

**5 Sunday School Lessons in  
2 Versions for Older and  
Younger Students**

**Lesson Five Jacob and Esau**



## Jacob and Esau

Our Cast of Characters:

Jacob - The younger of twin sons born to Isaac and Rebekah. Jacob will use deception and trickery to get what he wants. Jacob is his mother's favorite child.

Esau - The eldest of the twin sons born to Isaac and Rebekah. He is a skillful hunter who enjoys being outside. Esau is his father's favorite child.

Isaac - Father of Jacob and Esau. Isaac intends to give his blessing to his favorite son Esau, the eldest twin - even though God told Rebekah when she was pregnant that the eldest twin would serve the youngest.

Rebekah - Mother of Jacob and Esau. Rebekah hatches a plan to trick her husband Isaac into giving his blessing to her favorite son, Jacob.

**Read Gen 25:20-34; Gen 27:1-46 and Gen 28:1-22.**

The story of Jacob and Esau begins before they are even born. Rebekah is pregnant, but she is concerned. Things are not normal. There seems to be a struggling within her womb, so she turns to the Lord for help.

And the Lord told her, 'The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other, and your older son will serve your younger son.' Gen 25:23.

Years later when Esau returns from a hunting trip, he is so hungry that he is close to fainting. Esau sees Jacob cooking a pot of stew, and asks for a bowl. Now one would think that if someone saw their brother so hungry that their brother was about to faint, they would rush to get him something to eat. Not Jacob. Jacob was filled with trickery and deceit. Jacob saw his brother's extreme hunger as an opportunity to cheat Esau out of his birthright.

The birthright was a double portion of their father's inheritance. This was a double portion of the material possessions given to the eldest son upon the death of the father. Jacob refused to help his brother unless he gave up his birthright. In the end, Esau said, "What good is my birthright if I die of hunger." Esau swore to Jacob that the birthright was his. Both Jacob and Esau knew that what happened was wrong, and Esau was filled with anger.

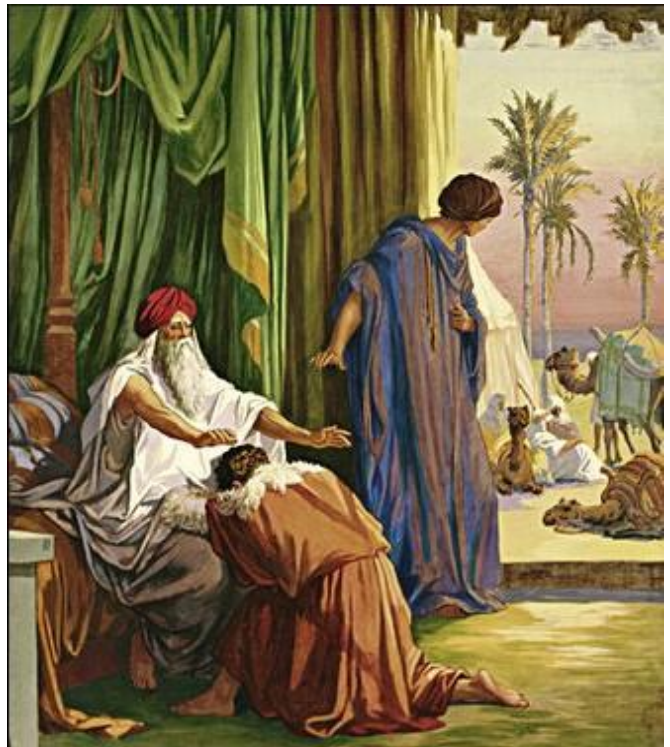
Years later Isaac was very old. His eyesight was failing. He wanted to give Esau, the eldest twin, his blessing before he died. The blessing was more of a spiritual inheritance. The blessing was the traditional way of recognizing the eldest son as the one who would inherit his father's position when the father died. If it is assumed that Isaac's intent was to also include the passing on of the covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac was aware that this was going against God's will for God had said, 'the elder shall serve the younger.'

Isaac asked his son Esau to go hunting for venison. Then to prepare the meat into a savoury dish. After Isaac ate the meal, he would give Esau his blessing.

