

INTERACTIVE TEACHING/LEARNING GUIDE
Week 11

SESSION TITLE: "Deception: When the End Does Not Justify the Means"
FOCAL PASSAGE: (Genesis 27:1-29, 41)

Central Teaching/Learning Aim: To help the learner commit to living life trusting and obeying God's perfect will and authoritative revelation, rather than relying upon their own limited human reason and their own deceptive human means for achieving desired blessings.

I. Creating Interest in the Series (Hook)

A. Set up a debate among class members.

Display the following question (either on Power Point or the whiteboard – or both):

"Does the end justify the means?"

Share the following information from Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals*:

"That perennial question, 'Does the end justify the means?' is meaningless as it stands; the real and only question regarding the ethics of means and ends is, and always has been, 'Does this *particular* end justify this *particular* means?'

Life and how you live it is the story of means and ends. The *end* is what you want, and the *means* is how you get it."

Adapted from "The Eleven Rules of the Ethics of Means and Ends (www.freerepublic.com)
4.20.2000

Invite your class members to divide into two groups, according to their views upon the displayed question (and Saul Alinsky's commentary). One group will argue in favor of the question/commentary, and the second group will argue in opposition to the question/commentary. Request that each group elect a spokesperson to represent each group's particular views. Allow the two groups some time to formulate their views, and then invite the spokespersons to share their group's arguments (pro and con). As the teacher, you will serve as the moderator of the debate.

Share the following information from Kerby Anderson's *Utilitarianism*:

"The philosophy [of 'the end justifies the means'] is known as utilitarianism. Although it is a long word, it is common usage every day. It is the belief that the sole standard of morality is determined by its usefulness....

Utilitarianism began with the philosophies of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). Utilitarianism gets its name from Bentham's test question, 'What is the use of it?' ...

Utilitarianism has been embraced by so many simply because it seems to make a good deal of sense and seems relatively simple to apply. However, when it was first proposed, utilitarianism was a radical philosophy. It attempted to set forth a moral system apart from divine revelation and biblical morality. Utilitarianism focuses on results rather than rules. Ultimately the focus on the results demolishes the rules.

In other words, utilitarianism provided a way for people to live moral lives apart from the Bible and its prescriptions. There was no need for an appeal to divine revelation. Reason rather than revelation was sufficient to determine morality."

Adapted from "Utilitarianism" by J. Kerby Anderson, Probe Ministries (www.probe.org) 2004

Ask – Do you sense the tension between a utilitarian approach to moral decision-making (that ultimately relies upon human reason) and a biblical approach to moral decision-making (that ultimately relies upon biblical revelation)?

State – Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill may have been the first philosophers to develop the ideas of utilitarianism into an articulated system of belief, but they certainly weren't the first persons to employ these ideas.

Read – (Genesis 27:1-29, 41)

Ask – Do you sense the tension of the utilitarian approach versus biblical approach to moral decision-making in this story?

State – The ethical question raised in this story is "Were Rebekah and Jacob righteous in employing deceptive means to achieve God's promised blessing?"

State – Today we will discuss how to commit to living life trusting and obeying God's perfect will and authoritative revelation, rather than relying upon our own limited human reason and our own deceptive human means for achieving desired blessings.

B. Optional Method – "Live Chat Room"

Set up a "Live Chat Room" in your classroom.

Ask – How many of you have participated (or at least observed) an ongoing conversation within an internet "chat room"?





State – Today, we are going to create a "Live Chat Room" within our classroom, in which we can discuss an idea that is very important to today's lesson.

Display the following question (either on Power Point or the whiteboard – or both) for your class to discuss (as the teacher, you may serve as the Live Chat Room Moderator):

"Does the end justify the means?"

Share – the following example of a real internet chat room conversation by Scout Masters (associated unofficially with Boy Scouts of America) concerning this important question:





RE: When Does the Ends Justify the means?

Posted: Wednesday, 12/17/2003: 1:19:37 PM    quality 

Try this, Can anyone give me a situation when the end, the product, the results, justifies the means, the way it got done, what was done to make it so and while the goals were accomplished, the Scout oath and law were always followed?

admin | IP: Logged
spin-off new thread

RE: When Does the Ends Justify the means?

Posted: Wednesday, 12/17/2003: 2:19:38 PM    quality 

OGE,

I was with you until you tacked on, "and while the goals were accomplished, the Scout oath and law were always followed?"





It seems to me, the first part of your supposition disallows the possibility of the latter. That is to say, obviously – if I have to point to the end result in order to justify the means employed, then my behavior must have been dubious and un-Scout-like.

Be that as it may, I do believe there is a justifiable pretence for such behavior. I believe the end justifies the means when the evil avoided or undone is greater than the evil committed. For example, lies were told to NAZI occupiers in order to prevent the torture and/or murder of innocent Jews. In my mind, a lie is justifiable if it means innocent people will be spared something much worse.

