

(dys)functional

F*a***M***i***L***e***S**

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ABRAHAM:

FAILURE

& FRIEND

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

LEADER NOTE

This section is about introducing the overall topic and giving an overview of the concepts we'll discuss. Highlight the topics that will be covered in the series, but be careful not to go into great detail, because you'll do that in each of the next two weeks. This is simply an introduction to the main elements of the series. Also, this is great time to let the group know that "Dysfunctional Families" is a 3-week study. "Abraham: Failure and Friend" is only the first week, but each character study is a part of the whole idea that the dysfunction of the patriarchal families gives us a picture of the grace and power of God.

ABRAHAM: FAILURE AND FRIEND

In Scripture, Abram/Abraham is known as the primary Old Testament example of faith. God chose Abram and changed his name to "Abraham" to identify him as "the father of many nations" (Gen. 17:5). It was through Abraham that God revealed His plan for human salvation (Gen. 17; Exod. 2:24) and gave assurance to future generations (Exodus 32:13; 33:1). Yet, Abraham was the beginning of generations of familial dysfunction. Despite this, Abraham's life is an encouragement that family failures don't disqualify you from being a friend of God.

ISAAC: SELLOUT AND SYMBOL

Abraham's son Isaac, promised to Abraham in his old age, is also revered as one of Israel's patriarchs. God used Isaac to foreshadow His plans, using Isaac's body on an altar as a human sacrifice to symbolize Jesus the Messiah. Still, Isaac fell short in parenting by showing favoritism for Esau over Jacob, and in marriage, by selling out his wife to protect his own life. Isaac's life is an encouragement that sellouts aren't disqualified from receiving God's love, grace, and power.

JACOB: BETRAYER AND BLESSED

Jacob was Abraham's grandson, and the third of Israel's patriarchs. From the start of Jacob's life, he played into family dysfunction (Gen. 25:23-26). Embroiled in the throes of parental favoritism, Jacob made matters worse by deceiving his dad and betraying his brother. Still, God used Jacob to further His overarching plans for the world and blessed Jacob, giving him sons and continuing the covenant promise. Jacob's life is an encouragement that betrayal doesn't disqualify you from being blessed by God.

FAILURE IN FAMILY

LEADER NOTE

Today's examination of Abraham's family life is divided into two basic sections—his failures in his family and his friendship with God. The order is significant. Group members need to know that their past sins, and even current family struggles, don't have to be the final story. Use the first section to help learners be reminded that God is full of grace and mercy. He chooses us—even in our sin, doubts, and imperfections. Use the second section to exhort group members to do what God calls them to do, even when it doesn't make sense. Remind them that they can trust that He loves them and desires friendship with them, no matter how many times they have fallen short.

KEY VERSES

GENESIS 12:1-3

¹ Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a

blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

What would you expect to see in a family to whom God made these promises: unity or discord? love or hatred? kindness or brutality? honesty or deception? loyalty or betrayal? Why?

What are some reasons there is dysfunction in your family, even amidst blessing?

From what you know about the rest of Scripture, what promises has God made to you and your family?

God called Abraham to leave everything that was dear to him and to go to a land that God would show him. Abraham followed God by leaving his family, friends, and all that was familiar to him to be a blessing to others. We are all recipients of that blessing. We have all been blessed by this one man's obedience to follow God. But as we'll see in Abraham's story, we don't always make the right choices in response to blessing.

KEY VERSES

GENESIS 15:1-6

¹ After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." ² But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." ⁴ And

behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." ⁵ And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

How do you account for the fact that Scripture shows Abraham's doubts of God's plans, yet counts his belief as righteousness two verses later? What does this tell you about belief and your own relationship with God?

Here we see the beginning of Abraham's failures take root. His struggle with identity and infertility (he was supposed to be the father of many nations but remained childless) made him afraid. So he suggested an alternate plan to God, saying his household servant would be his heir. In response, God took him outside, showed him the stars in the sky, and reminded him of His covenant promise. In that moment, Abraham took his eyes off his circumstances, looked up toward God, and trusted that God's word was true.

Thinking specifically about your family, where are you tempted to doubt God's promise? What do you tend to do in those situations: despair, give up, complain, pray, impatiently take matters into your own hands, or something else?

KEY VERSES

GENESIS 16:1-6, 11-12

¹ Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. ² And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³ So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. ⁴ And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. ⁵ And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you!

I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!" ⁶ But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.

¹¹ And the angel of the Lord said to her (Hagar), "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction. ¹² He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."

Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness, but then fear set in again. Sarah's suggestion to take matters into their own hands seemed logical, considering their ages, so Abraham conceived a child with Hagar.

What problems came to their immediate family as a result of Abraham and Sarah's sinful decision?

Ishmael was born out of the insecurities of Abraham and Sarah, and every relationship in the house was impacted. The trouble didn't stop when Hagar ran away, either. The religion of Islam began with the birth of Ishmael. Even though Ishmael was blessed by God and would become a great nation of 12 princes (Gen 17:20), he knew Isaac was the child of promise.

FRIEND OF GOD

KEY VERSES

JAMES 2:21-23

²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar?

²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;

²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.

From these verses, which of Abraham’s actions were most noteworthy to God?

What do you think it means to be a “friend of God”? Do you think God excluded certain parts of Abraham’s life, such as his family’s dysfunction, in calling him “friend”? Why or why not?

