

## Life Group Notes

Sunday 05 January 2020

**Speaker:** Andy McCullough

**Title:** Grace-Filled Struggle

**Series:** Jacob's Story

**Passage:** Genesis 25: 19-34

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Gen 25:19-21. Rebekah can't conceive for 20 years. There is a lot of pressure as this is supposed to be the "Blessed Family Tree." Isaac prays, God answers, and she conceives twins.

Gen 25:22. It is a painful, difficult pregnancy and Rebekah cries out to God, "Why?"

Gen 25:23. She will have two sons who will each produce a "nation." They will always fight each other. Surprisingly, the older will serve the younger!

Gen 25:24-28. Esau means Hairy. Edom means Red. He is the Alpha male, a hunter, full of testosterone, and his father's favourite. Jacob means "he is at your heels," a blessing name (God is at your heels!), but, as the story unfolds comes to mean Overtaker or Supplanter because Jacob pulls Esau back by the heel and moves into his place. Jacob is a good cook and the favourite of his mother.

Gen 25: 29-34. Esau is starving and wants some lentil stew. Jacob says, "You can have some if you sell me your birthright." Physically, this is a double portion of the father's property. Spiritually, this is the promise and blessing of God that through this family the world will be saved. "Thus Esau despised his birthright." He throws it all away to satisfy an immediate physical appetite.

What do we learn from this story at the start of a new year, of a new decade?

### **1. Have a sense of Destiny (God's Choice)**

Even before they were born, before the twins had done anything good or bad, God chose Jacob (Romans 9:11-12). The Bible is clear that God pre-destined Jacob. He chose him, and gave him a destiny, before he was even born. In the same way, God chose us and predestined us in Christ (Ephesians 1:4-5). Whatever 2020 throws at you, God is on your heels, if you are in Christ. He is with you. He is working out his plan for your life.

### **2. Remember What's truly important (Our Choice)**

The comment at the end of the story by the narrator is "Esau despised his birthright." Not "Jacob tricked him," not "It wasn't God's plan anyway"... Esau is to blame!

The New Testament also blames Esau, using him as an example to avoid (Hebrews 12:16,17). The Bible is clear that Esau had a choice, and he chose wrong. Some people teach double-predestination or hyper-Calvinism, which is that God chose some for heaven and some for hell. He chose Jacob for life and he chose Esau for death. But this story does not allow this. God's choice is at work, and our choice is at work. At the beginning for 2020, remember that you have a choice.

### **3. Live the grace-filled struggle (Grace wins)**

Rebekah's womb is like our lives: two opposing forces wrestling with each other. What happens when flesh and Spirit compete? (Galatians 5:16-17). Following Jesus is a struggle between God's will and our will, between flesh and Spirit. But Grace wins. If God has a purpose, he will bring it to completion.

### **Questions for Application**

- What new thing have you understood from this story? What difference should that truth make in your life?
- How do you feel about the beginning of a new year, 2020?
- What does it mean that "God chose us" (Ephesians 1:5-6)? How does that make you feel?
- Esau threw it all away for one meal. Do you agree that our choices have implications? How does that make you feel?
- How do you resolve these two truths: that God's choice is at work in Jacob but that Esau's choice disqualified him?
- Are you struggling at the moment? Pray Grace for one another.