

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 27:1-7

1. Today we learn that Isaac had grown old and his sight was failing. He decided to settle some of his affairs thinking perhaps that his death was near. He called to Esau who replied, “Here I am.” (verses 1-2) Describe the tasks he gave him in verse 3 and the first part of verse 4.

NOTE: At the time of this story, Isaac was believed to have been about 137 years old and lived another 40 years. His twin sons were approximately 40 years old. Recall Isaac's relationships with his sons by rereading Genesis 25:27-28.

2. Isaac told Esau that the purpose of this meal was to bless his son before he died (end of verse 4). If he knew of Rebekah's conversation with God (Genesis 25:23) or Esau's promise to Jacob to give up the birthright (Genesis 25:33), what might be one reason he would ignore this information?

NOTE: Family blessings were used in ancient nomadic cultures to designate the succession of political and religious leadership in a family. A festive meal or celebration usually accompanied the blessing ceremony. The patriarchal blessing was not necessarily assigned to the firstborn. Blessings differed from the birthright which referred to matters of inheritance and, for most of the world's history, the first-born child received an extra amount (see Deuteronomy 21:17).

3. Blessings were often given at times of separation as in death or when children left home. State the occasion for the blessing from one of the following verses.

Genesis 24:59-60

Deuteronomy 33:1

Luke 24:50-51

4. According to verse 5, Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau. Record what Rebecca told Jacob in verses 6-7.

5. Rebekah overheard some things in a private conversation between her husband and older son that disturbed her. She may have been troubled by this because she had been told by the LORD that "the elder shall serve the younger" (see Genesis 25:23). What else could she have done at this time instead of telling Jacob about this conversation?

6. CONNECTION: In the ancient story that begins today, we will see that, despite the misbehavior and shortcomings of its human characters, God's plan of promise moves forward. Both parents continue to further the interests of their favored child, yet God does not give up on his imperfect children and continues to love them as his plan for salvation unfolds. How blessed are we that God loves us in spite of our brokenness! Can you share some thoughts about how growth and grace can come from weakness and failure?

Read and record a phrase from Lamentations 3:22-24. Let thoughts of gratitude for our LORD's faithful and abiding love begin your prayer today.

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 27:8-17

7. After Rebekah told Jacob of the conversation she heard between Isaac and Esau, she began to formulate a plan to secure the blessing for her favored son. She told Jacob to "obey my word" (verse 8). Summarize the plan she designed in verses 9-10.

8. Upon hearing the plan to deceive his father, Jacob was very concerned and shared his misgivings. He worried that, if he was discovered, his father would curse him (verses 11-12). Are you surprised by the nature of Jacob's objections to Rebekah's plan? What else should he have been worried about?

9. Rebekah attempted to dispel his doubts so they might proceed with their plan by replying, "Let your curse be on me, my son: only obey..." and Jacob acted on his mother's plan (verse 13). Look up the word *curse* and comment on how you think her remark would have affected Jacob.

NOTE: Consider the serious consequences of curses in Holy Scripture (see [Genesis 3:14](#): God cursed the serpent, "upon your belly you shall go"; [Genesis 3:17](#): God said to the man, "cursed is the ground because of you"; [Genesis 4:11-12](#): God said to Cain, "you are cursed from the ground and are a fugitive and wanderer on the earth.")

10. His fears relieved, Jacob acted on his mother's plan and took the savory food that his father loved to his mother to prepare (verse 14). Summarize the actions of Rebekah and her plan to deceive Isaac into bestowing his blessing on Jacob rather than on her elder son from verses 15-17.

11. Jacob will pay a heavy price for this act of deceit and trickery against his own father. What different moral choice could he have made at this time in his life?

12. **CONNECTION:** Today we read that, in desiring to see the fulfillment of the divine promise, Rebekah has taken matters into her own hands rather than wait for God to act. She is like many of us who sometimes try to control and manipulate events, people and things in our lives without regard to consequences. With God's help, what changes can we make in the way we handle problems and respect others' choices? Record some thoughts to share.

Read the following Prayer of Thomas Merton from his book, "Thoughts in Solitude." Let this lead you into prayer today.

