

A Deceiver

SESSION 3

Genesis 27:18-30

Memory Verse: Luke 21:8

God accomplishes His purposes through flawed families and people.

In biographies, authors sometimes ignore or cover up the character flaws and mistakes of their famous subjects. In contrast the writers of the divinely-inspired Scriptures present humans with their warts and all. These character portraits teach us that God can work through all kinds of people, as long as they are willing to submit to His discipline.

Jacob is a great illustration from the pages of the Old Testament. His very name means “supplanter” or “deceiver.” And, for many years, he lived up to his name. Yet, God accomplished His purposes through Jacob, as Jacob learned to yield to Him.

As you reflect on the truths to this session, consider your own flaws and how God has used you despite those shortcomings. Spend time praying for the adults in your group, asking God to help them see themselves honestly and to let Him change them from the inside out.



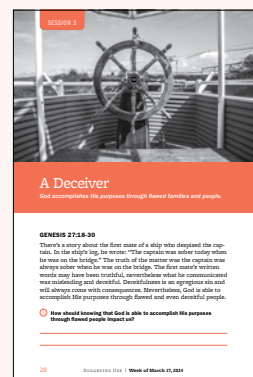
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There’s a story about the first mate of a ship who despised the captain. In the ship’s log, he wrote: “The captain was sober today when he was on the bridge.” The truth of the matter was the captain was always sober when he was on the bridge. The first mate’s written words may have been truthful; nevertheless, what he communicated was misleading and deceitful. Deceitfulness is an egregious sin and will always come with consequences. Still, God is able to accomplish His purposes through flawed—and even deceitful—people. (PSG, p. 28)

How should knowing that God is able to accomplish His purposes through flawed people impact us?



Understand the Context (Genesis 25:19–27:46)

Genesis 25:19 introduces readers to the story of Jacob. After taking Rebekah as his wife at age forty, Isaac prayed for her because she couldn’t conceive. The Lord heard his prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. The Lord revealed to Rebekah that the leaders of what would become two nations were present in her womb, and the elder of the twins would serve the younger. The event of the twins’ birth supported the truth of the Lord’s words because the younger, Jacob, came out of the womb grasping the heel of the older, Esau (25:19-26).

Esau loved the outdoors and became an expert hunter, while Jacob was a “quiet man who stayed at home” (Gen. 25:27). The Hebrew term rendered “quiet” can also be translated “complete,” “gentle,” or “having integrity.” These meanings don’t sound much like the person we know as Jacob. One Old Testament scholar defined the Hebrew word as meaning “one whose life revolves around a single center.” That description fits Jacob well because initially his life centered around himself. Later, as Jacob grew spiritually, he allowed the Lord to become the central focus of his life. In his experience of wrestling with God, Jacob learned that we prevail with God by surrendering to Him (see 32:24-32).

A significant interaction between Jacob and Esau occurred after the boys grew up. Esau came home exhausted from the field and found Jacob cooking a pot of stew. In exchange for the stew, Esau sold Jacob his birthright (25:27-34). The birthright consisted of special privileges belonging to the firstborn male

child in the family, including a double portion of the family inheritance.

In chapter 26, the focus shifts to Isaac. The Lord confirmed His promise to Abraham with Isaac. The fulfillment of the promise became apparent as Isaac’s wealth steadily multiplied. This patriarch’s peaceable nature reveals itself in the conflict over water rights between his own herdsmen and herdsmen from Gerar. Isaac handled the conflict by moving on and digging another well. He also made a covenant of peace with Abimelech, Gerar’s king.

Genesis 27 recounts the story of Jacob stealing the blessing from his elder twin. Isaac sent Esau out to hunt game and to prepare a meal for him. After the meal, Isaac planned to bestow the family blessing on Esau. Among other things, the blessing formally conferred the right to rule over the clan following the patriarch’s death.

Rebekah had overheard the conversation between Isaac and Esau and took the lead in deceiving her husband. She enlisted Jacob to prepare a meal Isaac loved. She also covered Jacob with animal hides so that his skin felt hairy like Esau’s. With that, a series of events were set in motion that changed the entire family forever.

As you read Genesis 27:18-30 reflect on how God uses flawed and sinful people to accomplish His purposes. (PSG, p. 29)



PRIOR TO THE SESSION: Display **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *The Patriarchs*), and **Pack Item 5** (Poster: *Key Moments in Jacob's Life*) for reference during the next few sessions.



