

2024 Southern California Spanish-speaking Conference Stories—Advanced Level

Friday Session—Story 1 Jacob—Having to Flee

Point to Emphasize: Our maneuvering and manipulating of others shows that our hearts are only for ourselves.

Reference Reading: Genesis 25:21-22, 25-26 and footnote 26¹, 29-34; 27:1-45, *Life-study of Genesis*, msg. 67

Memory Verse: Doing nothing by way of selfish ambition nor by way of vainglory, but in lowliness of mind considering one another more excellent than yourselves; (Philippians 2:3)

Story Sample

Isaac and Rebekah had been married for twenty years and they still had no children. So, Isaac followed the pattern of his father Abraham and prayed to God for a child. God answered this prayer and gave them not only one child but two! They had twins, Esau and Jacob.

In those days three things were matters of great importance to the children in a family—being the firstborn, having the birthright, and receiving the blessing of the father. The firstborn held a special position with special privileges. One of these privileges was the birthright, which meant that the firstborn would receive the top inheritance. Then, when the father was becoming elderly and near death, he would give a blessing to one child—a special speaking regarding their future.

In the family of Isaac and Rebekah, there was a real struggling for these three things. The one who initiated the struggling for these things was Jacob, starting from the time he was in his mother's womb. One of the meanings of his name is "heel holder," because when they were about to be born, Jacob grabbed Esau's heel to try to keep him from being the firstborn. Esau was a stronger baby, so Jacob did not succeed in being first. This shows that from the start, Jacob would always struggle to be first in order to have what he wanted.

Years later, Jacob also fought for the birthright. Another meaning of Jacob's name is "supplanter". A supplanter is one who manipulates others. To manipulate is to influence others in a clever, and many times even a tricky way to get them to do what you want. And this is what Jacob did—he manipulated Esau and tricked him out of his birthright. When Esau was very hungry, he sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew. Esau was angry that he had been tricked in such a way, Jacob would do anything to get the things he wanted.

Jacob even took away the father's blessing from Esau. When Isaac became very old and could no longer see well, Jacob disguised himself as Esau and tricked Isaac into thinking that he was Esau. So Isaac was also manipulated into blessing Jacob instead of Esau. Esau was furious! He wanted to kill his brother! So, Jacob was forced to flee and had to leave his loving mother and his father's home. What a price Jacob had to pay for wanting his own way.

I think we all are like Jacob sometimes. We would trick or manipulate others into getting our own way. When I was a child, I would trick my sisters by talking them into doing what I wanted to do. Or I would be the "best" daughter by helping my mom around the house until she would let me have the new toy I wanted. Once I got what I wanted, I would return back to my ways of being sloppy and careless. I was bothered by that look of disappointment on my mom's face

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when she realized what I had done. And I would have to leave the room to avoid that look. We all know of things to do in order to get our own way. We are just like Jacob in many ways.

Sometimes, we care only for ourselves and what we want, don't we? You may have watched a neighbor boy trick his little sister out of a toy he wanted by convincing her that the toy was not good enough for her. Actually, it may have been more fit for her than it was for him, but the neighbor boy may have just wanted it for himself.

Jacob was always struggling to get what his brother had—being the firstborn, having the birthright, and receiving the blessing from his father. He used trickery and deception to gain it. He did not care that he robbed his own brother and deceived his own father. Jacob only cared for himself. He had no consideration of others. As long as he got what he wanted, everything was okay. But Jacob's selfish actions had consequences. As the result of what he did, Jacob needed to flee his home, and he never saw his loving mother again. Having to flee was the outcome of Jacob's caring only for himself.

We have to admit we are all like this. We all manipulate to get what we want. I hope that after hearing the story of Jacob, when we are trying to get what we want by using manipulation and trickery, we should all pause to consider what we are about to do and feel some shame.

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Saturday Night Session—Story 2 Jacob—Laboring for Laban

Point to Emphasize: Struggling to get your own choice often causes you to have problems.

Reference Reading: Genesis 31:1, 38-41; 29:1-25; *Life-Study of Genesis*, msgs. 71, 73

Memory Verse: ...For I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content.
(Philippians 4:11b)

Story Sample

****** Dear storyteller, we do not want to go into more details than what is covered below in the story with the children. ******

Stories in the Bible often tell us something about ourselves. Today our story about Jacob is like this.

Jacob always wanted the best, and he chose the best. He was driven by his own choice, and because of this, he suffered a lot in his life. To escape the anger of his brother he had been sent by his parents to his relatives' house. Here he was expecting to find rest and a comfortable life. After being with his uncle's household for a month, his uncle, Laban, told him that he could not stay there for free. He would need to work with the flocks to earn his keep if he wanted to stay with him. Jacob became a hired laborer. He would be treated like all the other servants of Laban. Jacob was serving his uncle, Laban, caring for his flocks.

Laban said, "Tell me, what shall your wages be?" He was letting Jacob choose what his wages should be. Right then, if Jacob had been wise, he would have stopped and said, "Give me some time to ask God, what I should do." But Jacob was not like that. Already, he had made his choice and he knew what he wanted. It turns out that he worked fourteen years so that he could get the wife he chose to marry. That was a lot of years to get his choice. What he really earned those years working for his uncle, Laban, was a very hard life.

