils for your group activity during the closing application moment of the Bible Study teaching/learning time.

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Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

Spirit Song, *The Worship Hymnal*, #329; CCLI # 37824

Song for the Nations, *The Worship Hymnal*, #365; CCLI # 20340

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

God and Rival Siblings

Focal Text

Genesis 25:19-34; 27:22-29

Background Text

Genesis 25:19-34; 26:34--28:9; 32:1-21; 33:1-17

Main Idea

God is working out his purpose in the lives of people in ways we may find difficult to understand.

Question to Explore

In what ways do you feel you are or are not God's blessed child?

Teaching Aim

To lead the class to trace God's working in the choices and actions of Jacob and Essau.

Gathering together:

Give each participant a piece of paper and ask that they draw stick figures of their family of origin. Encourage them to use a descriptive word for each one. (Example: Mother – loving; Father – strong; Brother John – a tease; Sister Helen – kind). Allow a few minutes for sharing some memories of family life. (Be careful to monitor your time; it probably won't be possible for each member of the group to share).

Say to the group that we are examining ways in which we have experienced being God's blessed child. One of those ways for many people, but not for all, is the experience of living in family.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

God and Rival Siblings

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Introduction to your personal study:

Most millionaires do not acquire their fortunes by inheriting it. Most do not accumulate it by winning the lottery or hitting the jackpot in Las Vegas. Most people who are millionaires do it slowly. They work long hours. They save their money. They are not concerned about showing off their wealth with fancy automobiles and big houses. Today we look at a man who sought to have the blessings of God in a way that many people seek wealth through gambling or illegitimate ways. This man wanted the blessings of God now. He wanted to achieve it immediately and not wait on God.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

The story of Isaac's life is overshadowed by his father Abraham and his twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Isaac evidently spent most of his life in quietness. We recall the bringing together of Isaac and Rebekah. Abraham had sent his servant back to the ancestral home to find a bride for Isaac. The servant dealing with Rebekah and her brother Laban had been successful because of God's working and brought Rebekah to Isaac as a bride. Rebekah, Isaac's wife, had no children after twenty years of marriage. God had promised Isaac and Rebekah to multiply their family. Isaac prayed for the sake of his wife who had no children. Some commentators interpret that Isaac prayed with his wife. We don't know how long Isaac prayed. God answered the prayer. Rebekah was pregnant. Some humorously would say he prayed too hard. One child would have been enough.

Trouble in the family (Genesis 25:22-23)

Evidently the babies developing in Rebekah's womb created turmoil. It created distress in her mind and emotions. We don't know what caused her apprehension. Was it the constant turmoil within her? Was she concerned about her living through the birth? Did she have some concern about the future of the two within her. Whatever it was, it was sufficient enough that she asked God about it. God's explanation to her came back. She was pregnant not only with two sons but with two nations. It was not necessarily a comforting message nor one which Rebekah could readily understand.

The sons were to be different from each other in disposition and interest. There would be a struggle between the two nations. The younger would rule over the older. Sibling rivalry began here earlier than in most cases. It began in the womb. We later understand that the children would become Israel and Edom. These nations would not live together. Israel would be much stronger than Edom. Esau, the eldest, would serve Jacob, the youngest.

Competition intensified (Genesis 25:24-28)

Time for the birth came. Esau who was born first had a red complexion and was very hairy. He was so hairy that he was compared to a furry garment. Jacob came out of the womb holding Esau's heel. The contest between the brothers had moved from the womb to life in the world. There was a great deal of difference between them physically. Esau had the qualities of a strong and active person. Jacob was smooth like other children. There was a difference in their birth. Esau, the stronger, came out first. Jacob came as if he wanted to keep Esau from being first. They were different in their thinking and living. Esau was an outdoorsman. He was a hunter. He enjoyed the outdoors. Jacob was a quiet man. He lived quietly. He was a shepherd, a safe and

quiet work. They were different in their relationship to their parents. Jacob was the favourite of his father. Esau had the knowledge to please him. He knew of Isaac's desire for game. Rebekah had a preference for Jacob. One wonders how the divided and preferential love the parents showed their sons affected their home life. Jacob in a sense was a victim of his mother's partiality.

