

**A FAMILY FEUD****Genesis 27:1-28:9**

Living in a family is tough. You see each other when you wake up and have messy hair and morning breath. You see each other at the end of the day when you have encountered any number of challenges from a cranky boss to slow traffic to overdue deadlines to spilt milk and sick kids and any number of other unexpected and unwelcome events. There are so many things that can put us in a sour mood. Then there are relationships within the family that are as fragile as a China doll. We all have different personalities that create additional challenges.

Fortunately for us, we have Scripture that provides a template on how to live well as a family, that is if we are willing to heed its advice. One passage that is a good summary for family relationships is found in **I Corinthians 13:4-7**, which teaches that we are to treat each other with love and gives us a measuring stick to see how we are doing. As you consider them there are no exceptions or excuses.

We are to be patient and kind

We are not to be envious or boastful

We are not to be proud, rude or self-seeking

We are not to be easily angered or keep any record of wrongs

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth

In **Ephesians 6:1**, children are to obey their parents, but then in **verse 4** it tells fathers not to infuriate your children.

There are lots of passages about family living and essentially, we could take all the words of instruction about proper family dynamics and sum them up in the two-fold admonition to love God with all your heart and love others as you would yourself. If we love God the way we should, then loving those in our family as we should will be the natural result or outcome.

All too often it's more like a poem I once read, and allow me to change it a bit to fit the family.

To dwell above with the family we love that will indeed be glory.

But to dwell below with the family know,

Well, that's another story.

From our passage today in **Genesis 27-28:9** we learn some valuable lessons about the family and what happens when family members aren't walking with the Lord as they should. When you see what happens in this chapter, you will come to the conclusion that this is one of the saddest chapters in the book of Genesis. They are all walking according to the beat of their own drum.

On the flipside then, this passage teaches us about the importance of obeying God and following His plan. While we're at it lets remember two important truths:

God has a plan

God's plan is always the right plan

Only when we trust the Lord with all our heart and not lean on our own understanding will our paths be made straight (**Proverbs 3:5-6**). We will see that a father doesn't like the Lord's plan and seeks to carve out another. We will see a mother who likes the Lord's plan but circumvents it with her own.

Solomon gives some good advice for us all and a sound principle that this family should have heeded.

**Proverbs 4:10-14**

**Proverbs 16:9**

In **Genesis 22** we see Isaac as a type of Christ, but not here. About Isaac in this chapter, **John Phillips** writes "If he is a type of anything here, he is a type of the backslidden, worldly, carnal Christian. It is a sad fact that while we may at one stage of our lives mirror the beauties and graces of the Lord Jesus, we may at another stage reflect the exact opposite. Such is the human heart, even the regenerate human heart."

What he is saying is that a fall from grace, such as we see happening in this chapter, can happen to anyone, even someone who has previously laid his life on the altar to follow God. Faith can wane.

I hope this is a good lesson for all of us as we embark on a new year that we guard our walk with God closely; that we endeavor to emulate Paul who came to the end of his life had this to say about his

own faith journey: **“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.” (II Timothy 4:7-8)**

If there’s a good verse to claim for this year, as my friend Uncle Johnnie used to say, “that’s a good one.” If that is our goal, we won’t wind up in a mess like this family we will consider here.

As you will see in this chapter everyone does something wrong. So let’s remember one thing as we open the door of this chapter and into their home – we are opening the door of a believer. Here is a man, a husband, a father who at one time had a strong faith. But over time something had changed. First, there is a determined father in **verses. 1-4.**

### **I. A DETERMINED FATHER – vs. 1-4**

I would guess that there isn’t a father among us who doesn’t want to see his children succeed. We want the best for our children, especially for our first-born son. After all, he is the one who will carry on the family name. Sure, along the way we want to teach them life lessons, but we really want them to be better off than we were growing up.

The opening verse says **“When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see.”**

Remember Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah and 60 when Esau and Jacob were born. There isn’t anything hard and fast here from Scripture in this passage or elsewhere, nothing definitive that gives us the age of Isaac when it comes to the events that are unfolding, but there are two schools of thought from scholars.

One school of thought believes that Isaac is 117 years old at the time of these events making the twins 57.

Another school of thought holds that Isaac was 137 years old at the time of these events making the twins 77.

Regardless of their ages, all of them have been

around the block a time or two.

It has been well over a century since Isaac’s defining moment of faith on Mt. Moriah where, as a teen, he voluntarily offered himself to be Abraham’s sacrifice in obedience to God. Since then a lot of time has passed by. I wonder if he ever went back into his memory banks and thought about what it was like when he was walking closely with God. People tend to do some self-reflection as they enter into a new year and make some resolutions.

