

Welcome! Today, we're in the 3rd week of a 4-week series called "Family of God." We've been looking at some of our "spiritual ancestors" and their example of faith, and what it looks like to WALK WITH GOD.

All of these stories we've been looking at have had to do with familial relationships... **Abraham and Sarah**, that was the interaction between a husband and wife trying to become pregnant. **Abraham and Isaac**, last week, was the interaction between a father and a son, trying to endure this unthinkable "testing" God placed before them... **And why Isaac never wanted to go hiking with Dad again!** And this week, we'll look at the life of Jacob.

In Jacob's life, there are so many different stories we could talk about. The artwork here shows the story when Jacob wrestled with an angel, we could've talked about that and the way that God changed Jacob's name from **Jacob**, meaning "deceiver" to **Israel**, meaning "one who has wrestled with God."

We could've talked about **Jacob with Rachel and Leah** and how he had **12 kids over the course of 7 years** with 4 different women. (*You think Reality TV is scandalous... Read your bible! There is TV-MA stuff in this book!*)

But with all of the excitement and craziness surrounding Jacob's life... **I continually felt drawn back to the story of him and his brother Esau.** It might be because I heard a sermon 5 years ago that absolutely changed my life, that had to do with a simple interaction between these two brothers... And that's what I want to share with you today. (And I'll say from the outset, the pastor that preached that sermon was **Andy Stanley**, and almost NONE of what I'm going to share with you today is unique to me, but I feel as though it might be exactly what our community needs to hear today.)

Jacob and his brother, Esau, were twins, and were born to Isaac and Rebecca after 20 years of marriage, when Isaac was 60 years old. This was back in the days before Ultrasounds, so they didn't have the luxury of knowing a few months into the pregnancy that **THERE WERE TWO KIDS IN THERE...** But the time came for them to be born, and Esau was born first. **It says that he was born covered in red hair** (which is equal parts **gross** and **terrifying**) but to make matters even **WEIRDER**, Esau had a little hand clutching his heel when he was born, and then out came Jacob, the second born.

So, in the spirit of Names... Isaac and Rebecca named the first Esau, meaning "**hairy**" (not a great name) and the second Jacob, meaning "**heel-catcher / leg-puller / deceiver**" (like, 'you're pulling my leg...' "yanking my chain") Neither of these kids were set up for success from the get-go. **Tough names!**

As the boys grew up, it was clear that Esau was the older brother, even if only by a few minutes. **He was a Man's man. He was a hunter. Strong. Wrestled bears and alligators for fun. He could grow a big, impressive beard** (those of you like me, with the inability to grow a real beard, know what I mean... I can grow a heck of a NECK BEARD. I'm just waiting for the day that they come into style. But for guys whose beards actually start on their FACE... We're all just jealous of.) **Esau was that guy. Jacob was not.**

Jacob was a momma's boy. When his brother would go out hunting, **Jacob stayed in and cooked. He liked to decorate. He didn't like to perspire.** While the neighborhood kids played tackle football, Jacob was inside braiding his dolly's hair. (Kind of reminds me of myself, actually... Now... This was because I had two older sisters. They were very STRONG, and very convincing. *"This is what little brothers do, Johnny!"*)

Anyways... What I want to talk about today will probably feel a little weird when you first hear it. I want to talk about a tiny slice of life that is so minuscule that you'll probably say, *"Why are we talking about this?"* There's a part of our lives that we don't pay much attention to that will **determine** (not just influence, but **DETERMINE**) the direction and quality of our lives. It has the potential to completely overpower us, our prayers, our worship, our commitment to Christ...

It has the power to determine the **direction and quality** of our entire lives. It is the #1 thing that shipwrecks and sidelines more individuals than anything else in the world. **I want to talk today about our APPETITES.**

We have no idea how powerful our appetites really are. Think about it. Our appetites deeply affect our lives. AND... They deeply affect the lives of people around us. Some of you, your deepest pain in life is the result of SOMEONE ELSE poorly managing their appetite. Maybe a parent of yours with a habit or addiction. A family member with crippling debt, becoming a burden on the family. A spouse or a boyfriend/girlfriend with an appetite for some**THING** or some**ONE** other than you...

Our appetites while either rule us, or we will rule them. Think about some of these appetites.

- FOOD
- SEX
- ACCEPTANCE
- RESPECT
- FAME
- LOVE
- TO BE ENVIED
- STUFF

These appetites are never going away. They'll be with us for the rest of our lives. If you're in your 20s, you might think, "When I'm in my 30s or 40s, I'll have this under control"... But those of you in your 30s and 40s and beyond... You know that's not the case. These follow us wherever we go.

Here are **3** things to know about appetites:

1. **God created them, Sin distorted them.**
 1. Every single appetite you have has been broken. They've been distorted. Our appetite for food is GOOD. Without it, we'd starve. But our appetite for food has been broken, hasn't it?

2. **Appetites are never fully and finally satisfied.**

1. You know this because you've sat down at a meal and eaten until you were going to throw up. Then 3 hours later, you're back at the refrigerator looking for something to eat. Same for sex. Same for acceptance. Same for love.
2. You never say, "Ahh... I'm done." Never. ever. God designed them that way. They're with us for life.