The Unbelievable Price paid by Esau (Genesis 25:29-34)

Jacob had a desire for the spiritual benefits of the birthright traditionally given to the oldest son. He sought the best, yet he tried to obtain it by taking advantage of his brother's need. He sought to obtain it through devious methods. Jacob was at home cooking stew as Esau came in from his outdoor activities. Esau's strong appetite overwhelmed him. At this time he valued the birthright low in comparison to the food before him. He traded immediate satisfaction of the moment to long term blessing and success. As an active person he was tricked in by a quiet, reflective individual. His desire for red stew reflected on him as he was later called Edom, or red. Esau had poor reasoning skills. He traded long term spiritual blessings for a short term satisfaction of a physical hunger. Jacob, anxious for the birthright, took advantage of the moment and Esau's hunger to strike a trade. He was ready for the opportunity. He made Esau swear to trade the birthright for the bread and stew. After Esau finished the meal he left. The birthright meant nothing to him. Later he repented. But his repentance was made to his father Isaac and not to God. He wanted restitution and not pardon.

The Extreme Deception by Jacob (Genesis 27:22-29)

Jacob, in an effort to completely obtain the birthright, tricked his own father. Genesis 27:1-21 tells of Rebekah and Jacob's conniving to get the blessing for Jacob. They made Isaac's favourite food, Jacob put on Esau's clothes, and Jacob covered his hands so they would feel like Esau's hairy hands. Then Isaac, not seeing, was approached by Jacob. Confusion reigned. It was the voice of Jacob but as Isaac touched the hands, the hands seemed like the hands of Esau. Since the hands were those of Esau, the father blessed him. Isaac questioned Jacob, asking if he was Esau. Jacob lied indicating he was Esau. Isaac requested some game to eat so that the blessing could be given. Jacob brought game and wine to Isaac. When the meal was concluded, Isaac called for the son he thought was Esau. Even then Isaac was confused about which son it was. Since the hands were hairy like Esau he blessed Jacob. Isaac commanded Jacob to come to him and kissed him. Isaac smelled the outdoor clothes Jacob had on and thought again that he was in the presence of Esau. Genesis 27:27-29 gives us the details of Isaac's blessing on Jacob. Some of the elements of the blessing were: earth's richness, abundance of grain and wine, nations would serve Jacob, lordship over brothers, curses on enemies and blessings on those who bless him.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

This Bible study presents several difficult problems as they developed in this important family in God's plan for the redemption of the world. Your task is to help your church to understand some of the dynamics that helped create those problems. Some were caused by situations, culture dynamics, and attitudes that might have been redirected by good parenting. Others, perhaps, were beyond the control of the parents. All of us know parents who worked diligently and wisely to guide their children, yet the children did not follow God or make wise decisions as adults.

Lead your group to look at as many of the dynamics as time and your group's ability allow. Help them to understand what things can change, where "blame" actually lies rather than emotionally rests—and what things are beyond the influence of parent, siblings, and others in the future lives of children. The consequences (short and long term) of decisions and actions play an important role in the study and are worth noting. Too many people today have difficulty envisioning the consequences of their thoughts, decisions, and actions.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

God and Rival Siblings

Focal Text

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Main Idea

God is working out his purpose in the lives of people in ways we may find difficult to understand.

Question to Explore

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Teaching Aim

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Connect with Life:

Open with this question: What are some of the problems that face families today? Pause for responses. (Among possible answers: financial pressures, relocation, infertility, birth of a child, sibling rivalry, favouritism, quarrelling, excessive ambition.)

Present the theme to the participants: Today we look at a family in the Old Testament. They had problems then just as we do in our time and place.

