

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: December 2, 2018
Lesson Title: "The Deceiver"
Lesson Passage: Gen. 27:18-29

ABOUT THIS LESSON

This lesson is based on a portion of the story of Jacob's theft of his brother Esau's birthright, the fatherly blessing that was traditionally reserved for the eldest son. Jacob disguises himself as Esau and takes food prepared by his mother to his feeble and visually impaired father, Isaac, pretending that the food is wild game. Taken in by the scheme, Isaac gives Jacob the blessing that rightfully belongs to Esau. As we characterize Jacob, we will also evaluate the appropriateness of the title often attributed to him, "the Deceiver."

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Recount Rebekah's strategy for tricking Isaac into giving Jacob into giving Jacob his blessing. (2) Describe the interpersonal relations in Isaac's family.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Recall the saying, "Behind every successful man, there is a good woman." Suggest that, in the case of Jacob, the saying ought to be revised, because, behind Jacob's success there was a scheming woman, his mother, Rebekah. Observe that the parental favoritism described in Gen. 25:28 explains much of the reason for the fractured relationships within Isaac's family. Note the four words in v. 28, "but Rebekah loved Jacob," then make this point: We usually glorify the love of a mother for her child, because a mother's love is a beautiful human instinct. But, unless love is purified and restrained by loyalty to truth and honor, and by commitment to the will of God, it can become a destructive force, as was the case with Rebekah's love for her son Jacob.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Observe that the lesson passage (Genesis 27:18-29) is a portion of the story in Gen. 27:1-40 which tells us how Jacob implemented his mother's plan to secure for himself the blessing that his father, Isaac, had intended to bestow upon his first-born son Esau.

2. Before getting into the lesson passage itself, call attention to Gen. 27:1-10, which provides essential background information:
(1) Isaac was "old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see" (27:1). NOTE: This is confirmed by the question with which he responded to Jacob's greeting in v. 18, "who are you, my son?" (2) We do not know Jacob's exact age at the time, but we are told in Genesis 35:28

that he was 180 when he died. Whatever his age, he was now very feeble and blind. This explains his susceptibility to Jacob's trickery and his inability to detect the difference between venison and goat meat (27:25). (3) Realizing that he was near death (27:2), Isaac felt that it was time to convey his paternal blessing to Esau, his eldest son. So he summoned Esau, who was a seasoned hunter, and asked him to go out and gather wild game, to be used in the preparation of a sumptuous feast for his father; and he indicated that this feast would be the occasion on which he would confer his blessing upon Esau (vv. 3-4). (4) Isaac's wife, Rebekah, overheard this conversation and, after Esau's departure, she summoned Jacob, her favorite son, and shared a scheme designed to trick Isaac into conferring his blessing upon Jacob (*read Gen. 27:5-10*). (5) Jacob was reluctant to deceive his father, not only because he might be caught in the act (refer to vv. 11-12), but, also, he probably recognized the moral seriousness of her plan. (According to Leviticus 19:14, mistreating a blind man was an offense against God.) (6) But Jacob gave in to Rebekah's scheme, and went out to fetch the goats that she intended to disguise as wild game when she cooked them (v. 14).

3. *Comment on Gen. 27:18-27:* (1) Jacob's words in Gen. 27:20, "the Lord your God granted me success" (in hunting wild game) bordered on blasphemy, for he was "taking the name of the Lord in vain." (2) Isaac was somewhat suspicious (*see vv. 21-22*), as indicated by his question in v. 24, "Are you really my son Esau?" (27:24). (Asking his son to kiss him [v. 26] might have been an effort to put his suspicion to a test. (3) "And he smelled the smell of his garments" (Gen. 27:27) is a telling commentary on Esau's nature; for even his clothes (v. 15) had a strong smell.

4. *Discuss the name that is often attributed to Jacob, "the deceiver":* (1) Contrary to the popular assumption that the Jacob's very name meant "deceiver," the name comes from a Hebrew root word that means "supplant, circumvent, or overreach." The name was given to Jacob because, at birth, he came out of the womb holding the heel of his brother Esau (Gen. 25:26). (NOTE: Hebrews would often give a newborn a name based on an event at the time of birth.) So, a more accurate translation of the name Jacob would be "supplanter" or "heel grabber." (2) Even when Esau declared that Jacob was rightly named, because Jacob had stolen both his birthright and his father's blessing, he said "he has supplanted me (i.e., "displaced me") (Genesis 27:36).

CLOSING THE LESSON

Conclude the lesson by leading a discussion based on these thoughts: Rebekah might have dealt honestly with Isaac, telling him what she had learned from the Lord about Jacob's destiny (*refer to Genesis 25:23*). But, instead, she wove a web of deceit that discredited Jacob and forced him into exile, made Isaac sad and bitter, and drove a permanent wedge between her two sons.