

Sermon Study Guide



#1: Rivalry & Power

HOME: Finding Redemption in the Messiness of Life

January 19, 2020 | Dr. Stephen G. Tan

In this series we will look at the life of Jacob to help us identify the sin issues that causes messiness in life and dysfunction in the family, and how we can find redemption in these messes.

Reflect

There is no such thing as a perfect family. Every family--immediate or extended family, or even the church family--has its own challenges and issues and dysfunctions, because life is messy and because we live in a sinful world.

- How important is your family to you? Share what you appreciate most about your family.
- Discuss how conflict happens among people who are closest to each other and who love each other the most.

Read and Discuss

Scripture

Genesis 25:20-34

Discussion Questions

1. What did Isaac pray for? How did God answer his prayer? What perplexed Rebekah about her pregnancy (v. 22)?
2. Power play is when you try to gain influence over someone else using human methods to achieve what belongs to God. Cite examples of how power play shows in the family, workplace, or church.
3. We learn from this passage three important principles about power to help us avoid planting the seed of rivalry in our different relationships. The first is that **God's ways are not our ways. Let Him decide (v. 23-26).**
 - a. What was God's sovereign response to Rebekah's question (v. 23)? Why would God reveal this to Rebekah? It must have been a shock to Isaac and Rebekah to hear that their younger son would rule over the older one. What was the culture during that time that determines who should succeed in life?
 - b. Describe the birth of the two sons. What were the meanings of their names? In God's sovereign plan, He chose that the Messiah would come from Jacob, not Esau, but it didn't mean that He didn't love Esau. In fact, Esau became a great nation as well. How would you react that God's way is not necessarily your way?
4. **Overt favoritism fans the flames of rivalry. Avoid it! (v. 27-28).**
 - a. Describe how the twins Esau and Jacob grew up. Was it wrong that they differed in their personalities? What was the obvious shortcoming in Isaac and Rebekah's parenting style that brought about a seed of rivalry between their sons? Discuss why overt favoritism fans the flames of rivalry.
 - b. God showed that He has no favoritism when He gave the same access to salvation to everyone. As a parent (or a future parent), share how favoritism can be avoided in raising your kids.
5. **Value the spiritual over the temporal. Learn to wait (v.29-34).**
 - a. Describe how Esau and Jacob's personalities and character showed in their actions. What were the specific mistakes in their actions? Why was Esau held responsible for his decision to give priority to his immediate need over the long-term blessing?
 - b. Do you have a tendency to be like Esau who obviously didn't value what God had given him because of temporal needs? How do you compromise your faith when you choose temporal over spiritual matters?

Respond

In Walk: We see from Esau and Jacob's example that God is not bound by cultural norms. His ways are not necessarily our ways. He never uses scheming ways to accomplish His purpose because He is a holy and sovereign God. The Bible teaches that the end never justifies the means. Romans 3:8 tells us that the will of God is for us to always do what is right and truthful before His eyes. Esau and Jacob suffered the consequences of their actions because one did not value what He had and the other took matters into his own hands instead of letting God's plans take its natural course. When you want something that you think you need right now, do you pause and think of its consequences? Do you ever think that patiently waiting is such an important trait that you need when you are considering God's will and its spiritual value? How would you develop it?

In Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the powerful reminder in Your Word that power play is a sin that causes rivalry in the family and even in my spiritual home. Thank you for reminding me that Your ways are not my ways and I should let You decide. Lord, if I am guilty of overt favoritism at home or at work, please convict me and help me to avoid it by all means from now on. Help me to always value spiritual matters over temporal things because it is what will please You. Lord, help me to learn to wait upon You so that I won't be too impulsive and impatient in my decisions, especially when it has something to do with my faith and walk with You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.