

# REAL PEOPLE, REAL GOD:

## Isaac's Twin Boys

Today we're going to talk about a very REAL FAMILY—Isaac, Rebekah, Esau, and Jacob.

They were a mess.

As always, we'll see how our REAL GOD shows up in the midst of their mess.

### What are the REAL PEOPLE Doing?

- When today's story begins, Isaac and Rebekah have been married for 20 years, and Rebekah has remained barren and childless.
- Isaac is 60 years old when he prays for his wife's empty womb.
  - He was a miracle child of a barren womb and is now praying for a miracle child

### Our REAL GOD Hears and Answers

- Rebekah pregnant!
- Babies start jostling around within her, she cries out to God, "What's happening to me?"
- Our REAL GOD responds **Genesis 25:23**:
  1. "Two nations are in your womb and
  2. two peoples from within you will be separated;
  3. one people will be stronger than the other, and
  4. the older will serve the younger."
- Even in a very male-dominated society, our REAL GOD answers women in need (remember Hagar and Sarah?).

### REAL Babies Messed Up at Birth

- First baby born was "red and hairy"—Hebrew for "red and hairy" is *Esau*
- Second baby born was grasping his brother's heel. Hebrew idiom for "deceiver" is "one who grasps the heel," and spoken word is
- In ancient culture, name forms character.
  - "Red and hairy" Esau grew into a mighty hunter, and his father loved him more.
  - "Deceiver" Jacob stayed near the tents/worked at home, and his mother loved him more.
- Sad, dysfunctional family—that began before Isaac ever met his wife.

## REAL Dysfunction Runs Deep

- Isaac's life was steeped in family dysfunction from birth. His mother Sarah hated Hagar and her son Ishmael and had them sent away when Isaac was barely 3-4 years old.
- Abraham loved Ishmael and would have found this separation difficult. Though he loved Isaac deeply, he would have missed his son Ishmael.
- Later, Abraham marries another wife (perhaps after Sarah dies, perhaps before) named Keturah and has six more sons with her.
- Isaac would have witnessed his father's struggle with multiple sons/wives and the strife they produced.

## REAL Sibling Rivalry Begins

- Scripture tells us plainly that Isaac loved Esau more, and Jacob undoubtedly knew it.
- Jacob's bitter sibling rivalry (reminiscent of Cain and Abel) turns into conniving when he swindles Esau for the first time.

“Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, ‘Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!’ ...Jacob replied, ‘First sell me your birthright.’ ...Esau said, ‘What good is the birthright to me?’ ...So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob...So Esau despised his birthright.” **Genesis 25:29-34**

- Esau values his father's heritage so little that he'll sell it for a bowl of soup. God knew—and so now do we—that he would not be a responsible caretaker of God's Covenant.

## Who's the Best Brother?

- Esau would have been an irresponsible Covenant-bearer.
- Jacob is absolutely committed to gaining Isaac's inheritance, but his motives and methods are horrendous.
- Is it better to put God's eternal Covenant in the hands of a swindler or a lout? We need not decide—because God decided before either man made a single choice or action.

“Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—[Rebekah] was told, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ Just as it is written: ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.’” **Romans 9:11-13**

- We won't determine the answer to predestination or freewill on our podcast today, but let's just agree that God knew what He was doing when He chose to give Jacob Esau's birthright.

- Did the birthright automatically make Jacob the bearer of Abraham’s Covenant? Nope. A ***birthright*** is the firstborn’s right to a double portion of his father’s inheritance (possessions such as livestock, tents, grain, gold, silver, etc.). All family’s passed down a birthright. Abraham’s Covenant, however, was unique to Isaac and one chosen son. That deception comes years later...

## **REAL Deception Spreads**

- Isaac calls in his beloved son, Esau, to promise him the “special” blessing in exchange for a “tasty” meal (what is it with these men and their stomachs?).

“Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, ‘Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, “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.’ Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: 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. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.’” **Genesis 27:5-10**

- Jacob thinks deceiving his father is a bad idea—not because of any significant moral compass but because he’s afraid of being caught and cursed! Oy-vay! Have these people no shame?

## **What’s Rebekah’s REAL Motivation?**

What could have made Rebekah so determined that she would be willing to accept a curse for Jacob if Isaac found out?