It’s not that God doesn’t care about our sin; He certainly does! That’s the very reason He sent Jesus to die on the cross (Rom. 6:23). Abraham was a sinner, just like us. He had dysfunctional family relationships, just like us. But God used those relationships and situations to grow Abraham, develop his faith, and draw him into faith-filled friendship.

KEY VERSES

HEBREWS 11:8-12

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose

designer and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

Why do you think God waited so long to give Abraham and Sarah a son? How did this waiting exhibit God’s power and faithfulness in a greater way?

What miracle are you waiting for God to do in your family? What reasons might He have for waiting?

We often focus on failures. In considering Abraham, we may think, “He heard God’s actual voice and still questioned Him. He slept with another woman. He lied and told pagan men that his wife Sarah was his sister (Gen. 20:11-13). He rejected his own son and showed favoritism to Isaac (Gen. 16:6; 25:5-6). **Why would God call him an example of faith and ‘friend of God’?**”

God doesn’t view us the same way we view each other. His love is deeper and purer than ours; His forgiveness is more complete. God didn’t summarize Abraham’s life the same way we might. The basis for God’s view of Abraham was God’s faithfulness to Abraham. God had covenanted with Abraham to make him into the father of many nations, and God was faithful to keep His promise. Abraham was a friend of God not because of who he was, but because of who God is. Likewise, we can trust that God will redeem our stories not because we are without sin, but because He is full of grace and steadfast love.

YOUR NEXT STEP IN MOVING FROM DYSFUNCTION TO FRIEND OF GOD

LEADER NOTE

Regardless of what attitudes and circumstances currently define their family lives, everyone has a next step to take. Use this time to help learners personally apply biblical truths to their lives and commit to follow God in greater obedience in the ways they relate to their families. Emphasize that God included the raw truth about the patriarchal families so that we would know He loves us, His power is available to us, and He desires to draw us into closer friendship, regardless of our failures.

Two things symbolize Abraham’s life and family: a tent and an altar. Abraham was continually on the move, obeying God’s calls and commands (the tent). He also made a practice of worshiping God wherever they went (the altar). Abraham was a pilgrim and a stranger in this world; he had his sights set on a city whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). In these ways, Abraham and his family members are models for us today.

TENT

What have your sights been set on recently: God’s call on your life or something else?

What step of faith have you taken in the past that God has used to draw you closer to Him?

What is an attitude, action, or sinful habit God is calling you to leave behind?

What step of obedience is God calling you to take in faith?

ALTAR

What role does worship play in your life on a daily basis?

Besides coming to church, name one way you can worship God this week with your family.

What new commitment do you need to make to God as a result of this study of Abraham’s life?

COMMENTARY

GENESIS 12:1-3

According to Acts 7:2, The Lord spoke to Abram while he was still in Mesopotamia (Gen. 11:31). God gave Abram a one-verb command with four aspects to it. Abram was to go out from (1) his land, (2) his relatives, and (3) his father's house, (4) to a land chosen by God. Obedience to God often means leaving one thing in order to receive something else even better.

GENESIS 15:1-6

15:1. Abram's role as a prophet is shown here. Visions were one of two standard means (the other was dreams) by which the Lord revealed His word to people. The only other patriarch who is said to have received a vision was Jacob. The vision's content included a command (Do not be afraid), an assurance (I am your shield), and a promise (your very great reward). The Lord would reward him richly.

15:2-3. Neither God's protection nor His reward seemed important to elderly Abram since all his goods would go to Eliezer of Damascus, a slave born in his house. Engaging in something of a pity party, Abram made seven references to himself (in the Hebrew) in the space of twenty-two Hebrew words and twice utters the complaint that he was childless.

15:4-6. Ignoring Abram's apparent lack of gratitude, the Lord gave Abram one of the great promises of the Bible; the elderly patriarch would produce an heir from his own body. God then made the breathtaking promise that Abram's offspring would be as numerous as the stars. Old and childless, Abram believed the Lord, that is, he affirmed that God is dependable. God credited it to him as righteousness, that is, He judged or accounted that Abram measured up to the standard, conformed to the norm. Abram's faith and God's gracious response to it served as a paradigm of the Christian experience in three different New Testament books (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; Jas. 2:23).

GENESIS 16:1-4, 11-12

16:1. The issue of providing an heir from Abram's own body (cp. 15:3-4) reappears. Abram's wife, Sarai, was now 75 years old and well past her childbearing years. However, she did own an Egyptian slave named Hagar, probably acquired when she lived in Egypt (12:16).

16:2-3. Sarai faced a dilemma. On the one hand, the Lord had prevented her—Abram's only wife—from bearing children. On the other hand, the Lord promised that her husband would become a father. To "fix" the problem, she ordered her husband to go to her slave—quite possibly a teenager—and try to build a family through her. Abram, now 85, agreed. Sarai likely intended to use Hagar as a surrogate mother, and then adopt the child as her own. In offering something that was tempting but not appropriate to her husband, Sarai was imitating Eve's fateful actions in the garden of Eden (3:6).

16:4. The young slave girl found herself carrying the child of the most important man in the clan—something Sarai had never done. As a result, Hagar treated her mistress with contempt.

JAMES 2:21-23

Verse 21 picks up the Old Testament incident in which Abraham showed his willingness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen. 22:1-18). Verse 23 refers to the incident in which "Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6), which took place at least thirty years before that of Genesis 22.

