

Wednesday with the Word

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Momma's Don't Play Favorites? Rebekah, Jacob and Esau

Many children have been hurt by their parents and or family members who play favorites. This is sometimes done incidentally and sometimes is it done intentionally. Regardless of what the motivation the result is the same. Children are hurt when they feel like they have not been treated fairly or when they are not a valued member of the family.

Do you have a story of parents or elders playing favorites?

Did you think your mother or father had a favorite?

Where you the favorite?

Did you have a favorite child or a child you gravitated more to than the others?

If so how did it make you feel?

Tonight we look at Rebekah. The mother of Jacob and Esau. We look at how her relationship with her favorite son affected him and the dynamics of their family. Rebekah was married to the son that Abraham had from Sarah, the Sarah we talked about last week.

From the Beginning: Genesis 25:19-23

19 These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, **20** and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean.

How do our family issues affect our family?

We are going to see later tonight the family issues that Rebekah has that we also see in her brother and her son.

Do we account for our family issues and try to intentionally mitigate against them or do we let them drive us and potentially destroy us?

21 Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived.

22 The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. **23** And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger."

What is going on here?

Is God ordaining the struggle between these two brothers?

Why would God announce to her that this internal struggle is to be an eternal struggle?

How should a mother feel about her children being born into a destined rivalry?

Do we have rivalries between children in our family? How should parents manage sibling rivalries? Are they manageable?

If Rebekah knew her children were going to be at odds with each other, as God announced, could she have done something to prevent this?

Waiting and Wanting: Genesis 25:24-27

24 When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb.

25 The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. **26** Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

27 When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. **28** Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Family Issues: The father favors Esau and the mother favors Jacob. This is recipe ripe for disaster.

Why do you think parents tend favor one child over the other?

How could these parents, who had been waiting on a child for twenty years, mess over this blessing?

Why did they take sides after God had blessed them with these two children?

Do we ever take a blessing for granted?

Do we ever get what we pray for and then after we get we dismiss it or devalue it?

How did Issac go from praying for his wife to have children and then loving one child over the other child?

How can a mother love one child and not the other child?

What We Do for Food: Genesis 25:29-34

29 Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. **30** Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.) **31** Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." **32** Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" **33** Jacob said, "Swear to me first." 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 his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

What does this transaction say about the character of Jacob?

What does this transaction say about the character of Esau?

Was Esau just hungry and didn't really mean to "sell" his birthright?

Was Jacob plotting?

Was Jacob actually doing the work of God and fulfilling what was said about him and his brother?

Where is God in all of this? Is God allowing this or willing this?
Is this part of God's plan for the two brothers?

Is there a difference between what God wills to happen and what God allows to happen? If there is a difference how do we know the difference?

Setting the Stage: Genesis 27:1-4

When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called his elder son Esau and said to him, “My son”; and he answered, “Here I am.”
2 He said, “See, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. **3** Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and hunt game for me. **4** Then prepare for me savory food, such as I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may bless you before I die.”

The Mother’s Reaction & Plot: Genesis 27:5-10

5 Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, **6** Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “I heard your father say to your brother Esau, **7** ‘Bring me game, and prepare for me savory food to eat, that I may bless you before the Lord before I die.’ **8** Now therefore, my son, obey my word as I command you. **9** Go to the flock, and get me two choice kids, so that I may prepare from them savory food for your father, such as he likes; **10** and you shall take it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies.”

Should Jacob obey his mother?

Why did the mother do this?

Is Rebekah doing what God would have her do?

If God told Rebekah that her boys were destined to be warring against each other was she right for picking the one she loved and setting him up to do and be what was inevitable?

Do parents (and or family members) show favoritism in small and big ways? Do we show our favoritism? Why do we do it and how can we prevent it?

The Son’s Reaction and the Momma’s Response: Genesis 27:11-13

11 But Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, “Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a man of smooth skin. **12** Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall

seem to be mocking him, and bring a curse on myself and not a blessing.” **13** His mother said to him, “Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my word, and go, get them for me.”

