



Love Community Baptist Church

Wednesday Night Virtual Bible Study

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God Never Gives Up On You – Max Lucado

CHAPTER 2

“From Prince to Palooka”

Genesis 27:1–28:5

THE PROBLEM WITH TAKING SHORTCUTS

Rather than take the honest, responsible, uphill, longer path, I took the wide, downhill, dishonest one.

So did you. And so did every person, other than Jesus, who has taken a breath and taken a step on God's green earth. “All have sinned [taken shortcuts] and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23 NIV). The bracketed text is my commentary. The scripture just uses the word sin.

But isn't sin a shortcut?

When Adam and Eve plucked the fruit, they were taking a shortcut. Rather than wait for the Father to fulfill his promises, why not take matters into their own hands?

What situations do sin cause us to be in?

But can we agree that all of us at times have chosen the quick and easy route? That sin, at its root, is the unwillingness to wait? To trust? To follow God's plan? We take matters into our own hands.

That's what Jacob did. Esau, the seesaw, came home from hunting. He had an empty belly. He smelled the pot of red beans that Jacob was stirring over an open fire. The fragrance of simmering onions, garlic, and marbled beef made his mouth water.

“Give me the spoon, Jacob.” The heel-holder sensed an opportunity.

“What's it worth to you?”

“Anything. I'm faint with hunger.”

“Anything?”

“Name your price. Do you want my bow and arrow? My new knife? Its handle is as long as your foot. It's yours for a bowl of stew.”

Maybe at this point Jacob caught a glimpse of his mom giving him the nod. Maybe at this point Jacob caught a vision of the family tree named after him.

“I want the birthright.”

“The birthright?”

“Yes, the birthright.”

Esau looked at the beans and weighed the options. After a brief thought or two, he sealed his destiny with these words: “What good is a birthright if I’m dead?” (Gen. 25:32 THE MESSAGE).

But instead Esau “shrugged off his rights as the firstborn” (Gen. 25:34 THE MESSAGE). The verb translated as “shrugged off” connotes carelessness or contempt, “despising something as useless.”¹ The right of primogeniture was protected by law. A father could not give it to another son (Deut. 21:15–17). The firstborn son, however, could forfeit or sell it.

Rebekah knew the older would serve the younger.

Surely she’d told him. Did God’s plan need Jacob’s nudge? Of course not.

He could have waited for God to act.

He should have waited.

But Rebekah and Jacob took a shortcut.

In case you missed it, let me point something out. Grace just stepped onto the stage.

The family is a tinderbox, a spark away from eruption.

The brothers bicker.

The parents play favorites.

Yet God has tethered himself to them.

Grace. The “yet-Godness” of God. We break promises, yet God forgives. We forget commitments, yet God appears. We turn away from him, yet God turns toward us. That’s not to say our waywardness has no consequences. The relationship between the twins crashed like a lawn chair in a tornado. “Esau hated Jacob . . . , and Esau said in his heart, ‘. . . I will kill my brother’” (Gen. 27:41).

Rebekah heard about the pledge from the duped brother, gave Jacob the heads-up, and told him to scoot while the scooting was good. Jacob skedaddled. Rebekah and Jacob got what they wanted, but at what a cost! Sure, Jacob purloined the blessing, but . . . his family was splintered, he was without a home, he had to run for his life, his twin wanted to kill him, he had betrayed his father’s trust, and he, as far as we know, never saw his mother again.

He forfeited all the prosperity he would have received from the birthright. No flocks, herds, or possessions. His life was a mare’s nest of misery. The next time we see him he’ll use a rock for a pillow. Jacob went from prince to palooka in a day. All because he took a shortcut. All because he couldn’t wait. And us?

What shortcuts are we taking in life?

God has promised to give us all that we need. A garden of Eden of joy, hope, life, and love is ours for the asking. All we need to do is wait on God. But he is so slow! His timing is out of sync with ours. So we cut

corners. We cheat, if not the owner of the vacuum cleaner store, we cheat on exams, on taxes. We deceive. Not with goatskins and a lamb, but with lies, exaggerations, and misstatements. We polish apples, inflate facts, drop names, and work the system.

“God wants me to have this job. I’ll just pad my résumé.”

“God wants me to be happy. I’ve found happiness in the arms of a woman who is not my wife.”

“I know God wants me to tell the truth. But in this case the truth will get me into trouble. A little lie won’t hurt.”

How many shortcuts have been justified with the best of intentions?

A wrong shortcut, even one taken for the right reasons, always causes someone pain. It is a labyrinth honeycombed with trip wires.

There are no shortcuts with God. None. Zilch. Zero.

He doesn’t need your foot on his accelerator. He doesn’t need my help with his plans. If God had wanted Jacob to have the blessing, Jacob would have had the blessing. Rebekah didn’t need to connive. Jacob didn’t need to deceive. If God wanted Jacob to carry the mantle, it was as good as done. All Rebekah and Jacob needed to do was the one thing they found hard to do: wait on the Lord. How about you?

What are you seeking? Needing? Wanting? A spouse? Wait on the Lord.

A new job? Wait on the Lord.

Your husband to come home?

Your ship to come in?

Your career to look up?

Your business to take off?

If so, here is what you need to know. God’s timing is always right. His plan is always best. His will never includes deception or manipulation. His strategy never destroys people or requires compromise. He never badgers, battles, belittles, or bruises people. If you are doing so, then you are not in God’s will. You may think he is slow to act, but he is not. Trust him . . . and wait.

Lucado, Max. *God Never Gives Up on You: What Jacob's Story Teaches Us About Grace, Mercy, and God's Relentless Love* (p. 24). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.