Verse 21 concludes that Abraham showed his righteousness by his willingness to offer Isaac on the altar. The saving faith of Abraham showed itself by his total obedience to God in the matter of offering up Isaac. The faith James commended moves the heart and controls the life. James was demanding that true faith must be alive and vital.

Verse 22 states two facts about Abraham's faith. First, his faith and his actions were working together. Abraham's faith prompted his obedience. It prodded him on to do good works. Second, his faith was made complete by what he did. His obedience demonstrated the integrity of his faith. This is not to say that previously Abraham had a weak faith. His willingness to sacrifice Isaac vividly demonstrated the existence of true faith.

Verse 23 summarizes the entire process. Abraham's obedience showed he was a righteous man. God declared Abraham righteous as a matter of grace. Abraham showed the reality of this righteousness by his actions in Genesis 22. As a result of this obedience, God drew Abraham into a closer fellowship with him and called him God's friend.

HEBREWS 11:8-12

11:8. Abraham's faith shined brightly out of a dark background. Paul spent an entire chapter (Rom. 4) commending the faith of this spiritual leader. Abraham received a call to follow God which he accepted without question. He left Haran by faith (Gen. 11:31-12:4) and let God supply the road map. He did not receive his inheritance at the time of his first call, and he did not even know the location of the Promised Land. His daring faith earned him the title of "father of the faithful."

Today Jews, Muslims, and Christians revere the name of faithful Abraham, but it is likely his contemporaries laughed at him when he left Haran. God can accomplish wonderful results in his followers, who walk with him as pilgrims on earth.

11:9-10. These verses add three facts about Abraham's faith. First, his faith extended to his family. Isaac and Jacob became linked as heirs with him of the same promise. Second, he showed a tenacious faith by living as a nomad in a foreign land without rights and privileges. Third, Abraham did not look primarily for a physical city in the Promised Land but for a spiritual

city founded and built by God. Abraham wanted God to be the architect and builder of the city. The secret of Abraham's patient waiting was that he could see the invisible and move toward it.

11:11-12. Abraham's greatest demonstration of faith came when he showed faith in God's promise that he would have an heir. He was then one hundred years of age (Gen. 17:17; 21:5). Sarah at ninety (Gen. 17:17) embraced a promise which first caused her to laugh (Gen. 18:12-15). Both Abraham and Sarah shared the conviction that God was faithful to His promises. From these two elderly Hebrews who were as good as dead came a nation teeming with life as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

ISAAC:

SELLOUT

& SYMBOL

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

LEADER NOTE

This section is a way to briefly review last week before getting into today's lesson. Please be careful to keep it brief. We don't need to re-teach last week's lesson; we want to help learners see how this lesson is related to the one before it.

ABRAHAM: FAILURE AND FRIEND

In last week's session, we learned that Abraham failed many times but was also a friend of God. This man, who is elevated in Scripture as the primary Old Testament example of faith and was chosen as "the father of many nations," was also the beginning of generations of familial dysfunction. One of the lessons from Abraham's life is that family failures haven't disqualified any of us from being friends of God.

Name one takeaway from last week's lesson that stuck with you through the week.

What step of obedience did you have opportunity to take in faith this week?

The son who was promised to Abraham and Sarah and was miraculously conceived in their old age understood family dysfunction from the start. Isaac's name meant "laughter," chosen for him because Abraham and Sarah laughed out loud in disbelief that God finally gave them a child when they'd already lived a century. Isaac was well loved, but his brother Ishmael had been left to fend for himself (Gen. 21:8-21). In today's study of this second patriarch's life, we'll learn about the sins of Isaac in family relationships and see that selling out hasn't disqualified you from being a symbol to others of God's love, grace, and power.

SELLOUT

LEADER NOTE

Isaac is likely the least familiar of the three Old Testament patriarchs. This portion of the lesson is meant to highlight Isaac's lowlights in order to remind learners that all of us have sinned, but that God still wants to use us. We, too, must recognize our sins to properly understand Christ's sacrifice and God's grace to us. Though Isaac may be the least familiar patriarch, he was no less a part of God's overarching plan. God used Isaac to foreshadow Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

KEY VERSES

GENESIS 25:21-28

²¹ And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. ²² The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. ²³ And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." ²⁴ When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were

twins in her womb. ²⁵ The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. ²⁶ Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. ²⁷ When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. ²⁸ Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

If you knew from the time they were in the womb that your two children were at odds with one another, how would it impact the way you parent them?

What did Jacob and Rebekah do right in this situation? What did they do wrong?

We see that Isaac was a man of faith. He prayed to the Lord to give them a son. God told Rebekah that they would represent two nations and Esau would serve Jacob. In all likelihood, she did not keep this to herself but told Isaac. But Isaac felt a stronger kinship to Esau, as Rebekah did to Jacob. Rather than loving both sons equally and trusting in the Lord to reveal His plans in His time, Isaac and Rebekah joined in the sons' struggle, and by their favoritism, effectively encouraged it.

KEY VERSES

GENESIS 26:6-11

⁶ So Isaac settled in Gerar. ⁷ When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," for he feared to say, "My wife," thinking, "lest the men of the place

should kill me because of Rebekah," because she was attractive in appearance. ⁸ When he had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of a window and

saw Isaac laughing with Rebekah his wife.⁹ So Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Behold, she is your wife. How then could you say, ‘She is my sister?’” Isaac said to him, “Because I thought, ‘Lest I die because of her.’”¹⁰ Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the

people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.”¹¹ So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, “Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

Consider this moment. Isaac was in Gerar because God told him to stay there and that He would bless him and honor the covenant He had made with Abraham (vv. 1-5). The “men of the place” in verse 7 were enemies. They were pagan Philistines who stopped up all the wells Abraham had dug as an act of aggression. Even in this context, Isaac sold out his wife to protect himself.