3. **Appetites always whisper, "NOW." Never later.**

1. Our appetites have no patience. They jump in front of us and sit there until we do something about them.
2. **And sometimes, when we ACT ON THE IMMEDIATE, we end up sacrificing the ULTIMATE.** Think about how many times you've been with a salesman that's trying to get you to BUY NOW! "I'll throw in a toaster oven if you buy this Cadillac today!" **With appetites, IMPULSE is not our friend.**

Here's the thing: **Our response to our appetites will determine whether or not we fulfill God's will for our lives.**

So where does Jacob and Esau come into play? In Genesis 25, we see a very interesting interaction between these brothers around the family's **birthright**, and this is where I want to be together, Genesis 25.

Now, to make sense of this story, we need to understand what a **BIRTHRIGHT** is [SLIDE]. I think we have a bit of a cultural disconnect today, but back in that day, if you were the firstborn son, had the **birthright**. Simply for being born first, you got:

- A **DOUBLE** portion of the inheritance. You got at least twice what your brothers and sisters received. You were going to be rich. Great financial benefit.
- You also got to be the **JUDGE** of the family. Once your parents died, you made the decisions. Not a democracy. You made the call. You got power.
- You also got a **BLESSING**. The sense that God was going to bless you and your family in some sort of multi-generational way. Less tangible, but incredibly significant.

In Genesis 25, we find a story of a younger brother wanting the older brother's birthright. **Think about the frustration of Jacob.** Born 60 seconds after Esau, twins, essentially born at the same moment, but just because Esau came out first, he receives the birthright, the money, the power, the blessing. Jacob lived under this frustration.

Genesis 25:29-30 — 29 One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. 30 Esau said to Jacob, "I'm starved! Give me some of that red stew!"

How many of you are younger siblings? At least one brother or sister older than you. I'm the youngest... And anyone with older siblings knows what it's like to be **jealous** of them. They have cooler, **older friends**. We want those friends! They have **later curfew**. We want to stay up later! They have **cool clothes and they can drive first**. I spent most of my childhood wanting

what my sisters had... *And, I can assure you, they spent NONE of their childhood wanting anything I had.*

But... Every once in a while... **VERY RARELY**... an older brother or sister needs something from their younger sibling. And the smart younger sibling pauses and realizes... *"The time has come. This is a special moment. This is the time to negotiate."* So this is where I'd say, *"Ok Jade or Katie (my sisters), I'll let you have this if you let me drive your car. 'NO!' Ok... I'll let you have this if you switch bedrooms with me. 'NO!' Ok... If you give me a HUG, I'll let you have this..."*

Jacob sees the opportunity here to negotiate, so he starts at the ABSOLUTE top. The craziest thing he could think of.

31 "All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son." [trade me your birthright]

WHO WOULD TRADE THEIR BIRTHRIGHT FOR A BOWL OF STEW? WHO WOULD DO THAT? WHO WOULD CHOOSE SOMETHING SO TEMPORARY OVER A LIFETIME OF RICHES?

- The answer to the question is... You might. I might. Some of you actually are, right now. As a pastor, I see it all the time. Parents do it, choosing a pill or a bottle over a relationship with their kids. Husbands do it, choosing a younger woman or a fantasy over their wives. People do it all the time. Who would trade their birthright for a bowl of stew? I might. You might.

32 "Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. I'm about to die! Ok Esau, you're being a little dramatic. You walked in here on your own two legs... "I'm about to die!" You're not about to die. I find myself saying that sometimes: "I'm STARVING!!!" no... I'm not starving. In fact, I ate food just a few hours ago. **I'm probably ten days away from starving...**

Esau is so dramatic here.

Esau says, "Look, I'm dying of starvation, what good is my birthright to me?" Well Esau, it's actually worth A LOT. Think of how much **SOUP** you can buy with **TWICE THE INHERITANCE** of your brother?!...

But somehow, Esau loses sight of this. He loses sight of how **VALUABLE** the birthright is.

Psychologists have studied appetites for a long time, and they've discovered that when any one of our appetites gets stimulated, it actually becomes **ENLARGED** in your brain. Something chemically changes in your brain.

- **IMPACT BIAS:** Takes a simple appetite and magnifies it out of proportion.
 - Tells your brain, "This thing is going to be **EXTRAORDINARILY SATISFYING**..." Your brain lies to you. Your brain tells you it's going to be better than anything before.

- You buy it and you get it home... BUYER'S REMORSE. "Why did I do that?" I'll tell you why... Impact bias.
- **FOCALISM:** Focuses our minds on one thing and blurs out everything else.
 - Your brain has the ability to put everything out of focus and to choose ONE THING to hone in on. Again, this is a GOOD thing, but it's broken.
 - **ACTIVITY:** Every take your pointer finger and hold it about 6 inches away from your face and focus your eyes on your fingerprint. Now, as you're looking at your fingerprint, isn't remarkable how OUT OF FOCUS everything else is around it? Keep doing it. We don't notice how powerful our ability to FOCUS ON ONE THING is... What's directly in front of us is the only thing that matters. **That's focalism.**

Can't you see how dangerous this is? That's the power, and danger, and potential of our APPETITES. They have the potential to determine the direction of our lives.

