

STORY: GENESIS: ESAU & JACOB (Genesis 25-27, 32)

Suggestion: Act out the scenes with props (e.g. stew, hairy arms etc)

Who remembers Abraham? What was his son's name? *Isaac*.

So Isaac grew up, and when he was 40 years old, he married Rebekah. Many years went by, and still they didn't have any children. And so Isaac prayed to God, "Oh Lord, please look with favor on my wife Rebekah, and bless us with children."

God heard Isaac's prayer (of course, God hears every prayer!), and he answered it. When Isaac was 60 years old, Rebekah became pregnant - and not with just one child, but with twins!

The first baby born was a boy. He was all red and covered with hair, and so Isaac and Rebekah named him Esau, which sounded like their word for "red." The second baby was also a boy, and he came grabbing onto Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob, which sounded like their word for "heel."

The boys grew up.

Esau became a strong and skillful hunter who loved the outdoors.

Jacob was a quiet man, who preferred to stay home.

Isaac like Esau because he liked to eat the wild game Esau brought home from hunting. But Rebekah liked Jacob because he learned to cook and to do other things to help her around the home.

Jacob took Esau's birthright

One day Esau went out for another one of his hunting trips. He must have been gone for a few days, and the hunting must not have been very good, because when he came back, he was starving for something good to eat.

It just so happened that when Esau came home, Jacob had just made a great big pot of hot, steaming, stew. The mouth-watering smell filled the air.

"Give me some of that red stuff - I am starving!" Esau demanded.

Jacob was a schemer, and so he said, "Sure! I'll give you some stew - IF you will give me your Birthright."

The Birthright was a very important thing. It went to Esau because he was born first. When Isaac died, Esau's Birthright would make him the head of the household, and he would get twice as much of Isaac's wealth as Jacob would.

But here is where Esau made his mistake. He was hungry NOW. He didn't care about tomorrow. All that Birthright stuff wouldn't happen for a long time.

But Jacob was wiser. He knew one day tomorrow would come. If he had the Birthright, one day he would receive double portion of the inheritance and become the head of the household.

"Give me your Birthright, and I will give you some stew," Jacob said again, as he slurped on a steaming spoonful himself.

"All right! All right!" Esau said, "You can have my Birthright. What good will it be to me if I starve to death!" Not that he would have starved to death. He was just hungry.

"Do you promise?" Jacob said.

"I promise!" Esau snapped.

"All right then," Jacob said, and he gave Esau what he wanted.

And so Esau gave away his Birthright for a bowl of soup and few pieces of bread.

That wasn't too smart.

Jacob stole Esau's blessing

Isaac grew old. He could no longer see. He knew he would die soon.

And so he called his son Esau. "My son, before I die, I want you to take your bow and your arrows and go out hunting. When you come back, cook the meat you have caught. Make one of your delicious meals, the kind I like so much, and bring it to me. And then I will bless you."

Now, Rebekah just happened to hear all of this from the other room (the walls of tents aren't very thick!).

As soon as Esau left, Rebekah took Jacob by the arm and said to him, "Your father has sent Esau away to hunt. When Esau gets back, he is going to fix your father's favorite dinner, and your father is going to give him his blessing.

"Quick! Do what I say! Go out into the fields and bring me two young goats, and I will make your father's favorite dinner from them. Bring it to him, and your father will think you are Esau, and he will bless you instead."

When Jacob had brought the two goats, Rebekah prepared a delicious meal. Then she took some of Esau's clothes and had Jacob put them on. She took the skins from the goats and put them on Jacob's arms and the back of his neck so that he would be hairy like his brother.

Wearing the disguise his mother had made, Jacob took the steaming hot meal in to his father.

"Who is there?" his father asked.

"It is your first born son Esau," Jacob said. "I have brought your favorite dinner, just like you asked."

"How did you do it so quickly?" his father asked.

"Your God was with me, and he gave me success," Jacob answered. "Eat, and then you can give me your blessing."

"You don't sound like Esau," Isaac said. "You sound like your brother Jacob. Come here. Let me touch you."

Isaac felt the fur on Jacob's neck and arms. And then he said, "The voice is Jacob's, but the arms are Esau's." He was about to give his blessing when he asked again, "Are you really my son Esau?"

"Yes, I am," Jacob lied.

And so Isaac ate the meal he thought Esau had brought him. When he was finished he said, "Come here, my son, and kiss me, and then I will give you my blessing."

So Jacob came near his father and kissed him. Isaac could smell the smell of Esau's clothes, and so he gave him his blessing. " ... *Let anyone who curses you be cursed, but blessed be anyone who blesses you!*"

Jacob runs from Esau

Of course when Esau came back from his hunting and found out how Jacob deceived his father, he was furious! Wouldn't you be mad if your brother stole something that belonged to you?

From that day on Esau hated his brother Jacob. "One day, my father will die," he said, "And then I will kill my brother Jacob!"

When his mother heard it, she told Jacob to run for his life. "I can't lose both my sons in one day," she said.

What a mess we make when we lie and cheat.

Source: <http://www.essex1.com/pages/paul/bible24.html>

Images: <http://www.freebibleimages.org/stories/?book=Genesis>

LESSON

Bad Brothers, Good God

Jacob was a liar and a cheat. He thought of ways to take what didn't belong to him — Esau's birthright and blessing.

Esau was a careless — he sold his birthright for some soup and bread. Esau was murderous — he wanted to kill Jacob.

But through it all, God was with the brothers. He never left them. He knew their weaknesses, and he still worked through them to accomplish his good and wonderful plans through them, even when they messed things up.

When Jacob ran away from Esau, he slept in the middle of the desert and had a dream. God appeared to him and told him that He will watch over and protect him and bless him greatly. *"All this I will do. Be sure of this, I am with you. I will never leave you or forsake you."*

Esau showed grace

The story doesn't end there. Twenty years later, when Jacob wanted to bring his large family back to his homeland, he was very worried that Esau would still be angry with him. He brought all sorts of gifts to try to appease Esau. He went to meet his brother (who was accompanied with 400 men) and bowed down to the ground 7 times.



But surprisingly, Esau ran to meet his brother, hugged him tightly and kissed him. And they both wept. Esau met and welcomed all of Jacob's family. Despite all the wrong Jacob had done to him, Esau had forgiven him. Esau showed him grace. Just like the father who ran to welcome the prodigal son who spent all his money and returned dirty and smelly.

This is a picture of God's unmerited grace through Jesus.

Just as Jacob schemed, lied, deceived, cheated, and caused great heartache and pain to Esau, we have done likewise to our heavenly Father.

Just as Jacob struggled and tried by his own efforts to earn Esau's forgiveness and found it all unnecessary, we do the same by trying to be good to earn God's favor.

And finally, just as Esau extended grace and forgiveness to Jacob despite all the injustices and suffering, God's amazing grace is extended to us when we accept His gift of forgiveness in Jesus Christ!

Memory Verse: Gen 28:15 *"Be sure of this, I am with you. I will never leave you or forsake you."*