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 27:18-26

13. Today we read one of the most dramatic scenes in the Book of Genesis. Jacob, disguised with the help of his mother as Esau, went to his father. Summarize their encounter from verses 18-19.

14. Isaac appeared to be suspicious. He asked his son how the meal was prepared so quickly (verse 20). What does Jacob's reply suggest to you about his relationship with the LORD?

15. Isaac asked his son to come near to know whether he was really Esau. Though Isaac recognized Jacob's voice, he felt "the hands of Esau," so he blessed him. Then Jacob brought the food to his father who ate it (verses 21-25). Which of Jacob's lies or misrepresentations do you find most disturbing in this scheme to fool Isaac (verses 21-25)?

16. Record Isaac's satisfied words for the son he thought was his favorite, Esau (verse 26).

17. Often, the most hurtful betrayal is done or incurred by a loved one. Look up and record the following verses from Mark 14:44-45.

18. CONNECTION: Rebekah and Jacob knew exactly how to take advantage of Isaac to gain his blessing because of his infirmity and they knew him so well. In our own lives, we have all been deceived or manipulated, from time to time, even by loved ones. When that happens, we can learn from the example of Our Lord who himself was deceived and betrayed. What are some ways to heal from the pain of betrayal? Can you share a story from your life when, with the help of God's grace, you were able to recover from an act of dishonesty or deceit?

Read and record Mark 11:25. Let this thought lead you into prayer today.

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 27:27-29

19. Today's lesson begins as Jacob came near to kiss his father. Isaac was comforted by the smell of Esau's garments on Jacob when he kissed him. He then began his blessing by referring to Esau's love of the earth. Record the opening lines of the blessing from verses 27-28.

Ah, the smell of my son

May God give you

and of the fatness of the earth

NOTE: Isaac's blessing confers fertility (vv.27-28) and dominion (v.29). The "dew of heaven" is rain that produces grain and wine, two of the principal foodstuffs of the ancient Near East. The "fertility of the earth" may allude to oil, the third basic foodstuff. The full agricultural year may be implied here: the fall rains are followed by the grain harvests of the spring and the grape harvests of late summer, and then the olive harvest of the fall. *NABRE*

20. In the final verse of the blessing, Isaac prayed for his son's leadership (verse 29). Select one or two of the elements of this blessing and describe how they refer to Isaac's love and hopes for his son, Esau.

21. Jacob did not earn or deserve this blessing that was intended for his brother. Compare if we, as Christians, deserve to share in the New Covenant (see Luke 22:20).

22. In Scripture, when God blesses it is pure grace. Read and record one of the following passages in which God blesses.

Numbers 6:24-26

Deuteronomy 28:6

Luke 11:28

23. Our Commentary states that this blessing reflected the history of the Israelites. Read page 56 and record a brief comment on this statement.

24. CONNECTION: Isaac's blessing combined special elements for Esau, the son he loved. There are many blessings in Genesis that are part of our faith history. When we bless, we bring holiness into our lives asking God for guidance and grace. Some of our family traditions include special blessings handed down from parents and grandparents. Do you have a special blessing your family shares? Or, today, write a special blessing for a child or a loved one that reflects his or her special qualities, needs, desires or hopes. Share this blessing with your group.

St. Paul tells us to "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them." (Romans 12:14) As you pray today, ask God for mercy and compassion in order to bless those who have hurt you or those you love.

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 27:30-40

NOTE: In this chapter, Jacob intercepts the blessing intended for Esau and cheats him out of the inheritance of the first-born. His mother, Rebekah, is the mastermind behind the ruse, guiding him at each crucial step. The Genesis narrative is not blind to their underhanded ways; rather, it frowns upon Jacob the deceiver and almost pities Esau the victim. It is just as aware, however, that Esau shamefully despised his natural birthright (25:29-34). The story thus illustrates how God can further his plan despite the failings of his people. God had already elected Jacob over Esau to bear the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. *Ignatius Study Bible*

25. We begin today after Isaac pronounced his blessing, meant for Esau, on Jacob. Summarize what happened in your own words immediately after Jacob left his father according to verses 30-32.

