

Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

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Year 1: Session 1 – Getting to know Jacob, a patriarch

Class 1: Genesis 27:1-35, 41-44 – Jacob the Deceiver

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Introduction to Jacob
- Explore one reason why deception is so tempting
- Offer one way to address the causes of deception (by speaking words of belonging)

Materials needed:

- Movie clip (available on rfour.org)
- 3 non-see-through cups
- A tray or hard surface to place the cups on that is somewhat mobile
- Small item to hide under one of the three cups

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- For the opening question for today's class, I [the teacher] will ask the question, and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we'll go around the circle.
- When it's your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here's this week's question:* Can you do an impression or an accent? If so, let's hear it. If not, what's an impersonation you wish you could do?

(Optional) INTRODUCING THE NEW YEAR

It's the start of a new school year and there are a few things that we need to cover -- (*share your expectations & schedule for the year*)

TRANSITION to ACTIVITY

- We're going to do an activity, where you have to tell me, as a class, which cup you think contains this item (hold item up).

- How this works is that I will hide this item [hold up item] under one of the cups and arrange the cups on the tray without you being to see.
- I will then show you the three cups and you get to guess which cup has the item under it.
- But, before you guess, you can ask me however many yes / no questions you want about where the item is - and I will answer.
- The thing you'll need to figure out is: Do you believe that I'm telling you the truth?
- We'll do this a few times and we'll see if you ever believe what I tell you.
- Let's see what happens

DO ACTIVITY

- *Note to teacher(s):* Your job, here, is to always tell the truth - even if the question is: *Is the item under this cup?* The idea here is to be trustworthy. It's always interesting to see if students will believe you, especially if you prove yourself trustworthy.

ASK

- What do you think - did the leader always tell the truth?
- Was it hard to tell if the leader was telling the truth?
- Did you think the leader was trying to fool you?
- As the leader kept telling the truth over and over again, did that convince you to believe what the leader said more or less each time? Why?

BACKGROUND of scripture story

- In today's story about Jacob, we'll see a number of situations where belief and trust plays an important role.
- But before we get to the story, some background first:
 - Jacob lived about 1900 years before Jesus lived.
 - In other words, the amount of time between when Jacob lived and when Jesus lived is the same amount between when Jesus lived and our lives, today.
 - Jacob lived before there was a nation called Israel.
 - In fact, Jacob is one of the "founding fathers" of Israel.
 - The fancy word we use to describe Jacob as a "founding father" is "patriarch"
 - There are three people who are considered to be the patriarchs of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
 - Jacob was the last one born of the three. Isaac was Jacob's dad and Abraham was Isaac's dad -- which means that Abraham was Jacob's grandfather.
 - In fact, Jacob's name was actually changed to "Israel."
 - We'll discuss that story in our next lesson.
 - Today's story happens about 20 years before Jacob's name change.
 - He's still very young, but his dad, Isaac, is dying.
 - And Jacob, who is a twin, wants what his older brother is going to get: the blessing and birthright.
 - As we'll see, both Jacob and his mother will go to great lengths to make sure that he, and not Esau, get that blessing and birthright.
 - Let's see what happens

READ Genesis 27:1-35, 41-44 (recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse)

1 When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." "Here I am," he answered. **2** Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. **3** Now then, get your weapons--your quiver and bow--and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. **4** Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die." **5** Now Rebekah (who is Isaac's wife and the mother to both Esau and Jacob) was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, **6** Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, **7** 'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.' **8** Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: **9** Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. **10** Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies." **11** Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I'm a man with smooth skin. **12** What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing." **13** His mother said to him, "My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me." **14** So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. **15** Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. **16** She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. **17** Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made. **18** He went to his father and said, "My father." "Yes, my son," he answered. "Who is it?" **19** Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing." **20** Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" "The LORD your God gave me success," he replied. **21** Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not." **22** Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." **23** He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him. **24** "Are you really my son Esau?" he asked. "I am," he replied. **25** Then he said, "My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing." Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. **26** Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come here, my son, and kiss me." **27** So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he 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 heaven's dew and of earth's richness--an abundance of grain and new wine. **29** May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed." **30** After Isaac finished blessing him and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. **31** He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, "My father, sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing." **32** His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?" "I am your son," he answered, "your firstborn, Esau." **33** Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him--and indeed he will be blessed!" **34** When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me--me too, my father!" **35** But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." **36** Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!"

41 Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob." **42** When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Your brother Esau is consoling himself with the thought of killing you. **43** Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran. **44** Stay with him for a while until your brother's fury subsides.