What reasons did Isaac have for saying Rebekah was his sister (see also Gen. 20:1-2)?

Does God excuse a person’s sin when it is learned behavior? Why or why not? How does this speak to you personally?

Still, it was not only sinful behavior that Isaac learned from his father, Abraham. Abraham had also modeled well for Isaac what it meant to live with true faith in God. Hebrews 11 names Isaac as an example of faith, along with Abraham: “By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau” (v. 20). Abraham followed God and worshiped God wherever he went. His friendship with God was a testimony to Isaac, who also placed his faith in the Lord.

SYMBOL

KEY VERSES

GENESIS 22:1-2, 7-14

¹ After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

² He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”⁸ Abraham said, “God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So they went both of them together.⁹ When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac

his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”¹² He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, “The Lord will provide”; as it is said to this day, “On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

What would you have done if you were Isaac in this situation? Do you think there was a struggle that was not recorded, or is there a message here about Isaac's faith along with Abraham's?

What did Isaac learn about God in this experience?

Now that we know the New Testament, the rest of the story Abraham and Isaac couldn't see, what was the bigger picture God was pointing to through this event?

God tests His people to build greater trust in Him and to become people who are submitted to His will. God wants His people to be those who are ready to surrender all to Him, even when it's hard. This was a test for Abraham and a lesson for Isaac, one he wouldn't soon forget. As God commanded Abraham to sacrifice the person he loved most, Abraham displayed extraordinary faith in God. We also see trust on the part of Isaac, trust in his father and trust in the Lord. Isaac laid on the altar as his dad prepared to offer him as a sacrifice. In that moment, Isaac served as a picture of a future promise. As God provided a substitute for Isaac on the altar, God has also provided the final substitute for His people in the death of Jesus, His only Son, who was not spared from death, but faced it completely for us.

YOUR NEXT STEP IN MOVING FROM DYSFUNCTION TO BEING A SYMBOL OF GOD'S LOVE AND GRACE

LEADER NOTE

Many believers allow guilt and shame over past sins to keep them from being used by God today. Others may not feel guilt or shame, but experience fear in stepping up to do what God is calling them to do for His glory. Regardless, every person has a next step to take. Use this time to help learners personally apply biblical truths to their lives and commit to follow Jesus in greater obedience. Emphasize that sin means all of us have "sold out" in some form or fashion. We've abandoned God's commands to take an easier, more comfortable way.

OBEY GOD NO MATTER WHAT.

Sometimes what God commands doesn't make sense to us. God didn't reveal His entire plan to Abraham and Isaac from the beginning; neither does He inform us what good will come from our faithfulness to His commands and who will come to know Him because of it. We can know for certain that God's commands are for our good, and He is faithful. This should lead us to obey God, even when we have fears or think there's a better way.

What step of faith and obedience is God calling you to take right now that could be a symbol to others of God's love and grace?

PRAY AND TRUST GOD TO HANDLE YOUR CONCERNS.

What is a situation in your life that worries you?

Isaac was stressed about Rebekah's barrenness and hoped God would give them a son. Isaac didn't take a concubine as his father had; he took his worries to the Lord in prayer. God answered his prayer and gave him Jacob and Esau. Isaac was worried the Philistines would kill him because they wanted his wife for themselves. Instead of praying and trusting God to handle his concerns, this time he took matters into his own hands. As a result, a pagan king showed more integrity than God's representative. When we pray and trust God to handle our concerns, we invite Him to show His power and goodness to the world through us.

James 4:2 declares, "You do not have because you do not ask God." Does your current prayer life invite God to show off His love and grace? Explain.

LOVE PEOPLE.

As in Isaac's story, how we treat other people is often influenced by what we have learned from our parents. But generational sin can be broken. We are to love people, not as we've been taught by broken people before us, but by the Word of God, the example of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

If you're a parent, what wrong things might your children be learning about loving God and people from you?

COMMENTARY

GENESIS 25:21-28

25:21-22. The barren condition of Rebekah parallels the Abraham-Sarah narratives (11:30; cf. Rachel, 29:31). In both cases, a message from the Lord follows, a promissory call (12:1-3) and a prophetic oracle (25:23). The absence of children contrasts with the success of the search for Rebekah and the hopeful expectation of children (24:60). The verb "prayed" commonly concerns intercessory prayer for others. Isaac's intercession assumes that the Lord is responsible for human reproduction. That the Lord "answered his prayer" repeats the same verb, forming a parallel between the two halves of the verse: "When Isaac prayed ... the Lord answered his prayer." This rhetorical feature underscores the effectiveness of the patriarch's intercession and the responsiveness of

his God. The last clause of the verse presents the evidence that the prayer was realized. This terse report of pregnancy is striking since there was a significant waiting period of twenty years between marriage and conception.