Somewhere along the way for Isaac there was a spiritual shift or should I say a spiritual drift that took him off course with the Lord. From his teen years until now Scripture only gives us a brief sketch of his life. We have only a few polaroid shots giving us a glimpse into his life and character. It looks like his faith has waned. Though obvious to us, maybe he didn’t see it. We’re often the last to see such changes let alone admit them. I don’t mean to suggest that he has abandoned his faith, but it sure seems like following God isn’t as important as it once was early in life.

What we discover in these verses is a man who doesn’t appear to be walking with God very closely. As a matter of fact, we can conclude that it doesn’t appear that the family is close either. The woman he loved when he first saw her and took her to be his wife has lost her charm in his eyes. His one son, Esau, decided to marry a couple of local women, much to the disappointment and irritation of his parents. Jacob is cunningly shrewd and deceptive. As the spiritual leader in the family, Isaac seems to have a passive faith, a faith that walks by sight or a faith that is so insignificant he chooses rather to make his own plans instead of following God. This is really a lesson to husbands and fathers to take the spiritual lead in the family and set the compass point in following God as a family.

Instead of following God, the prevailing philosophy that Isaac seems to live by is this: “If it feels good, do it.”

Case in point.

Let’s not forget that when the Esau and Jacob were born God indicated that the older would serve the

younger (**Genesis 25:23-24**). Yet here Isaac has either forgotten or ignored that prophecy regarding these two sons. If Isaac is in fact 137 it may be that he's doing a little soul searching of his own because his older half brother Ishmael died at that age. Isaac doesn't know it but he'll live a lot longer – the ripe old age of 180. He's not sure how much longer he has on God's green earth, so he called in his favorite son for a father to son talk about his intentions. He wanted to proceed with the father/firstborn son blessing. But here he is, wondering about life and death and wanting to pass on his last will and testament to Esau. There doesn't appear to be any effort on the part of Isaac to honor God's will in the matter. He was going to bless Esau regardless.

#### It goes without saying, but can I just say it anyway?

It's never a good thing or the right thing to try and go against God's will. When it comes to His plans, He is going to win every time.

There were two things that belonged to the oldest. There was the birthright and there was the blessing. The birthright was an honor given to the oldest, giving him the right to inherit everything owned by the father. The son with the birthright was given a double portion of whatever the other children in the family were given. If he had \$1 million dollars and five kids, four would receive equal portions, but the oldest would receive twice what they received. In **Genesis 25** Esau sold his birthright to Jacob because, as **verse 34** says, he despised his birthright. He didn't care about it. In the case of this birthright, it also came with a spiritual component. It would be through the line of the birthright holder that the Messiah would come. So to despise the birthright, meant he was in effect despising God's plan for redemption, a plan he didn't want any part of.

Now the blessing didn't necessarily have to be given to the firstborn. It was considered the last will and testament of the person giving the blessing. We'll see that the blessing though, given to Jacob unbeknownst to Isaac was significant, because it both mirrored God's promise in **Genesis 25** and

passed on the promise of God given to Abraham. And Isaac was determined to give it to Esau. When Isaac says "**that my soul may bless**" indicates a deep passion to see it happen, a willingness to neglect the will of God.

If you think for a moment about your possessions and passing them on before you die, the single greatest gift that Isaac could pass on was the blessing. It not only included property rights, it was passing on the blessing for carrying on the family name. In this case, it also included passing on the right and privilege to be in line for the Messiah. Isaac was right to pass it on, but wrong to pass it on to the one he wanted to give it to. It had been God's plan and will all along that the older would serve the younger and Esau was determined to change that. The nature of Isaac's heart is clear from **Romans 8:5-8**.

Isaac had only two options:

One was to obey God's will.

The other was to do his own will.

We either obey God or we don't.

The carnal mind puts man's will over God's will.

In **verses 1-4** we see a determined father. But in **verses 5-13** we see a deliberate mother.

## II. A DELIBERATE MOTHER – vs. 5-13

From what we read here, somewhere along the way Isaac and Rebekah had drifted apart. Not that they had gone their own separate ways, but they weren't as connected as they once were. We don't see them talking or praying about the situation or even consulting God. We could even say that he didn't even let Rebekah know what he was doing. Where Isaac wanted to do his own thing and go against God's will, Rebekah at least wanted to do God's will, just in her own way.

If Isaac's philosophy of life was if it feels good do it, Rebekah lived by the philosophy that the ends justify the means.

