

Sunday School 8 March: Living as a family (Genesis 25-27)

Despite the love between Isaac and Rebecca, they don't seem to have made a great success of their family life. It seems that Isaac and Rebecca forgot to teach their children to put God in centre place, and to love their children equally.

Favouritism split the family: Esau and his Dad versus Rebekah and Jacob, the younger boy. In all the stories of them, we hear about rivalry.

And then Esau married two local (therefore ungodly) women who made life "bitter for Isaac and Rebekah". Does this perhaps mean Esau's family didn't honour God?

Jacob meanwhile grew up to be a schemer! God had promised that Jacob would be the one through whom his blessing would come. But Jacob set about to make this happen without waiting for God.

This meant that the day came when day Jacob took advantage of Esau's exhaustion to steal the rights Esau had as the firstborn son. Esau should have become the head of the family (in charge of the family business of trade and farming and that he would also inherit twice as much as Jacob. Esau clearly didn't value this right much as he swapped it for a bowl of stew one day after he had been hunting! But Jacob was sneaky to insist on this.

Then we read of another incident where no one comes out well – everyone was working for his own benefit and not following God's ways. When he got old and ill, Isaac wanted to pronounce a blessing over Esau, although he knew God had promised greater benefits to Jacob. Rebekah schemed with Jacob to steal this blessing by being dishonest. She prepared meat so that it tasted like venison and then she dressed Jacob up to smell and seem like Esau to fool Isaac who couldn't see very well. Jacob joined in with her plan; Esau became murderously angry; and Isaac suspected something was wrong, but didn't ask God for help.

Jacob got the blessing, but at great price. He had to run away from Esau and Rebekah never saw her favourite son again.

Despite all his scheming and self-reliance, Jacob was comforted by God in his loneliness and his sadness through a very special dream of a ladder going up to heaven. God hadn't given up on him! Even then Jacob didn't show that he had learnt his lessons because he bargained with God "IF you will be with me and keep me in this way I must go and give me food and clothing so that I may come back to my father's house in peace, then you will be my God"! And God did all that!

God never gives up on us: John 10:28 says: "No one can steal [my followers] out of my hand". We can jump out of God's hands; we can tell him to leave us alone – and sadly some people do just that. They forget about God when they are too old for Sunday School. But God doesn't choose that way. Instead he wants to walk with us and talk with us all through our lives. Just as he did with Jacob. And he goes on pleading with us to follow his ways.