25:23. The first couplet entails a synonymous parallelism, announcing "two nations ... two peoples" (v. 23ab) are in her womb. Here, the descendants are substituted for the two children who are the progenitors of Israel and Edom. These two peoples "will be separated," recalling the migration of the peoples listed in the Table of Nations (10:5, 32), but more importantly, echoing the parting between Abraham and Lot (13:9, 11, 14). It was by means of separations that resolutions came to the tensions

between Isaac and Ishmael and Jacob and Esau. Syrén observed the irony of the term “separated,” for the twins were locked together in the womb and dramatically at birth by the younger’s grasp of Esau’s heel. Nevertheless, the divine purpose necessitated their ultimate separation (33:12-19).

The second couplet in the oracle explains that the parting involves the hostile usurpation of the elder brother by the younger and “stronger” brother (v. 23cd). The notion of the younger son holding sway over his senior was contrary to custom (29:26; 37:10-11; 43:33; Deut. 21:15-17; Job 32:6), although in Genesis it was common for Israel’s fathers (27:29, 32-33; 38:27-30; 48:14-20; 49:8). That the “older will serve” the younger brother recalls the curse and blessing invoked by Noah (9:25-27), and it anticipates the blessing stolen by Jacob at the expense of Esau (27:29, 37, 40). That the oracle speaks of two “nations” shows that the prophecy and its fulfillment look beyond the brothers to their descendants. Edom’s history reveals repeated submission to the Israelites (e.g., Exod. 15:15; Num. 24:18; 2 Sam. 8:12-14; 1 Kgs. 11:14-16; Isa. 11:4; Amos 9:11-12; Obad. 1:18).

25:24-26. These verses report the second conflict episode in the passage. Verse 24 confirms the first part of the oracle by announcing “twin boys” and by repeating the word “womb,” occurring in v. 23a. That the infants struggle at delivery corresponds to the oracle’s prediction, “they will be separated.” Unusual pregnancies or strange occurrences at birth may accompany a distinct event (e.g., 1 Sam. 4:21) or signal an omen (e.g., 38:27-30). The description of the infant as strikingly “red” and “hairy” is not derisive, for a ruddy complexion and the growth of hair were valued (Num. 6:5; 2 Sam. 14:26; Song 5:11; 7:5; Isa. 3:24; 7:20; Jer. 7:29). Esau is distinguished especially by the hair over “his whole body,” giving the appearance of a “garment”). This latter term is used of an outer covering, such as the prophet’s mantle (e.g., 1 Kgs. 19:13).

25:27-28. The differences between Esau and

Jacob, already apparent at birth, became more pronounced as the boys grew up. Esau was a rough-and-tumble hunter and outdoorsman (lit “man of rural regions”); Jacob was quiet and stayed at home (lit “dweller in tents”). The differences between the boys highlighted a division between the parents: Isaac, something of an outdoorsman himself (24:63), loved his rugged son Esau, while Rebekah loved her more domestic son Jacob, even teaching him how to cook.

GENESIS 26:6-11

To inherit the promises of offspring, land, and blessing that God had given Abraham, Isaac had to stay in the land as a foreigner. Isaac would have had to negotiate with the Philistines to enjoy certain privileges among them. As a result he might have to provide a wife for someone’s harem. If the person asked for Rebekah (and she was, after all, the most important female in the clan and a beautiful woman), Isaac might be killed if he refused. Thus Isaac, like Abraham before him (12:13; 20:2), told outsiders that his wife was his sister. Isaac’s lie was uncovered when he was caught caressing (lit “laughing/playing with”) Rebekah. Abimelech, as the supreme authority in the region, sent for Isaac and demanded an explanation. Isaac patterned his defense after his father’s (20:11); he feared he might die on account of his wife.

GENESIS 22:1-14

22:1-2. Abraham’s ultimate test of obedience to God is described in 22:1-19. God used this event to affirm the sterling character of Abraham’s faith by giving him the incredibly difficult task of sacrificing his son Isaac. Pagans in Canaan during the OT period regularly practiced child sacrifice by making them pass through the fire (2 Kgs. 16:3) to give them as food to their gods (Ezek. 23:37). With this command God was asking Abraham to demonstrate that he was as committed to the Lord God as pagans were to their gods.

22:3-4. Confirmation of Abraham’s amazing trust in God is found first in the fact that he

was up before sunrise (early in the morning) the next day to begin the journey. His diligence in going to the place God had told him about contrasts sharply with Jonah's actions (Jnh. 1:3). Traveling from Beer-sheba, it was not until the third day that Abraham reached the Jerusalem area.

22:5-8. Evidence that Abraham believed God could raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:17-18) is found in his comment, we'll come back. Abraham carried the most dangerous elements of the sacrifice—the fire and the sacrificial knife—himself, perhaps as a sign of his protective love for Isaac. Ignorant of God's command and surprised that his father would forget the most important element in an animal sacrifice, Isaac asked Abraham where the lamb was. Abraham's faith-filled response was that God Himself would provide the lamb ("sheep").

22:9-14. Abraham followed the standard procedure for a burnt offering involving a living being. In describing his preparation, the Bible emphasizes only Abraham's systematic acts of obedience, omitting any mention of Abraham's or Isaac's feelings. Just before the knife was put to Isaac's neck, the Angel of the Lord spared him. The patriarch had passed the test, providing experiential evidence that he feared God more than he loved his only son. Exactly as Abraham had predicted (v. 8), God had miraculously provided a sheep—and the most prized variety, a ram. To memorialize the event Abraham named that place The Lord Will Provide.

JACOB:

BETRAYER

& BLESSED

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

LEADER NOTE

This section is a way to briefly review last week before getting into today's lesson. Please be careful to keep it brief. We don't need to re-teach last week's lesson; we want to help learners see how this lesson is related to the one before it.

