

## CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

MARCH 18 2023

# identity theft

**Scripture Story:** Genesis 25:19-34; Genesis 27.

**Commentary:** *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 16.

**Key Text:** Genesis 25:21-23

### PREPARING TO TEACH

#### I. SYNOPSIS

This story is the first documented case of identity theft. At the time of this story Isaac was about 137 years old. He was blind. Thinking that his life was almost over, he called for his eldest son, Esau, in order to transfer a blessing to him. In the ancient culture the firstborn son received a double portion of blessing because it was his responsibility to take care of the family after the death of the father. Desiring this blessing, Jacob schemed with his mother, Rebekah, and stole his brother's identity.

A number of themes emerge from this story that are particularly relevant to young people today. First, there is the theme of identity. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), it was on this point of identity that Satan tried to trip Jesus: "If you are the Son of God" (Matthew 4:3, 6, NIV). But Jesus made it clear that He knew who He was and there was no reason to prove it. Still today, Satan is a master of spiritual identity theft. It is important that young people know who they are in Christ.

A second theme of this story deals with the issue of delayed gratification. Had Jacob trusted God to fulfill the promise of the birthright, he would have saved himself immeasurable heartache. Sadly, he couldn't wait, and thus he lived up to his name, "the deceiver."

A final theme that is embedded in this text deals with the issue of integrity. Between Jacob and Rebekah, there is plenty to discuss about honesty and the role this virtue should play in a Christian's life.

One way you might wish to approach these

themes is through the lens of family dynamics. If students believe their family to be dysfunctional, in many respects they aren't much different from families of old.

#### II. TARGET

The students will:

- Learn the value of delayed gratification. (*Know*)
- Experience the conviction to live a life of integrity. (*Feel*)
- Be encouraged to determine to model a Christlike character in daily decisions. (*Respond*)

#### III. EXPLORE

##### The Son, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, No. 4

"God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God" (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:25-27; Luke 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9, 13; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; 8:1, 2).

## TEACHING

### I. GETTING STARTED

#### **Activity**

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

#### **Illustration**

Share this illustration in your own words:

Identity theft is a criminal offense. It occurs when a person knowingly uses, without authority, a means of identification of another person with the intent to commit or to aid or abet any unlawful activity that constitutes a violation of federal law or that constitutes a felony under any applicable state or local law. It is the fastest-growing crime in America. This past year more than 9.9 million Americans were victims of identity theft costing them more than \$5 billion. Every 79 seconds in America someone becomes a victim of identity theft. Technology has opened the opportunities for this crime to the extent that some experts predict that in a few years there will be a massive identity theft crisis in our nation.

The tragedy with identity theft is that you can spend your whole life building your credit, forming a positive identity, and in one moment somebody can swipe your identity, and your future is destroyed.

### II. TEACHING THE STORY

#### **Bridge to the Story**

Share the following story in your own words:

The lesson today offers the first documented case of identity theft. Jacob stole Esau's identity, and the consequences were severe. He anguished for more than 20 years about his sin. And he destroyed a family already teeming with dysfunction.

The devil would love to destroy your identity in the same way. Instead of your trusting God completely, the devil hopes to sabotage your soul by causing you to compromise. The devil invites you to take a shortcut, rather than waiting on God. He wants you to cheat, rather than being honest. He'll delight in any sin, no matter how small, for every little sin erodes your identity as a child of God.

#### **Out of the Story for Teachers**

After you read the Into the Story section with

your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- Read the entire story and reflect on the spiritual lessons that jump out at you.
- Circle the phrases in the story that are new to you.
- What does this story teach us about integrity?
- What does the story teach us about delayed gratification?
- Besides the importance of integrity and delayed gratification, what other lessons emerge from this story?
- What are the primary emotions of the story? Underline the phrases in the text that capture these emotions.
- What is the key verse in the story? Why?

#### **Sharing Context and Background**

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share in your own words.