Rebekah hears what Isaac told Esau and quickly forms a plan to trick Isaac into giving the blessing to her favorite son, Jacob.

Rebekah tells Jacob to kill two young goats which she made into one of Isaac's favorite dishes. Rebekah dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes so that Jacob would smell like Esau. She put goat skins on Jacob's arms and neck so that he would feel more hairy like his brother Esau.

Isaac says that Jacob had the smell and feel of Esau, but the voice of Jacob. Twice he asks, "Are you Esau?", and twice Jacob lies and responds, "I am Esau."



Shortly after Isaac gives Jacob his blessing, Esau returns from hunting. Esau is filled with great anger. Jacob has now stolen both his birthright and his blessing. Instead of becoming the head of his father's household, Esau is reduced to the level of servant to his brother Jacob. Esau forms a plan to kill his brother Jacob after his father dies.

Rebekah learns of Esau's intent. To save Jacob's life, Rebekah begs for Isaac's permission to send Jacob to her brother's home to search for a wife. (The local women where they lived were idol worshippers.) Isaac consents, and Jacob flees for his life to another country to find his uncle.

Theives, wild animals and the elements made traveling alone dangerous. Would Esau pursue him and kill him? An exhausted Jacob falls asleep using a rock for a pillow. But Jacob was not alone. God was watching over him. That night God sends Jacob a dream. In his dream, Jacob sees a ladder going up to Heaven with angels going up and down the ladder. God was at the top of the ladder. God gives Jacob the same promise he gave to Abraham, "and in you and your offspring, shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

God sees not just the deceit and lies Jacob has used in the past, God sees the man Jacob will become. God chooses Jacob to carry on the covenant he made with Abraham.





The Meeting of Esau and Jacob. James J. Tissot, 1836 - 1902.

Jacob was gone for many years, living with his uncle's household. God told Jacob to return to his homeland. Though Jacob still feared Esau's anger, he followed God's request.

The years had changed not only Jacob, but Esau as well. When they met, Esau embraced Jacob. Jacob's fears of Esau's anger were unfounded. God had changed both men.

Among Jacob's descendants were Moses, King David, King Solomon, and Jesus called the Christ, the Son of God. As God had promised, "and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the sins of the world were paid in full; and everlasting life in Heaven became a free gift to all believers.

**Prayer:** Dear God, you chose Jacob to carry on your covenant. Jacob had many faults, but you loved him and chose him anyway. You were by his side and watched over him through his journey in life. Watch over me in my life's journey. Help me to follow your guidance. Teach me how to walk in your path of righteousness. Thank you for the gift of your Son. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## Jacob and Esau

Jacob and Esau were twins. Esau was born a few minutes before Jacob, and was the first son born to his parents Isaac and Rebekah.

Now parents are supposed to try very hard to love their children equally. This did not happen in the home of Jacob and Esau. Esau, the first-born twin, was the favorite child of his father, Isaac. Jacob, the younger twin, was the favorite child of their mother, Rebekah.

As the twins grew older, Esau became an excellent hunter. One day Esau was gone so long hunting that when he came back, he was dizzy and about to faint from hunger. Esau saw Jacob cooking some stew and asked his brother for a bowl. Jacob saw how weak and dizzy Esau was. Instead of helping his brother, Jacob told Esau he would only give him something to eat if Esau gave him his birthright.



The Mess of Pottage by James Jacques Tissot, painted between 1896 - 1902.

The birthright was a double portion of possessions given to the eldest son when the father died.

When their father Isaac died, Esau would inherit more cattle, camels, goats and sheep than Jacob. Finally Esau said, "What good is my birthright if I die of hunger?" Esau swore to Jacob that the birthright was his.

What happened was not right, and both Esau and Jacob knew it. Jacob should have had love and compassion for his brother Esau. He should have gladly shared his food with his brother. Instead, Jacob used Esau's hunger to trick his brother out of his birthright.

