



LESSON 13

God chooses Jacob over Esau

GENESIS 25:21-34; 27:1-28:5



God blesses those He has chosen to bless.



“The LORD said to her, ‘Two nations are in your womb...the older shall serve the younger’” (Gen 25:23).

Supporting Truths

1. God blesses those He has chosen to bless.
2. Even though God chooses, God blesses those who receive His promise by faith.
3. Even though God blesses those He has chosen, sin still causes suffering.
4. God is able to use human sin in order to bring about His blessing.
5. It is better to trust God’s promise than to try to make it happen the wrong way.

Objectives

1. State that God chose Jacob before he was born.
2. Describe how Esau despised the covenant but Jacob valued it
3. Match each person’s sin to the consequences they suffered for their sin.
4. Explain how God used Jacob and Rebekah’s sin to accomplish His plan.
5. Consider how Jacob and Rebekah should have handled the situation.

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Lesson Summary

Just as God chose Abraham's son Isaac to be the heir of the covenant, so God chose Isaac's son Jacob to receive the Abrahamic covenant. But the transition was difficult. Isaac wanted his oldest son, Esau, to be the heir, but Rebekah and Jacob tricked Esau into blessing Jacob. Even though each person suffered a lot because of their sin, God accomplished His plan to make Jacob the covenant heir. The covenant cannot be broken.

Spotlight on the Gospel

God's choice of Jacob is a picture of salvation. Salvation comes to those God has chosen even before their birth (Eph 1:4). It comes according to God's choice, not according to human preference, for God chose the younger son to replace the older son. So the only way to be saved is to entrust ourselves to God through Jesus Christ.

LAST WEEK



God tests Abraham
Genesis 22:1–19

THIS WEEK



God chooses Jacob
over Esau
*Genesis 25:21–34;
27:1–28:5*

NEXT WEEK



Jacob wrestles
with God
Genesis 32:1–33:20

PROMISE

Lesson Commentary

God blesses those He has chosen to bless.

The entire salvation plan is God's choice, and He does just as He plans. In the beginning, God chose to create mankind. After the fall, God chose to promise a Savior, and selected just one man, Abraham, through whom the promise would be fulfilled. God chose just one of Abraham's sons, Isaac. And it was God's choice to select just one of Isaac's sons, Jacob, to receive the blessings of the covenant.

God chose Jacob and not Esau before their birth (25:21–24)

Even before birth, there was an obstacle to God's plan. Isaac's wife, Rebekah, was barren (Gen 25:21), and this barrenness lasted twenty years (25:20, 26). Isaac seems to have learned from his father's mistake. Instead of seeking a human solution, Isaac prayed for his wife, and God answered (25:21).



THINK ABOUT IT

No man will ever choose God apart from God first choosing him (John 15:16).

Even though there were twins in Rebekah's womb, God chose only one of them to carry on the **covenant**, or **special promise**. He had made to Abraham (25:23). Even though the custom was for the older son to become the family leader,

God chose the younger son. God's choice of Jacob over Esau to continue the physical line was not based on personal merit or demerit as the boys had yet to do anything good or bad (Rom 9:11). Rather, God's choice of Jacob resides solely in His own sovereign perfect plan and purpose. This serves as a clear illustration of salvation where man is ultimately saved not by his works of the flesh or his own will (John 1:13) but by the gracious choice and calling of God (1 Cor 1:9). This **choice** is called **election** (Eph 1:4).

The family was divided over God's plan (25:25–34; 27:1–24)

Unfortunately, Isaac resisted God's plan. As the leader of the family, he should have led according to God's choice of Jacob. Instead, he liked Esau better and gave more attention to the food Esau hunted than to God's purpose (Gen 25:28). Rebekah clung to

the younger son through deceit and lack of submission to her husband.

Jacob and Esau were also divided over God's plan. God chooses His plan and accomplishes it, but salvation still depends on each individual's response (Rom 10:9–13). Earlier, Ishmael was rejected because God did not choose him, but also because Ishmael despised the covenant when he mocked Isaac. In the same way, Esau was rejected both by God's choice before his birth, but also by his own rejection of the covenant blessing. So he sold his **birthright**, **his special role as the firstborn**, for a bowl of stew (25:33). He despised the covenant (25:34), so he lost the favor that comes through the covenant (Heb 12:16–17).

Jacob received the covenant because God chose him before birth, but also because he valued the covenant. Even though he was immature and deceptive—even his name means deceiver—he pursued what was truly valuable (Gen 25:29–34). For his faith he would receive the covenant; for his lies he would suffer much pain.

