

his father's inheritance (cf. Deu 21:17).<sup>Ryrie</sup>

- 2) The selfish longing for the birthright did not suddenly pop into Jacob's head when his brother begged for a bowl of soup. Perhaps his mother had told him what God told her before he was born (v.23). Perhaps he had bitterness in his heart because he was born moments after his twin brother. Sinful, selfish greed had been eating at him. He had been pondering how to get the birthright for a long time. This was his chance!
- 3) Selfishness is sinful because God tells us we are to be content with what He gives us. (Hebrews 13:5) "*Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" The cure for selfishness is truly to believe that God is all that we need.

**b. Esau selfishly wanted to fulfil his lust.**

- 1) He came in hungry from a long hunting trip. He was hungry, but he would not have died if he had waited long enough to find a bunch of figs, a cluster of raisins or an apple. However, he was selfishly willing to give up a priceless, lasting treasure to satisfy his lust for something that would not last.
- 2) My friend, the devil is going to tempt you to do the same. He will tempt you to give up your purity to satisfy your sensual lust. He will tempt you to give up your honest reputation to steal something that will not last. He is going to tempt you to give up your godly testimony to gain the praise of others, that will not last. **Do not give up what is priceless for a bowl of soup!** (1 Timothy 6:6) "*But godliness with contentment is great gain.*"

**Conclusion:** When facing family problems, we ought to learn from Bible characters like these. When you have a need – pray like Isaac! When you need wisdom – pray like Rebekah! When you are tempted to play favourites – choose instead to love equally. When you are tempted to be selfish – Ask God to help you be content with Him and His provisions.

**Song:** Yield Not to Temptation - 364

# Facing Family Problems

5 September 2021 PM – Genesis 25 – Gen2021 – Scott Childs

**Introduction:** Here are some family prayers of children. "**I bet it is very hard to love everyone in the whole world. There are only four people in our family, and I'm having a hard time loving all of them.**" A boy prayed, "**Maybe Cain and Abel would not have killed each other if they had their own rooms. That's what my Mom did for me and my brother.**" Another child prayed, "**Please send a new baby for Mommy. The baby you sent last week cries too much.**" Children are so transparent.

The truth is every family has its share of genuine problems.

**Transition:** In Genesis 25, we see four family problems that troubled Isaac and Rebekah's family, from which God wants us to learn.

## 1. Rebekah was Barren (v.19-21)

### a. Rebekah was barren for twenty years.

- 1) Isaac longed for a son. Rebekah likely did too.
- 2) It was a shame for a married woman in those days to be childless. Sarah, Isaac's mother, had longed for a child until she was 90 years old. Both Rachel and Hannah were greatly grieved and wept over their barrenness.
- 3) God does not tell us why He withheld children from Rebekah, but He obviously had a reason. God creates children. (Psalms 127:3) "*Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*"

### b. Isaac prayed and God answered.

- 1) Sometimes it is not God's will for a wife to bear children. In Isaac and Rebekah's case, they knew the God had promised father Abraham to multiply their seed.
- 2) Very little is said about Isaac's walk with God. I suspect that he may not have been as strong spiritually as he should have been. Rebekah's family did not have any strong spiritual leaders either. **Perhaps God was using this family problem to get them to draw near to Him.**
- 3) One of the best things a married couple can do is to spend quality time in prayer together. Jeremiah wrote, (Jeremiah 29:13) "*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*"

- 4) After Isaac prayed, God answered his prayer.

## 2. Rebekah had an Unusual Pregnancy (v.22-23)

### a. Her pregnancy was very restless

- 1) This was her first pregnancy, yet she knew something was unusual about it. The baby was very active.
- 2) There were no ultrasounds in those days. She had no idea that she had twins who were wrestling in her womb.
- 3) She did the wise thing. She prayed and asked the Lord about it.
- 4) We must never forget that our God knows all things, and He cares about us. (Psalms 147:5) "*Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.*" (Isaiah 40:28) "*Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.*" God told Jeremiah, (Jeremiah 33:3) "*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*" When we need wisdom or help, we must get on our knees and pour out our hearts to the Lord.

### b. God's answer Rebekah's prayer

- 1) Evidently, the Lord spoke to her, perhaps in a dream or vision, we do not know.
- 2) Note God's answer (v.23). She was carrying twins. They would form two nations. One would be stronger than the other. The elder would serve the younger.
- 3) God knew all that before they were born. God also knew that one of the nations would follow Him and the other nation would oppose Him.

## 3. Isaac and Rebekah Played Favourites (v.24-28)

### a. Their twin boys were very different.

- 1) The first was born with lots of reddish hair all over his body (v.25). Thus, they named him Esau, meaning "hairy". Time would reveal that Esau had no interest in God. He lived only for his flesh.
- 2) The second was born with normal complexion, but he was holding on to his brother's heel at birth. They named him

Jacob, which means "heel-holder" or "supplanter". A "supplanter" is one who wrongly holds the place of another. Though Jacob was a deceiver, he had a moderate fear of God that became more evident as he aged.

- 3) As the boys grew, their interests were as different as their appearances. Esau became a *cunning hunter* and a man of the *field* (v.27). Jacob was a *plain man who lived in tents*. The word "plain" means whole, complete or full. One who is mature and upright as one who is whole.<sup>AHLB</sup> It refers to one who lacks nothing in physical strength, beauty, etc. but he was an ordinary, quiet sort of person.<sup>DBD</sup> This word is generally used of moral uprightness and integrity.<sup>Whedon</sup> He was amiable, pious and cultured.<sup>Ryrie</sup> Instead of roaming the hills as a hunter, Jacob tended sheep and other cattle and lived in a tent rather than sleeping under the stars as his brother often did.

### b. The parents foolishly played favourites.

- 1) Yes, they each had a favourite son.
  - a) Isaac loved Esau his adventurous son who wandered the fields and forests and brought home venison.
  - b) Rebekah loved Jacob who stayed near home and tended the family farm. She may have taught him gardening and cooking, but we have no reason to think that he was soft or weak.
- 2) Every child born is unique. No two children are alike.
- 3) Parents, no matter how tempting it may be to favour a child that meshes well with your personality, you must resist the temptation and treat all your children with equal love. Help each of them to develop their own personalities, traits, qualities and potentials.
- 4) We must follow God's example. (Acts 10:34) "*Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.*"

## 4. The Boys were Selfish (v.29-34)

### a. Jacob selfishly wanted the birthright

- 1) The birthright gave the eldest son precedence over his brothers (cf. Ge 43:33) and assured him a double share of