Guide the Study:

Request a person to read Genesis 25:19-21.

Share with the church: Married almost twenty years, Isaac and Rebekah had no children. Isaac in his concern for his wife prayed because of her inability to have children. This is an excellent example for husbands - to pray for their wives, not just so they might have children but praying for them in all areas of life. God in this case answered his prayer positively and Rebekah became pregnant.

Encourage a brief discussion: What are some of the responses that couples give when they find they are going to have a child? (Possible answers: surprise, happiness, regret, anger, frustration, thankfulness, concern.)

Ask: What response do you feel that Isaac and Rebekah felt. (Since they had been praying for a child they probably rejoiced).

Inquire: What kind of problems can come when a woman is pregnant? (Mood changes, weight gain, desire for strange menus, impatience. Since women often died in childbirth for most of human history, it would be natural for a woman to feel fear.)

Continue: Look in this next passage about Rebekah's pregnancy to see any problems she had.

Encourage someone else to read Genesis 25:22-23.

Now share: Rebekah felt strong movement of the babies. They were jostling one another. The movement was so strong that she asked the Lord what was happening.

Seek a response: When an answer came from God what are the four items he shared?

Her children would become two nations
They would become separated
One nation would be stronger than the other
The older child would serve the younger.

Say. As we read Genesis 25:24-28 look for the differences in the boys as they grew into adulthood. Read Genesis 25:24-28.

Place before your students the following five questions.

What were the qualities of Esau? (Possible answers: skin was red, had a hairy body, became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, loved by his father Isaac.)

What were the qualities of Jacob? (Possible answers: born competing with Esau, he was a quiet man, lived among the tents, loved by Rebekah his mother).

What family problem do you see here? (One problem was that each parent loved one of the children more than another).

What kind of problems come up when children are loved unequally? Let your members mention various issues that come when this happens.

What kind of disputes or complaints do siblings usually have with each other? (Possible responses: he's getting more than I am, you love him more than me, make him leave me alone, make him stay on his side of the room, it's my turn not his, I didn't say he could use that, how come he gets to do that and I don't?)

Now state: Let's read in the Bible the problems Jacob and Esau had.

Have a person read Genesis 25:29-34.

Inform the group: Jacob wanted the birthright of Esau. The birthright was felt to be the right of the oldest son of a family. This oldest son usually succeeded to the fathers position as head of the family. He received twice as much of the father's property as the other male sons. The logic behind this tradition grew out of the need to ensure that the property and prestige of the family would remain intact for a following generation. Divided equally among large families, this goal would not have been economically or socially viable. The birthright could be sold or lost in case of misconduct. This arrangement might have caused jealousy in any family, but most certainly would have caused tension between twins whose birth took place essentially at the same time.

Request opinions: What value did Esau place on his birthright? (Not much. In v. 34 it says that he despised his birthright).

Share this thought and question: We all agree that Esau placed little value on his inheritance. But why would we say that? (Evidently he was more interested in immediate satisfaction before long term benefits because he traded his birthright for a meal. However, it is possible that he did not really believe that it would be lost when he knew that his father favoured him greatly over his younger brother).

Search out an answer: How did Jacob arrange to get the birthright? (He had some stew cooking when Esau came in from the country and was hungry. He caught Esau at a weak moment. He wouldn't give the food to Esau until Esau swore an oath to sell him the birthright).

Explain or encourage a person to explain briefly the conniving of Rebekah and Jacob to obtain the birthright for Jacob as recorded in Genesis. 27:1-21.

Say. Now let's see the outcome of this trickery.

Ask a different person to read Genesis 27:22-29.

Look for someone to explain this from the story: Why did Isaac think that Jacob was Esau?

Ask. What were the elements of the blessing that Isaac bestowed on Jacob?

