

God's Mercy to a Deceiver

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God is merciful to use even the most unlikely people to build His kingdom.

MAIN PASSAGES: Genesis 27:1-10,18-20,25-29; 28:10-15



What are some foods associated with localities, and which ones have you tried?

Good food usually means a good time, but the pursuit of good food can become disproportionate in our lives, impacting our decision-making, our finances, and our relationships. The same is true for all of the various appetites and desires we struggle with. Why? Because we often fail to put them in their proper place—beneath our pursuit of God. Still, God is merciful. He knows our weaknesses and failings, and yet, He continues to love us and use us to bring blessing to the world.

Group Time

Point 1: God's plan continues through a dysfunctional family (Gen. 27:1-10).

¹ When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could not see, he called his older son Esau and said to him, “My son.”

And he answered, “Here I am.”

² He said, “Look, I am old and do not know the day of my death. ³ So now take your hunting gear, your quiver and bow, and go out in the field to hunt some game for me. ⁴ Then make me a delicious meal that I love and bring it to me to eat, so that I can bless you before I die.”

⁵ Now Rebekah was listening to what Isaac said to his son Esau. So while Esau went to the field to hunt some game to bring in, ⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Listen! I heard your father talking with your brother Esau. He said, ⁷ ‘Bring me game and make a delicious meal for me to eat so that I can bless you in the LORD’s presence before I die.’

⁸ Now, my son, listen to me and do what I tell you. ⁹ Go to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, and I will make them into a delicious meal for your father—the kind he loves. ¹⁰ Then take it to your father to eat so that he may bless you before he dies.”

Isaac’s family was dysfunctional because of sin. As a family unit, they struggled with favoritism, deceit, self-control, and sensuality.



What are some of the sins and struggles that plague many families today?

Many of us lament over the negative things we have experienced in our families and lives—whether because of our sin, someone else’s sin, or because of life’s circumstances. We wonder what our family might be like today if only we could go back and change or fix something. As humans, we tend to focus on the negative rather than rejoice over the positive. Yet we need to stop to consider that no matter what we’ve experienced or what errors we’ve made in our own family life, God is still merciful to us. He still blesses us with goodness and works through us, even when we fail to recognize His blessings.

Point 2: God's plan continues through a deceitful son (Gen. 27:18-20,25-29).

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.”

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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.

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.

Deceived by his younger son, Isaac ate, drank, and then blessed his son Jacob. The aging father bestowed a **four-part blessing** on him, including **an abundance of grain and wine, dominion over other nations and his family**, and **curses for those who cursed him** and **blessings for those who blessed him**, echoing God’s covenant with Abraham.

God delights in using the ordinary—the weak and flawed—for His redemptive purposes so that all of the credit and glory goes to Him (1 Cor. 1:26-31). When we look at the patriarchs, we can only shake our heads and marvel at how God could bring about such good through those who acted so sinfully. We do not celebrate sin, but we celebrate a God whose mercy and grace bring beauty even from the ashes of our lives. We are *all* unworthy to receive God’s blessings and be used by Him, but God kindly pours out His blessings upon us without measure in Christ Jesus.



How have you experienced God’s mercy and grace in your life?

Point 3: God's plan continues through His mercy and grace (Gen. 28:10-15).

¹⁰ Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ He reached a certain place and spent the night there because the sun had set. He took one of the stones from the place, put it there at his head, and lay down in that place. ¹² And he dreamed: A stairway was set on the ground with its top reaching the sky, and God's angels were going up and down on it. ¹³ The LORD was standing there beside him, saying, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your offspring the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out toward the west, the east, the north, and the south. All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵ Look, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

These verses record the first time God spoke to Jacob. Here we might expect to see God's thundering wrath given Jacob's past, but instead, we see God's gentle mercy. He gave Jacob exactly what he needed to know in this moment of uncertainty.



Why do you think it was so important that God spoke directly to Jacob in this passage?

God came into the world through Jesus Christ, providing blessing for all—salvation as a means of restored relationship with God. And He did that for us: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). It is true that God extended mercy to Jacob in abundance, yet through Christ, He has showered us with mercy in superabundance. Jacob's story should not elicit jealousy in our hearts but a humble gratitude, knowing that we are just as undeserving and have received unmatched mercy and grace in Christ.



Voices from Church History

"What is the atonement of Christ? It is himself: it is the inherent and everlasting mercy of God made apparent to human eyes and ears. The everlasting love was disclosed by our Lord's life and death. It showed that God forgives, because he loves to forgive."¹

—David Livingstone (1813-1873)

God Is Merciful: Mercy refers to God's

_____. Both mercy and grace are

_____, meaning humanity can do _____ to earn God's mercy and grace. If one could, then it would no longer be the _____ of mercy or grace.

My Mission

Because God has shown mercy to us, an unworthy people, we look for ways God can demonstrate His mercy and grace to others through our struggles, flaws, and dysfunctions.

- **What are some of your flaws and weaknesses that cause you to think God couldn't save you or work through you? How does the gospel address each one?**
- **How can your small group grow deeper in relationship with one another to be the family God intends?**
- **How can you reveal God's mercy and grace to someone in the coming days?**

Notes

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Genesis 27:1-17

As we read through the Bible, we see time and again how God designed the family to be the primary building block of the community of faith and society as a whole. The husband-wife and parent-child relationships are the two most vital human relationships, only increasing in importance when we understand how they each parallel our relationship with God.

