



Enter the Story

Jacob & Esau

A narrative based on family dysfunction, a faithful God and pathways to redemption and restoration.

THE BIBLE

Genesis 25-33

Prepare for the Story

ICEBREAKER

- Tell us about a time that someone tricked you. What happened? How did it make you feel to be tricked or fooled?

Rewind the Story

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- The Flood – God’s desire to cleanse creation
- Wisdom of Job – Why do bad things happen to good people?
- Nation – Abram’s call to trust God

Hear the Story

Scene One: Twin Rivals

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.”*

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.

Scene Two: Inheritance and Blessing

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, but what good is an inheritance to me if I starve?”* Esau replied. So Jacob demanded, *“Swear to me right now that you will give me your inheritance.”*

So Esau took an oath, trading away his inheritance and rights as the firstborn son. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and stew. Esau quickly ate, 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 your 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.

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 thought 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."

Scene Three: Jacob Flees

Rebekah discovered 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, and then Jacob and his growing family moved back into the Promised Land of Canaan.

Retell the Story

- When Isaac was 40 years old, who did he marry?
- How many children did they have?

- What was different about the pregnancy and birth of Jacob and Esau?
- Describe Esau and Jacob.
- What happened to make Esau give away his inheritance?
- How did Jacob trick his father into giving him Esau's blessing?
- How did Esau react to these events?
- What did God promise Jacob?

Discuss the Story

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?
- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?
- 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 this blessing to Jacob when he deceived his father?
- What blessing is God passing on through Abraham, Isaac, and now Jacob?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of **other** stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?

- What do you notice from this story about God's character or qualities?

Join the Story

1) INSTANT GRATIFICATION

Esau will forever be remembered as the man who, for a single meal, sold his inheritance and rights as the oldest son (Hebrews 12:16). What did that meal cost, Esau? What do we potentially give up in order to have instant gratification? Give some examples. What do you think it will really cost us, in the end, to be people who demand immediate gratification?

2) FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT

In our story so far, we have seen three sets of brothers: Cain & Abel, Ishmael & Isaac, and now Jacob & Esau. What are the similarities and differences between these brothers and their stories? Do you see any patterns that emerge? If so, what do you make of them? What do they teach you about God or humanity?

3) REDEMPTION AND RESTORATION

When Esau discovered what Jacob had done, he threatened to kill him. So Jacob ran. Years later, Jacob & Esau met again. Read Genesis 32:3-6 & 33:4-11. After you read their encounters years later, what stands out to you about the character of both Jacob and Esau? How do you think God felt about this interaction between the brothers?

Pray

God,

Sometimes, we don't understand Your ways. But we are thankful that Your purposes and plans move forward even when we are not perfect. Thank You for always providing a path toward redemption and restoration.