

God Chooses the Younger Twin

All right, let's get out of here. I'm ready to light up Chi-Town," said Duane to his three co-workers. "Stefon, we're going to drag you with us!"

The men had concluded a three-day conference in Chicago and were anxious to partake of some "exciting" night life. Most of their flights were the next afternoon, and Duane's plane left on Sunday.

Stefon had followed his co-workers to the hotel bar to wind down. Now the men were ready for dinner and "treats." Duane had located numerous restaurants, live shows, and pleasure hot spots to attend.

"It's Chicago!" Duane said. "Let's party! Who's with me?" An approving roar came from everyone except Stefon. He liked his co-workers, all of whom were married except Kojo, but hadn't spent much time with them outside of the office.

"Come on, Stefon," Duane said. "We won't say anything to Tamila. What happens in Chicago, stays in Chicago!"

Stefon had spent the conference listening to Duane talk about the "wild time" they would have after the conference was over. Stefon didn't want any part of it, because of his commitment to Christ and love for Tamila.

"Hey guys, I'm just going to turn in and get room service," Stefon said.

"Aw man," Duane said. "you're going to regret it!"

Stefon started to reply, but then just got up from the bar and headed to the elevator doors.

- 1.** *What do you consider to be worldly desires?*
- 2.** *How do you distinguish the difference between worldly desires and God's desires?*
- 3.** *Why do we need to choose God's desires for our lives over worldly desires?*

Jacob and Esau

Genesis 25:19b-23, KJV

19b Abraham begat Isaac:

20 And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

21 And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD.

23 And 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 25:19b-23, NIV

^{19b}Abraham became the father of Isaac, ²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean.

²¹Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. ²²The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

²³The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

God fulfilled His promise to Abraham and miraculously enabled Sarah to conceive a son, Isaac. When Isaac turned 40, it was now his turn to continue the family line. Isaac found a wife among his relatives in Paddan Aram—Rebekah, sister of Laban. When Rebekah proved barren, Isaac prayed for his wife, and in response, the Lord opened her womb. After a few months, Rebekah experienced significant jostling in her womb, which turned out to be the activity of twins! When Rebekah went to the Lord to about this, He told that not only

did she have two babies in her womb, but that the two represented two different nations. One would continue the line of God's promise, while the older would serve the younger. This ran contrary to the ancient middle eastern practice of the older sibling receiving the lion's share of the father's inheritance.

But when it comes to the womb, and the generations that are impacted by who is born when, the Lord's will is going to be accomplished, with or without the cooperation of human beings.

4. *What was Isaac's prayer for his wife?*

5. *What was the Lord's answer to Rebekah's question?*

The Twins Are Born

Genesis 25:24-28 KJV

24 And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

25 And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.

26 And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.

28 And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Genesis 25:24-28 NIV

²⁴When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁵The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. ²⁶After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

²⁷The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. ²⁸Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

The twins Rebekah gave birth to were so different physically, we can surmise that they were fraternal, and not identical twins. (Fraternal twins are conceived from two separate eggs). The first twin to be born was Esau, who was all red and hairy as an infant—Esau means “hairy” in Hebrew. While there is no physical description of Jacob, while being born, he was grasping at the heel of his older twin brother. Because of this event, his parents gave him the name “Jacob,” which means “grasping at the heel”—or in more colloquial terms “deceiver.”

We’re told that Isaac was 60 years old when the boys were born. This means that Isaac and Rebekah had tried for 20 years to conceive, and had failed. The boys grew up to be as different as night and day. Esau became a rugged man, comfortable with the outdoors, and skillful in hunting (and preparing) game. Jacob was more comfortable staying close to home. The biblical writer gives us a clue that trouble is brewing for the two boys because the parents favor one child over the other. Isaac had great affection for Esau because of his ability to secure and prepare wild game, while Rebekah favored Jacob.

