

GROUP DISCUSSION

Questions for facilitating dynamic discussion

The Reckoning
Week 1: Selfish Ambition
Genesis 25:19-34

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Life can sometimes feel like a wild frontier. That certainly was the case for Jacob, Isaac's second born son and Israel's namesake patriarch. In this series we'll look at Jacob's mistakes and the redemption he found through God's grace - a story that can spur us in our own journey of transformation. This week we'll consider where our focus should be directed.

Kicking It Off:

What is your place in the family birth order? Do you fit the stereotypes of your birth order?

Discussion:

1. Read Genesis 25:21-26. What prophecy does God give to Rebekah about her sons? How does it appear that this will be true from the moment of birth and the naming of the boys?
2. Consider several of the earliest mentioned birth orders in the Old Testament: Cain – who was older than Abel; Ishmael – older than Isaac; and Esau – older than Jacob. In OT times firstborn sons received valuable privileges, including a greater inheritance, leadership, and an honored place at the table. Yet God repeatedly chose the younger son to receive those privileges. Why do you think God made this reversal? Look at Romans 9:10-13. What does Paul tell us about this reversal? How does this reflect God's role in our salvation?
'Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad – in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls – she was told, "The older will serve the younger."' (Romans 9:11-12, NIV)
3. In Jeff's sermon he said Israel as a nation is central to God's strategy of salvation. He also noted that Jacob was the *last* of the three patriarchs of Israel. According to the diagram Jeff shared, what took place in the family line of God's promise up through Jacob (the promise would be fulfilled through only one son)? How did it change after Jacob (all 12 of his sons were part)? What do you make of this shift?
4. Going back to the firstborn, read Colossian 1:15-20. Christ is described here as the firstborn – of what? What makes Him such? Esau obtained the birthright of firstborn by emerging mere minutes before his brother. Jacob took it from him through opportunistic self-ambition. How is Christ's birthright superior to both of these?
5. Read Hebrews 12:22-24. What does it mean to you to be part of "the church of the firstborn"? What will you do to take this perspective with you into your week?

Wrapping Up:

We've heard more than once that God has a plan for our lives, but do you make Jacob's mistake, thinking it's up to you to make it happen? Do you use earthly means to try to reach heavenly goals? Pray for both a heavenly focus and a heavenly dependence.