

THE THREAD

DISCOVERING THE THREAD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH THE BIG-PICTURE STORY OF THE BIBLE

PART 1: BEGINNINGS

LESSON 7 || JACOB AND ESAU

SESSION SNAPSHOT

NARRATIVE PASSAGE: Genesis 25:19-28; Genesis 27:1-45

GOSPEL FOCUS: Romans 8:26-28

STUDENT TAKEAWAYS:

- See that God is faithful to His plan of redemption and grace despite our sinfulness.
- Learn that they can have faith in the plans of God, Who acts out of His great grace for our good and His glory.
- Define what it means to surrender their life to God's leading, trusting that His will be done in their lives.

OVERVIEW:

God has a plan, which is bigger than we can even imagine, and His plan includes each one of us. Unfortunately, our sinful nature makes us desire to be our own god. As Christians, we often struggle between wanting the good stuff God wants for us and still wanting all the worldly things we think will make us happy. Even as our understanding of and relationship with Him grows, we can still hang on to this sinful nature and desire to be our own god. We want to realize God's blessings for our lives and do His will in the world, but we strive to achieve these by our own strength, with our own methods, and according to our own schedule. The lesson of Jacob and Esau is simple to grasp intellectually but much harder to actualize in our everyday lives. Simply stated: God is God, and we are not.

TEACHER PREP VIDEO:

Each *Thread* lesson comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the lesson's main point as you prepare to teach.



BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is designed to help you provide the basic context for the passages you'll be studying.

- **WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "CONTEXT"?** In every YM360 Bible study lesson, we encourage teachers to help students know *who* wrote a particular book, *when* it was written, and *why* it was written.
- **WHY TEACH CONTEXT?** Grasping the big-picture view of God's story of redemption is difficult for teenagers without understanding the context of the books and passages they're studying.

GENESIS

- *Author:* While there's no specific author named within the text, Moses is the accepted author for Genesis, with some editing and additions done after his death (such as the account of his death!).
- *Time frame:* It's difficult to establish with any certainty a date for the completion of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible). Most of the material originated from Moses himself, and depending on the date of the Exodus (which is also not known for sure), the date for the writing of Genesis is estimated to be sometime in the 1400s or 1200s BC.
- *Purpose:* Genesis details the earliest history of our world, including creation and Adam and Eve's fall. It also focuses on the emergence of Israel, not only as God's people but as the group that God would work through to bring redemption to the world.

ROMANS

- *Author:* Paul is the author of Romans.
- *Time frame:* Romans was probably written from Corinth in the winter of 56-57 AD.
- *Purpose:* Since the church in Rome had not received comprehensive theological teaching on salvation and other implications of following Christ, Paul wrote Romans to ensure a good understanding of such things. In addition, since many Jewish Christians were rejecting some of the new Gentile converts, a level playing field needed to be given to all believers. This is what Paul was advocating for in Romans.

LESSON PLAN

The Lesson Plan contains four elements:

- **GETTING STARTED**– An introductory activity designed to prepare teenagers to engage with God and the truth of His Word.
- **THE STORY**– A section featuring a narrative from Scripture that helps teenagers know God better through learning the story of the Bible.
- **THE THREAD**– A special emphasis where teenagers discover the Gospel thread coursing throughout the story of the Bible.
- **WRAPPING UP**– An application-focused segment helping teenagers ask the question, “How am I impacted by what I learned today”?

GETTING STARTED

- *Goal:* To get students to see that they don’t always understand the full story, see the big picture, or know all the facts.
- *Set-Up:* You’ll need a jigsaw puzzle with at least 25-50 pieces. Any smaller may be too easy. Any bigger may be too time-consuming.

FIRST, talk about a time you had to do something challenging without knowing exactly why you were doing it. Then, ask questions similar to the following and get students’ responses:

- **Has a parent ever asked you to do something you thought was over the top?**
- **Talk about a time when a teacher gave an assignment in class that just didn’t make sense.**

NEXT, lead students in the following activity. Divide your students into groups of three or more students, depending on your group size. Inform students that they are going to be putting a jigsaw puzzle together. The only catch is that they will not be allowed to see the box. Give each group an equal number of jigsaw pieces (all pieces come from the same puzzle).