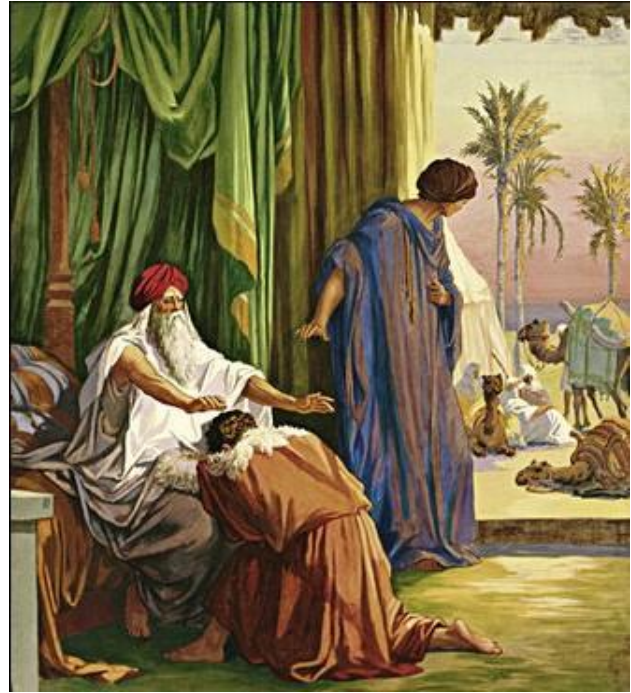
Many years went by. Their father Isaac was very old. His eyesight had failed, and he was blind. Isaac did not know how much longer he would live. Isaac wanted to give his blessing to his favorite son, Esau before he died.

The blessing was the traditional way a father passed down his position to his eldest son. With the blessing, Esau would become the head of the household, and the head of the clan. Esau would make the decision of when to move to find better pasture for the animals. Esau would settle arguments, give permission for marriages, make treaties with other clans.

Isaac told Esau to go hunting for venison, and prepare a savory meal. After Isaac finished eating, he would give Esau his blessing.

Rebekah heard what Isaac said, and immediately formed a plan to trick Isaac. She told Jacob to hurry and kill two goats. Rebekah made Isaac's favorite meal. She dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes so that Jacob would smell like Esau. Rebekah put goat skins on Jacob's arms and neck so that he would feel more hairy like his brother Esau.

Blind Isaac said, "You feel and smell like Esau, but your voice is like Jacob's." Two times Isaac asked Jacob, "Are you Esau?" Twice Jacob lied and said, "I am Esau." Isaac gave Jacob the blessing.



Very soon after Isaac gave Jacob the blessing, Esau returned from hunting. When he learned that Jacob had cheated him out of the blessing, he became so angry that he made a plan to kill Jacob after his father died.

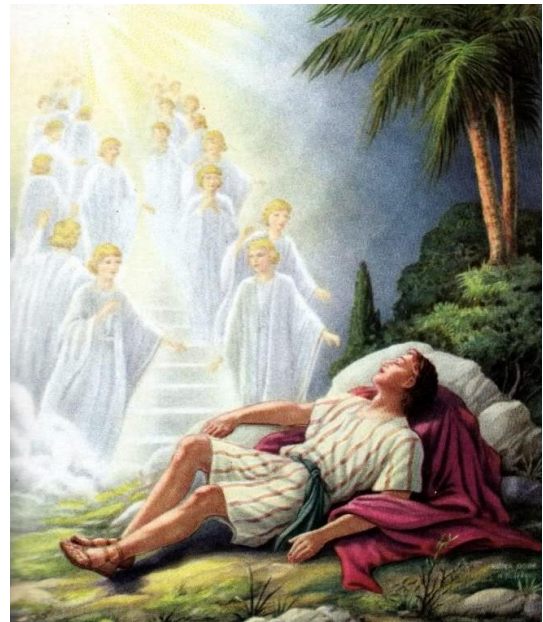
Rebekah learned of Esau's plan to kill Jacob, and she begged Isaac to send Jacob away to her brother's family in another country. She told Isaac that the women who lived near them worshipped idols. Let Jacob go to the home of my brother to find a wife among my relatives.

Jacob packed a few things and ran for his life. Would Esau chase him and kill him? Would he make it to his uncle's country without being beaten or killed by bandits? An exhausted Jacob fell asleep using a rock for a pillow.

