

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **God Calls Abraham's Family**

September 2022

Fall Quarter

**September 10, 2022**

## **Lesson #2 – God Chooses the Younger Twin**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Genesis 25:19b-34

### **ICE BREAKER** –

1. Why might God choose to make us wait before He grants our requests?
2. How can we avoid making rash, impulsive decisions in life?
3. What prayers are appropriate for a parent to say for their quarreling children?

***Key Verse: “The LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.—Genesis 25:23***

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

The second half of Genesis introduces audiences to Abraham (originally known as Abram) and his family line. God promised that this family would be the way by which He would bless the world (Genesis 12:1–3; see lesson 1). Despite Abraham and Sarah’s fertility issues and their advanced age (11:30; 12:4), God provided them with a son, Isaac (21:1–7).

However, Abraham would have other sons by other women. Hagar, a servant of wife Sarah, gave birth to Ishmael (Genesis 16:1–4, 15–16). After Sarah died, Abraham took another wife, Keturah, who bore him other sons (25:1–2). However, Abraham held Isaac in the highest regard (25:5–6). Isaac eventually married Rebekah (24:67). Together they settled in the southern part of Canaan, near the Sinai Peninsula (25:11; see 16:14).

Throughout Genesis, family lines and the concept of generations serve as transition points in the text. For original audiences, these served as markers for moments of great significance, and each marked a new focus in the narrative (see Genesis 5; 6:9–10; 11:10–27; 25:12–18).

The underlying Hebrew word translated as “generations” (Genesis 5:1; 6:9; 10:1, 32; 11:10; etc.) reminds audiences to focus their attention on the upcoming narrative and the individuals depicted. This lesson focuses on “the generations of Isaac, Abraham’s son” (25:19a).

### **LESSON COMMENTARY**

**25:19–21a.** When **Isaac** married Rebekah he **was forty years old**, a relatively late age for a man during the biblical period to enter into his first marriage. The norm was to marry as teenagers—the early teens for women and the late teens

for men (cf., e.g., the expression “wife of [one’s] youth” [Pr 5:18; Is 54:6; Mal 2:14–15], in which the term “youth” [*ne’urim*] primarily denotes the teenage years; and in one of the earliest rabbinic statements on the subject, a man’s preferred marriage age is explicitly set at 18 [*m. ’Abot* 5.21]). Nevertheless one may deduce from the example of Isaac that it is more important to marry the right person than to marry early—especially when one finds oneself, like Isaac, surrounded by a culture that is overwhelmingly “unfit” for one’s self in the preeminent matter of faith. Like Sarai (11:30), Rebekah too **was barren**, though the response of the patriarch in each case—reflecting their spiritual maturity—is different. Abraham did nothing (at least nothing is stated in Scripture), whereas **Isaac prayed to the LORD ... and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived** (v. 21). God’s answer was not immediate, for Rebekah gave birth 20 years after their marriage, when Isaac was 60 (v. 26). This further bears out, in any event, the important biblical principle already clearly set forth in 4:25; 20:17–18; and 21:1–2 that the Lord alone ultimately enables a woman to conceive (or who “opens” and “closes” the womb), for “children are a gift of the LORD” (Ps 127:3).

#### **b. Birth of Jacob and Esau (25:21b–26)**

**25:21b–26.** Not knowing that she was pregnant with twins, and concerned by the movement that she felt **within her**, Rebekah **went to inquire of the LORD** (v. 22). In response God indicated not only that there were **two nations** (i.e., twin sons from whom will arise two peoples) **in her womb**, but also that **the older shall serve the younger** (v. 23). By this statement God was declaring that by His own sovereign will—and in contrast to the convention of recognizing the eldest son as preeminent—Jacob and all his descendants (i.e., the “nation” that Jacob/Israel would later become) will be privileged to be the benefactors and mediators of the Abrahamic covenant. The preference of the younger for the older is a common theme in Genesis. Some additional examples are that Abel was preferred over Cain (Gn 4:1–8), Isaac over Ishmael (Gn 21:1–21), Rachel over Leah (Gn 29:30–31), Joseph over all his brothers (Gn 37:4), Perez over Zerah (Gn 38:29–30), and Ephraim over Manasseh (Gn 48:13–20). To make the point that God’s choices are based on His own sovereign will and not on human merit Paul cited this divine response in Rm 9:11–12: “though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad.” God’s response to Rebekah was not merely *prophetic* (i.e., looking forward to the national ascendancy of Israel over Edom) but rather *declarative* (i.e., His decision for the twins as of that moment). Paul emphasized that God spoke with respect to *the twins* before they were even born or had done anything. Hence, the sole explanation for this is God’s sovereign election. God made the same point in His statement through Malachi, “I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau” (Mal 1:2–3; see comments on Rm 9:6–13 and Mal 1:2–3). This refers not to God’s *emotional* attitude toward the two, but rather to His simple, sovereign *choice* of one and rejection of the other (see also Gn 29:30–31; with respect to His *emotional* orientation, God loves everyone; see Jn 3:16).

### c. Sale of Esau's Birthright (25:27–34)

**25:27–34.** Though spiritually mature and of commendable character, Isaac was not perfect. Here he fell into the common parental trap of favoring one child with whom he had more in common over another. This pattern was carried over by his son Jacob, both toward his own children (preferring Joseph and Benjamin over the other ten) as well as in his marital relationships (favoring Rachel over Leah). Thus, **Isaac loved** (i.e., preferred) **Esau** (v. 28), who was a **skillful hunter ... because he [Isaac] had a taste for game**. But **Rebekah**, falling into the same parental trap, **loved** (i.e., preferred) her more **peaceful**, tent-dwelling son **Jacob**. This parental split favoritism no doubt later encouraged that “distance” between Jacob and Esau that prompted the former to solicit the latter’s **birthright** (v. 31) for a bowl of **stew**. The strife between brothers that begins in this passage continues throughout the Jacob narrative and reflects a common theme in Genesis (see comments on 4:8). The birthright under dispute is distinct from the paternal *blessing*; see 27:30–46 and 49:8–12. Esau, of course, was also at fault for having **despised** (not having valued) **his birthright** (v. 34), and in infamous commemoration of his selling it for a bowl **red** (*'edom*) **lentil stew**, his descendants are identified ever afterward by the label **Edom** (*'edom*, “red [people]”, v. 30).

**LESSON NUGGET** – Isaac and Rebekkah knew that God had promised descendants (Genesis 15:5), so Isaac laid hold of the promise and prayed. True prayer lays hold of God’s word (John 15:7) and seeks to accomplish God’s purpose. God gave them twin boys who were opposite each other in every way. He also gave them a revelation that the younger one, Jacob, would carry on the messianic line. For that reason, you would think that Isaac would have favored Jacob, but the physical won over the spiritual. Esau pictures the man of the world who despises the eternal and lives for the temporal.

**Sources:** *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible, Life Application Bible Notes and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*