At first, give students time to put their pieces together as best they can. They will likely have some pieces that fit together, but mostly just a scattering of pieces that don’t. After a little while, allow groups to combine with ONE other group. Give them time to try and put the combined puzzle pieces together. Finally, allow all groups to come together to complete the puzzle. Continue until there is only one group and the puzzle is complete.

THEN, have students respond to the activity. **Ask questions like:**

- **Why was this difficult?**
- **What would have made it easier?**
- **And now, for the big question: What was the purpose?**

Allow students to voice any opinions they have about the purpose. Then, **say something like:**

- **If you could have seen the box top, it would have made your task easier, right? Life is kind of like that. We don’t know how all the pieces of our life fit into God’s big-picture plan, but we do know they fit, and when they all go together as God sees it, it’s beautiful.**

Explain to your students that in this lesson, they’ll look at a Biblical example of what happens when God’s people take matters into their own hands without knowing the whole story, seeing the big picture, or getting all the facts. **Say something like:**

- **We’ve just experienced how much it helps to see the big picture before taking action. We’re about to look at a Biblical example of a family that tries to “play God” as they attempt to achieve their goals and not let God accomplish His goals in His way.**

TRANSITION TO THE STORY.

THE STORY

- *Goal:* For students to see how God is faithful to His plan of redemption and grace despite our sinfulness.
- *Set-Up:* Students will need a Bible or a Bible app. You may find that a dry-erase board is helpful for jotting down some notes, but it's not essential.

FIRST, explain that in this lesson, you'll be looking at the story of Jacob and Esau from Genesis 27. You'll start in Genesis 25, but the main story is in Genesis 27. If you'd like, use the Connecting The Dots section below to review or fill in the gaps between your last lesson and this one.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

As you teach The Thread, there will naturally be some gaps in the story. This is an optional way for you to fill in some of the gaps between the last lesson you taught and this one. Use it to review or connect the dots to the events surrounding the passage.

- Jacob and Esau are the grandsons of Abraham. They are the sons of Isaac.
- God had promised Abraham that He would give him innumerable descendants. God promised that the whole world would be blessed through one of these descendants (Jesus)! Remember that Sarah and Abraham got impatient waiting on God and tried to accomplish God's promise through Sarah's maid, Hagar. That didn't work out so well. But God kept His promise, and Isaac was born.

Inform students that you'll be reading pretty much the entire story of Jacob and Esau. Explain that this story is a bit long, but if they engage their imaginations, it will be fascinating and captivating. Let students know that you'll work together to cover the passage and need volunteers to help you read.

THEN, start by having students turn to Genesis 25. While they're finding it, provide some of the basic background for the book using the Bible Background. Then, read or have a student read verses 19-21. **Say something like:**

- **Think back to how Isaac was born miraculously when his mother was in her 90s! I bet his parents told that story a few times. How do you think the story of his own birth affected Isaac's faith when asking God for children?**
 - *Answers will vary.* And while we don't know, it would seem that this story would help make Isaac more hopeful about God hearing his prayers.

Read or have a student read verses 22-28. **Ask something like:**

- **Why do you think the Bible included this little detail about Rebekah favoring Jacob and Isaac favoring Esau?**
 - *Answer:* It will help us understand their actions in the next part of the story. You may also want to briefly mention that it adds to the Bible's credibility as a historical document that our "heroes" are presented with all their faults.

Re-read verse 23. Lead students to understand that although this sounds like God is simply stating what's going to happen in the future, we know from other parts of the Bible (Malachi 1 and Romans 9) that God deliberately chose Jacob. Verse 23 represents God's promise to Rebekah that He would fulfill His promise to Abraham through Jacob.

THEN, read or have a student read Genesis 27:1-27. **Ask something like:**

- **What do you notice about Jacob's response to Rebekah's plot?**
 - *Answer:* He didn't say, "But Mom, deceiving Dad and stealing the gift he wants to give Esau is sinful. Instead, let's just wait and see what God has in mind." He went with the plan even though he knew it was wrong.

