

Bible Studies for Life: November 3

Jacob and Esau: Family Rivalry • Genesis 27:35-37, 41; 33:1-4, 8-11

By Bobby McKay



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Genesis 27:35-41

Esau was furious with Jacob; we could argue that he had a right to be. Jacob was a dishonest trickster, costing Esau the

birthright and the blessing from their father, Isaac. Through deceit that took advantage of their father's poor eyesight and the selling of a birthright over some stew, you have two opposite brothers in character and motives. To make matters worse, the parents of the young men were also involved in the drama and played favorites against each other. Grudges were formed, and anger festered in hearts. Esau's wrath was to the point that he "determined in his heart that he would kill his brother Jacob."

The vast majority of people never commit the physical act of murder. However, we have all faced the temptation to hate and hold bitterness in our hearts. Christ reveals to us that harboring hate is an offense in the same arena as murder itself.

Genesis 33:1-4

Years passed between the two brothers, and the gap in time could make anyone better or more bitter. Esau had a choice to make the next time he crossed paths with his brother: He could seek his revenge, ignore him, or forgive. These three options remain with you and me today. People will hurt us, sometimes deliberately and sometimes by mistake. No one is immune from being taken advantage of in this world.

In a beautiful display of humility, Jacob humbles himself before Esau, and a tearful reunion ensues. Since their younger days, Jacob had suffered many instances of great times of attitude adjustment. He was not entirely the same man he was in his youth. He recognized his need for mercy and genuine brokenness can be the key to restoring a fractured relationship.

Genesis 33:8-11

The ball was in Esau's court. There may be a time when someone comes to you and seeks your forgiveness. When that opportunity comes, you have a choice to make it. If you need help knowing

which way to go, remember Christ's great love and grace to us all. Repeatedly and without measure, He has forgiven us more times than we could possibly count. While Esau noted Jacob's many offerings and gestures, he assured him it was not necessary to make things right. We, too, may think we need to come to Christ with bells and whistles when, in reality, all he wants (and will ever want) is our genuine humility and desire for reconciliation.

In verse nine, when Jacob is called "brother," the relationship is fully and beautifully restored. What relationships in your home, business, neighborhood, or church are fractured that could be repaired by simply extending humility and forgiveness? As a Christian, you have a critical choice to make. What will you choose?

McKay is pastor of New Liberty Baptist Church, Morton.