God gave Jacob a dream. In the dream Jacob saw a ladder going up to heaven with angels walking up and down. At the top of the ladder stood God.

God told Jacob, "and in you and your offspring, shall all the families of the earth be blessed." That was the same promise God had given to Abraham.

You and I would wonder how the promise of a Savior could possibly come from the descendants of Jacob - a man who cheated his brother Esau out of his birthright and blessing. A man who was willing to lie and deceive to get what he wanted.



Source: Wikipedia. Public Domain



But God knows all things. God was not only looking at the person that Jacob was, God was able to see the person Jacob would become. God knew that the heart of Jacob would change, and that he would become a better man.

God watched over Jacob as he journeyed to his uncle's country. Jacob stayed many years with his uncle's household. When God told Jacob it was time for him to return to his own country, Jacob was still afraid of Esau's anger. But Jacob did as God commanded.

During the years that Jacob was away, Esau had changed too. He was no longer angry with his brother Jacob. Esau ran to Jacob when he saw him, and pulled him into his arms for a hug. God had changed both their hearts. Esau's heart that had been filled with anger was now filled with love for his brother.



The Meeting of Esau and Jacob. James J. Tissot. 1836 - 1902.

**Prayer:** God, you watched over Jacob and Esau even when their hearts were filled with lies and deceit and anger. You helped them to become better persons. You filled their hearts with love. God, help me to become a better person with a heart filled with love. Help me to be sorry for the things I have done that were wrong. Give me strength so that I do not make the same mistakes again. Thank you for your Son, Jesus, who paid the price for all my sins so that I can live with you in Heaven. Amen.

## But God Saw

When Esau arrived tired and so hungry he was close to fainting,  
Jacob had no compassion; but used the circumstance to cheat Esau of his birthright.

But God saw the man Jacob would become.  
God saw the cleansing blood of Jesus his Son.

When Isaac was going to give Esau his blessing,  
Rebekah and Jacob plotted to trick Isaac into giving Jacob the blessing.

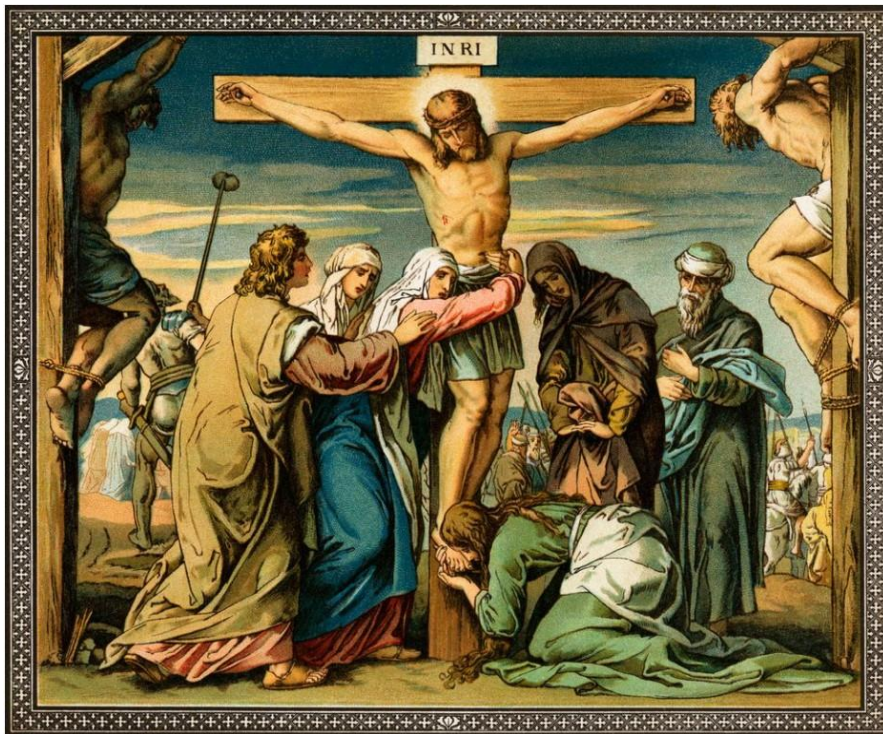
But God saw the man Jacob would become.  
God saw the cleansing blood of Jesus his Son.