- Would it be harder for you to rebuke (tell them their plan is sinful) a parent or a good friend? Why?
 - Answers will vary.
- Focus on Genesis 27:13-27. See if you can list all the lies and deceptions Jacob and Rebekah must navigate to make their plan succeed.
 - Consider writing answers on a dry-erase board if available. As students wrap up their answers, take a moment to remind students how sin is an awful trap. One sin leads you to more sin.

Transition to a discussion of Isaac's blessing. Explain that so far, you've seen Rebekah and Jacob planning out all the details of a master plot and then actually pulling it off. But you're about to discover why this elaborate plot was so important to them. Say something like:

- The whole purpose of this was so Isaac would get his father's blessing. In this culture and time, you have to understand that the blessing was more than just a wish or happy thought. The blessing from Isaac came with all of Isaac's wealth, power, and authority to enact it. Equally important was the fact that Isaac's spoken word was like an unbreakable contract. He couldn't simply "un-bless" Jacob just because he had been deceived. So let's see what this blessing is all about.

NEXT, read or have a student read Genesis 27:28-29. Say something like:

- Try to put the blessing or gifts Isaac just gave Jacob into modern terms. Let's list them (again, a dry-erase board might be handy here).
 - *Answer:* Isaac just gave Jacob all of his abundance, prosperity, power, and security. Jacob basically became the ruler of the family with discretion over its wealth, power, and authority!

Finish this section by reading or having a student read the remainder of Genesis 27:30-45. Bring home two huge main points by saying something like:

- Notice that God did not forsake His promise to Rebekah and Jacob even though they lied, cheated, and deceived their way to status. Just like Isaac's word, God's promise is absolute. He doesn't revoke His promise just because we can't seem to keep ourselves from sinning.
- But, also notice that Rebekah and Jacob corrupted the joy God had planned for them. Esau's hatred and anger were never part of God's promise. The contempt and fear Jacob would have to live with from Esau were direct consequences of his sinful effort to take God's plans into his own hands.

IF STUDENTS DON'T HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, TRANSITION INTO THE THREAD:

- As we continue to study the big-picture story of the Bible, remember that we're looking for echoes of the Gospel in the stories we read. Do you see any evidence of the Gospel message in this story? Let's look closer.

THE THREAD

FIRST, instruct students to turn to Romans 8. If you choose, provide them with some brief context for the book by referencing the Bible Background. Also, give them some immediate contextual background. Say something like:

- In this part of his letter, Paul recognizes that the readers are suffering. Their lives aren't going so well, and the cause of their suffering is most likely that they are Christians. Paul is trying to help them see that not only will they get the reward of heaven when they die, but it also means that God can even make their current suffering beneficial to them.

THEN, read or have a student read Romans 8:26-28, then lead students in a discussion. Ask:

- What do you think these verses are talking about?
 - *Answer:* Explain that when things aren't going well, we probably don't even know what to ask God for. But the Holy Spirit does the asking for us.
- Let's dig a little deeper and get a little more personal. Can a couple of you give us examples of when your life wasn't going so well, and you didn't know what to do?
 - *Answer:* Students may stay in the shallow end with answers like bad grades or personal dynamics with friends, but they may dive deep and bring up an imminent divorce or death of a loved one. Be prepared for both.

Remind students that it seems like common sense that they'd know what to pray for if they're being bullied or experiencing some other tough time. You'd pray for it to stop. But remind them that God's perspective is bigger than you can imagine. Say something like:

- God knows and sees everything. We don't see the big picture. And while we may think we know what to ask God for, sometimes we don't. But God knows precisely what we need. He knows what's going on. He knows how to bend whatever junk is happening around you into a life-building experience for you.

