

## The Sad Life of Esau

Most of the families mentioned in Genesis are not happy ones. Certainly this is true of Esau, a man who must be counted as one of the more miserable people who ever lived. Things **could** have been different in Esau's life, but both he and the people around him seem to have consistently made poor choices.

***His parents played favorites (Gen. 25:27-28)*** – Isaac and Rebekah had twin boys, and the Bible says, “Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob” (Gen. 25:28). Nothing good ever comes from parents playing favorites with their children. Favoritism, or even the perception of favoritism, leads to children who are angry, envious and resentful. Scripture commands fathers to refrain from provoking their children to wrath (Eph. 6:4). Isaac and Rebekah provoked their sons to wrath by picking favorites, and the fruit of their sin lasted for generations (cf. Gen. 27; Obadiah).

***He made a rash decision (Gen. 25:29-34)*** – Perhaps in other areas of his life Esau was wiser, but when it came to his physical desires, he proved himself exceedingly foolish. Esau was extremely hungry on one occasion and so he sold his birthright to Jacob for a meal (Gen. 25:33-34). The writer of Hebrews says this about Esau: “You know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears” (Heb. 12:17). Esau learned that many of life's decisions have consequences which cannot be altered.

***He made poor choices in marriage (Gen. 26:34-35)*** – Scripture says that when Esau was forty years old he married two Hittite women, “And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah” (Gen. 26:35). Motivated by his self-centered desires, Esau does not seem to have ever asked his parents for counsel. Worse yet, there is no evidence that Esau ever sought God's will concerning whom he should marry. Genesis 28:8 states that, “Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac.” Isaac further charged Jacob not to marry Canaanite women (Gen. 28:6-7). Esau's poor choices in marriage drove a wedge between him and his family, and worse, they seem to have driven him even farther from God (cf. 1 Kings 11:1-4).

We can learn from Esau. Though he consistently made poor choices, two lessons are worthy of our contemplation:

***We can always choose to do right*** – At any stage of his life, Esau could choose to obey God's word, and so can we. 1 Corinthians 10:13 promises us that we will never be tempted beyond our ability to choose between right and wrong. Matthew 16:18 guarantees that all the demons in hell itself cannot keep a man from doing what is right. No matter what choices have led us to where we are in life, we can always “start again” and return to God's way by choosing what God says is right (James 1:21-22).

***The truth will set us free*** – Esau probably considered himself a victim, a notion which was not entirely unjustified. His parents had shown favoritism, and his brother had

“usurped” him and taken both his birthright and his blessing (cf. Gen. 25:23). Many today are in bondage to the feeling that they are victims of circumstances beyond their control. However, God’s truth can set us free from such bitter bonds (John 8:32). The word of God counsels the path of faith and forgiveness (1 John 5:4; Matt. 6:14-15) to find freedom even in the midst of terrible circumstances. **--JB**