

Series: Beginnings, Betrayal, Blessings
Title: Jacob and Esau: Steps to Reconciliation
Text: Genesis 32, 33, 36

28 years to see Dad

There are only two people in my life where I've had no reconciliation, though I've tried in both.

Yet, there are many times I may find myself in a disagreement with my wife or a friend.

I have spent my life striving to assist marriages in conflict resolution: ways to bring healing to a relationship and to bring people together.

In many ways, I have striven to bring people together in a shared vision for a church and then walk people through the necessary changes that are essential for that vision to be lived out.

Today, we are looking at a twenty-year feud that needed healing and resolution.

We have seen some of the dynamics between these two individuals in previous messages within this series.

The Story: Jacob and Esau

The offense - Gen. 27:41

- Foreshadowed by God's word to the mother and the events at their birth
- The birthright
- The blessing

Yet, Esau was not a good guy.

Hebrews 12:16–17

¹⁶ *that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.*
¹⁷ *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.*

- This verse speaks of Esau's nature and disposition when the birthright and blessing were given. He cried but did not repent of his behaviors to his father.

The result was total hatred and rage.

The Rage - Gen. 27:41

Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau

said to himself, *“The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”*

The departure - Gen. 27:43-45

⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice. Arise, flee to Laban my brother in Haran ⁴⁴ and stay with him a while, until your brother's fury turns away— ⁴⁵ until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereft of you both in one day?”

Twenty years – Gen. 28-31

The return – Gen. 32:1-2

¹ Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. ² And when Jacob saw them, he said, “This is God's camp!” So he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

- He has seen God with the dream of the ladder.
- He has watched God bless him with the miracle of the flocks.
- He has seen God’s protection from his father-in-law.
- And now as he is approaching the moment of facing his brother the angel of God meets him.
 - Mahanaim – the place of two camps
 - Song of Songs speaks of the dance that happens at a time of peace called the dance of Mahanaim.
 - The 15th of Av (the day of love and peace, auspicious for weddings and unions) and Yom Kippur (day of atonement) are days where this dance is done.
 - This is the day when both the temples were destroyed (the first Temple by the Babylonians in 423 BCE and the second by the Romans in 70 CE).
 - Six days before the day of rest. From emptiness to life.
 - Life and restoration. Yom Kippur – The day of connection with God. The heartbeat of connection.
 - He gains a spirit of peace amid fear for the upcoming reunion.

Jacob sends Servants – Gen. 32:5

“I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight.”

Esau was coming with 400 men – Gen. 32:7-8

⁷ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people who were with him, and

the flocks and herds and camels, into two camps, ⁸ thinking, “If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape.”

- He separates his people so if one dies, the other might survive

Jacob prays – Gen. 32:9-12

⁹ And Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Lord who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,’ ¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps. ¹¹ Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children. ¹² But you said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”

- Jacob goes to the Lord first.
 - *“I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, ...”*
 - Humility before the Lord
- A prayer that he might be delivered from his brother
- A prayer for protection for his family
- Reminded God of His promise to him

Jacob sends gifts ahead – Gen. 32:13-18

¹⁴ ...two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵ thirty milking camels and their calves, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. ¹⁶ These he handed over to his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, “Pass on ahead of me and put a space between drove and drove.” ¹⁷ He instructed the first, “When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, ‘To whom do you belong? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?’ ¹⁸ then you shall say, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a present sent to my lord Esau. And moreover, he is behind us.’”

- Group by group he sends gift to his brother as an offering of repentance
 - They are a present sent to my lord Esau.
- It might take many attempts to make amends
- But there is no limit to the willingness of Jacob to make amends for what he done so many years ago.

Jacob Wrestles with God and promised name change – Gen. 32:22-32

²⁶ Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." ²⁷ And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ²⁸ Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." ²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. ³⁰ So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered."

- I believe it is necessary to wrestle with God prior to dealing with the struggles of men.
- You have striven with God.
- You have striven with men.
- Striven
 - To make great efforts to achieve or obtain something.
 - To struggle or fight vigorously.
- Peniel – seen God and been delivered.
 - Delivered spiritually
 - Yet not yet physically

Esau meets Jacob – Gen. 33:1, 4

¹ And Jacob lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. ... ⁴ But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

- Jacob sees the 400 yet does not run.
- He has met God and now he will meet whatever consequence he will receive from his brother.
- Esau receives him.
- Embraces him.
- Weeps with him.
- Invites him to his home.

The family bows, gifts are given, a request to come, a delayed visit – Gen. 33:7-11

⁷ ...And last Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. ⁸ Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company that I met?" Jacob answered, "To find favor in the sight of my lord." ⁹ But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." ¹⁰ Jacob said, "No, please, if I have found favor in your sight, then accept my present from my hand. For I

have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me. ¹¹ Please accept my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.” Thus he urged him, and he took it.

- Even after this beautiful reception Jacob bows with all of his household
- He does not wash away what he has done when grace is shown. He bows
- He gives recompense
- For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God, and you have accepted me.

A home in Succoth and a land in Shechem – Gen. 33:17-20

¹⁹ ... he bought for a hundred pieces of money the piece of land on which he had pitched his tent. ²⁰ There he erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

- He builds a house in Succoth and names the area.
 - ¹⁷ But Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.
 - Likely strengthens the flock at this point before travel
 - He visits Seir
 - He purchases the land in Shechem

God confirms name change at Bethel, the place of promise with Jacob’s ladder - Gen 35:1-15

⁶ And Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, ⁷ and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother.

¹⁰ And God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” So he called his name Israel.

Jacob moves to Mamre / Hebron – Gen. 35:27

And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned.