As you lead the students through the story of Jacob and Esau, you may find it helpful to share some of the following perspectives.

1. The birthright was a symbol of taking responsibility for the well-being of the family. But with responsibility came privileges. For example, the recipient of the birthright (typically the firstborn) enjoyed the status of leader of the family and received a double portion of the inheritance (see Deuteronomy 21:15-17). This birthright was obviously more important to Jacob than it was to his brother. It's interesting to note that Esau is not the only man to have brokered such a trade. In the late 1920s, archaeologists discovered a clay tablet in the Iraqi city of Nuzi that tells of a similar exchange. In this other case, however, the man at least got "three sheep" rather than a bowl of stew!
2. While the passing on of a birthright is foreign to our way of thinking, Ellen White broadens the idea of selling the birthright to include other arenas of life. "Multitudes are selling their birthright to indulge their senses. They sacrifice health, weaken their mental abilities, and forfeit heaven, all for temporary pleasure that both weakens and debases them. Esau awoke too late to recover his loss. In the day of God it will be the same with those who have traded their

status as heirs of heaven for selfish gratifications” (*Beginning of the End*, p. 83).

- Jacob and Rebekah went to great lengths to deceive Isaac. This old man had all of his senses fooled. His eyesight was not trustworthy. He felt the hairy arms and guessed wrong. He smelled the earthy aroma of Jacob’s clothes and miscalculated. He listened to the voice and was deceived. He tasted the stew and thought he knew what he was eating, but his taste buds failed as well. Deceit is of the devil.
- Think about the consequences of sin. Who paid most dearly for this family debacle? Their family life was destroyed, and consequently, each family member suffered many lonely hours of separation, disillusionment, and shame. Rebekah would never see her favorite son again. Jacob was now facing a life without a father, mother, or brother. Esau would obsess over bitter feelings of revenge. And Isaac would die knowing that he had been duped and that the family had been splintered.

### III. CLOSING

#### Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

In groups of four, describe each other’s “identity.” Limit your descriptors to positive character qualities. Next, brainstorm specific ways the devil might seek to undermine each person’s identity by tempting them in

#### Tips for Top-Notch Teaching

##### Experiential Learning

We learn at a deeper level when we experience something. For example, one of the best ways to teach delayed gratification is to invite the students to experience it. One way to do this is to offer three slices of an apple (or any kind of treat) to any student who wants to enjoy the reward immediately. For those who wish to wait until the following week in class promise a much bigger reward, such as a whole apple. Experiential learning, of course, is enhanced when there is a time for reflecting and debriefing. In this case you may ask students questions such as:

- What factors did you weigh while making your decision either to take the immediate reward or to wait?
- How did choosing to wait for a bigger reward make you feel?
- How did you feel when others got a bigger reward the next week and you had nothing?
- What can you learn from this exercise that might inform decisions you make in your diet? exercise? sexuality? etc.

these areas. Finally, discuss ways that you can resist the devil’s temptations.

### Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson. Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the Key Text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from *Out of the Story*.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.

## Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

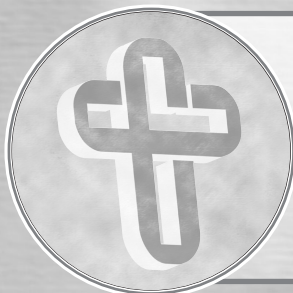
Some years ago psychologists conducted an experiment known as the “marshmallow test.” A 4-year-old sits by a table with one marshmallow on it and is informed that the experimenter must leave temporarily. If the kid can wait for the experimenter to return, he will be rewarded with two marshmallows. If he opts to eat one right now, he can—but he doesn’t get another one later.