Even after seeing how Esau despised the birthright, Isaac still planned to give the blessing to Esau. Isaac was about 137 years old (27:1). Isaac had had 77 years to see Esau's true character, including Esau's marriage to two ungodly women (26:34). For 77 years Isaac refused to let God control this one corner of his heart. Unlike Abraham, who sent Ishmael away even though it was hard (21:11–14), Isaac would not give up his personal plan for Esau.

Isaac's plan to bless Esau was heard by Rebekah (27:5) and instead of talking to Isaac, she purposely went behind his back, instructing Jacob to deceive his father (27:6–10). As a 77-year-old man, Jacob should have been mature enough to do what was right. Instead, all he cared about was getting caught (27:11–12). After Rebekah promised to take responsibility if they were caught, Jacob followed her orders (27:13–17). Not only did Jacob deceive by wearing goat skins and Esau's clothes, but he blatantly lied three times

THINK ABOUT IT

Esau lived by his senses and the need of the moment, not by God's promise (Gen 25:29–30)



STUDY THE BIBLE LESSON

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to his father (27:18–24). A father leading in the wrong direction, a mother at odds with the father, a godless son, and a deceptive son—things did not look good for God’s covenant.



THINK ABOUT IT

God’s sovereignty over sin never removes man’s responsibility for sin (Acts 2:23).

God overcame human sin to bless Jacob just as He planned (27:25–33; 28:4)

It is in times like these that we see how good it is that God chooses anyone at all.

Because He had chosen Jacob, God made sure that Jacob would receive the family blessing. Although God is faithful to fulfill His promises when we do what is right, He is even able to use sinful actions to accomplish His plan (Gen 50:20). So He used Jacob’s lies to cause Isaac to give Jacob the blessing (27:25–29). The **blessing** was a prayer for good things, asking God to give Jacob prosperity and leadership over his brother. The final two lines of the blessing repeat God’s promise to Abraham, showing that Jacob is the one to carry on the Abrahamic blessing (12:3).

At this point, Isaac thought he was blessing Esau. But then Esau came in just after Jacob left (27:30–32). Isaac did not just tremble. He trembled violently (27:33), and for good reason. He realized his own plan had been shattered, but he also realized what he had almost done: he had almost violated God’s plan for the covenant. Only God’s sovereign intervention had prevented him. At that moment, the faith which Isaac had repressed for 77 years began to revive, for he confidently proclaimed, “Yes, and he shall be blessed” (27:33).

Later Isaac confirmed his faith, when he blessed Jacob before Jacob left to go stay with Laban (28:3–4). With this blessing, Isaac now voluntarily affirmed God’s plan to pass on the Abrahamic covenant through Jacob. That is why Hebrews 11:20 says, “By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.” After 77 years of resisting, Isaac finally accepted God’s plan.

The family suffered because they twisted God’s plan (27:34–28:5)

Even though God is able to use sin to accomplish His good plan, it is never wise to sin. Each member of the

family suffered in a way that fit their sin. Esau despised the birthright, so he lost the blessing (27:34–40). Isaac failed to lead his family, so he suffered a divided home. His own wife deceived him, Jacob deceived him, and now Esau was determined to kill Jacob (27:41). Rebekah secretly schemed for Jacob’s sake, so she had to send Jacob away (27:42–45). Jacob only returned after 20 years (31:41). Rebekah never had a good relationship with Esau (27:46), and because of her sin she never saw her beloved son for the rest of her life, nor did she get to see and enjoy her many grandchildren.

Even though Jacob carried on the Abrahamic covenant, he suffered terribly for his lies. First, he had to flee far from his family because Esau wanted to kill him (28:1–5). But the pain did not stop there. Just as he was a deceiver, so he was deceived. Laban deceived him and gave him Leah instead of Rachel, producing a lifetime of conflict (31:41). Even Jacob’s own sons deceived him, pretending that his beloved Joseph had been killed, so that Jacob considered his life short and bitter (37:33; 47:9). Jacob eventually learned his lesson, but the pain of deceit plagued him.

God blessed Jacob, just as He had chosen to do before Jacob’s birth. The covenant continued, Jacob grew rich and had many children, and Jacob learned to walk by faith. Human sin could not stop God’s plan. But the sin still caused lifetimes of pain, enough to serve as a strong warning that it is much better to accept God’s plan by faith and obedience than to resist it or twist it (Gal 6:7). Like Jacob, we are all sinners. But if, like Jacob, we walk by faith in God, then Jesus’ death pays for our sins and we are forgiven.

THINK ABOUT IT

Unrepentant sin will always deteriorate and divide the family from enjoying the blessings of God.



Lesson Outline

God blesses those He has chosen to bless.