Answers:

The earth's richness,

abundance of grain and wine,

nations would serve Jacob,

lordship over brothers,

curses on enemies,

blessings on those who bless him.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Question the group: What was Esau's primary motivation in life? (Immediate, short term satisfactions).

Follow up with this: What was Jacob's primary motivation in life? (Although he was selfish in wanting the birthright which was Esau's, he eventually came to want long term blessings from God).

Encourage this activity for the group: On a piece of paper list your desires for the next year. Pause.

Have the group ponder these questions in silence:

Do these desires of yours contribute to your ultimate happiness?

Does your long term happiness depend on your relationship to God?

What do you need to take off your list in order to center your happiness of God?

What do you need to add?

Are you letting God work in your life?

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

God and Rival Siblings **Genesis 25:19-34; 27:22-29**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Learning from a Very Sad Story

This is a sad story. There is nothing noble in the way either Esau or Jacob acted toward his twin brother. Ancient tradition indicated that the elder brother received the blessing of the father. This included the right to be the head of the clan or extended family and much of the wealth of the family. This tradition continued down through time in many cultures and bitterness often existed between siblings.

We can sympathise with Jacob. After all, he was Esau's twin, born only seconds after Esau.

But the jealousy grew as Jacob and Esau grew and led to a bitter betrayal and enmity for most of the adult life of these siblings.

Nothing so dramatic has probably happened in your home. Parents today try to divide family resources equitably. It is unlikely in most homes that the elder brother will inherit the major portion of the goods.

But jealousy still arises between siblings. One child is a better sportsperson; another child is better at math. One daughter is more attractive than another. Parents may not always be fair in their treatment or at least it may seem that way to the children.

Today's lesson reminds us that jealousy among siblings has long lasting damaging effects. Is it possible for you to be proud of your brother's or sister's achievements even when you do not do as well? Is this an attitude that you need to cultivate?

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***God and Rival Siblings***
Genesis 25:19-34; 27:22-29**Beginning the Service:**Sing "'Spirit Song", *The Worship Hymnal*, #329Sing "Song for the Nations", *The Worship Hymnal*, #365**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

On January 12, 2010 the country of Haiti suffered a major earthquake. Many lives were lost; many people were left crippled and maimed; homes and businesses, hospitals and schools were demolished. Much help was sent to Haiti from around the world. Pray today for those who continue to be impacted by this major tragedy. This tragedy was followed by other earthquakes in Indonesia, Chile, New Zealand, and Japan. With such shifting of the earth's surface, more yet may follow. Pray for the people devastated by each of these and for future protection from the consequences of such natural phenomena.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Harmony in the Home**Introduction:**

Romance can last over time, but it is affected by everyday life.

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In a earlier lesson we examine the romantic story of Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac's father, Abraham, sent a servant to his family home to find a suitable bride for Isaac. The servant was pleased to find a beautiful young woman who was also helpful and kind. He asked her family if she would return with him to marry Isaac. Rebekah agreed to this proposal and traveled to meet Isaac. Isaac was apparently happy with the servant's arrangements and the two were married. The Scripture tells us that Isaac loved Rebekah.

Today's emphasis begins twenty years after the marriage. Rebekah has not yet had a child which would be a tragedy in a culture where a woman's worth depended upon her ability to produce a male heir. Isaac seems genuinely concerned for Rebekah's feelings as well as for a male heir. He prayed and Rebekah became pregnant with twins.

The twins became a divisive issue for Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac preferred the manly Esau and Rebekah preferred Jacob. This became a barrier for the couple. Rebekah plotted with Jacob against Esau and ultimately against Isaac. No romance can survive deceit.

Sibling rivalry is painful in any time and in any culture.

No other relationship is like that of siblings. The oldest sibling often is a favourite, but also must comply with the expectations of parents for achievement at school, in sports and later in the business world. The youngest child may be pampered especially if parents are older and somewhat weary of the demands of child rearing. Middle children may feel they are not as special as either the older or younger child.