NEXT, read or have a student read verse 28. Ask something like:

- What important words or phrases would you pull out of this verse?
 - *Answer:* "in all things," "God works"; "according to His purposes."
- Does this mean that God will make everything perfectly happy for you? Why or why not?
 - *Allow students to answer as they will.* Don't correct them or affirm them at this point. Just let them freely answer.
- The key to understanding this verse is in the phrase, "for those who are called according to His purpose." God works good in our lives according to His purposes. Hmm. Does this shed some light on the previous question? Let's ask it again: Does this mean that God makes everything perfectly happy for us?
 - *Answer:* Help students see that God certainly delights in our happiness, but He has a much bigger perspective in mind. God might allow us to experience unhappiness today for a much richer happiness tomorrow. He can work this way because He has a complete view of all things.
- How does this change the way you understand why God allows us to experience hard times?
 - *Answers will vary.*

FINALLY, TRANSITION INTO THE WRAPPING UP SECTION BY saying something like:

- You've probably heard this before, but I want to challenge you to let this knowledge really soak in and impact your life. Knowing that God's got an eye on your life and a plan to make it all fit is different than genuinely trusting Him and allowing Him to make that plan a reality. Let's talk about that a bit before we wrap up.

WRAPPING UP

- *Goal:* For students to define what it means to surrender their life to God's leading, trusting that His will be done in their lives.
- *Set-Up:* You will probably use a dry-erase board for this section.

FIRST, say something like:

- We've learned today about a promise God made to Rebekah that He would bless Jacob. We saw how Rebekah overheard her husband planning to give that blessing to Esau. She didn't trust God to keep His promise and took matters into her own hands. Jacob didn't trust God either. He joined the deceptive plot without a second thought.

THEN, ask students for some examples of acting outside of God's will to get blessings. Say something like:

- The temptation facing Rebekah and Jacob is actually very common. People want to get life's good stuff, but they don't trust God to provide it in His time, by His power, and in His way. Sometimes the "good stuff" isn't actually even good, but people want it anyway. Give me some examples.
 - *Answers:* Drugs, junk food, inappropriate TV/video games, etc . . .
- Most of the time, however, the "good stuff" is truly good, but if we get it by acting outside of God's will, we corrupt it. What are some examples of truly good things that we strive to get our own way?
 - *Answers may include things like* cheating to get good grades, lying to keep the peace, having sex outside of marriage, and so on.
- Ask students to share about times they hatched a great plot to get something good, but it required action outside God's will. If students are not too responsive, you may want to tell a story of your own to get things moving.

NEXT, zero in on the big three components of letting God be God: His time, His power, and His way. Write this list on the dry-erase board and say something like:

- There are three big ways we don't trust God. 1) God's schedule. We want it now! We don't want to wait. 2) God's power.' We can make this happen on our own! We act as if we don't need God. 3) God's way. We think the ends justify the means.

Ask students to share examples of when they haven't trusted God in one of these categories.

FINALLY, bring the conversation around to trusting God to keep His promises in our lives. Say something like:

- Think back to the story of Jacob and Esau. Specifically, Isaac asking God to give him children even though his wife, Rebekah, was barren. Because Isaac's very existence was evidence that God keeps His promises, Isaac was confident that God would answer his prayer.
- Think back to the verses in Romans that tell us that we don't see the big picture enough even to know what we should pray for, so the Holy Spirit prays for us according to God's will.
- Together, these verses show us that God may not answer a prayer as we think He should. Can you accept that? Can you accept that you are not God and don't know what's best?
 - *Answers will vary*, but encourage students to be honest with themselves.

Explain that whether or not God answers our prayers the way we think He should, we can be sure that God keeps His promises regardless of our sinful nature. And we know that God has promised He will work out all the details (awesome or awful) for our good and His glory.

Challenge students to commit to giving God just one situation in their life. Remind them that once they give it to Him, they need to keep their hands off. Let God do it His way, on His schedule, by His power. Ask if anyone wants to share their commitment with the group. Once students have had a chance to respond, ask if anyone has any further thoughts or questions. Then, close your Bible study in prayer.

- If you've purchased the corresponding devotional journal, remind students they'll be working through Week 1 this week. Encourage them to keep up with the daily devotions and to give memorizing this week's verse their best shot.
- If you're utilizing the digital devotions included in the Thread curriculum, remind students how you'll be making them available, i.e., Instagram, Facebook, etc.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU . . .

- Do you have questions about a lesson?
- Something that worked particularly well that you want to share?
- Something that didn't work that you want to bring up?

We value your feedback! Please do not hesitate to email us with your questions, comments, or concerns at feedback@youthministry360.com.