But as we turn the pages of Scripture, we also see time and again the brokenness of families—the most important relationships often cause the deepest heartache and pain. We have seen this on full display in Isaac's family, with this passage, perhaps, being the pinnacle of this family's struggle.



Voices from Church History

"Without you, what am I to myself but a guide to my own self-destruction?"²

—Augustine (354–430)

It can be easy for us to look at the bigger picture of how God used this family—even through their adversity—to fulfill His promises and glorify Himself. That is certainly true, but at the same time, we need to step into this family's pain with them. We have to remember these were real people who were part of a real family falling apart at the seams. We need to remember this because it is the shared reality of so many families today—perhaps even your own. We have to remember that God's ideal for the family and what we might experience are often driven apart by sin—ours and/or others'. But at the same time, we must remember that reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel—reconciliation between us and God, but also between spouses, parents and children, and siblings in broken families.



Where do you yearn for God to bring healing and reconciliation in your family or within other close relationships around you?

Day 2: Read Genesis 27:18-29

Rebekah and Jacob's deception causes many to wonder whether or not God condones deceptive behaviors when done to achieve godly purposes. God had planned to pass the blessing along to Jacob instead of Esau all along, and in Esau, we see a man who didn't show any inclination to value it or show any desire or plan to carry on with the covenant of God. Yet Isaac seemed intent on ignoring God's plan and blessing his oldest son. Were the lies of Rebekah and Jacob, then, part of God's plan, or did He merely use their lies to bring His will to pass?

While this is a compelling theological question with various explanations offered, rarely will we find ourselves in a position where it appears that deception would be best. Even Jacob and Rebekah could have chosen a different path. We have no record of them trying to reason with Isaac and exhorting him to follow God's plan. While God's ways at times may be unclear, what is clear is that God calls on us to live holy and blamelessly before Him and others.



How has God blessed your holy and blameless obedience to Him, even if it was difficult?

Day 3: Read Genesis 27:30-46

A common criticism of the church is that it is full of hypocrites. Backstabbing, deception, lying, and pride can be on full display. A lack of concern for humanity can also exist. And this can cause us to wonder how God could ever use the church. How can God use such broken people to bring His will to pass and glorify Himself? Perhaps you have wondered that even about yourself.

Yet the more we study Scripture, the more we discover the problems we have today are the same problems people have had for millennia. And more importantly, we discover in ourselves the same troubles that we see in those surrounding us.

But as we read through the story of Scripture, we also see that God used these people, as broken and sinful as they were, and we walk away with the confidence that He can and will use us for great good and for His redemptive purposes. God still uses us to bring blessing to this world, not because of who we are but because of who He is.



In what ways do you feel as if God could not use you? How have you seen Him use you in surprising ways?

Day 4: Read Genesis 28:1-9

It took some time, but in the end, we see Isaac finally come around to God's plan of carrying on the promises through Jacob, not Esau. While the first blessing of his youngest son was compelled through deception, here we see the patriarch freely offer his blessing. It might be easy to miss this detail sandwiched in between such a compelling story around it. Just before this, we see Esau seething in anger, wanting to kill his twin brother. And just after this we read of Jacob's first encounter with God during his travels. But we have much to learn from Isaac's blessing here.

Yes, Isaac made a mistake earlier in attempting to bless Esau despite God's revealed will for Jacob to be the one to carry on the family covenant. And yes, his family was divided and in strife. But here we see the patience and grace of God. God continued to work on Isaac's heart and gave him time to obey. And God is just as patient and gracious with us in our slowness and disobedience.



What disobedience do you need to confess to God today? Repent and thank God for His grace and patience toward you.

Day 5: Read Genesis 28:10-22

There are a number of potential reasons why Jacob chose to stop for the night where he did. Whatever his reasons, we do know that it wasn't because he thought the location was special. He had no idea that he would encounter God, or better yet, that God would "encounter" him, in such a powerful way there.

What was rather ordinary became extraordinary—an awesome place, the house of God, the gate of heaven (v. 17). So, with nothing to sacrifice to God in worship, Jacob took the stone that had been near his head, set it up as a marker, and poured oil on it. He named the place Bethel, which means "house of God."

It is easy for us to focus on Jacob's flaws—he had a number of them! But we cannot miss his spiritual sensitivity in this moment. He encountered God and responded appropriately in worship. How about us? How often have we missed God at work in our lives because we have been too busy, too distracted, or too blinded to Him? May we have the spiritual sensitivity to see God at work in the moment!



How has God been at work in your life recently? How has He grown you, blessed you, and used you?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- God's plan continues through a dysfunctional family (Gen. 27:1-10).
- God's plan continues through a deceitful son (Gen. 27:18-20,25-29).
- God's plan continues through His mercy and grace (Gen. 28:10-15).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



What have you observed this week that reminded you that nothing can thwart God's plans, not even deception among His people?



How can you communicate to others the good news that while evil is real, God is nonetheless sovereign and good?

Notes