Yet in many families, there is a great deal of love and friendship between siblings. Families do fun things together and life is more interesting if there is a brother or sister with whom to share play time and chores. Siblings often defend one another against criticism or unfairness by playmates

Adulthood, careers and marriages often change the closeness felt in childhood. Even when there is a desire to spend time together, distances often make visits difficult to do very often. Modern day technology makes it easier to stay in contact by phone and e-mail. Still, if siblings do not make intentional plans to stay connected, they may drift apart.

Once children are grown there may be more time for visiting. Aging parents may bring siblings together in care giving and decision making. Siblings realize that their shared memories of growing up are precious and belong only to them. The close relationship of earlier years may be nurtured and enjoyed. . Jane Austen in her book *Mansfield Park* wrote, "Children of the same family, the same blood, with the same first associations and habits, have some means of enjoyment in their power, which no subsequent connections can supply." (Quoted in Jan Karon, *The Mitford Bedside Companion*, Viking, 2006, XII).

However, if the sibling rivalry of earlier years is carried over into adulthood, there may be petty competition. It is unlikely that siblings will attain the same measure of financial success and jealousy can be present. Comparison of one's own children with nieces and nephews can be painful if the discrepancy in abilities is too great. A sibling's spouse may be a source of irritation.

Esau and Jacob were destined from birth to be rivals. Genesis 25: 23 says, "The elder shall serve the younger". Jacob was designated from birth as one who would take over what really belonged to Esau. Esau, however, proved himself to be an unworthy recipient of the place of honor of the oldest son when he so easily gave up his birthright in order to feed his hungry stomach.

Even painful events in a family's past can be redeemed by God

Many people suffer from scars of their childhood. These may include a parent's favoritism toward a sibling, a lack of nurturing from either mother or father or both, a painful divorce which left a child without the support needed either financially or emotionally. Some people never grow beyond these painful experiences to find happiness and contentment in adulthood. These childhood traumas affect their relationships with their own spouse and children.

Even the Old Testament story tells us that God's plan is bigger than these human events. When the twins jostled each other within Rebekah's womb, she inquired of the Lord the reason and the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). Though we may not understand why this was to be true, there is no doubt that it was a part of God's plan.

Esau's character is described in various ways. In Genesis 25:34 we read, "The Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright." In Genesis 26: 34 it states, "When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beerli the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah."

After Isaac has given the blessing to Jacob, Esau held a grudge against Jacob and stated that after Isaac has died, he will kill Jacob.

Jacob was a deceiver, but he was obedient to his father in the matter of seeking a wife from among the people who believed in Jehovah rather than from the Canaanite people with their many gods. As Jacob made his way to Haran, he experienced the Lord and received the promise of the covenant.

Call to Commitment:

This Old Testament story of rivalry speaks to us as families today. We need to be careful as parents to affirm each of our children equally. In an earlier lesson, we emphasized that each child is a gift of God. Every child in a family will have different personalities and abilities. Some will be easy to discipline; others will be more independent; some will be rebellious. Parents are only human and it is only with God's grace that we can parent each child fairly and in the way which helps them to develop their talents and abilities to honour God and serve others.

Today's story may also remind us of the need to reconnect with family members with whom we have lost contact. Family relationships, like friendships, need nurturing. Facebook may give more immediate or constant contact, but it may lack the sense of personal involvement that a phone call or a letter contains. Remembering birthdays or special events should not always be the task of the wife of the family. Planning visits or family reunions take time and money, but can be a source of great fun and fulfillment.

A loving family is a powerful Christian testimony. We cannot control the ways in which our family will exhibit Christ's transformative power, but we can create an atmosphere of love and acceptance in our homes which allows for each child to find God's will for his/her life. We want each member of our family to feel that he/she is God's blessed child.

Concluding the Service:

Choose a blessing for the church from one of the praise hymns found in the Book of Psalms. Psalms 148 and 150 are good sources for churches to leave their time of worship praising God.