### **Two Great Motivators in Life:**

1. Love
  2. Fear
- Love for Jacob – Would Esau take back the birthright Jacob stole years earlier—for that bowl of stew—and exile his younger brother without provisions?
  - Fear for herself – Would Esau exile Rebekah herself or treat her poorly when he gained control of Isaac’s camp?

### **Another Strong Motivation:**

Perhaps she remembered God’s promise to her when the boys jostled against each other in her womb:

“...the older (Esau) will serve the younger (Jacob).” **Genesis 25:23**

Like Sarah (and many concerned mamas since), perhaps Rebekah was trying to “help God” with His plan.

## **REAL Betrayal and More Dysfunction**

- Rebekah prepares the meal, dresses Jacob in Esau’s clothing, and places goatskin on his hands and neck to make him “hairy” like his older brother.
- Jacob carries the tray into his father’s tent. The aroma of the tasty meal announces his presence...

“He went to his father and said, ‘My father.’ ‘Yes, my son,’ he answered. ‘Who is it?’ 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.’” **Genesis 27:18-19**

- This is the first of FIVE lies Jacob tells his father Isaac. Four more times Isaac gives Jacob a chance to tell the truth, and every time Jacob lies to his *blind father* to swindle him out of the family fortune.
- When Isaac is finally convinced, he confers Esau’s blessing on Jacob:

“Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed...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.***” **Genesis 27:27-29** (*emphasis added*)

- Isaac intended to make Esau lord over his brother, but notice he only *HINTED* at Abraham’s Covenant in this blessing.

## **The REALization Dawns**

- Esau returns from hunting and prepares the special meal. He enters the tent ready to receive THE blessing.
- Both father and son are devastated at the realization.
- Esau begs his father for another blessing—almost as many times as Jacob lied about his identity.
- Isaac REPEATEDLY denies his best-loved son any blessing at all, saying he’d given all the blessing to Jacob. Finally, he offers Esau only the measly blessing that someday he’ll throw off Jacob’s yoke.
- Esau storms out, vowing revenge on his conniving brother.

## Now For the REAL Blessing!

- Rebekah hears of Esau's threat and cooks up another scheme to get Jacob out of the camp. She visits Isaac and goes on the offensive rather than letting him complain about Jacob's deceit.

“Then Rebekah said to Isaac, ‘I’m disgusted with living because of these Hittite women [the ones Esau married]. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living.’” **Genesis 27:46**

- Isaac summons Jacob. At this point, you'd expect Isaac to be angry with his youngest son, right? Yell, scream—at least try to get to the bottom of the deception! But Isaac does NONE of that...

“So Isaac...commanded [Jacob]: ‘Do not marry a Canaanite woman. Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother’s father Bethuel...***May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers...May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.***’ Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way.” **Genesis 28:1-5** (*emphasis* added)

I've always thought Isaac was a sort of a Patriarch under-achiever—not much page-time in Genesis. There are many chapters about Abraham, many about Jacob, but we don't hear much about Isaac's encounters with God.

But this whole blessing thing has changed my opinion. Isaac was VERY MUCH led by the Spirit during his blessings. He was constrained by God's Spirit when he *thought* he was blessing Esau and only hinted at Abraham's blessing to the son he loved most. Again, when Esau arrived and BEGGED his father for a blessing, the Spirit kept Isaac from granting Abraham's Covenant to his firstborn.

Did Isaac realize what was happening? I don't know. But by the time Jacob came into his tent, the Spirit prompted him to clearly and powerfully confer Abraham's Covenant blessing on the son of GOD'S choosing. Good on ya, Isaac! What an amazing God we serve!

## What About Us REAL Folks?

Isaac's family was a split-down-the-middle, heck-of-a-mess, can-you-get-more-emotional-baggage-than-this kind of story. Drama, drama, drama! Yet our REAL GOD worked His purposes and plan through these very REAL people.

That's encouraging to me.

That says to me that no matter what kind of dysfunction, sin, or mess we find ourselves in today, our REAL GOD work through us—in spite of us.

Bottom line: He uses our mess to bless.

\*Originally posted by Mesu Andrews on Jul 22nd, 2016\*