

Jacob And Esau

Bible Base: Genesis 27: 1-45

Aim: To show that God cares about our families

Suitable for KS1 and KS2

You will need:

- the accompanying visual printed on A3 card and folded in four
- the backing track for 'It's Excellent To Be Obedient'

Introduction

'It's not fair!' Have you ever said this to anyone in your family? E.g.: 'It's not fair - you have more sweets than I have.' Or: 'It's not fair - why should I put it away; I didn't get it out!'

Has anyone in your family ever said this to you? E.g.; 'It's not fair - you never give me a turn.' Or: 'It's not fair - I have to do all the work and you never help!'

Sometimes in our families things may not seem very fair. Today we will hear about a family in which lots of things were unfair.

Story

Prepare and use the attached visual as you tell the story. (Display the characters individually, in pairs or all together as relevant to each part of the story.)

Introduce the family; mum - Rebekkah, dad - Isaac and their two boys - Jacob and Esau. Explain that Jacob and Esau were twins.

Establish that although twins are two children born in the same family on the same day usually one is slightly older than the other. (This might be done by interviewing a pair of twins chosen from the audience.) In this case, Esau was the older.

Establish that sometimes twins look alike and are hard to tell apart - and give an example of twins known to you. In this case there was at least one difference between the two: Jacob had smooth skin while Esau had hairy skin.

Tell the story as follows:

In this family things started going wrong because mum and dad each had a favourite. Isaac loved Esau more than he loved Jacob. Rebekkah loved Jacob more than she loved Esau. Thus Esau would sometimes say to his mum, 'It's not fair - you love Jacob more than you love me.' Jacob would sometimes say to his dad, 'It's not fair - you love Esau more than you love me.'

Isaac was getting old. One day he sent for Esau and said, 'I'm getting far too old to be the leader in this family any more. Very soon now you will be in charge and everything I have will belong to you. I want you to go out and hunt for a wild animal, kill it and turn it into a dinner of roast meat for me. Once I have eaten it I will say a special prayer for you and from then I will make you the leader in this family and everything I have will belong to you.' So Esau went off to do as his father had said.

Rebekkah had been listening at the door of the tent, however. She sent for Jacob and told him what she had heard. 'We don't want Esau to be the leader - do we?' she said. 'We

want you to be the leader! I will tell you what we will do. We will play a trick on your dad. I will make him some stew - with lots of his favourite meat in it. You take it to him, pretend you are Esau and he will make you the leader instead of Esau and everything he owns will belong to you.'

'But mum,' protested Jacob. 'As soon as he sees me he will know it's me, Jacob, and not Esau.'

'No he won't,' said Rebekkah. 'He is old - and his eyes aren't working properly. He will never be able to tell the difference.'

'But mum,' went on Jacob. 'As soon as I open my mouth he will know it's me.'

'Then you will just have to practise disguising your voice to make it sound like Esau's,' said his mum.

'But mum,' said Jacob again, 'What if he touches me? As soon as he feels my smooth skin he will know it's me!'

Rebekkah thought about this and said, 'I will tell you what we will do. I will stick some goat's hair on your arm and if he wants you to come close, make sure it is the arm with the goat's hair on it that he touches - and then he will think for sure that you are Esau.'

Jacob thought for a moment and said, 'Well - I do want to be the leader, so I will do it!'

So later that day Jacob went into the tent where his dad was.

'Hello,' he said. 'It's me, Esau. I have brought you the dinner you asked for.'

'You don't sound like Esau,' said Isaac. 'You sound much more like Jacob to me. Come closer and let me touch you.'

So Jacob went up to his dad and put out his arm with the goat's hair on it and let him touch it.

'Well,' said Isaac, 'you sound like Jacob but I know now that you are Esau because I can feel your hairy skin. So where is that dinner you brought me?'

Jacob brought him the dinner that his mum had prepared and after eating it, thinking he was Esau, Isaac called him over and told him to kneel in front of him while he said a special prayer for him. Then he said, 'From now on you are the leader in this family and everything that was mine is now yours. This is my promise.'

Jacob ran excitedly from the tent to tell his mum that their trick had worked. Meanwhile Esau came home from hunting. He made a dinner of roast meat for his dad and took it to him.

'Hello,' he said. 'It's me, Esau. I have brought you the dinner you asked for.'

'What?' said Isaac? 'Haven't you just been here? Haven't I just eaten the dinner you made for me? Haven't I just made you the leader in this family?'

'No, dad,' said Esau. 'I have been hunting all day just as you asked.'

Slowly Isaac realised that he had been tricked and when Esau realised what Jacob had done he ran from the tent shouting, 'Jacob! Where are you? If I get my hands on you I'll kill you for what you did to me today!'

Rebekkah heard him and quickly sent for Jacob.

'It is not safe for you to stay here any more,' she said. 'Quick - get your things and go before Esau finds you!'

So Jacob ran away and in fact had to stay away from home for many years.

Comment

Comment as follows.

At this point in the story I don't think anyone in this family is especially happy.

Isaac is saying 'It's not fair - I have been tricked!'

Esau is saying, 'It's not fair - I should be the leader in this family!'

Jacob is saying, 'It's not fair - why should I have to run away?'

Rebekkah is saying, 'It's not fair - I may never see my favourite son again.'

I don't think that God is happy with this family either.

It is God's idea that we should live in families but His idea is that we should learn to love and care for each other and be happy together in our families. Mums and dads should love each other and keep their promises to each other. Brothers and sisters should learn to live in peace with each other and not fight. Parents should love and care for their children and treat them fairly. Children should obey their parents and treat them with respect.

However I don't believe I have ever met any family where this always happens as it should. My family is certainly not perfect - and I suspect yours isn't either.

The good news is that as you read on through this story you find that God still cares about this family even though they were far from perfect and did not treat each other in the way that they should have done. One of the things that happened later on was that God met with Jacob and helped him to change and become a better person so that in time he was able to go back to his family, say sorry to Esau and begin to put things right.

So if things are not always as they should be in your family, don't give up! God still cares about your family and is ready to help. In particular, God wants to help us, as he helped Jacob, to play our part and to treat others in our families in the way that we should.

The fifth commandment tells us the part that God wants you, as children, to play in your families most of all. He wants you to treat your parents with respect. This means listening to them and obeying them. It means showing appreciation for the things they do for you. It means helping them without having to be asked. It means, if you think something is unfair, explaining why you think it is unfair politely and without being grumpy or rude.

We may not be able to do much about the way others in our families behave - but we can think about the way we behave in our families - and ask God to help us play our part. That may not solve every problem - but it will always make a difference.

Prayer

Conclude with a prayer asking for God's blessing in the families of the children present.

Song

Use the backing track provided to teach the song 'It's Excellent to be Obedient' (This is an Elvis-style song based on the fifth commandment. You might invite children to curl their lips, like Elvis, each time they sing 'uh-huh-huh!' and to shake their heads each time they sing 'oh no no'. If you are feeling particularly brave you might also wear an Elvis wig and jacket as you perform / teach the song!)

Well it's excellent to be obedient uh-huh-huh,
It's excellent to be obedient uh-huh-huh;
You don't say no to your ma and pa
You say uh-huh.

Well it ain't real good to be real rude oh no no
It ain't real good to be real rude oh no no
You gotta treat your parents like you know you should
Uh-huh-huh

Well it's excellent...

(Optional second verse)

It don't show aptitude to have an attitude oh no no
It don't show aptitude to have an attitude oh no no
You gotta treat your parents like you know you should
Uh-huh-huh

Well it's excellent...