



### INTRODUCTION

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As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**ICE BREAKER QUESTION:** In what ways does our culture struggle with delayed gratification?

We see our culture struggle with delayed gratification all over. We can see in our finances, the workplace, our relationships, communities, etc. We will see in today's study how Esau struggled with the same issue and how it led to a total change in the trajectory of his life?

Read back through the passage before going through the questions.

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### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. What is your biggest takeaway? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?
2. What do we learn about Esau in the way he treated his birthright?

*The tragedy was, that was just about the sum total of who the man was. Esau was an easygoing "good time Charlie" who was accustomed to yielding to his appetites. The concept of delayed gratification had no place in his thinking. He lived for what was before him, be it a hunt or a meal or the company of women. Esau was singularly unreflective. He had no sense of the spiritual, no eye for the unseen, no vision, only earthbound dreams. Holy things? He never thought that deeply. And that is why he could so blithely sell his birthright for Jacob's stew with the facetious rhetoric of starvation. He cared not at all about the covenant's future glorious promises of Canaan and a multitude of descendants. What good were they in the present? Even the firstborn's entitlement to a double portion of the inheritance meant nothing now.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 427–428.

Young Esau could not see beyond what was in front of him. He possessed no vision, no spiritual imagination. He had no eyes or mind for God, or for Heaven, or for Hell. Spiritual realities were to him dull and opaque. He was a single-dimensional soul. Pleasure *now* was his guiding star. For him all that mattered was the excitement of the hunt, a hearty meal, a woman's company—all good things in the proper perspective and place. But pleasure is all that Esau could see. Thus he despised his birthright, selling it for a single meal, and likewise he despised his heritage for the pleasure of Canaanite women. Esau's blithe arrogance brutalized everything precious to life and fixed him on his tragic course.<sup>2</sup>

**3. What other ways, besides selling his birthright, did Esau show he had no desire to follow God?**

*But his sensual nature pushed him further into sin. Marriage to the Canaanites of the land was strictly forbidden. His grandfather Abraham had gone to great lengths to find a proper wife for Isaac, making his servant Eliezer swear that he would not take a wife for Isaac from the daughters of the Canaanites (cf. 24:1–9). But Esau spat upon this when in open defiance he took wives from the idolatrous Hittites and brought them to his tents within the camp, where “they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah” (26:35).<sup>3</sup>*

**4. Based on the end of Esau's life, do you think Esau ever repented and came to faith?**

*What are we to make of Esau? Most exegetes who address the matter believe that Esau was an unbelieving, lost soul. The main reason is found in the passage already cited in Hebrews:*

*See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. (12:15–17)*

*But the question is, does this refer to Esau's entire life? Is it his life epitaph? Or does it apply to the event early in his life when he sold his birthright and lost his blessing—a time when his life was characterized by immorality and unholy conduct—a period in which he acquired his Canaanite and Ishmaelite wives—a graceless time in his life? As to the famous statement quoted in Romans 9:13, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated,” which Paul uses to illustrate God's sovereign choice (particular, individual election) of Jacob over Esau, it must*

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<sup>2</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 433.

<sup>3</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 428.

*be remembered that it is a quotation from Malachi 1:2, 3, which is a centuries-later oracle of judgment against the Edomites for their abuse of Israel. In Genesis 33 there is no acrimony but rather forgiveness and mutual love and affection. And the brothers stood in solidarity at their father's death (35:29). One day the second table of the law would be summed up by the call to love your neighbor as you love yourself (cf. Leviticus 19:18), and here Esau appeared to be doing just that. Perhaps it was because he had first come to love God—and grace was effectual.*

*My point is that Genesis is ambiguous about Esau. The beginning of his life was certainly graceless, but he appeared as a different man after the twenty-year hiatus. Certainly his demotion from covenant-bearer did not mean that he was excluded from the benefits of the covenant.<sup>4</sup>*

## **5. How is the end of Esau's life like many people's in our culture today?**

*Personally I have seen the pattern and ambiguities of Esau's chronicle traced in the lives of men I have buried over the years. They were born to godly, though imperfect, parents. Growing up, they were nurtured and catechized in God's Word. But Christian things meant little to them. Heaven was far-off, disconnected from real life. And as they matured, they came to despise their heritage—maybe not overtly but by neglect and dismissiveness. Some were ignorant despisers, others cultured despisers.*

*To their parents' great sorrow they married outside the faith and then went with the flow of culture in raising their children so that they became *de facto* pagans pursuing and even attaining the American dream.*

*But as these men passed through midlife, the emptiness of it all began to pummel their souls. They repented and came to faith. When they could, they made amends. But their families did not follow. So these men stayed at the fringes of the church, sometimes seeking counsel, engaging in benevolences, attending irregularly and alone, inarticulate as to their faith.*

*When they died, the family asked for a funeral in the church in respect to their father's wishes. And when I preached, it was to ignorant, unbelieving hearts—Edomites.<sup>5</sup>*

## **6. Who in your life do you need to pray for to repent and turn to God? How can God use you to shine the light of Christ in their life?**

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<sup>4</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 430–431.

<sup>5</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 431.

## 7. What similar challenges do we have even today, as we reflect on Esau's life?

*For every generation, the challenge is the same—to see that there is more to life than a meal, or a video game, or baseball, or a party, or a movie, or an indulgence of some kind—to see, as Paul put it, that “the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). The challenge is to “seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God,” to “set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:1, 2). The challenge is to forgo the lazy brain death that comes so easily to the young who ignore the teaching and preaching of God’s Word—and to listen with all you have. Do not sell what God has given you through his Word, your church, and your family for a cheap pleasure.<sup>6</sup>*

## Conclusion

Paul admonishes us to examine ourselves to see whether we have true faith (2 Cor. 13:5). The blessings we see in our lives are by themselves not sufficient proof that we belong to God. After all, Esau was blessed and was yet shown to lack faith. True devotion to Christ is shown in our repentance for sin, the fruit we have in our life, and our faithfulness in the task the Lord has given us. That is, we must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

The Bible teaches there is never a day before death when repentance is beyond our grasp. That is what I continued to tell the lady I spoke of earlier. Even the thief on the cross found humble repentance in his words to Jesus: “Remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

This is the wonder of our God and the gospel. God’s love makes repentance always acceptable no matter where you find yourself in life. If you seek repentance, you will find it. God’s grace is *that* radical.

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<sup>6</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 433–434.

# PRAYER

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My heart's prayer for you is Paul's prayer, the prayer I pray for my own children and grandchildren:

*... that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 1:17–20)<sup>7</sup>*



## FURTHER STUDY



### Devotionals –

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/blessings-esau>

### Article –

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/is-it-ever-too-late-to-repent/>

### Video –

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/sermon/the-generations-of-esau/>

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<sup>7</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 434.