Given the above scenario, would I still respect a Scout as someone who embraces the oath and the law? – My answer is YES! The spirit of the oath and law is ultimately about serving others and maintaining one's honor. I think – telling a lie that could cost you your life in order to protect the innocent – is definitely in the spirit of the Scout oath and law – and the means would be justifiable.

admin | IP: Logged
spin-off new thread

RE: When Does the Ends Justify the means?





Posted: Wednesday, 12/17/2003: 2:47:18 PM    quality 

Rooster,

You are employing situational ethics. One of my favorite classes in seminary. Just to play the devil's advocate, do you think that a lie told for any reason can be justified before God? Is not a sin a sin in God's eyes?

admin | IP: Logged
spin-off new thread

RE: When Does the Ends Justify the means?

Posted: Wednesday, 12/17/2003: 3:56:44 PM    quality 

SR540Beaver,

I think God looks at the heart. If I told a lie for profit, he knows it. If I told a lie to save a life, he'd know that too. The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus with such a question.

Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. Matthew 12:9-14

So, I believe as Jesus taught. If your heart is intent on doing good, then many things are acceptable.

Encourage – class members to discuss the displayed question, while also taking into consideration the views expressed by the Scout Masters. (NOTE: To add an extra element of fun to this discussion, you may invite your class members to identify themselves with made up “log-on user ID’s” when they share their input.)

Ask – What are situational ethics?

Share – the following information from Kerby Anderson’s *Utilitarianism*:

“A popular form of utilitarianism [i.e., ‘the end justifies the means’] is *situation ethics* first proposed by Joseph Fletcher in his book by the same name [1966]. . . .

The found of situation ethics is what Fletcher calls the law of love. Love replaces the law. Fletcher says, ‘We follow the law, if at all, for love’s sake’

Situation ethics also accepts the view that the end justifies the means. Only the ends can justify the means; the means cannot justify themselves. Fletcher believes that ‘no act apart from its foreseeable consequences has any ethical meaning whatsoever.’”

- Adapted from “Utilitarianism” by J. Kerby Anderson, Probe Ministries (www.probe.org) 2004

State – Joseph Fletcher and the Scout Masters certainly weren’t the first to wrestle with the tempting ideas of situation ethics.

Read – (Genesis 27:1-29, 41)

Ask – Do you sense the tension of the utilitarian approach of situation ethics versus the biblical approach of timeless truth to moral decision-making in this story?

State – The ethical question raised in this story is “Were Rebekah and Jacob righteous in employing deceptive means to achieve God’s promised blessing?”

State – Today we will discuss how to commit to living life trusting and obeying God’s perfect will and authoritative revelation, rather than relying upon our own limited human reason and our own deceptive human means for achieving desired blessings.

C. Optional Method – Movie Clip “Whale Rider”

Start: Scene 10 – 38:48

Stop: Scene 10 – 42:14

Movie Synopsis: “A small Maori village faces a crisis when the heir to the leadership of the Ngati Konohi dies at birth and is survived only by his twin sister, Pai. Although disregarded by her grandfather and shunned by the village people, twelve year-old Pai remains certain of her calling and trains herself in the ways and customs of her people. With remarkable grace, Pai finds the strength to challenge her family and embraces a thousand years of tradition in order to fulfill her destiny.”

Columbia Tristar Home Entertainment (2003)

Scene Synopsis: In this scene, young Pai defies her grandfather, the Tribal Chief, by deceitfully practicing the sacred rituals (for preparing the next Tribal Chief), which he has forbidden her to

learn, because long-standing custom has reserved them for men only. However, Pai remains certain of her calling to be her tribe's next chief, despite her grandfather's disagreeing view. So, what should Pai do? Pai finds a natural ally in her grandmother. Pai's grandmother favors her, believing that she should be the next tribal chief, as well. The grandmother's favoritism toward Pai, as well as her agreement concerning Pai's calling, eventually place her in conflict with her husband, too. The tension in the family eventually climaxes in a bitter argument over a meal.

Show – the movie clip.

State – This island family is certainly not the first to struggle with conflicting expectations for family members, favoritism, and deceit.

Read – (Genesis 25:29-34)

Ask – What similarities do you perceive between Pai's family and Jacob's family?

State – The ethical question raised in the movie is "Were Pai (and her grandmother) righteous in employing deceptive means to achieve Pai's calling to be the next tribal chief?" And the ethical question raised in the biblical story is "Were Rebekah and Jacob righteous in employing deceptive means to achieve God's promised blessing?"

State – Today we will discuss how to commit to living life trusting and obeying God's perfect will and authoritative revelation, rather than relying upon our own limited human reason and our own deceptive human means for achieving desired blessings.

II. Book

A. **Utilize** the discussion guide to examine the Scripture passages.

III. Look

A. **Distribute** the handout "What Is Your Leadership Style?" and guide members to discuss it. (NOTE: You may discuss the four leadership styles either in one large group or encourage class members to divide up into smaller discussion groups.)