ASK

- Is there anything you find interesting or weird about this story? [*to teachers: You don't necessarily need to answer what they notice or have questions about – sometimes just agree with a, "yep, that's interesting" or a, "Yeah, I find that to be weird, too" works*]
- In verse 3 and 4, what does Isaac tell Esau to do? (hunt and prepare some game for Isaac, who will then give his blessing to Esau)
- Who overhears this conversation? (Rebekah, the mother)

- And what does she do? (Tells Jacob)
- And who comes up with the plan to deceive Isaac? (Rebekah does)
- Does Jacob object? (No, not really - he's just worried about certain details)
- Verse 33 - how does Isaac react to being deceived? (he "trembled violently" - in other words, not very well)
- Verse 41 - how does Esau react to being cheated? (also not very well - he plans to kill his brother)
- Verse 43 - What is the result of Jacob's deception? (Jacob must flee his home)
- Did you notice any of the characters listening to God in prayer about what they should do? (nope! None of them do that - this is a pretty godless story in that sense.)
- What were the reasons that you think caused Rebekah and Jacob to choose to deceive? (greed, jealousy, belief the birthright was Jacob's, etc)
- What do you think ... was the deception worth it for Jacob and Rebekah? Were the results worth it??

TELL

- When Rebekah was pregnant with Jacob and Esau (who were twins), the brothers “jostled” within her. So she asks God in prayer why they fight within her and the response she hears is, *"Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."*
- In today's story, it appears that Rebekah tried to make those last few words come true on her own.
- What she doesn't do is say, “OK, God, how do I help my son Jacob become this great nation that you talked about?”
- She doesn't believe that God will make it happen. But it is not only God who Rebekah doesn't believe.
- She doesn't believe Jacob, by being Jacob, can get the blessing.
- She doesn't believe Isaac will give Jacob the better blessing (and rightfully so, I think - Isaac seems to not believe Jacob deserves a good blessing, too)
- So, she has Jacob pretend to be someone else to get the blessing.
- And Jacob goes along with this because in a lot of ways, we see that he wants to be his older brother or at least have what his older brother has his whole life:
 - His name of "Jacob" means "Grasper" or "Grabber."
 - The reason he was given this name is because when he and Esau were born, Jacob was born grasping/holding onto Esau's foot.
 - And, when they are older (but before this story), Jacob buys Esau's birthright from him for a bowl of soup (Esau was very hungry and probably never super-bright)
- It is this "grabbing" for his brother's life instead of believing in himself and being ok with his own life that we see in today's story as well.
- In this instance, Jacob was trying to grab the blessing of his brother. As the firstborn son, Esau automatically held the birthright. A birthright was an honor given to the firstborn, bestowing “head of household” status and the right to inherit his father's estate. The son with the birthright would receive a **double** portion of whatever was passed down from the father (see Deuteronomy 21:17). (taken from <http://www.gotquestions.org/blessing-birthright.html>)
 - A blessing *could* be given regardless of birthright. However, a greater blessing was *almost always* given to the one who held the birthright. (taken from <http://www.gotquestions.org/blessing-birthright.html>)
- Neither Rebekah or Jacob believed Isaac would bless Jacob with the blessing.
- We then see the actions that were prompted by this lack of trust and lack of belief do a lot of damage.
- Isaac is betrayed. Esau is robbed. And Jacob has to leave home.

INTRO TO VIDEO

- Let's watch a movie clip that shows a similar situation with a different result.
- The clip we're going to watch is from the movie, "Mrs. Doubtfire"
- In it, a divorced dad has made a number of bad decisions that has resulted in him not being able to see his kids very much.
- So, he has a plan - he's going to pretend to be someone else so that he can be hired to be the next nanny for his kids.
- Let's see what happens

WATCH VIDEO

ASK

- So, could the dad stay the dad to get what he wanted? (no)
- What was he willing to do to get closer to his kids? (be a completely different person)
- Was he convincing as another person? (seemed like it, yes)
- Do you think he'll get the job? (he seemed to be doing pretty well - and yes, he does)

TELL

- Today's story is difficult to talk about because there's nothing good that happens in it.
- So, we have to learn from the mistakes that are in it.
- And the two biggest mistakes in it are:
 - 1. God is never consulted
 - 2. None of the adults believe Jacob is good enough for the "right" blessing
- A lot of our classes will be about reminders and reasons why we should consider consulting God.
- However, for today, I want to focus on the mistake of the adults not believing in their children.
- As students, you are not our "children," but I want you to know we believe in you.
- And, during this year, I hope we can provide a place where you don't feel a need to pretend to be someone else (except when it's for fun, of course)
- This doesn't mean we're going to let you do whatever you want. Being your true self doesn't mean just doing whatever you want. It means doing the things you have to do while being yourself instead of pretending to be someone else.
- Which is why we are so very excited about the start of this year: We get to spend all these classes with you [point]. And you [point]. And you [point]. And it's going to be awesome. Not because the lessons will be awesome (though hopefully they are), but because you are going to be here. And your being here is what is going to make this an awesome year.
- So thank you, not just for today, but for all the classes we're going to have together.
- Next class, we'll read the story where Jacob wrestles with God - and how it helps him stop grasping at his brother's life.

CLOSING PRAYER