What is most fascinating about the study is the correlation between being able to delay gratification at the age of 4 and the outcome in the lives of the child participants. A Stanford University research team studied the kids for many years. Consider the final report:

“Those who were able to wait as four-year-olds grew up to be more socially competent, better able to cope with stress, and less likely to give up under pressure than those who could not wait. The marshmallow-grabbers grew up to be more stubborn and indecisive, more easily upset by frustration, and more resentful about not getting enough. Most amazingly, the group of marshmallow-waiters had SAT scores that averaged *210 points higher* than the group of marshmallow-grabbers!”<sup>1</sup>

Ask the students: Do the results surprise you? Why or why not? How can your character be strengthened by delaying gratification? How does this affect your identity?

<sup>1</sup> John Ortberg, *If You Want to Walk on Water, You’ve Got to Get Out of the Boat* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), p. 179.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 16. A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at [www.cornerstoneconnections.net](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net).



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## STUDENT LESSON

**Scripture Story:** Genesis 25:19-34; Genesis 27.

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### identity theft



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### flashlight

“When, after his sin in deceiving Esau, Jacob fled from his father’s home, he was weighed down with a sense of guilt. Lonely and outcast as he was, separated from all that had made life dear, the one thought that above all others pressed upon his soul was the fear that his sin had cut him off from God, that he was forsaken of Heaven. In sadness he lay down to rest. . . . As he slept, . . . the divine voice was heard in a message of comfort and hope. Thus was made known to Jacob that which met the need and longing of his soul—a Savior”  
(*Steps to Christ*, p. 19).

### keytext

“Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, . . . and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. . . . The Lord said to her, ‘Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.’”

(Genesis 25:21-23, NIV)

# what do you think?

Use this code to make a generalization and classify a person from each of these occupations according to their honesty: AH (Absolutely, 100 percent honest in every way, never compromising); MH (Mostly honest, the majority of the time); OH (Occasionally honest, but not always); RH (Rarely honest).

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A rock star                        | <input type="checkbox"/> A pharmacist     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A pastor                           | <input type="checkbox"/> A lawyer         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A teacher                          | <input type="checkbox"/> A farmer         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A priest                           | <input type="checkbox"/> A police officer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A veterinarian                     | <input type="checkbox"/> A magician       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A used-car salesman                |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The president of the United States |   |

How would you classify yourself? Where would you put Jacob on the honesty scale? What about Esau? Isaac? Rebekah?

## did you know?

One of the most meaningful Jewish celebrations is the Feast of Sukkoth. It commemorates the 40 years of the Jews wandering in the wilderness. Although it was only 200 miles from Egypt to Canaan, it took God's people 40 years to make the trip!

The Feast of Sukkoth reminds us of the importance of time in spiritual life. Good things cannot be hurried. It was during the wilderness wanderings that the Israelites received the Ten Commandments, the pattern for the tabernacle, and the necessary character to enter the Promised Land. The Feast of Sukkoth reminds us that selling a long-term birthright for short-term gratification is foolish. God's blessings come to those who understand the value of delayed gratification.

## INTO THE STORY

**“The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.**

“Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, ‘Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!’ . . .

“Jacob replied, ‘First sell me your birthright.’

“‘Look, I am about to die,’ Esau said. ‘What good is the birthright to me?’”

“When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, . . .

‘I am now an old man and don’t know the day of my death. . .

Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like

and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die.’”

“Rebekah said to her son Jacob, . . . ‘Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.’”

“He went to his father and said, ‘My father.’

“‘Yes, my son,’ he answered. ‘Who is it?’

“Jacob said to his father, ‘I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me.’”

“Then he said, ‘My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.’”

“After Isaac finished blessing him, and Jacob had scarcely left his father’s presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting.”

“Isaac trembled violently and said, ‘Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him—and indeed he will be blessed!’

“When Esau heard his father’s words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, ‘Bless me—me too, my father!’

“But he said, ‘Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.’”

(Genesis 25:27-32; 27:1-4, 6-10, 18, 19, 25, 30, 33-35, NIV)

# OUT OF THE STORY

Read the entire story and reflect on the spiritual lessons that occur to you.

Circle the phrases in the story that are new to you.