INTRODUCE: Direct the group to signal with a thumbs up or a thumbs down if they have ever heard the term “fake news.” Share that, according to one source, “fake news” is false or misleading information presented as news. *Sometimes fake news goes viral and is quickly considered truth.* Explain that when we can’t verify the accuracy of information, distinguishing the truth is not always easy.



REFLECT: Read the lesson introduction on page 28 of the PSG. Lead the group in a brief discussion about honest communication and the dangers of being deceptive.

ASK: **How should knowing that God is able to accomplish His purposes through flawed people impact us?** (PSG, p. 28)

CONTEXTUALIZE: Using Understand the Context, share the background leading up to the focal passage. Use **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *The Patriarchs*) to add context and to summarize the conflict between Jacob and Esau.

TRANSITION: *During this session, Jacob, with Rebekah's help, deceived his father, Isaac. Knowing the rest of the story and how Jacob was used by God, we are reminded of how God uses flawed and even deceitful people to accomplish His purposes.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Secure several copies of the *Baptist Hymnal* (2008). Encourage the group to turn to Hymn No. 105, “Grace Greater Than Our Sin.” Enlist three volunteers to read one verse of the hymn when directed. After each volunteer reads, lead the group in singing or reading the chorus together. Briefly discuss why it’s important to remember that God’s grace is greater than anything we might do.

Trap Set (Genesis 27:18-20)

18 When he came to his father, he said, “My father.” And he answered, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?”
19 Jacob replied 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 bless me.” **20** But Isaac said to his son, “How did you ever find it so quickly, my son?” He replied, “Because the LORD your God made it happen for me.”

(v. 18) Father: The Hebrew word rendered **father** is written in English as *ab*. The term is part of various Old Testament names. Abram means “exalted father.” Abraham means “father of a multitude.” The name of Gerar’s King Abimelech means “my father is king.”

In Old Testament times, a father exercised paternal authority over his family. He held responsibility for the religious and moral training of his children. Before the Israelites received the law through Moses, a father also acted as the family priest. Among his other duties, a father assumed the responsibility of giving his daughter in marriage.

(v. 18) Son: The Hebrew term translated here as **son** can designate a grandson or even children in general (male and female). The word also can refer to the people of a nation, as in the “sons of Israel.” The importance of children, especially sons, in ancient Israel is evident in the law of levirate marriage, which provided for the continuation of the family line (Deut. 25:5-10; Ps. 127:3-5).

Fathers passed on ancient traditions to their sons (Ex. 13:8-9,14). Sons were taught to honor their fathers and their mothers (20:12) and to heed their parents’ instruction as wisdom derived from their life experiences and their relationship with God (Prov. 1:8; 6:20).

Key Person

Jacob

This colorful personality appears in approximately half the book of Genesis. The younger of Isaac and Rebekah’s twins, he came out of his mother’s womb grasping the heel of his brother, Esau. Thus he received a name meaning “heel grabber” or “deceiver.”

Jacob deceived others, but later reaped deception from his Uncle Laban (see Gen. 29:15-30). As a patriarch, Jacob fathered twelve sons. From those sons the twelve tribes of Israel originated. The Lord eventually changed Jacob’s name to Israel, after he wrestled with God and found victory in surrendering his life completely to the Lord (32:24-32).

(v. 19) Esau: This elder twin of Jacob was born with a hairy and red body (25:25; 27:11,21-23). Jacob’s holding Esau’s heel at birth depicted the struggle that would continue between them and their descendants. **Esau** became the ancestor of the Edomites, who occupied a region south of the Dead Sea.

Isaac favored Esau, while Rebekah favored Jacob. Having sold his birthright, Esau remained eligible to receive Isaac’s family blessing. However, Rebekah devised a plan whereby Jacob could deceive his elderly father and receive the blessing (27:1-30). To escape Esau’s anger, Jacob fled to Mesopotamia (27:41-45). Years later, the brothers experienced reconciliation after Jacob returned to Canaan (33:1-16).

(v. 19) Firstborn: The **firstborn** son represented the prime of human vigor (49:3). He was to be dedicated to the Lord and received special privileges and responsibilities. The firstborn son’s birthright included a double portion of the inheritance and leadership of the tribe or clan. Following his father’s death, the firstborn functioned as head of the house and provided for his mother until her death and his sisters until their marriages. The firstborn might sell his birthright as Esau did (25:29-34) or he might forfeit his privileges as Reuben did (35:22; 49:3-4).