ISAAC: SELLOUT AND SYMBOL

God used Abraham and his son Isaac to deliver a powerful picture full of promise. As young Isaac lay on the altar ready to give his life, God pointed to the salvation Jesus would offer all mankind through the cross. However, unlike Jesus, Isaac was certainly not without sin. Like his father before him, Isaac fell short in parenting (showing favoritism for Esau over Jacob) and in marriage (selling out his wife to protect his own life). Yet Isaac's life reminds us that our sellouts haven't disqualified us from being a symbol of God's love, grace, and power. God wants to use you to display His glory to the world!

Name one takeaway from last week's lesson that stuck with you throughout the week.

If people were seeking to learn about Jesus from your life this past week, what message did they receive?

Today we'll take a look at the third Old Testament patriarch, Jacob. He was Abraham's grandson and Isaac's son. From the start of his life, he was a picture of familial dysfunction (Gen. 25:23-26). Jacob did not only follow his predecessor's sinful actions, but he also added to them by deceiving his dad and betraying his brother. Still, God used Jacob to further His overarching plans for the world. God also blessed Jacob, giving him sons and the covenant promise. Jacob's life will encourage you to know that betrayal hasn't disqualified you from being blessed by God.

BETRAYER

LEADER NOTE

Jacob's story is extensive. It begins in Genesis 25 and continues through Genesis 50. There are many passages about Jacob we could examine, notable shortcomings that had horrific consequences (like his favoritism of Joseph and failure to recognize the hostility this produced in his other sons). But the verses in this section are meant to highlight Jacob's betrayal of his brother Esau. The beginning of Jacob's life didn't disqualify him from being used and blessed by God, but it did create much family dysfunction. Likewise, although our stories of betrayal do not disqualify us from being used by God, they do have consequences.

KEY VERSES

GENESIS 25:22, 23, 26

²² The children struggled together within her...²³
And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than

the other, the older shall serve the younger”...²⁶
Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob.

How do we all come into the world seeking our own way, like Jacob did in a very literal manner?

What is something you find yourself struggling to attain in life? How has that struggle impacted your relationships?

From the start, Jacob was striving to best Esau. Anyone who has had children of their own knows it's true—even from the earliest moments of life, sin is part of the human condition. We are all natural-born sinners. There were two sons struggling in disunity inside Rebekah. This struggle is one the whole world has experienced.

KEY VERSES

GENESIS 25:34

³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

GENESIS 27:36

³⁶ Esau said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.”

The initial struggle between the brothers only intensified as they got older. Once, Jacob took advantage of Esau's exhaustion, hunger, and arrogance. He bribed Esau—food for his birthright. But that wasn't enough. Later, Jacob pretended to actually be Esau. He convinced his father he was Esau and received the older son's blessing. In doing so, Jacob betrayed his brother and his father, too. His deception sent Esau into a murderous rage, so Jacob left town and headed to his uncle Laban's place, where he then lived for two decades.

What did Jacob's actions reveal about his character? About his relationship with God at this point in his life?

How has your family life affected your identity and your ability to make decisions?

As the saying goes, “What goes around comes around.” When he arrived in Padan Aram (Gen. 28:2), Jacob fell in love with Laban's daughter, Rachel. Soon, Jacob found himself on the other end of deception and betrayal.

KEY VERSES

Genesis 29:18-25

¹⁸ Jacob loved Rachel. And he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." ¹⁹ Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her. ²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed."

²² So Laban gathered together all the people of

the place and made a feast. ²³ But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went in to her. ²⁴ (Laban gave his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her servant.) ²⁵ And in the morning, behold, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?"

Why do you think Jacob felt justified in deceiving Esau and Isaac, but felt so shocked and betrayed by Laban's deception? How do we act similarly?

Do you think Jacob would have deceived his brother and father if the events were reversed, if he had first personally known the devastation such betrayals cause?

How could this betrayal have impacted Jacob's relationship with God?

BLESSED

LEADER NOTE

As with each of the three studies in this series, we began with the sins of the patriarchs, but we move to the lovingkindness of the Father. Use this section to drive home the point that God still uses complicated and conflicted people.

KEY VERSES

GENESIS 28:12-15, 18-22

¹² And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! ¹³ And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. ¹⁴ Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and

you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."... ¹⁸ So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it

up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it.¹⁹ He called the name of that place Bethel...²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear,

²¹ so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God,²² and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you."

What had Jacob done to deserve God's appearance and blessing in this way?

What does this tell you about the Lord and His plans for you?

When Jacob's betrayal forced him to leave his family and go live with Laban, he left the land promised by God to Abraham. As God's chosen inheritor of the covenant with Abraham, Jacob's leaving the land seemingly complicated God's promise coming to fruition. But God is more than adequate for the task of keeping His promises. In a dream communicating the connection between heaven and earth (the ladder) and God's active work on the earth through His angels (the acts of ascending and descending the ladder), God reiterated the promise He made to Abraham by reciting it to Jacob, Abraham's grandson. God promised to be with Jacob wherever he went, and to bring him home.

Here's a beautiful truth for us all: God does not only show us His love and use us despite our shortcomings, but He also actively works to bring restoration to the earthly relationships we have damaged. In going home, Jacob would have to face his brother Esau again.

