

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### PINELAKE CHURCH

THE DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

THE NEED FOR BLESSING

MAY 26, 2013

#### PREPARATION

- > Spend the week studying **Genesis 27:27–28:9** and **Matthew 3:13-17**. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.
- > **Determine** which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > **Pray** for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their receptivity to God's Word.
- > **Focus on the Main Point.** Children long for the blessings of their parents. God has blessed His children richly that they may follow His calling.

#### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

**Do you have siblings? What three words best describe your sibling relationships growing up? Why?**

**What was the worst thing you ever did to one of your siblings? What was the worst thing done to you by a sibling?**

For those with siblings, disagreements and fights inevitably pop up. Fortunately most relationships turn out positively despite the poor choices that are made. Jacob and Esau were biblical siblings who had a rocky relationship. Jacob tricked Esau out of his birthright and, in Genesis 27, he tricks Isaac into giving him Esau's blessing. This story gives an opportunity to wrestle with our needs for parental blessing and, ultimately, to rejoice in the blessings we receive from our heavenly Father.

#### LEARN

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> **HAVE A COUPLE OF VOLUNTEERS READ GENESIS 27:27-40.**

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**What do you know about Jacob and Esau? What events led up to Isaac blessing Jacob?**

**What did Jacob's blessing mean? Why was it powerful?**

**How did Esau feel? Have you ever been in a similar situation? How did you respond to such deceit?**

Esau was not the brightest boy and Jacob very cunning. Jacob took advantage of Esau's simple desires to lay claim to his birthright. Then following the advice of Rebekah, Jacob tricked Isaac and also managed to secure Esau's blessing. When Isaac thought Jacob was Esau, he blessed Jacob. This was a powerful blessing of familial authority and of favor in God's eyes. Jacob received a significant identity through this blessing.

> HAVE TWO MORE VOLUNTEERS READ GENESIS 27:40-28:9.

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**What did the lack of a blessing lead Esau to do?**

**Describe the difference between Jacob and Esau after the blessing. Who followed their father's calling? Why did they follow their father's law?**

Esau raged when he found out that he would not get a blessing. He wanted to murder Jacob. When Isaac instructed both his sons to stay away from Canaanite women, Jacob listened and went to Laban's house. Esau took a Canaanite wife. Jacob followed his father's law and calling. Without a blessing, feeling cheated and probably confused, Esau lived a life of disobedience.

**What type of blessing have you received from your parents? How has this affected your identity or decision making?**

In our culture today, identity issues and a sense of disconnect with parents is rarely the result of sibling rivalry. Many parents simply aren't around, or are to unsure of their own blessing or significance to be able to pass along a powerful sense of identity and love. In Matthew 13 though, we see a perfect example of a Parent blessing and loving a Son.

> HAVE A FINAL VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 13:13-17.

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**How is the blessing Jesus received from the Father like the blessing that Jacob received from Isaac?**

**Jesus was blessed by the Father as He began His ministry. How was Jesus faithful to his Father's calling?**

Jesus was blessed as He was identified as God's Son. Jesus, God's own Son, followed the calling placed before him by living a perfect life and dying a sacrificial death. In His death He bought us into God's family as God's adopted children and made us co-heirs with Christ (See Rom. 8).

**Why do we get the same blessings as Jesus? How is God our Father?**

**Jesus' death made us God's children as God adopted us into His family. How do you feel blessed like our older brother, Jesus Christ?**

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

As God's children we are entitled to the inheritance and blessing of the Father. Just as Christ, our brother, obeyed God's calling we do the same. We are blessed as a child of God who can live a life consistent with God's law and God's calling.

### LIVE

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives. Create some talking points for the group by looking at the practical implications of the lesson. Get group members to talk about the real life implications of the passage. Look at what can be applied specifically to Pinelake.

**What is the calling that God has given us as His children? How does being blessed by God our Father enable us to follow His call? What is one way you need to live in your identity as a child of God and follow His call this week?**

**How does it feel to know that God looks at you just as He did Jesus and says "This is my child, with whom I am well pleased."? How can you keep this in mind this week?**

### LEAD

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage impact the way you lead at Pinelake and interact with people outside of Pinelake.

**Why is being part of God's family an important understanding of being a part of God's church?**

**Is there someone in your life who needs to be reminded of the blessing and power of being a child of God?**

### PRAY

Close your group time in prayer. Ask God to remind you of the blessing of being His child. Pray that those who feel the need for a blessing would find it in God their heavenly Father. Pray that Pinelake would communicate and demonstrate the blessing of God to our community.

### FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following information:

- Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
  - **How have you experienced the blessing of being a child of God this week?**
  - **Who is someone in your life that needs to know the blessings of God the Father?**
- The challenge to memorize Matthew 3:17.

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**GENESIS 27:27–28:9**

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**27:27-29.** Isaac's blessing included four elements: agricultural prosperity (v. 28)—even as He had done for Isaac (26:12); international respect and success (27:29); a command directing Jacob to be master over the entire clan; and the transference of the protective provision of cursing and blessing that God had once given Jacob's grandfather Abraham (12:3).