Esau’s descendants named Edom established – Gen. 36

Esau took his family and settled in the hill country of Seir, or Edom (Deut. 2:4–6, 12, 22; Josh. 24:4).

- According to 36:6, Esau separated from his brother Jacob because he did not think that the land of Canaan was able to support both of their clans.
- Esau was insightful, taking steps to avoid conflict with Jacob.
- Esau's settling in Edom is paralleled with Jacob's settling in Canaan (Genesis 37:1)
- Jacob could settle in Canaan unhindered by the size of Esau's family and herds, thus avoiding the need for them to separate as did Abraham and Lot (13:5–6).

Though there is reconciliation between these two brothers, Esau's family line causes problems for generations.

Let me briefly summarize what happens to Esau's descendants, the Edomites after Genesis 36.

- The Edomites prevented Israel's passage in Numbers 20:14-21 even though Moses promised no harm and even offered to pay whatever water the Israelites drank.
- David conquered Edom in 2 Samuel 8:13-14, and Edom was subject to Israel during the reign of David and Solomon.
- After Solomon's death, Edom remained under the control of Judah, though unattested until the time of Jehoshaphat.
- Near the end of Jehoshaphat's reign, Edom joined with other enemies of Judah for a raid on En-gedi (2 Chr. 20).
- Edom successfully revolted against Jehoram (849–842), gaining freedom from Judah (2 Kgs. 8:20-22).
- The book of Obadiah is almost exclusively addressing Edom, speaking of Edom's sins and coming judgment. Jeremiah 49 does the same.
- The end of Edom is shrouded in mystery. We know only that Edom lost its independence in the fifth century B.C., and from about 312 B.C. it was controlled by the Nabateans.

Conflicts happen

- On a personal level
- On a worldview level
- On political positions
- On a national level
- On a global level

Here's the narrative the world is telling, what we'll call "The Conflict Spiral." They say that the real problem is:

- The world presses down on people.
- Social circles are impacted.
- Families are affected.

- Individuals are harmed.
- We experience turmoil in our hearts.

There's truth to that. But that doesn't get to the heart of it.

The reality is that what really causes fights between countries, states, spouses, siblings, and even friends are all the same: they all come from disordered desires within our own hearts.

James 4:1–2

¹ What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

So, while the world tells one narrative, the reality is a fuller picture, which is flipped. The truth is that “The Conflict Spiral” really goes the opposite way:

- We experience turmoil in our hearts ... because we don't get what we want.
- Individuals are harmed ... because we take it out on others.
- Families are affected ... because they are the closest to us.
- Social circles are impacted ... because we live social lives.
- The world presses down on people ... because when you add us all together, we're one big mess.

We all need redemption, and the transformation of individuals at the heart level is how real change happens—and that comes only by God.

All the conflicts happening between people right now stem from sin. It's not about the conflicts or the issues themselves. It all comes from the fact that every one of us is lost and in desperate need of an encounter with the living God.

Our real problem is not fighting on the outside; it's the battle within.

What we see in the life of Jacob and Esau is a microcosm of all sorts of conflict, and so when we read their story, we should see ourselves in the narrative.

Like these two brothers, we need God in order to be made whole, which affects our relationships with everyone else.

The main point of my message today, if you could walk away with one thing, is this:

In order to be reconciled with one another, we must encounter God in a transformational way.

STEPS TO RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation does not just happen. Even if one seems to have forgiven. If these steps have not been done, there is not a true joining of the two parties toward peace.

A Conversation must take place. It must be held by the two parties and not dismissed by either party for healing to take place.

- If the offensive person brushes it off, there will be no healing
- If the offended person simply says “Whatever”, there will be no healing

There are three parts to healthy reconciliation conversation

BEFORE THE CONVERSATION

Take the First Step

- Decide to make yourself vulnerable.

Check your heart

- Make sure you’re being humble and acknowledging your part.

Pray before the conversation

- Be right with God before you approach them.
- That a potential divisive moment would actually be a reconciliation moment.

Make known your heart of repentance

- Jacob sent drove after drove of gifts and honor before he met Esau
- Cards
- Friends
- Attempts

IN THE CONVERSATION

Stand in the moment

- You may be in fear but do not run from your responsibility

Continue to apologize

- You must humble yourself completely.
- It may take many attempts.
- Everyone bowed to Esau.

Speak no justification but stay humble throughout

- There are no caveats.
- There is not a discussion needed.

AFTER THE CONVERSATION

Insist on making amends

- If something is owed, pay it.
- If something is needed, give it.
- If something must be heard, say it.

There is no guarantee of forgiveness or sustained forgiveness

- They may not receive it.
- But you will be right in the eyes of the Lord.
- Those affected by it may not join in the victim's forgiveness.

Closing

So, let me ask you:

- How are you doing in your heart?
- With whom do you need to be reconciled?
- Whom have you injured?
- Does anyone have a grievance against you?

- What reconciliation with people do you need today?

To be reconciled with one another, we must encounter God in a transformational way.

So, ask God, “Am I right with those close to me?” If there’s unresolved conflict, ask God, “How can I be reconciled to them?”

The apostle Paul wrote,

Rom. 12:19 - If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

You can’t make someone be reconciled to you. Esau played a role, too.

All we can do is our part.

So, allow God to bring peace in your heart, so that you can make peace with those close to you, as far as it depends on you:

CHALLENGE

1. Take the first step
2. Check your heart.
3. Pray beforehand.

CHALLENGE

4. Stand in the moment
5. Continue to apologize
6. Speak no justification but stay humble throughout

CHALLENGE

7. Insist on making amends
8. Realize that there is no guarantee of forgiveness or sustained forgiveness

CHALLENGE

Choose to do it
And
DO IT