In the exodus from Egypt, God preserved the firstborn of Israel. As a result, all the firstborn male Israelites belonged to the Lord. Originally, Israel’s priests came from the firstborn of Israelite families (Ex. 13:11-15). Later the Lord chose the tribe of Levi to carry out this responsibility (Num. 3:11-13).

Key Doctrine

The Family

Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. (See Proverbs 24:3; Ephesians 6:1-4.)

EXPLORE Genesis 27:18-20



APPLICATION POINT: Believers must avoid justifying wrong actions.

EXPLAIN: Direct attention to the first two points on **Pack Item 5** (*Poster: Key Moments in Jacob's Life*). Share that even though Esau had forfeited his birthright, he still would be first in line to receive his father's blessing. Point out that this would involve family leadership and responsibility after Isaac's death.

DRAW: On the board or on a large sheet of paper draw a two-column chart. Label one column *Esau* and the other column *Jacob*. Lead the group to share what they already know about each brother and record those facts on the chart.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Genesis 27:18-20**, while the group identifies Jacob's initial steps to trap Isaac.

EXAMINE: Encourage adults to find a partner. Encourage half the pairs to examine and summarize the information for verse 18 on pages 30-31 of the PSG, while the other half does the same for verse 19 (PSG, p. 31). After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share some key thoughts from each verse. Lead the group to examine Genesis 27:20 together (PSG, p. 31). Point out how Jacob tried to give God credit for helping him.

ASK: **How do we try to fool others to get a blessing today? How do we try to include God in our schemes?** (PSG, p. 32)



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Mouse Trap

Hold up a mouse trap and ask the group to identify its primary use. Explain that just as we attempt to lure a mouse into the trap with a bite of cheese, we can be misled by a tempting desire. Note that desires can lead us away from God's plan for us; but God can still accomplish His purposes through flawed people if we repent. State that today's session reveals a deceitful Jacob, but God is not through with him.

Deception Carried Out (Genesis 27:21-27)

21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come closer so I can touch you, my son. Are you really my son Esau or not?” **22** So Jacob came closer to his father Isaac. When he touched him, he said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” **23** He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him. **24** Again he asked, “Are you really my son Esau?” And he replied, “I am.” **25** Then he said, “Bring it closer to me, and let me eat some of my son’s game so that I can bless you.” Jacob brought it closer to him, and he ate; he brought him wine, and he drank. **26** Then his father Isaac said to him, “Please come closer and kiss me, my son.” **27** So he came closer and kissed him. When Isaac smelled 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.

(v. 21) Isaac: This son promised to Abraham and Sarah was born when the couple was beyond child-bearing ages. The name Isaac means “he laughs.” The designation identifies not only Abraham’s and Sarah’s unbelieving laughter at the Lord’s promise, but also their joy in the promise’s fulfillment (Gen. 17:17-19; 18:11-15; 21:1-7). The Lord’s command to offer Isaac as a sacrifice served as the supreme test of Abraham’s faith. Isaac married Rebekah, who bore the twin sons Jacob and Esau. The patriarch Isaac died at the age of 180 at Mamre near Hebron.

(vv. 22-23) Hands: The Hebrew term primarily designates the appendage at the end of a person’s arm, especially in terms of how hands are used to accomplish an individual’s will. However, the Hebrews also employed the word in a variety of theological expressions. For example, the phrase “into or under someone’s hand” conveyed the idea of that person having authority or power over something or someone.

Also, the term rendered “their strength is gone” (Deut. 32:36) more literally reads “their hand is gone.” The expression “pledged their allegiance to King Solomon” (1 Chron. 29:24) can mean “gave (their) hand under King Solomon.” To act “defiantly” (Num. 15:30) involves acting “with a high hand,” while uplifted hands often symbolize prayer (Ps. 28:2).

(vv. 26-27) Kiss: This kiss may have been part of the blessing ritual or it may simply have been a demonstration of family affection. On the other hand, it may have been another attempt on Isaac’s part to make sure that he was blessing Esau and not Jacob. Esau would normally carry an earthy scent associated with hunting or being outdoors (v. 27).

