

# Sibling Rivalry – Jacob and Esau

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\*\*\*First Slide

Last week we started our series on Sibling rivalry where we started by talking about how our society is fascinated by public rivalries between brothers and sisters, and that's especially true when it comes to sports figures.

We talked about how all of us have watched the Williams' sisters compete on the tennis court or the Manning brothers compete on the football field. The press will often times focus (almost distractingly so) on the rivalry between the brothers or sisters, many times picking up on one small comment or even a look to point out the obvious. Brothers and sisters tend to compete against and compare themselves to one another.

And I think the reason we are so fascinated by watching these public sports figures play is we all see a side of ourselves in their competition. We all remember our rivalries with our brothers or sisters and we can pick a favorite that is most like us and root for them to win.

Well then we said that this concept of sibling rivalry has been around since the first people recorded in scripture and because of this, we thought it would be interesting to take a look at the relationships between siblings in the bible and see if we can learn something about God and about ourselves in the process.

Last week we started by looking at the relationship between the first 2 brothers recorded in scripture, Cain and Abel.

\*\*\*And as we looked at the story found in Genesis 4 we answered 2 questions about the story there.

\*\*\*1. Why did God only have regard on Abel's offering and not Cain's?

\*\*\*2. What does God expect of us when we find ourselves in Cain's shoes?

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Well this week we are going to look at another set of brothers found in the Old Testament, the brothers of Jacob and Esau. Turn with me over to Genesis 25.

When I was growing up, it was me and my brother Jeff. Jeff and I were competitive, a bit. Everything we did turned into a competition to see who would win. Who can eat the fastest, who can run the fastest, who can wrestle and win, who could grow a beard first, etc. Well we were always coming up with ways to compete with one another and one summer day when we lived in Texas, we decided that while my parents were gone that day, we would see who could jump farthest off the roof of our house into our back yard.

Now obviously you can't jump off the roof onto hard ground, that would be stupid!

Then my mom and dad came home. Needless to say, neither of us won that competition on that day. But I'm convinced that if we hadn't been punished so severely that day, I would have gone on to become a Hollywood stunt man.

Background on Isaac, Rebekah, and conceiving to give birth to twin boys.

\*\*\*22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I this way?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

I imagine that she was talking to Isaac and wondering what was going on with the baby inside her.

23 The LORD said to her,

    "Two nations are in your womb;  
    And two peoples will be separated from your body;  
    And one people shall be stronger than the other;  
    And the older shall serve the younger."

It's interesting how God is able to see beyond our limit of time and understanding and know what will become before we do.

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God knew that Jacob and Esau would be rivals. He knew that one would be chosen to be the father of God’s people and one would become the father of a people that would eventually be forgotten.

\*\*\*24 When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

25 Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau.

26 Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau’s heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.

So here we see that the brothers are already competing with one another. In the divine plan of God, Jacob and Esau are already struggling to see who will be first.

\*\*\*27 When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents.

Now what does this mean? As we look at this sentence a lot of information about who they were comes out. “when they grew up” or as they became adults. Esau becomes this great hunter, but Jacob is called a “peaceful man, living in tents.”

I can tell you how this went down. As they grow, the rivalry continues throughout their young years. I can see through this passage that Esau was the main competitor and probably turned everything they did into a competition, which Jacob lost quite frequently. He was probably at first consoled by his mother very often when he was young and quickly gave up on becoming a hunter, which was the very thing that Isaac LOVED about Esau.

If you remember last week I gave a few tongue in cheek how-to’s on how to promote rivalry in your children.

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1. Compare your children to one another and let them know you are doing it. Say things like, “Your brother never acts that way,” and “If your sister can do it, why can’t you?” Holding one child up as the model and using that model to encourage better behavior on the part of the sibling is a sure way to create resentment and divisiveness among your children.

28 Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

This is the very thing that will drive your children apart and create an “us against them” mentality. Here you have team Rebekah and team Isaac. Team Rebekah is made up of the outcast and defeated. Team Isaac the conquerors and winners.

And both of them are wrong in their approach and wrong in their attitude, because we find out later how Isaac ignores his younger son, to his detriment, and we find out how Rebekah uses Jacob’s rejection by his father to concoct a plan to convince Jacob to manipulate him into blessing Jacob instead of his older brother. And she even puts the name of God on the plan.

Mothers and Fathers, it is not your job to manipulate people and circumstances to accomplish God’s will in their life. By doing this, you teach your children that waiting on God is for losers. If you want to see God’s plan accomplished in your life, then, by golly, kick the doors in and make it happen!!

Often times when we do this we short-circuit the plan of God in our life and in our children’s life. We find out later that the price that Rebekah pays for doing this was to never see the face of her son again.

29 When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished;

30 and Esau said to Jacob, “Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished.” Therefore his name was called Edom.

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The Edomites were to be known as a people of carnality and idol worship. Esau had become a man that thrived on the satisfaction of his flesh. Everything he did was driven by that desire.

Do you remember last week when God answered Cain about his offering and He said, “If you do wrong, sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for you, but you must master it.” Esau never mastered his appetites. He married several women outside the family and greatly displeased his mother and father because of it. Ultimately, it was his appetite that caused him to sell Jacob his birthright.

31 But Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.”

Who is this speaking here? Rebekah! She had been telling Jacob all along about the prophesy that God had given her. Be careful what you share with your kids, because it will come out of their mouths later!

32 Esau said, “Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?”

33 And Jacob said, “First swear to me”; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

The birthright of the eldest son in the family consisted of the family name and titles to all land and property, the chief portion of the inheritance from the father, and in Esau’s case, the continuance of the promise of God to Abraham, and ultimately the lineage of the Messiah.

Esau gave up his birthright, gave up his inheritance and all that it signified, gave up all that he knew that it signified for a bowl of stew. And God judged him for it, to the point that everything he represented was eventually destroyed and forgotten.

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Hebrews 12

16 that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

What he did was considered by God to be immoral and godless. He behaved as though there was no God and the lesson here couldn't be clearer to us.

Accepting Christ as our savior gives us a right to an inheritance that is beyond names and titles and treasures and lineage. We will one day reign with Christ in heaven. We will spend eternity in the presence of the God we worship and adore. But we will also be judged for everything we have done on this earth as believers.

But many of us behave as though that were just a fairy tale. And we pursue carnality and pursue the fleshly nature like that is what is real.

Hebrews 10

35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.