



STORY FROM...
Genesis 25–33

Jacob & Esau

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **TELL THE STORY** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

When Isaac was 40 years old, he married Rebekah. Isaac prayed hard for his wife because she could not have a child. God answered his prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. But the two children fought with each other inside her womb.

She prayed and asked God, *“Why is this happening to me?”*
God told her, *“Your sons will become two rival nations. One nation will be stronger than the other and the older son will serve the younger son.”*

When the first son was born he was very red and hairy; he looked like he was already wearing clothing! So they called him Esau, which sounds like the word for “hair”.

Then the other twin was born with his hand grabbing Esau’s heel.
So they named him Jacob, which means “grabbing the heel”, but can also mean “deceiver”.

As the boys grew up, Esau became an expert hunter who loved the outdoors.
His brother Jacob liked to stay indoors and live quietly in the tents.
Isaac loved Esau and all of the wild game he would bring home, but Rebekah favored Jacob.

Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came home exhausted from hunting and said to Jacob, *“I’m starving! Give me some of that red stew you’ve made.”*
Jacob replied, *“All right, but trade me your inheritance for it.”*
“Hey—I’m dying of starvation!” said Esau. *“What good is my inheritance to me if I starve?”*

Jacob demanded, *“Swear to me right now that you will give me your inheritance.”*
So Esau gave an oath trading away his inheritance and his rights as the firstborn son.

Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and stew. Esau quickly ate and drank and went on his way—not thinking about the fact that he had just given up his inheritance.

Years later, when Isaac was old and almost blind, he called for Esau and said,
“I am an old man now and I will die soon. Hunt some wild game for me and prepare it just the way I like it. Then, before I die I will pass on the blessing that belongs to you, my firstborn son.”

Rebekah overheard this conversation. So when Esau left to go hunting, she said to Jacob,
“Do exactly as I tell you. Go and bring back two of the finest goats from our flocks and I’ll prepare your father’s favorite dish from them. Take the food to your father; then he will eat it and give you the blessing instead of Esau.”

Jacob replied, *“Mother—he won’t be fooled that easily. Esau is hairy and my skin is smooth! What if he touches me? He’ll see that I’m trying to trick him, and then he’ll curse me instead of blessing me.”*
“Just do as I say!” Rebekah demanded.

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So Jacob brought back two of their best goats, and Rebekah made Isaac's favorite meal. Then she put Esau's best clothes on Jacob and made him a pair of long hairy gloves from the skin of the goats.

Then Jacob took the meal to his father pretending he was Esau.

"The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's," Isaac said to himself.

"Are you really my son, Esau?" Isaac asked.

"Yes of course!" Jacob answered.

"If you are, come here and kiss your father," Isaac said.

So Jacob went and kissed Isaac. When he did this Isaac smelled his clothes and was finally convinced he was really Esau.

So Isaac gave his blessing to Jacob saying, *"May God pass on to you the blessing he promised to Abraham. Your family will grow large and become a great nation and other nations will become your servants. God will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you."*

As soon as Isaac had blessed Jacob, Esau returned from his hunting trip.

When he learned that Isaac had given his blessing to his brother he wept out loud,

"Father, bless me, too!"

But Isaac said, *"Your brother was here and tricked me. He has carried away your blessing."*

Esau hated Jacob and said to himself, *"After my father is dead, I will kill Jacob."*

Rebekah found out that Jacob was in danger and sent him far away to live with his uncle.

On his journey God appeared to Jacob saying, *"I am the God of your grandfather and father. I am giving you and your descendants this land. Your family will grow large and be a blessing to the entire earth! I will be with you and protect you wherever you go—giving you everything I have promised."*

And God blessed Jacob with great wealth and 12 sons! Jacob's name was changed to Israel, which means "struggler with God". The Hebrews would later be called the people of Israel, named after Jacob.

Many years later Esau forgave his brother Jacob. Then Jacob and his growing family moved back to the Promised Land of Canaan.



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▲ **RETELL THE STORY** (*This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story*)

▼ **DIALOGUE** (*These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story*)

- From this story, what do we learn about Jacob? Esau? Rebekah?
- What did God tell Rebekah about the children in her womb?
- How might that have affected her actions?
- Why do you think Esau gave up his inheritance so easily?
- Why do you think Jacob desired his father's blessing?
- Why would God pass on his blessing to Jacob when he deceived his father to get it?
- What blessing is God passing on through Abraham, Isaac and now Jacob?

• **What does the story teach us about God?**

God is powerful. He was able again to cause Rebekah, a barren woman, to conceive (Just like he had done with Sarah).

God knows all things. He knew the future of the boys while they were still in the womb.

He knew that the older would serve the younger.

God is the source of all grace. God blesses us even when we don't deserve it.

Jacob was a continual deceiver, yet God established his covenant with him.

God keeps his promises. He passed the covenant he made with Abraham on to his son Isaac, and on to Jacob. Each time he promised to bless all the nations of the earth through them.

God is patient with our selfishness.

- Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories? What connections did you make?
- In what ways are we also like Jacob?

We are all sinners just like Jacob. None of us do anything to deserve any of God's blessings.

◆ **APPLICATION** (*Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups*)

- What did you notice from the story for the first time?
- What questions do you have about the story? What do you wonder about?
- How did the story challenge or encourage you?

- Where in your life has God blessed you?
- Why do you think that God uses people to bless others?
- Why do you think that God allows things to happen that do not make sense to us?