AGES 3–5 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God chose Jacob and not Esau before they were born (25:21–24).
2. Isaac and Esau did not accept God's choice (25:25–34; 27:1–4).
3. Jacob was blessed anyway (27:5–28:5).

AGES 6–11 LESSON OUTLINE



1. God chose Jacob and not Esau before their birth (25:21–24).
 - Isaac prayed for Rebekah, and God gave her twins (25:20–22, 26).
 - God chose the younger son (25:23).
2. The family was divided over God's plan (25:25–34; 27:1–24).
 - Isaac loved Esau, who was a rough and hairy hunter (25:25–28).
 - Rebekah loved Jacob, who was a peaceful but deceptive man (25:25–28).
 - Jacob valued the birthright, but Esau despised it (25:29–34).
 - Isaac secretly planned to bless Esau instead of Jacob (27:1–4).
 - Rebekah and Jacob deceived Isaac (27:5–24).
3. God overcame human sin to bless Jacob just as He planned (27:25–33; 28:4).
 - Isaac blessed Jacob without knowing it (27:25–29).
 - Isaac knew the blessing now belonged to Jacob, not to Esau (27:30–33).
 - Isaac blessed Jacob with the covenant blessing (28:3–4).
4. The family suffered because they twisted God's plan (27:34–28:5).
 - Esau lost the blessing (27:34–40).
 - Isaac suffered a divided family (27:41).
 - Rebekah had to send Jacob away (27:42–45).
 - Jacob had to flee far from his family (28:1–5).

TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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Lesson Questions

Use these questions to teach or to review this week's lesson.



Ages 3–5 Lesson Questions

- 1. What were the names of Isaac and Rebekah's twin boys, and what were they like?**
Esau had lots of red hair and loved to hunt. Jacob was quiet and liked to cook.
- 2. What did Esau trade Jacob?**
Esau traded his birthright to Jacob for some food.
- 3. Who did Isaac want to bless?**
Esau, even though Esau despised the birthright.
- 4. How did Jacob get the family blessing?**
Jacob wore Esau's clothes and put goat hair on his arms.



Ages 6–11 Lesson Questions

- 1. What did God tell Rebekah about her sons?**
God told Rebekah that each son would be the father of a nation. One son would be stronger than the other, and the older son would serve the younger.
- 2. What did Esau sell to Jacob?**
Esau sold his birthright to Jacob in exchange for some food.
- 3. Who was supposed to receive the blessing and why?**
Jacob was to receive the blessing because God had chosen him over Esau.
- 4. What did Rebekah and Jacob do when they heard that Isaac was going to bless Esau?**
They tricked Isaac into thinking that Jacob was Esau.
- 5. Was it wrong for Rebekah and Jacob to deceive Isaac?**
Yes.
- 6. Did Isaac believe that Jacob was Esau?**
Yes. Isaac gave Jacob the blessing, thinking he was Esau.
- 7. How did Isaac confirm his faith?**
After Jacob deceived him, he blessed Jacob with the covenant blessing as God had chosen earlier.
- 8. Name two consequences of the family's sin?**
The family was divided both spiritually and physically. Esau hated Jacob and wanted to kill him. Jacob went to live with Laban, his mother's brother.

Lesson Activities

Choose from the following ideas to introduce, illustrate, and apply this week's lesson.

AGES 3–5



ALL ABOUT TWINS

Read a children's book on twins, such as *About Twins* by Shelley Rotner, to the class. Ask the children whether any of them have friends who are twins. Explain that in today's lesson, they will learn about twins named Jacob and Esau.

GUESS WHO?

Seat the children in a large circle in the middle of the room. Have one of the teachers or helpers sit on a chair in the middle of the circle. Place a blindfold on the teacher. Have children say the teacher's name or answer a question to see if the teacher can guess who the child is by the sound of their voice. Take enough time to allow each child a turn. In today's lesson, we will see how Jacob tried to trick his blind father and steal his blessing. If you teach a large class, you may wish to select only four or five children to try tricking the teacher.



FREE GIFTS

Near the end of the lesson, have an awards ceremony. First, hand out awards to a few children who have achieved something (answered a question or participated in the lesson). Talk about how the children worked for the award, and ask them how they feel about receiving the award. Then hand out gifts to every child, giving no reason except that they are free gifts. Ask them how they feel about receiving free gifts. Now talk about God's free gift of grace, both to Jacob in the story and to us.

LIES

In our story today, Jacob lied to his father, Isaac. Ask different children to explain what lying is. After a few children have been able to answer, explain that lying is saying something that is not true. Then ask the children what God thinks about lying. After a few children have answered, tell them that God hates lying. Explain that God never lies (Num 23:19 and that lying is a sin (Ex 20:16).