Jacob’s betrayal with a kiss for personal gain is superseded in Scripture by Judas’s betrayal kiss of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:48-49).

(v. 27) Smelled: Isaac depended on his sense of smell to help compensate for his failing eyesight (Gen. 27:1). The patriarch’s nose informed him that the clothing of the son whom he was blessing carried the odor of a man who hunted in the wild.

Key Word

Blessed

We previously encountered the Hebrew word translated **blessed** in Genesis 24:27, where Abraham’s servant “blessed” or praised the Lord for leading him to the house of Abraham’s relatives. (See comments in Session 2.) The term occurs in a different context in Genesis 27. Here, it designates the irrevocable blessing a father typically conferred on the eldest son before the father’s death. In the Old Testament context “to bless” means to endow with power for success, including prosperity and longevity. This verbal blessing was normally futuristic.

Additionally, the Old Testament views God as the only source of blessing. It is only in His name that others can confer blessing (see Deut. 10:8). From Genesis 12:1-3 forward, the Lord demonstrated that He alone ultimately has the power to bestow blessing. In the accounts of the patriarchs, blessing is linked specifically to reproductive powers. Thus we see that God alone gives life. This basic understanding of God as the Lifegiver extends throughout the Scriptures to its ultimate expression in John 3:16. Isaac’s blessing on Jacob included prosperity, international respect, and authority over Isaac’s descendants.



APPLICATION POINT: Believers must be diligent when examining truth claims.

RECORD: Add the word “Deceiver” under Jacob’s name on the two-column chart. Point out that Jacob was definitely living up to his name in this incident.

READ: **Read aloud Genesis: 27:21-27** as the group listens for the next steps of Jacob’s deception. Point out how Isaac repeatedly questioned Jacob regarding his identity, and Jacob repeatedly lied to his father to get what he wanted.

DISCUSS: Write the following words on the board: *Sight, Hearing, Touch, Taste, Smell*. Lead the group in a brief discussion about how each of these senses played into Jacob’s deception of Isaac. Acknowledge that Jacob and Rebekah covered every base.

ASK: **When is it healthy to remain skeptical about a person’s claims?** (PSG, p. 33)

REVIEW: Direct adults to scan the “Did You Know?” feature on page 34 of the PSG. Encourage them to share key ideas about the blessing Isaac was getting ready to bestow on Jacob. Use information from *Key Word: Blessed* (p. 42 of the Leader Guide) to supplement that information.

TRANSITION: *The trap was set, and the deception was carried out. All that was left was for Isaac to share the blessing.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Case Study

As a group, record a list of situations where it is easy to make poor decisions. Discuss what makes these situations so tempting. Present the following case study for group discussion: *Sam works long hours to support his family, but he never seems to have enough money for all the bills. He is presented with an opportunity to add extra income by simply altering one line on a report that he submits monthly. His boss justifies it by saying that it wouldn’t really change anything. Should Sam consider the offer? Why or why not?*

Blessing Granted (Genesis 27:28-30)

28 May God give to you — from the dew of the sky and from the richness of the land — an abundance of grain and new wine. **29** May peoples serve you and nations bow in worship to you. Be master over your relatives; may your mother’s sons bow in worship to you. Those who curse you will be cursed, and those who bless you will be blessed. **30** As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob and Jacob had left the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau arrived from his hunting.

(v. 28) Dew of the sky: The great differences in day and night temperatures in biblical Palestine resulted in heavy dews in the morning hours. Such dews were beneficial because they kept vegetation alive during the summer drought. Recognized as a gift from God, He might withhold the dew from His disobedient people (1 Kings 17:1; Hag. 1:7-10).

During the time of the Israelites’ wilderness wandering the Lord sent manna along with the dew (Ex. 16:13-16; Num. 11:9). In a figurative sense, the king’s favor (Prov. 19:12), godly teaching (Deut. 32:2), and the blessings of unity among God’s people (Ps. 133:1-3) are compared with the refreshing dew.

(v. 28) Richness of the land: This phrase more literally means “the fatness of the earth.” In the context of Genesis 27:28, the term is used symbolically to convey the idea of prosperity and well-being.

A related noun is generally designated “olive oil.” Olive oil played a significant role in the daily activities of those living in the biblical world. It was mixed with flour to bake daily bread. Such oil was important in cosmetics, perfumes, medicines, and the lighting of lamps. It also played a role in sacrifices and offerings. Priests and kings were anointed with oil as a symbol of the Lord’s blessings. Thus, the term became synonymous with prosperity.