Esau became so angry that Jacob had cheated him out of his birthright and blessing,  
that Esau made a plan to kill his brother Jacob.

But God saw the man Esau would become.  
God saw the cleansing blood of Jesus his Son.

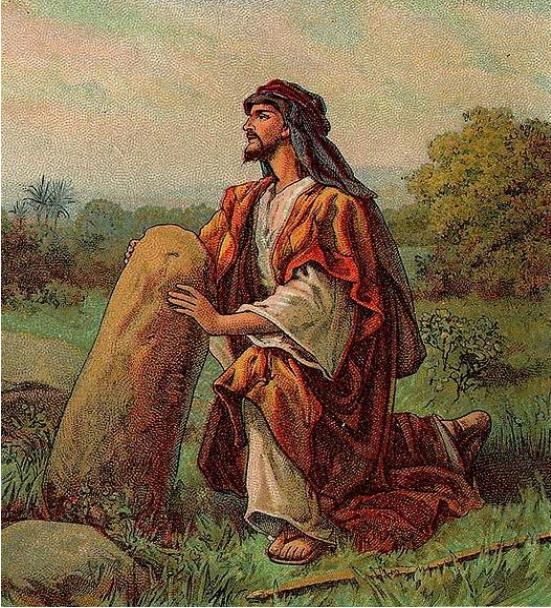
And I fail and make mistakes. I do things that are wrong.  
Some of my sins seem small, but some of my sins seem big to me.

God, see the person I can become.  
Forgive me through the blood of Christ, your Son.





## Important Words to Remember



Jacob's Vision and God's Promise, Lithograph, 1906

During the dream that God gave Jacob in which angels were walking up and down a ladder that went up to Heaven, God said to Jacob, "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land." Gen 28:15.

When Jacob woke up, he said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate to Heaven." Gen 28:17.

And Jacob took the stone which he had used for a pillow and stood it upright, and poured oil on it. Jacob made a vow saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, and this stone which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you." Gen 28:20-22.

God speaking to Jacob in the dream changed Jacob. Before the dream, Jacob's thoughts were filled with getting more, tents, servants, camels, goats, power and authority than his brother Esau. Jacob was only focused on this life. He forgot that there was another life - an eternal life - that we will live in Heaven. Before, Jacob only thought about himself. Now Jacob turned his thoughts toward God, and planned on living his life in a way that would serve and honor God.