In those years, Jacob gained a big, complicated family life. He had one daughter and eleven sons. There were female servants, too. This huge household was filled with envy and competition. Everyone was wrestling for Jacob's attention. His household gave him problem after problem.

As he worked for Laban, his uncle for twelve years, Jacob was shepherding Laban's flocks, he was in the open field with no place to sleep. There was no shade from the heat during the day and no protection from the frost at night. During the day it was so hot, yet at night it became so cold! Jacob suffered this every day. He was also required to bear the loss of any cattle which got torn by beasts or stolen or lost. He had to pay Laban for every single one! This put him under lots of pressure!

And above all this, Laban changed his wages ten times! This does not mean Laban gave Jacob a raise each time. NO! Laban never increased his wage. He always found ways to pay Jacob less.

Jacob came to Laban as a young single man. But in twenty years he gained a terrible family life and an exhaustive job. All because he had to have his choice.

And what about us? Do we have to have our own choice? When there is a plate of cookies and mom says you can have two, I am sure your choice is the two biggest ones. You would never

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think to leave a big one for someone else. Why can't you be satisfied to have any of the cookies? Why must you choose the best ones for yourself? Or if your friends are making teams, you always want to be on the team with the best players. You would never want to be on the team which is not the best in your eyes. Why can't you be satisfied with having a good time with friends on either team? Why must you get your own choice? And if you don't get your choice, do you pout and declare that it is NOT fair? *[Lead a discussion with the children about wanting their choice and why they can't be happy with less. It is because we are selfish.]*

I hope that none of us would grow up to have such a troublesome life as Jacob. I hope that as we grow and make big choices, like which college or trade school to go to, or what kind of job to take, we would go to God and consider what He wants, what His choice is for us. It is clear from Jacob's story that struggling to get our own choice can often bring us problems.

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Lord's Day Session—Story 3 Jacob—Protecting Himself from His Brother Esau

Point to Emphasize: We should trust God's Word rather than our own ability to fix things.

Reference Reading: Genesis 31:3; 32:1-21, footnote 13¹; 33:1-16, footnote 4¹; *Life-study of Genesis*, msgs. 73-74

Memory Verse: ...Be strong and take courage; do not be afraid or dismayed. For Jehovah your God is with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9b)

Story Sample

Jacob was sent by his parents to his relatives' house to escape the anger of his brother, Esau, after Jacob tricked him out of his birthright. Jacob was with his uncle Laban and worked for him for twenty years. But, one day, God told Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you." Wow! God told Jacob to return to where Esau was. Had Esau forgiven Jacob for taking his birthright? Was Esau still angry at him? Should Jacob fear for his life? No! Jacob simply needed to trust in God's Word and believe God was going to be with him and care for him, and just return. God was very clear and said, "I will be with you." Let's see what Jacob did.

Well, Jacob did obey God and started his journey. But instead of trusting in God's Word, he decided to do things to try to protect himself from Esau. First, he sent messengers to tell Esau he was returning and was hoping he would find favor in his eyes. When the messenger came back, they told Jacob that Esau was on his way to meet him and was coming with four hundred men. Oh, Jacob was overcome with fear! He suspected that Esau was coming to kill him and his family, so he decided to divide his people and possessions in two camps. In this way, he was trying to protect himself. If Esau came to attack one camp, the other camp could escape. Jacob thought he was so clever!

Jacob prayed and told God to please deliver him from the hand of Esau for he feared him and his attack. He even reminded God of His promise to Jacob to care for him and his people. But although Jacob prayed to God, he did not trust in his prayer. Rather, after he prayed, Jacob came up with his own idea to send gifts from his flock to Esau. He divided the gifts into three groups and sent each with a servant and asked them to go before Esau, going out one group at a time. Each servant was to meet and give the presents to Esau and tell him that Jacob would be coming. Jacob was hoping that all of these presents would help to make peace with Esau and that Esau would accept him. Do you think Jacob needed to do this? *[Have some of the children respond.]*

Here we see that Jacob was not trusting in God's Word but instead went to a lot of work to protect himself from Esau. Jacob feared Esau's reaction to his coming back. He did not put his trust in what God had spoken to him, but rather he trusted his own skill and ability to protect himself. He was carried away by his fears and worry, not relying on God's Word. The outcome of not trusting in God's Word was his striving to protect himself.

Oftentimes, we are like Jacob. Even though we know God's Word is reliable, we don't fully trust in God. Immediately in our minds, we start to fear and worry and we end up formulating a plan based on what we think is best, just like Jacob. We start looking into how WE can handle things. But, are we better than God? Are we smarter than God? Absolutely NOT! We need to trust in God and trust in His Word.

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I want you for a moment to think of a situation in which you said or did something wrong. Afterward, you realized you were wrong and you decided to apologize. However, on your way to meet the other person, even though you were sure that it was the right thing to apologize and you knew that God was with you, you started to fear something. Then, you may have started to think of what to say or what to do to try to skillfully fix the problem all by yourself. Sometimes even rather than going through with the apology, you may have even tried to explain yourself out of the apology. I'm sure we all have had these moments. I want you to know that instead of worrying about how it will all turn out, you can trust in God's Word and trust He is with you. *[Storyteller, please share your personal story if you have one.]*

So, even as children, you can pray and have many conversations with God. After you pray, you don't need to be like Jacob trying to fix everything for yourself. You can choose to trust in God and follow His way. You can trust what God says in His Word, that He will always care for you.