KEY VERSES

Genesis 32:9-12

⁹ And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,'¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.¹¹ Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children.¹² But you said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea,

which cannot be numbered for multitude.'"

GENESIS 32:24-28

²⁴ And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day.²⁵ When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.²⁶ Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."²⁷ And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob."²⁸ Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed."

Has God ever led you to confront conflict after you have continually tried to avoid it? Describe that experience.

Do you really think God could not overcome Jacob? Why, then, do you think God allowed the wrestling to continue for so long?

God asked Jacob for his name. What was God really asking Jacob?

How did Jacob's new name reflect both who Jacob was and who he would be in the future?

Jacob's encounter with God at Peniel marked a turning point in his life. In a wrestling match, God responded to Jacob's preoccupation with control. Jacob's spiritual victory, symbolized by his name change, wasn't accomplished by overpowering God but by holding on to God until God chose to bless him. Spiritual blessings are received through staying close to God and clinging to Him, even when our experiences are painful and difficult. We advance toward maturity in Christ not through living perfect lives, but through struggling to be transformed into His image, by His grace.

YOUR NEXT STEP IN MOVING FROM DYSFUNCTION TO BEING BLESSED BY GOD

Leader Note

Remember, everyone has a next step to take. Use this time to help learners personally apply biblical truths to their lives and commit to follow God in greater obedience in the ways they relate to their families. Re-emphasize that God included the raw truth about the patriarchal families so we would know that He loves us, His power is available to us, and He wants to bless us regardless of our failures.

In the end, Jacob's story was changed (Genesis 48-50). He, too, is included in Hebrews 11 as an example of faith (verse 21). You are not defined only by what you or your family has done, but by your faith in God—who you're becoming.

How have you experienced wounding, either literally or figuratively? How does today's study change your perspective on how God might use this?

How is the current state of your relationship with God impacting your relationships with others? What is one step toward growth and maturity God is calling you to take?

Name the ways you want God to bless your family. What is your role in receiving that blessing?

COMMENTARY

GENESIS 25:22-34

25:22-23. The first couplet entails a synonymous parallelism, announcing “two nations ... two peoples” (v. 23ab) are in her womb. Here, the descendants are substituted for the two children who are the progenitors of Israel and Edom. These two peoples “will be separated,” recalling the migration of the peoples listed in the Table of Nations (10:5, 32), but more importantly, echoing the parting between Abraham and Lot (13:9, 11, 14). It was by means of separations that resolutions came to the tensions between Isaac and Ishmael and Jacob and Esau. Syrén observed the irony of the term “separated,” for the twins were locked together in the womb and dramatically at birth by the younger’s grasp of Esau’s heel. Nevertheless, the divine purpose necessitated their ultimate separation (33:12-19).

The second couplet in the oracle explains that the parting involves the hostile usurpation of the elder brother by the younger and “stronger” brother (v. 23cd). The notion of the younger son holding sway over his senior was contrary to custom (29:26; 37:10-11; 43:33; Deut 21:15-17; Job 32:6), although in Genesis it was common for Israel’s fathers (27:29, 32-33; 38:27-30; 48:14-20; 49:8). That the “older will serve” the younger brother recalls the curse and blessing invoked by Noah (9:25-27), and it anticipates the blessing stolen by Jacob at the expense of Esau (27:29, 37, 40). That the oracle speaks of two “nations” shows that the prophecy and its fulfillment look beyond the brothers to their descendants. Edom’s history reveals repeated submission to the Israelites (e.g., Exod 15:15; Num 24:18; 2 Sam 8:12-14; 1 Kgs 11:14-16; Isa 11:4; Amos 9:11-12; Obad 1:18).

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oracle’s prediction, “they will be separated.” Unusual pregnancies or strange occurrences at birth may accompany a distinct event (e.g., 1 Sam 4:21) or signal an omen (e.g., 38:27-30). The description of the infant as strikingly “red” and “hairy” is not derisive, for a ruddy complexion and the growth of hair were valued (Num 6:5; 2 Sam 14:26; Song 5:11; 7:5; Isa 3:24; 7:20; Jer 7:29). Esau is distinguished especially by the hair over “his whole body,” giving the appearance of a “garment”). This latter term is used of an outer covering, such as the prophet’s mantle (e.g., 1 Kgs 19:13).

25:27-28. The differences between Esau and Jacob, already apparent at birth, became more pronounced as the boys grew up. Esau was a rough-and-tumble hunter and outdoorsman; Jacob was quiet and stayed at home. The differences between the boys highlighted a division between the parents: Isaac, something of an outdoorsman himself (24:63), loved his rugged son Esau, while Rebekah loved her more domestic son Jacob, even teaching him how to cook.

25:29-34. Esau’s impatient, appetite-driven life contrasted sharply with Jacob’s shrewd, calculating character. Esau willingly traded his birthright—the right of the firstborn son to a double portion (or perhaps two-thirds) of the inheritance (Deut. 21:17)—for the chance to eat some... red stuff. Because of his fateful decision, Esau picked up the alternate name Edom (“Red”), which would be carried by the people group stemming from him (32:3). And because Jacob had made him swear to sell his birthright, the decision could not be undone.

GENESIS 27:31-38

Esau apparently had to awaken his blind father, who was confused at first, but began to tremble uncontrollably when he realized he had given someone other than Esau the right to rule the clan. Esau complained that Jacob had now cheated him twice, first gaining the double portion of inheritance (25:31-33), and now the clan’s headship. Jacob, whose name sounds

similar to words meaning “deceitfulness” and “to supplant/replace”, had lived up to his name. Having lost every desirable blessing, Esau begged his father to find some way to bless him, too.

