

How to Overcome Family Mess – February 16-17, 2019
Follow-up Bible Studies

Written by Maggie Baxter

Day One: Genesis 27:1-45

- Describe Isaac's condition (1). What did he ask of Esau, his favorite child (2-4)? What scheme did Isaac's wife Rebekah then hatch (5-10)? Why did Jacob hesitate, and how did his mother ultimately persuade him (11-14)? Summarize the plan's execution (14-29). Consider all factors of this family's mess: favoritism, elaborate deception, etc. How does it make you feel? Do any of these patterns exist in your own family? Speak to the Lord.
- What happened when Esau returned from hunting (30-40)? How would you describe both Isaac and Esau's emotions during this scene? Even in today's world, parents either implicitly or explicitly speak blessings over their children. What have your parents spoken over you? What do you speak over your children?
- In the aftermath of Jacob's deceit, what was Esau thinking and feeling (41)? What did Rebekah do (42-45)? Imagine if she or Jacob had been contrite. What healing may have happened?

Day Two: Genesis 37:12-36

- What did Israel (Jacob) tell *his* favorite son to do (12-17)? Once Joseph's brothers spotted him, what did they do (18-20)? Already "the favorite," Joseph's arrogant dreams in verses 5-11 incensed his brothers; fratricide and a cover-up were in the works. In your family, what incenses people? How can you overcome these unhealthy patterns and persuade others to do the same?
- Describe Reuben's objection and alternative plan (21-24). Why was he the only dissenter? What opportunity did Judah seize (25-28)? How did Reuben respond (29-30)? How did the brothers cover up what they did (31-33)? Describe Jacob's mourning (34-35). Imagine maintaining this ruse in the face of such profound grief. What happened to Joseph during this time (36)?
- Family mess abounds among the patriarchs of the Old Testament. Why are so many of these stories recorded in scripture? How do they help you to think about your own family mess?

Day Three: Psalm 142

- What is David doing (1-2)? Meditate on how he communicates with God: "cry aloud," "lift up my voice," "pour out...my complaint" and "tell my trouble." Speak to the Lord in this way about family issues. Reveal to him the depth of any hurt, concern, etc.
- What contrasting picture does David then paint of God's care for him versus the care he receives from others (3-5)? Perhaps you've felt this way in your family: "no one is concerned for me" and "no one cares for my life." Invite the Lord into this pain and ask him to reveal all the ways he watches over you. What is he speaking, and what is your response?
- What specific pleas does David make to God (6-7)? Why (6-7)? Continue following David's lead: make your own pleas to the Lord. What rescue or protection do you need? What new environment or family do you want him to set you in?

Day Four: Romans 8:14-17

- What is the identity of those led by the Spirit of God (14-15)? To what extent do you believe this about yourself? Perhaps instead you feel afraid or enslaved. Speak to the

Lord and proclaim, "I am part of God's family; I am his child." Ask the Spirit to testify the same, as Paul claims he does in verse 16. How does this feel?

- Thanks to the Holy Spirit, how can we cry out to God (15)? Speaking to God in this incredibly personal and familial way is a revolutionary shift, but it could also be unsettling. Perhaps fathers and families don't necessarily feel safe. Ask God to faithfully paint a new picture of family for you. May he help you to more healthily relate to your family of origin. May the new family found in Christian community bring healing.
- What is the implication of being a child of God (17)? What does the word "heir" bring to mind? Alongside Jesus, your brother, what do you picture inheriting from God? Speak to the Lord about it.

Day Five: Romans 8:18-30

- How do "present sufferings" compare to future glory (18)? If your family life is presently bleak, pause and ask God to fill you with hope for the future as you reflect on this entire passage.
- Describe the way creation waits (19, 22). Where do you see this eagerness and pain in the world around you? What about in your family? What exactly is creation awaiting (19-21)? What about believers in particular (23)? What does it mean to hope in the Lord (24-25)? Ask God to make you a person of Christian hope.
- What role do both prayer and the Holy Spirit play in nurturing hope (26-27)? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you pray for health and restoration in your family. What ideas is he giving you?
- What hope is there for those enduring darkness (28-30)? Meditate on verse 28 alongside Genesis 45:5 and 45:7. Picture this coming to pass for all the ways family has wounded you. God is for you! Goodness can follow catastrophe! May it be so for you.