Listening from somewhere close by she heard Isaac's plan to bless Esau and it brought to mind something she probably thought about regularly. I

think she thought about this a lot in order to come up with a plan as quickly as she did but lacked the appropriate timing and now was the time to put her plan in motion. To delay meant her favorite son would not receive God's prophecy that Esau would serve Jacob. She is just as deceitful as Jacob.

Someone rightly stated that **"It is never right to set aside doing right in order to achieve what is right."**

Her plan was simple. Jacob was to play the role of his brother Esau and take some tasty food to his father so that he could receive the blessing instead of his brother. The plan seemed good with one huge exception, although Isaac couldn't see, he could still taste and smell and feel. Jacob was nothing like his brother who was hairy all over and he said so. Rebekah even had a plan to remedy that problem. Jacob would wear a disguise. She would dress him up in Esau's finest clothes and cover his arms, hands and neck with goat skin. He must have looked quite ridiculous in that get up. And in order to pull it off would have to enter his father's tent without being seen, otherwise someone would talk.

She had the right goal in mind, but the wrong means of getting there.

The end does not justify the means.

Going to church is the right goal, but it's never right to speed to get there on time.

Giving bread to a homeless person is the right goal, but it's never right to steal that bread to give to a homeless person on the corner.

Getting good grades to earn a college scholarship is the right goal, but it's never right to cheat to get those good grades.

Giving to missions is the right goal, but it's never right to lie to a customer to get that bonus so you can give to missions.

The end never justifies the means when the means require you doing something unethical or immoral or illegal no matter how lofty the goal is.

In this case, Rebekah was willing to lie to her own husband to bring about God's will regarding the blessing. Her actions were deliberate. But the plot thickens as we note in **verses 14-29** a deceitful son.

### III.A DECEITFUL SON – vs. 14-29

Jacob had an objection. Oh, it wasn't an objection to the plot. He seemed to live by the 11<sup>th</sup> commandment which is thou shalt not get caught. That's what he objected to. If he got caught in the ruse, he would be cursed instead of blessed.

Notice his lies.

**Verse 19 – "I am Esau your firstborn."**

**Verse 19 – "I have done as you told me."**

**Verse 19 – "Please eat some of my game."**

**Verse 20 – "The Lord your God gave me success."**

**Verse 24 – "Are you really my son Esau?" "I am."**

**Verse 27 "So he went to him and kissed him."**

Remember that I said a moment ago that it is never right to set aside doing right in order to achieve what is right.

Jacob deceived his father by saying he was his brother.

Jacob lied about going out and hunting game.

Jacob even brought God into the lie by saying that God made him successful.

He lied a second time about his real identity.

The last lie was the kiss of deception, of betrayal, the same as when Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss.

It didn't bother him to be a deceiver. What bothered him, what he feared, was that he might get caught in the act, but then he was found out anyway not too long after the ruse had been successful and he received the coveted blessing. Now let me add here that God did not condone Jacob's deceit. God hates all lying (**Proverbs 16:6-7**).

**Psalm 32:2 "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit."**

Notice the components of the blessing in **verses 28-29**. **"May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness – an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and**

**may those who bless you be blessed.”**

Heaven’s dew and earth’s richness speak of unlimited prosperity.

Nations serving him and bowing down before him included unlimited power. He would also be over his brothers.

It also included divine protection when it speaks of nations receiving a curse for cursing them or nations being blessed for blessing them.

On May 14, 1948, President Truman was the first to recognize Israel as a sovereign state.

On December 6, 2017, President Trump signed an order recognizing Jerusalem as the capitol of Jerusalem. This act came 22 years after Congress issued the Jerusalem Embassy Act. Previous presidents campaigned on recognizing Jerusalem as the capital, but President Trump delivered on it, declaring that following construction in that city, the US embassy would be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

On December 11, 2019 President Trump signed an executive order to further the fight against anti-Semitism in the United States on college campuses.

God’s promise to bless those who bless Israel is a part of this blessing given to Jacob. Yet there are those in our own country who oppose Israel. I don’t know about you, but I for one, choose to be on the side of receiving God’s blessing and not a curse.

We have a son here who in the end got what he wanted all be it by being deceitful. That leads to a despondent son in **verses 30-40**.

#### **IV. A DESPONDENT SON – vs. 30-40**

The whole thing is about to come to a head. Esau wanted the blessing, not for the spiritual elements that were associated with it. He had already despised his birthright showing that he didn’t care about God or God’s will. He wanted the blessing because of the military and political power he would receive through it. He only cared about the physical prosperity it would bring.