What are the primary emotions of the story? Underline the phrases in the text that capture these emotions.

What does this story teach us about integrity?

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What does the story teach us about delayed gratification? (See also 2 Peter 1:5-7; Psalm 27:14; Hebrews 6:15)

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Besides the importance of integrity and delayed gratification, what other lessons emerge from this story?

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What do you think is the key verse in the story? Why?

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## punch lines

**“Fixing our eyes** on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (**Hebrews 12:2-4, NIV**).

**“The integrity of the** upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity” (**Proverbs 11:3, NIV**).

**“Listen, my son,** and be wise, and set your heart on the right path” (**Proverbs 23:19, NIV**).

**“So God led the** people around by the desert road” (**Exodus 13:18, NIV**).

## further insight

**“There is danger in amusement that is sought merely for self-gratification. . . .**

**“These are not necessarily things sinful in themselves, but something that is made first instead of the kingdom of God. Whatever attracts the mind from God, whatever draws the affections away from Christ, is an enemy to the soul.”**—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 53.

# connecting to life

## Sabbath

Read Proverbs 11:3.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* activity at the beginning of the lesson and reflect on the experiences you have had personally or have witnessed from a distance that prompted you to generalize the way you did. Which occupation was the easiest to generalize about? Which was the most difficult to generalize?

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After today's reading, where would you rank on the scale of personal integrity? Think about the different experiences you have had in your life in which you chose the path of integrity as opposed to the path of compromise. How did you feel about your choices? Why do you think a life of integrity is often so hard to live?

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## Sunday

Read Proverbs 23:19.

Read the *Into the Story* section about the ethical drama between Jacob and Esau and answer the study questions provided in *Out of the Story*. As you read this story, what elements emerge that you had not thought of before? What do you think God is trying to say to you about your life today in this story?

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## Monday

Read Isaiah 14:27.

Read the *Key Text* found in Genesis 25:21-23 and commit this passage to memory or write it down and place it someplace where you will see it on a daily basis. Have you ever wondered about the awesome truth that God knows what is ahead and is ultimately in control of the big events of history? Talk to God today specifically about His will for your life and convey your willingness to trust in His will, no

matter what compromises might confront you.

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## Tuesday

Read 1 John 1:9; Psalm 103:12.

Read the quote in the *Flashlight* section and reflect on the weight of Jacob's sin and how it burdened him with guilt. What did Jacob need to see? What did he finally see in this season of guilt and shame? In what way are you like Jacob wrestling with guilt? Do you see your need of a Savior, or do you simply get overwhelmed with remorse? Who do you know who responds to their mistakes in life with a deep gratitude for their Savior, Jesus Christ? How have they modeled true repentance to you in the way they respond to shortcomings?

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## Wednesday

Read carefully and thoughtfully through the *Punch Lines* provided in this week's lesson and choose one verse that speaks pointedly to your life today. Why does this passage stand out to you now? Think of the people you have influence with (friends, younger siblings, or younger people at church) and consider how you could share this passage with them in a way that will deepen their commitment to God. List them by name and invite God to lead you to them this week.

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## Thursday

Read Hebrews 12:16, 17.

Take some time today to read chapter 16 in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, noting the insights the prophetic eye reveals. What does Ellen White say about integrity and delayed gratification? What Bible passages does she highlight or lead you to study? What principle emerges from this chapter that will apply to

any generation, any season in the journey of life? Write that principle out in your own words below.

Principle:

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## Friday

The author of the book of Hebrews had it right in saying, "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood" (Hebrews 12:2-4, NIV).

The point of this passage captures Jacob's experience well. How does it capture your experience? When you look at Jacob's journey (dishonesty and mistakes; struggles with guilt, shame, God, and repentance), where are you in your journey? What is the next step for you that moves you closer to God?

## this week's reading\*

*Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 16.

\**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at [www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URihF1rBO9s](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URihF1rBO9s). By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.