(v. 28) Grain and new wine: The Hebrew word translated **grain** does not identify a specific grain. It has been variously translated “wheat,” “cereal,” or “corn.” The word designated a desirable and valuable crop. The Lord expected His people to tithe grain along with other products (Num. 18:8-13; Deut. 18:1-5). The Lord promised to bless His people with such agricultural abundance if they were obedient to Him (Deut. 7:12-13; 11:13-14).

Old Testament prophets predicted the abundance of grain and **wine** when the Lord restored His people (Jer. 31:12; Ezek. 36:29). Many Bible scholars view the Philistine god Dagon as a grain god because the name is closely related to the Hebrew word for grain (*dagan*).

(v. 29) Peoples . . . nations: The Hebrew term translated **peoples** often appears in the Old Testament to identify a group larger than a tribe or clan, but smaller than a race. It predominantly expresses two basic characteristics of a group: (1) relationships such as religious fellowship, family ties, or a king-subject relationship and (2) the unity of the group. The root of the word rendered **nations** suggests an emphasis on togetherness, a common people considered as a unit. In Genesis 27:29 the two terms appear almost synonymous.

Key Word

Curse

At least six different Hebrew words have been translated **curse**. The majority of curse pronouncements using this Hebrew term fall into one of three general categories: (1) declaring judgments or punishments (Gen. 3:14,17), (2) uttering threats (Jer. 11:3; 17:5; Mal. 1:14), or (3) proclaiming laws (Deut. 27:15-26; 28:15-19).

All of these curses result from people violating the demands of their relationship with God. For example, idolatry (Deut. 27:15) and disrespect for parents (27:16) would bring a curse on those who commit such acts of disobedience. While belonging to the Lord and His people brought blessing, being cursed often meant separation from the Lord and from the community of faith. Thus to be cursed resulted in insecurity, as well as physical and spiritual disaster.



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can trust God to bring His purpose to pass in every situation.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Genesis 27:28-30** while the group listens for the elements of Isaac's blessing.

EXAMINE: Encourage the group to read the information for verses 28-30 on pages 34-35 of the PSG and to circle or underline the various elements of Isaac's blessing. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they marked. Facilitate a brief discussion about the impact each of those elements would have on Jacob's future. Note that despite Jacob's dishonesty, God still had a plan and that plan would be fulfilled.

SUMMARIZE: Briefly summarize Esau's response in Genesis 27:31-46. Note the consequences of the deceit on the family. Affirm that even as God's purposes are fulfilled, individuals will still experience the negative consequences of negative decisions.

TRANSITION: *Jacob's future as the leader of the family was now assured through the blessing of Isaac. He would carry out the promises provided through God's covenant with Abraham, even though his actions and character were flawed. That should comfort us, knowing that God can and will use us despite our brokenness and imperfections.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Paraphrase

Give each adult a pencil and a sheet of paper. Lead the group to work with a partner to paraphrase Isaac's blessing in today's language. Allow time for the paraphrases to be shared. Point out that regardless of how the blessing is worded, it set Jacob apart from Esau and opened a door for a new future.

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 36 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Believers must avoid justifying wrong actions.*
 - *Believers must be diligent when examining truth claims.*
 - *Believers can trust God to bring His purpose to pass in every situation.*
- DISCUSS:** Call for volunteers to share content from Genesis 27 that supports these statements. Encourage adults to consider ways they can live out these statements each day.
- REFLECT:** Encourage adults to suggest reasons people are so quick to justify their wrong actions.
- ASK:** **Why is it essential we have discernment when listening to the claims of others?** (PSG, p. 36)
- READ:** Direct the group to read Luke 21:8 aloud together, encouraging them to memorize the verse to remind themselves to avoid being deceived in challenging situations.
- PRAY:** Close in prayer, guiding the group to pray silently for God to provide discernment through the Holy Spirit when they face questionable truth claims.

After the Session

Reinforce the session by reminding the group to be alert for any deception that would detract them from God's plan. Encourage them to support each other in prayer. Point them to Luke 21:8 as a verse they can memorize and meditate on as they seek spiritual discernment. During the week, send each adult a text or email with Luke 21:8. Remind them of the power of God's Word when they need wisdom and discernment.

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