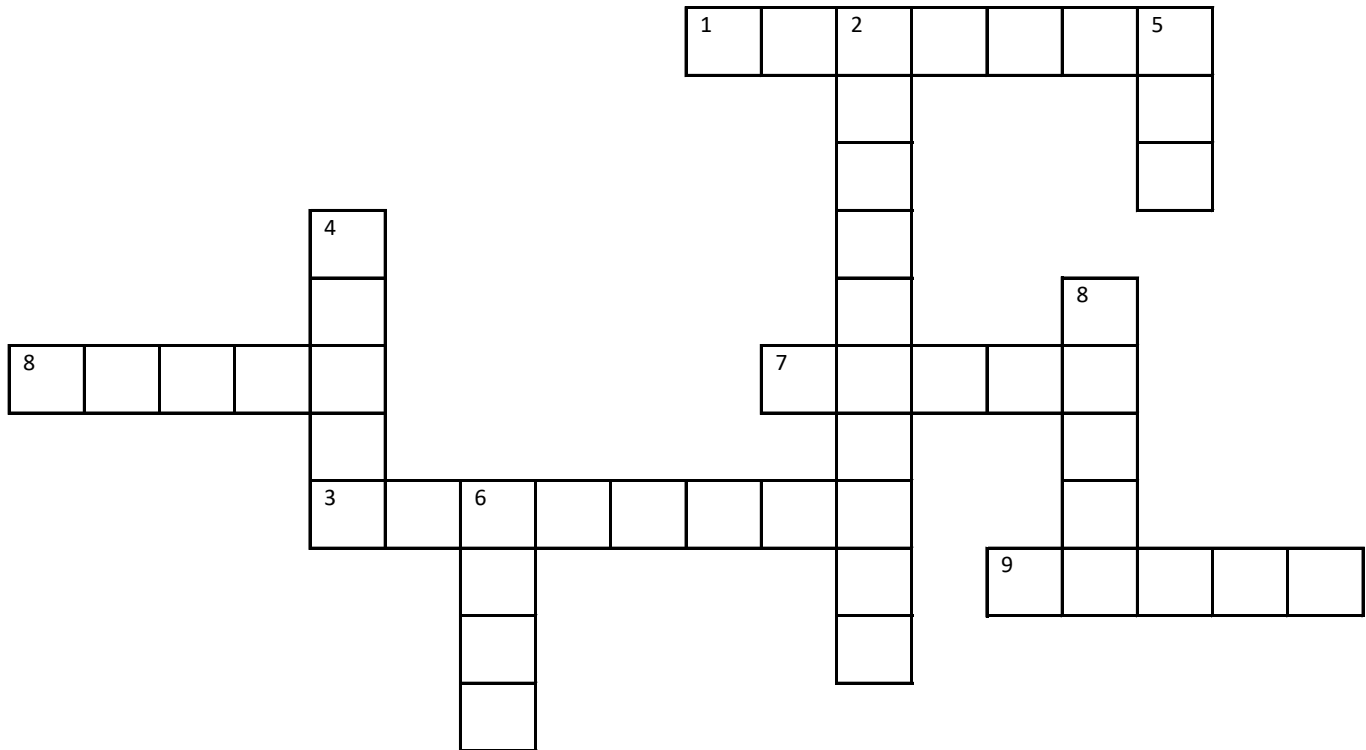
Following God will change you. Talking with God daily helps you to grow in your faith. Reading Scripture and knowing Bible verses gives you hope and strength - courage to face the trials of your life and the temptations of the devil. As Jacob started to walk with God, his jealousy and anger at Esau faded and was replaced with love.

As we walk with God and grow in faith, the Spirit of God that lives within us gives us gifts to help us in our life: Peace deep down in our soul, even when times are hard. The ability to Love, even when some of the people we know are hard to love. Goodness - the ability to be a nicer person than we used to be. Joy - even during sad times there is an underlying joy that God loves us, cares for us, and has a place for us in Heaven.

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Galatians 5:22.**

**Prayer:** God, help me to always remember that there are two lives - the life I am living now on earth, and an eternal life that I will live in Heaven. Help me to grow in faith. Give me the gifts of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## Jacob and Esau



### Across

1. The name of the mother who plotted to trick her husband Isaac into giving the blessing to her favorite son?
3. The traditional way a father passed down his position as head of the household to the eldest son was called a \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Jacob cheated his brother Esau out of his birthright and blessing. Esau was so angry he planned to kill Jacob. Jacob fled for his life to his uncle's home in another country. Exhausted, Jacob lay on the ground using a stone for a pillow. That night God spoke to Jacob in a \_\_\_\_\_.
8. What was the name of the father of the twin boys Jacob and Esau?
9. Rebekah and Jacob were able to trick Isaac into giving Jacob the blessing because "Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so he could not see." Today, instead of saying "his eyes were dim", we would say that Isaac was \_\_\_\_\_.

### Down

2. When Esau returned from a long hunting trip dizzy and so hungry he was about to faint, Jacob refused to give Esau anything to eat unless Esau gave Jacob his \_\_\_\_\_. Gen 25:32-33.
4. The name of Rebekah's favorite child was \_\_\_\_\_.
5. When Jacob returned after spending many years in another country living with his uncle, Jacob was still afraid of Esau's anger. Jacob bowed to the ground seven times to Esau. It was tradition to give seven bows to a person of high authority. This was done out of respect, and to show that they would act as a servant to that authority. Esau would have none if it. He pulled Jacob up and gave him a \_\_\_\_\_, and kissed him.
6. The name of the eldest twin, son of Isaac and Rebekah was \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Rebekah had Jacob wear Esau's clothes so that he would \_\_\_\_\_ like Esau. Gen 27:27.