**27:31-38.** Esau apparently had to awaken his blind father, who was confused at first, but began to tremble uncontrollably when he realized he had given someone other than Esau the right to rule the clan. Esau complained that Jacob had now cheated him twice, first gaining the double portion of inheritance (25:31-33), and now the clan's headship. **Jacob**, whose name sounds similar to words meaning "deceitfulness" and "to supplant/replace", had lived up to his name. Having lost every desirable blessing, Esau begged his father to find some way to bless him, too.

**27:39-40.** Isaac's response to Esau was much shorter than Jacob's blessing (21 vs. 34 Hebrew words), and was more of an "anti-blessing." Creating an ironic wordplay with phrases from Jacob's blessing (v. 28), Isaac stated that Esau would live away from the richness of the land and from the dew of the sky. Jacob would "**be master**" (v. 29), but Esau would serve. Living a life of violence by the sword, Esau's only consolation was that he would someday break Jacob's yoke from his neck.

**27:41-46.** For a second time in this chapter, Rebekah intervened to change Jacob's destiny. Her latest plan was for Jacob to stay with his uncle Laban in Haran—hundreds of miles away—until Esau's anger subsided. Otherwise, she feared, she would lose both her sons in one day—Jacob by murder, Esau by capital punishment (9:6). The few days, however, turned out to be more than 20 years (31:38)!

**28:1-2.** As with Abraham in the previous generation, Isaac was concerned that his youngest son not take a wife from the Canaanite women (lit "daughters of Canaan"; cp. 24:3).

**28:3-5.** Before Jacob's departure Isaac extended to him two major covenant blessings: offspring and land. The blessing of being fruitful was previously given to Adam (1:28), Noah and his sons (9:1,7), Abraham (17:6), and Ishmael (17:20). Isaac invoked it using the name "El Shaddai" (God Almighty), a name first revealed to Abraham (17:1; see note there). The second blessing was possession of the land God gave to Abraham, a blessing that only God could give. Having received these blessings, Jacob left for his mother's ancestral home of Paddan-aram.

**28:6-9.** When Esau noticed that his father Isaac disapproved of the two Canaanite women he had married (26:34), he did not divorce them. Instead he added to them, taking his cousin Mahalath daughter of Ishmael as a third wife. Mahalath was also known as Basemath (36:3). Mahalath's brother Nebaioth was Ishmael's firstborn son (1 Chron. 1:29).

**MATTHEW 3:13-17**

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**3:13.** We now have skipped to almost 30 years later in Jesus' life (see Luke 3:23). Matthew 2 indicates Joseph had brought the family back to Israel from Egypt, and they made their home in Nazareth. This town was in the region of Galilee, or the northern half of Israel, as opposed to Judah in the south. That Jesus **came from Galilee** seems to indicate John the Baptist was carrying out his ministry in the southern regions of the Jordan, nearer the Dead Sea than the Sea of Galilee.

**3:14.** John's hesitance in baptizing Jesus makes sense. John's baptism presupposed sinfulness, and John knew Jesus was sinless. For this reason he made a strong objection. That John recognized Jesus' superiority is reflected

in his words, **I need to be baptized by you**. Thus Jesus was not baptized for any sin in His life. There was none.

**3:15.** Jesus' baptism has always proved to be a bit of a puzzle for the church just as it did for John. The sinless Jesus had no sin from which to turn. Why, therefore, did He desire baptism? Jesus' response, **because this is the way to fulfill all righteousness**, is mysterious. What did He mean? Three understandings are possible.

First, in His baptism Jesus endorsed John's ministry. That John was subordinate to Jesus is clear, but that does not lessen the importance of his ministry: John was to call people to prepare for God's Messiah.

Second, in being baptized Jesus identified with the sinners He came to save. Matthew's interest in Jesus' fulfillment of prophecy may come into play here. Isaiah 53:12 states the Messiah would be numbered among the transgressors. Paul later wrote that God "made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). Though Jesus was without sin (Heb. 2:17), He related perfectly to the predicament of sinners and died for the sins of all (1 John 2:2).

Third, Jesus was baptized to publicly declare His commitment to follow God's will completely. He had lived in relative obscurity until then. Jesus was about to start a public ministry that would bring Him into deadly conflict with the religious authorities. Baptism marked the end of His private life and demonstrated His complete obedience to God.

**3:16.** Obedience always brings God's approval, and that is represented in three ways immediately following the Son's baptism. First, Jesus glimpsed again what He had left 30 years earlier, for **the heavens were suddenly opened for Him**. Second, the descent of **the Spirit of God like a dove** is a powerful affirmation of Jesus' identity and His power. We should not infer from this occurrence that the Spirit was previously absent from Jesus. We should understand it as a spiritual encouragement and empowerment of the deepest expression.

**3:17.** The third affirmation of God's approval is the **voice from heaven**. **This is my beloved Son** underscores the source of unity among the three Persons of the Trinity. Love binds and perfects. That Jesus is, in fact, the Son underscores His identity as the Messiah. **I take delight in Him** is a tender expression of the Father who is deeply pleased in the obedience of the Son who has taken fully the form of a man.