GENESIS 28:10-22

28:10-15. Jacob started northward on the approximately 500 mile journey to Haran. At the end of one of his first days he stopped in central Palestine and camped outdoors. That night God appeared to him. Perhaps the stairway (a better translation than “ladder”) he dreamed of was a supernatural version of humanity’s Tower of Babylon (11:4), with God’s angels—and not sinful humans—using it to commute from heaven to earth. In the dream Yahweh transferred to Jacob all the essential elements of the promises given originally to Abraham and Isaac.

Key features from Abraham’s era include: the gift of land (12:7; 13:17); the promise of offspring as numerous as the dust of the earth (cp. 13:16); and peoples being blessed through Jacob and his offspring (cp. 12:3; 18:18). As with his father Isaac, God promised He would be with him wherever he went (26:24) and bring him back to the promised land.

28:16-19. No other person in the OT is recorded as anointing a sacred stone; Jacob would do it twice (35:14). Jacob renamed the site Bethel (“House of God”), a name that would be retained throughout Israelite history (Jdg. 1:23; Neh. 11:31).

28:20-22. Jacob is the only patriarch to make a vow. Though his words can appear selfish, the vow may simply contain a request that God would carry out the implications of the promises made in verse 15. Years later Jacob would confess that God had indeed kept the terms of His promises (35:3).

GENESIS 29:13-25

29:13-20. In the ancient Near East, a male kissing another male in greeting signified

acceptance of and respect for the other person (27:27; 45:15; Exod. 18:7; 1 Sam. 10:1). Laban called Jacob my own flesh and blood and gave him the right to stay in the home permanently. Jacob was neither a son nor a slave, so it was appropriate to work out a suitable arrangement that compensated Laban for his provisions and Jacob for his labor. It was not appropriate for Jacob to work for nothing, so it was agreed that Jacob would work for seven years for the right to marry Rachel.

This arrangement is reminiscent of a provision in the law of Moses that permitted certain slaves to work seven years for their freedom (Ex. 21:2). Men did not buy wives in the strict sense of the word; however, they did customarily pay a bride-price (Gen. 34:12; Ex. 22:17; 1 Sam. 18:25) to their future wife’s family to compensate them for the care and protection provided to the woman prior to her marriage.

29:21-27. Perhaps you have never noticed that Jacob said give me my wife, not “give me Rachel.” This opened the door for the master schemer (Laban) to pull the old switcheroo. Had he planned this seven years earlier? Probably not. He had every expectation that Leah might find a husband during that time; but since she didn’t, he saw an opportunity to unload his less desirable daughter on his unsuspecting nephew. The ceremony took place with the bride veiled, Jacob slept with his new wife, and in the morning he got the surprise of his life.

Laban, of course, had the perfect excuse: It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Not only that, but he put forth a counteroffer Jacob couldn’t refuse because of his love for Rachel: We will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work. Why hadn’t Laban mentioned this custom seven years earlier? Perhaps because it was part of the deceit from the beginning, but not likely. Since Leah and Rachel were both moving on in age, and prospects of marriage for the older daughter dimmed by the hour, Laban saw his chance to pull off a double wedding and put his hooks into a foreman for the ranch for another seven years.

What did Rachel think of all this? We have no idea, but we know that the role of women in nomadic cultures even today does not permit them to object to their father's will. Why did Jacob accept this deal instead of demanding Rachel immediately? He didn't actually have the local sheriff on his side, and he probably saw himself outfoxed, outgunned, and outmaneuvered. Besides, his love for Rachel made even the second seven years seem like a good deal.

GENESIS 32:3-12, 24-30

32:3-12. Remembering Esau's death threats from 20 years earlier (27:41-42), Jacob now made a special effort to gain Esau's favor with the assistance of messengers. The first prong of his strategy was verbal: Jacob had the messengers call Esau "lord" and himself "your servant," thus honoring Esau's position as first-born—even though he had previously taken Esau's birthright and blessing. Jacob also made sure he was the first to initiate contact between the brothers, in order to seek Esau's favor.

To prepare for the coming confrontation with his brother Jacob did two things: first, he divided his group in two so at least some of his people could escape if necessary; second, he offered a prayer with three elements: an admission

that he was unworthy of the many blessings God had given him, a prayer for rescue, and a reminder of God's promises to prosper and multiply Jacob.

32:24-30. Now Jacob experienced his third and final encounter with God while on a journey (cp. v. 1; 27:12-15). A man, understood by later Israelites to be God or an angel possessing the authority of God (Hos. 12:3-4), wrestled with the elderly patriarch until daybreak. The fight ended when the divine being dislocated Jacob's hip. Jacob, injured but still unwilling to release his grip on the being, demanded that He bless him. Asserting His authority over Jacob (see note at Gen. 1:5), the man changed Jacob's name to Israel, linking the name with the fact that the patriarch had struggled with God), as well as with men, and had prevailed.

Jacob was the third person to be renamed by God, joining Abraham and Sarah (17:5,15). The patriarch's inferior status is reflected in the fact that, unlike the divine being, who asked for Jacob's name and got it, Jacob was unable to learn the being's name. The renamed man now renamed the place Peniel—or Penuel—literally "the face of God," because he had seen God face to face and yet was spared from death.