26. In verses 33-35, Isaac and Esau learn of the deceit inflicted upon them. When Esau asked for another blessing, Isaac told him that no ritual existed to undo a blessing even though it was not intended for Jacob. It was believed in the ancient world that a blessing or a curse, once spoken, was irrevocable. Look up and record one of the following verses from Proverbs about the power of words.

Proverbs 12:18

Proverbs 15:1

Proverbs 18:21

27. The great emotion displayed in this passage tells us how important the blessing was in this culture. Imagine you are present during this emotional scene of a loving father who has disappointed his heartbroken son. Which character do you think is more sympathetic, Isaac or Esau, and why?

NOTE: In verse 36 Esau lamented, "Is he not rightly named Jacob?" implying that the meaning of Jacob's name, *he supplants*, or *he takes by the heel*, was appropriate since he took away his birthright and his blessing.

28. Esau continued to beg for a blessing from his father, then finally lifted up his voice and wept (verses 36-38). Isaac finally answered with a blessing. Complete the words of Isaac's blessing for Esau from verses 39-40 below.

See, away from the fatness of the earth

and away from

By your sword you shall live

but when you break loose

29. While Isaac's blessing at first glance seemed more like a curse, what positive element(s) can you find in the blessing bestowed on Esau?

NOTE: "[A]way from the fatness" refers to how Esau is barred from the blessed and fertile land promised to Jacob (27:28). Historically, the Edomites lived outside the borders of Israel in the rugged highlands south of the Dead Sea. "[W]hen you break loose" foresees the Edomite revolt against the divided kingdom of Israel several centuries later (2 Kings). *Ignatius Study Bible*

30. CONNECTION: In this reading, we feel sorry for Esau who weeps for the loss of his father's blessing. Isaac tells Esau that his words of blessing cannot be taken back. This does not mean that the words of blessing are some sort of magic but rather stresses the powerful impact of prayer when the intervention of God is invoked in the lives of others. The spoken word is powerful and can be used to both hurt or to heal our loved ones. What are some things we can do if careless words have wronged another or, conversely, how can we harness the healing power of the Holy Spirit with our words?

Read and record Proverbs 15:4. As you pray today, ask our gentle Jesus to help guide you to become more thoughtful and loving in your speech.

DAY SIX

Read Genesis 27:41-46

31. Today we read that Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him. What did he say to himself according to verse 41?

32. After hearing the words of her elder son, Rebekah told Jacob that Esau was planning to kill him. For the third time, she told Jacob to “obey” ([Genesis 27:8,13](#)) and flee at once to her brother (verses 42-43). Rebekah will never see her beloved son again. Did Rebekah consider the consequences of her actions? What do you think she thought was going to happen to her family?

33. Although Jacob was her favored son, what about her words in verses 44-45 suggests that Rebekah cared about both her sons?

34. Though she formulated a plan to save Jacob from Esau, Rebekah still needed the support and resources of Isaac to implement that plan. She told Isaac she was weary of her life "because of the Hittite women" (verse 46). Look up [Genesis 26:34-35](#) to learn about the marriages of Esau and speculate as to the reasons they created problems for Rebekah.

NOTE: Rather than admit to her husband that she masterminded the deceitful events, she picks up the theme of [Genesis 26:34-35](#): Esau's marriages outside the family have brought grief to his parents. Rebekah wants assurance that Jacob will marry within the family, to avoid further sorrow. Her request to send Jacob away has the added advantage of protecting the promise of children and land. *Collegeville*

35. After this story we hear no more about the life of Rebekah. Look up and record one of the final references to this Old Testament Matriarch.

[Genesis 35:8](#)

[Genesis 49:31](#)

36. CONNECTION: Today we read that "Now Esau hated Jacob..." While family life can sometimes be challenging, it can bless us in ways that surprise us as life unfolds. True friendship in life is a rare gift but among siblings or family members, it is a special grace. Sometimes life also gifts us with friendships that are more like family than even close relatives.

What are some ways that, with God's help, we can develop close relationships and discourage competition among siblings and friends? How have the special bonds you have developed with family and friends helped you on your faith journey?

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-10. Write a prayer today of gratitude today for a special loved friend or relative in your life.

Read pages 55-57 in *The Book of Genesis* by Lawrence DiPaolo, Jr., Ph.D. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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