Jacob had hardly left his father’s tent when Esau showed up. That would have been quite a meeting

out on the front porch. If so, our chapter may have had a different and shorter ending.

Let your imagination run a bit here. Here comes Esau strutting proud as a peacock with a tray laden with his four-course meal. He’s holding a large platter with oven mitts because the venison had just come off the grill. A light breeze is carrying the aroma of fresh cooked venison through the air. As he nears the tent, he ducks a little to get through the doorway as he announces his arrival. Esau came to receive what did not belong to him since it was God’s will for Jacob to receive the blessing. But as he entered the tent, it was not the joyful welcome he hoped to receive or one he expected. It was one of bewilderment. **“Who are you? Why, I’m your firstborn, Esau.”**

Now **verse 33** conveys the mindset of Isaac. It says he trembled violently. **C. I. Scofield writes that “he trembled with a great tremble, greatly.”** He shook to the core of his soul. He was afraid especially realizing that his blessing went to someone else and the blessing could not and would not be revoked even though it was done deceptively.

Realizing his blessing had been stolen, Esau showed his despondency with a loud and bitter cry asking his father to give him a blessing as well. But there was none. It had all been given to Jacob and he wept bitterly. They are not tears of repentance but tears of regret that he would not receive a blessing even though he tried to change his father’s mind.

John Phillips tells this story about the day David Livingstone was laid to rest at Westminster Abbey. His pallbearers were statesmen whose names ring through history, among them the American adventurer H. M. Stanley. The Abbey was crowded. But somewhere lost in the mass of people stood a tattered, ill-kept beggar. No one gave him a second thought, but as the crowd passed by he was heard to say that they had grown up together having gone to the same school. He remarked that Davie had received Christ while he had not and now the world honors him. The beggar had sold his birthright for the world’s pottage, and now it was too late to get it back.”

Phillips adds “Esau wrung his hands in vain. His impassioned remorse could no more bring back the blessing than it could reverse the spin of the earth upon its axis or cause it to retrace its path around the sun.”

Warren Wiersbe writes that “Esau wanted the blessing but didn’t want to be the kind of man God would bless.”

**How many are there who have sold what could have been theirs for something that was cheap?**

The writer of Hebrews sums up Esau’s life by saying: **“See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.” (Hebrews 12:16-17)**

Because he had rejected God, God had rejected him.

He wanted a blessing of some kind, so Isaac answered him.

Where Jacob would prosper, Esau would live in a less fertile land.

Where Jacob would live in peace ruling over others, Esau would live by force.

Esau would live in subjection to Jacob. That didn’t happen until centuries later when King David came to the throne. The Edomites, who were the descendants of Esau, would eventually regain their freedom during the reign of King Joram, which we read about in **II Kings 8:20-22**.

It’s quite a story of spiritual unrest in a family. Isaac disobeyed God’s word and will showing us that no matter how well you start out, there is no guarantee how you will end up.

Rebekah had her own agenda and manipulated the events to ensure God’s promise happened in favor of her favorite son, Jacob.

Jacob was deceitful.

Esau had altogether disregarded God’s word. He became angry and bitter toward Jacob and schemed of the day he would kill Jacob, but would bide his time until after their father died.

Having heard through the grapevine of Esau’s plot, Rebekah brewed another plot of her own to remove Jacob from harms way by making Isaac think that it was his idea to send Jacob to her relatives for a while. She thought it would be for a short time, but in reality turned out to be 20 years. She would never see her son again.

**Chapter 28** opens with Isaac confirming the blessing of God on Jacob. If there is any redeeming value in this passage and story it is found here. In these verses we see that Isaac has, if you will, a reconnection and recommitment with God. He affirms on Jacob the Abrahamic covenant passed on to him by Abraham and now conferring on Jacob. He refers to God as God Almighty, the One who will do what He purposes.

Esau heard that his parents didn’t want Jacob to marry anyone from the surrounding nations, despised his parents again and did just that, taking a third wife by marrying a cousin who was the daughter of Uncle Ishmael.

**Kent Hughes sums up chapter 27 by stating that “Everyone in the family sought the blessing of God without bending the knee to God. This little family was fraught with ambition, jealousy, envy, lying, deceit, coveting, malice, manipulation, stubbornness and stupidity. And everyone lost.”**

If there is a fitting verse that summarizes this family, it would be **James 3:16 “For where you have envy and strife or selfish ambition (NIV), there you find disorder and every evil practice.”**

If there is a passage that should summarize a family that is walking in faith, obedient to God, a passage that would be good for us to practice in this coming year it is the verses that follow. **James 3:17-18 “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”**