6. *What was unique about the birth of Jacob and Esau?*

7. *What was the favoritism of Rebekah and Isaac?*

Esau Sells His Birthright

Genesis 25:29-34 KJV

29 And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:

30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

31 And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

Genesis 25:29-34 NIV

²⁹Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. ³⁰He said to Jacob, “Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!” (That is why he was also called Edom.)

³¹Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.”

32 And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.

³²“Look, I am about to die,” Esau said. “What good is the birthright to me?”

³³But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

³⁴Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left.

So Esau despised his birthright.

The wonderful fragrance of the simmering bowl of stew could likely be noticed for hundreds of yards, and drew in the hungry Esau. For some reason, the biblical writer calls attention to the color of the stew (which was red), perhaps as a tie-in to Esau’s red skin, which also earned him the nickname “Edom”—which means “red” in Hebrew.

Taking advantage of Esau in a vulnerable moment, Jacob convinced him to willingly hand over his birthright in exchange for satisfying his hunger with the food the younger brother had prepared. People sometimes do desperate, and even irresponsible, things when they are hungry. Esau irrationally thought that he would die immediately if he didn’t eat some of the stew Jacob was cooking. He unthinkingly handed over his birthright in order to not delay the gratification of his appetite.

In every sense of the word, this exchange was legally binding, and it was enough to “clear the conscience” of Jacob when he conspired with his mother to dupe his blind father into eventually giving him Esau’s blessing.

8. *How did Jacob take advantage of his twin brother’s vulnerability?*

9. *How did Esau respond to Jacob’s trade offer?*

God's Voice or the World's Voice?

The twins' biological clocks were ticking. Ella and Eleanor desperately desired to get married and have children. They sought eligible young men wherever they went. Daily they prayed for a husband.

One evening at a church singles' gathering they both met their Mr. Right. Ella's young man looked like he had just stepped out of the latest fashion magazine. His character appeared flawless. Eleanor's young man wasn't as stunning, but he was gentle and humble.

As the twins' relationships developed, they dreamed of marriage. Ella's young man suggested that they get to know each other better by living together before getting married. Ella knew what God said about pre-marital sex, but for the next three years, they lived together. Then one day, Ella came home and all her boyfriend's belongings were gone. He had left her.

Eleanor and her young man continued to grow together in their faith. She waited for the topic of marriage to be discussed. She knew God was telling her to be patient. After seven years of dating and the boyfriend's graduation from medical school, he asked her to marry him.

Ella and Eleanor desiring and seeking a husband wasn't wrong. Ella was given two choices—either live with the young man and hope marriage would follow or possibly lose him. Eleanor also had two choices—either pressure the young man to propose or wait on God's timing.

Daily we all have choices to make. Do we listen for God's voice to guide us, or do we go by what the world says is acceptable?

10. *What role do our unfulfilled desires play in determining whose voice we obey?*

11. *How can we distinguish between God's voice and the world's voice?*

12. *Does choosing God's voice always lead to us getting our desires fulfilled? If not, why not?*

Who Will You Choose?

The world screams for us to choose what it has to offer, while the Lord commands us to make a choice between the world and Himself. Daily we are given choices to make that involve choosing the world's way of doing things or God's way. The choice may be as simple as whether to eat a fruit or a cookie or whether to buy that expensive coat instead of giving all your tithes and offerings for the month.

► *What choice is before you today that you need to make? Which will you choose, God's way or the world's way?*

KEY VERSE

And 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, KJV

The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."
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DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of September 12 through September 18

(See *The Quiet Hour and Cross devotionals on these passages.*)

- Mon.** Hebrews 12:7-17—Partake in God's Holiness.
- Tue.** Genesis 27:18-29—A Blessing Bestowed.
- Wed.** Genesis 27:30-41—A Blessing Forsaken.
- Thu.** Romans 11:25-32—God Will Be Merciful to All.
- Fri.** Psalm 105:1-11—Praise for God's Wonderful Works.
- Sat.** Genesis 32:3-12—Seeking Favor in God's Sight.
- Sun.** Genesis 32:22-32—Wrestling for a Blessing.