SAVORY STEW

See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.

Materials: Craft page, paper bowls, glue, scissors, beans, dried pasta, and crayons.

Directions: Print out craft pages before class and cut out one circle for each child. Pass a cutout circle to each child and tell them to color it. Next, help the children glue the circle to the bottom of the inside of the bowl. Then pass out beans and dried pasta to the children and let them glue these items on the inner sides of the bowl to create a savory stew.



Savory Stew
See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1

TEACH THE BIBLE LESSON

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AGES 6–8



INTRODUCE

BUTCHER PAPER BROTHERS

Select two children to lie down on butcher paper and make poses (hands on hips or waving, for example). Trace around them with a black pen. Identify which is Jacob and which is Esau. Allow the children to take turns decorating Esau (with red skin, hairy arms, etc.) and Jacob (as a gardener, wearing a chef's hat, holding veggies, etc.). Cut out the shapes and hang them on the wall on either side of you as you teach the lesson. Point to them throughout the story or while discussing their differences.

TOUCH AND SMELL

Blindfold the children. Pass around several roughly spherical objects. Here are some ideas: orange, softball, tennis ball, apple, lemon, ball of yarn, ball of string, onion, or potato. Have children try to identify these items by touch and smell. It's not so easy, is it? In our Bible lesson, we will hear about how Isaac was fooled when he could only touch and smell.



ILLUSTRATE

BIRTHRIGHTS AND BLESSINGS

Bring in pictures of things that are part of an inheritance, such as houses, land, cars, and jewelry. Explain that when someone dies, all that he owned is called an inheritance. Usually these things eventually will go to the person's children. In those days, the older son had a birthright. That means that Esau was supposed to get a double portion of the things his father owned. Divide the pictures into two groups, one twice as large as the other. But as we will see, God chose the younger brother, Jacob, to receive the double blessing.

MYSTERY TOUCH/SMELLS

Bring paper bags or bowls filled with various items. Include some items that have distinct odors (popcorn, lemon, cut grass, etc). Have the children close their eyes and try to identify what is in each bag or bowl using only the senses of touch and smell. Explain that Isaac's eyesight was bad, so he had to rely on touch and smell. Rebekah and Jacob used this weakness to trick Isaac.



APPLY

JACOB'S DISGUISE

Materials: Paper lunch bags, scissors, glue, yarn, string, and crayons.

Directions: Cut off the bottom corner of the bag to create an opening for the thumb. Next, cut out an oval shape on the bottom of the bag to create an opening for the fingers. Then cut down the side of the bag beginning at the top and stopping a half inch from the bottom. Tighten the bag around the child's arm by sliding the extra material under the bag and secure with tape or staples. Leave enough space for children to slide the bag on and off their arms. Allow children to color the bag red like Esau's skin. Provide children with yarn and glue and let them decorate the bag with "hair".



AGES 9–11



INTRODUCE

BICKERING BROTHERS*See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.*

This passage reveals yet another example of brothers quarreling against one another. Make a copy of the Venn Diagram for each student or draw it on the white board. Also give each child a copy to take notes on. Read Genesis 25:21–34 and 27:1–40. Ask children to write similarities between Esau and Jacob in the parts of the circles that overlap, and differences between the twin brothers on the parts of the circles that do not overlap.

TWIN TESTIMONY

Invite a twin (or set of twins) to come to class to briefly describe what it's like having a twin. You could also ask parents of twins to talk about what it's like raising twins. Have children write down questions they would like to ask, so they will be prepared for the visit. After the visit, read Genesis 25:21–26 to the class to introduce the lesson.



ILLUSTRATE

LIFE'S STORY

Show the class a current newspaper. What kinds of things are going on in the world? Does God know about all this? God has a plan for our world and our lives. What happens to His plan when people do bad things? Does anything take God by surprise? Why not? Because God is in control of the future.

GOD CHOOSES WHO HE WILL BLESS

Invite two children to stand in front of the class. Explain that neither child has done anything to earn a blessing. Give one child a blessing (small toy, candy, etc.), but give the other child nothing. Tell children that it was your choice to bless one child and not the other. Neither child deserved a blessing. It was your choice. Explain that in today's lesson, God chose to bless Jacob and not Esau. It had nothing to do with what the brothers had done; it was simply God's choice.



APPLY

LIE AFTER LIE*See Year 1 Craft Book, Book 1.*

Pass out the "Lie after Lie" work sheet to each child. Read the passages and answer the corresponding questions together. You may choose to divide the application questions among the children and then share answers as a group.