Next verse, *33 But Jacob said, "First you must swear that your birthright is mine."*

PAUSE THE STORY: I'd like to role play what I'd like to say to Esau at this point.

- "Wait wait wait! BEFORE YOU DO THIS... I gotta tell you something. **Esau, I'm from the future.**
 - You're going to have 12 sons. Each one of these sons will have a family.
 - A few years from then, this whole family is going to end up in Egypt, and they're going to become a nation of slaves. And they'll be in slavery for 400 years. And they're going to become a mighty nation. They'll be known as God's Chosen People. This entire nation of people is going to come from YOU.
 - They'll be a nation in slavery for 400 years, and then God will raise up a guy named Moses. And Moses isn't going to know God's name. Moses will be a shepherd. (I'm skipping a lot Esau, you can read it later...)
 - And God is going to introduce himself to Moses... And listen to how God, the creator of the universe, introduces Himself to Moses. "*Moses, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Esau.*" **God is going to introduce Himself with YOUR name....**
 - **Unless you trade your birthright for a bowl of stew.**

If Esau was able to see all that would happen, I think Esau would have stopped in his tracks. If only I had been there to tell him... But I wasn't. And, my friends, no one is going to be there to help you in those moments either.

We're all like Esau. We have no idea what God might do through us if we surrender our appetites to Him and live for Him fully. We have no idea.

You have no idea what hangs in the balance of your willingness to refuse to trade your future for a bowl of stew.

33b ...So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left.

- He ate and drank. And the stew was gone. And so was his birthright.

- **His destiny was changed because of an appetite that he couldn't harness.**

- This is a tension that never, ever goes away. You might think, "Well, once I'm 30... Nope. Once I'm 40... Nope." **Once you're dead...** Once you're dead this won't be a problem anymore.

But until then, EVERY SINGLE DAY of your life, you'll be tempted to trade your future for some bowl of stew.

So how do we survive? How do we navigate our lives, being peppered with temptations left and right... Here's a trick. It's called REFRAMING.

- **REFRAMING:** Looking at the bowl of stew, and stepping back and thinking, "*In light of my future, in light of what God might do through me... Is it worth trading the **ultimate** for the **immediate**?*"
 - "5 years from now..." Here's where I want to be...
 - Academically
 - Spiritually
 - In terms of this habit/addiction
 - in my relationships
 - Your appetite only has one little word and it's **MORE** and it only has one little place on the clock and it's **NOW...**
 - **What's at stake? What's at stake?** You don't know. I don't know. And we can't risk it. Because we have no idea what God might do through us, if we have our appetites submitted to Him.

What's your bowl of stew right now?

- Is it a habit?
- Is it a shortcut you're taking?
- You have an **incredible IQ**, with incredible capacity and you're just sort of cruising... You're not using your full potential?
- What is it that you're involved in right now that's not illegal and it's not immoral, **but you wouldn't want anyone in this room knowing about?**
- For some of you, it's your relationship. Girlfriends, boyfriends that you shouldn't be with, and you KNOW you shouldn't be with them...
- Some of you have a habit... We don't want to call it an addiction. "*You can quit at any time, you have it under control...*" But you know that if you were to ask God, "*I'm wide open God, I don't want to hold anything back from You, I want Your preferred future for me, I don't want to be Esau*" you know that God would put His finger **RIGHT THERE** on that.
- **That's your bowl of stew.**

We're trading the unknown Will of God for something that's going to be gone in a few short minutes...

Think of the appetite brimming inside of Jesus, as He walked the earth, as a man... FULLY MAN. The God that gives each wave in the ocean its shape. The God that knows our DNA down to the last **nucleotide**. The God that knows every inch of **every star in every galaxy** in the **entire universe**. **Walking dusty streets, and being spit on by the very mouths He formed.**

Yet, even in His humanity, He mastered His appetites. How? How was He able to do that? In the face of some of the most inhumane treatment that we've seen in history.

He was able to REFRAME the situation.

He saw His daily interactions in light of eternity.

The perspective that Jesus had (and continues to have to this day) is **far beyond** our understanding. Our limited perspective is as if we're stuck within a single sentence of a single book in an entire library... Of **course** we can't see the big picture.

But here's the thing. **We have the attention of the Author.** When we calm our minds and speak our hearts honestly in prayer, the Storyteller leans in to us and meets with us and speak peace into our lives. And there comes the perspective, and the ability to **see things in light of eternity.**

By the wisdom of God within us, we can **REFRAME** the situation. We can look at our bowls of stew (*RIGHT IN FRONT OF US!*) and see how fleeting they are. **We can see that trading the ultimate for the immediate is a foolish mistake.**

May we learn from our older brothers, **Jacob and Esau.**

May we learn to be **slow to respond** to our appetites.

May we learn to **see things in light of Eternity.**

And may we allow Jesus, by the power of His Spirit within us, to use us for His Glory, and His Glory only.

Let's pray...