What does she mean by “let your curse be on me?” What curse?

Is not what she is doing feeding into what she was told was going to be?

Should Jacob have pushed back? Should he had said, “No, I am not going to do this!”

What is about the relationship between mother and son that is making this thing go?

When Loving You Is Wrong: Genesis 27:14-17

14 So he went and got them and brought them to his mother; and his mother prepared savory food, such as his father loved. **15** Then Rebekah took the best garments of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob; **16** and she put the skins of the kids on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. **17** Then she handed the savory food, and the bread that she had prepared, to her son Jacob.

Who is leading this plot?

Why is the leader of this plot doing all of this work?

What is motivating the leader of this plot to do this work?

How is the mother and son working together? What is the cumulative catalyst behind their actions? What is making them tick? Why have the desire to steal the birthright from Esau?

The Sins of the Mother in the Son: Genesis 27:18-29

18 So he went in to his father, and said, “My father”; and he said, “Here I am; who are you, my son?” **19** Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, so that you may bless me.” **20** But Isaac said to his son, “How is it that you have found it so quickly, my

son?" He answered, "Because the Lord your God granted me success." **21** Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." **22** So Jacob went up to his father Isaac, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." **23** He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. **24** He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I am." **25** Then he said, "Bring it to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you." So he brought it to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. **26** Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near and kiss me, my son." **27** So he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his garments, and blessed him, and said, "Ah, the smell of my son
is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed.

28

May God give you of the dew of heaven,
and of the fatness of the earth,
and plenty of grain and wine.

29

Let peoples serve you,
and nations bow down to you.
Be lord over your brothers,
and may your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed be everyone who curses you,
and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"

Why didn't Jacob tell the truth to his father?

Why, when his father gave him out, he didn't take it?

When Issac prays, "cursed be everyone who curses you" does this mean that Rebekah is cursed? Is this the curse she was talking about earlier?

The birthright is about position, power and wealth. Is this what was behind the actions of Rebekah and Jacob?

How does our drive for position, power and wealth have the potential to corrupt our relationship?

The Fallout: Genesis 27:30-40

30 As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau came in from his hunting. **31** He also prepared savory food, and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, "Let my father sit up and eat of his son's game, so that you may bless me." **32** His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your firstborn son, Esau." **33** Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him?—yes, and blessed he shall be!" **34** When Esau heard his father's words, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, me also, father!" **35** But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing." **36** Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright; and look, now he has taken away my blessing." Then he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" **37** Isaac answered Esau, "I have already made him your lord, and I have given him all his brothers as servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?" **38** Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, father? Bless me, me also, father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

39 Then his father Isaac answered him:

"See, away from the fatness of the earth shall your home be,
and away from the dew of heaven on high.

40

By your sword you shall live,
and you shall serve your brother;
but when you break loose,
you shall break his yoke from your neck."

Why was Esau so surprised? Had he not given this away for a bowl of soup?

Did Jacob take away Esau's birthright or did he give it away for a bowl of soup?

Why was Isaac so easily tricked? Do you think Isaac knew the ways of his wife and the son she loved?

How do we let people we have been in relationship with and we see their ways but ignore who they are?

Do we have a tendency to be in denial about who people really are and then allow them to deceive us?

The Big Payback: Genesis 29:15-30

15 Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?” **16** Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. **17** Leah’s eyes were lovely, and Rachel was graceful and beautiful. **18** Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” **19** Laban said, “It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me.” **20** So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed.” **22** So Laban gathered together all the people of the place, and made a feast. **23** But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. **24** (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) **25** When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?” **26** Laban said, “This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn. **27** Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years.” **28** Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife. **29** (Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her maid.) **30** So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. He served Laban for another seven years.

What does this say about the prophecy in Genesis 25:19-23?

Genesis 33:1-4

Now Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. **2** He put the maids with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. **3** He himself went on ahead of them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near his brother.

4 But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.