Ask – How many of you frequently face ethical decisions in your professional and/or volunteer work? Have you ever considered what kind of moral leadership style you most frequently employ in making these ethical decisions?

Discuss – the four moral leadership styles, encouraging class members to personalize them.

Ask – Is your moral leadership style more utilitarian (based on human reason and situation ethics) or more biblical (based on divine revelation and timeless truths)?

IV. Took

A. **Share** – the following true story recently reported by Kidd Kraddick and Kellie Rasberry, popular radio personalities on KISS FM (106.1) during the morning show (March 2005):

Recently, Eric Clapton, the legendary rock guitarist, had the privilege of finally meeting Queen Elizabeth during an informal engagement in Great Britain. Humorously, upon her meeting Eric Clapton, Queen Elizabeth politely asked, "And now what do you do, Mr. Clapton?"

A bit surprised but not offended, Eric Clapton humbly explained that he had been playing the guitar as a professional artist for over 45 years.

When asked about this embarrassing, though innocent, exchange, Eric Clapton responded, "I was just grateful for the opportunity to finally meet the Queen."

State – How embarrassing – even potentially humiliating – when a human queen lacks awareness of the blessings of a distinguished artist!

Fortunately, our biblical story today emphasizes how edifying – even humbling – it is when our Divine King is completely aware of the blessings He sovereignly chooses to bestow upon His chosen people. Likewise, we may be grateful that we have the ongoing opportunity of meeting with this King in trusting prayer and obedient decisions.

Ask – Have you discovered that seeking to accomplish God's plan of blessing through deceptive means only brings unnecessary tension and lasting devastation to you and those around you? Are you ready to commit to living life trusting and obeying God's perfect will and authoritative revelation, rather than relying upon your own limited human reason and your own deceptive human means for achieving desired blessings?

Close – in prayer, begging God for mercy to trust and obey His perfect will and authoritative revelation. Moreover, beg Him for the mercy to not allow your class to be led into the temptation of relying upon their own limited human reason and their own deceptive human means for achieving desired blessings.

B. Optional Method – "Principles for Knowing and Obeying God's Will"

Share the following principles for knowing and obeying God's will.

Ask – How many of you struggle with knowing and obeying God's will, especially in making decisions in response to the particular challenges of your life? What principles, if any, do you use to perceive/receive God's will?

State – The Bible affirms four aspects of perceiving/receiving God's will.

- i. **God's Word** – Ultimately, the Bible is the authoritative, written revelation of God's will.
- ii. **God's Spirit** – The Holy Spirit ministers to believers in numerous ways, including illuminating the truth of God's Word; guiding believers to/through the truth; convicting of sin, righteousness, and judgment; comforting believers in grief, fear, and confusion; etc.
- iii. **God's Church** – The Holy Spirit ministers to/through mature believers in the church who are wise in God's Word, being enabled to share wise counsel with others.
- iv. **God's Providence** – God's sovereign outworking and holding together of all things in/through His Son, according to His perfect will, allow believers to perceive/receive His guidance through the circumstances of life.

State – When we perceive that these four aspects align together, we are able to receive God's will, as well as respond to His will with trust and obedience.

Ask – What might have happened in today's biblical story, if each of the family members would have prayerfully pursued these four aspects of perceiving/receiving God's will?

Ask – Have you discovered that seeking to accomplish God's plan of blessing through deceptive means only brings unnecessary tension and lasting devastation to you and those around you? Are you ready to commit to living life trusting and obeying God's perfect will and authoritative revelation, rather than relying upon your own limited human reason and your own deceptive human means for achieving desired blessings?

Close – in prayer, begging God for mercy to trust and obey His perfect will and authoritative revelation. Moreover, beg Him for the mercy to not allow your class to be led into the temptation of relying upon their own limited human reason and their own deceptive human means for achieving desired blessings.

C. Optional Method – “Nail Found Imbedded in Construction Worker’s Skull”

State – On Monday, March 7, 2005, Patrick Lawler humorously (though shockingly) appeared as a special guest on David Letterman’s “The Late Show”. Who is Patrick Lawler, and what qualified him as a special guest on “The Late Show”?

Share – the following account of Patrick Lawler’s amazing, yet puzzling, story, as reported by The Associated Press (January 17, 2005). (NOTE: You may display the actual x-ray picture of Patrick Lawler’s skull on Power Point, which shows the four-inch nail firmly embedded.)

4-inch nail found in man's skull

Construction worker unknowingly shot himself

Erin Gartner

Associated Press, Jan. 17, 2005 12:00 AM

LITTLETON, Colo. - A dentist found the source of the toothache Patrick Lawler was complaining about on the roof of his mouth: a 4-inch nail the construction worker had unknowingly embedded in his skull six days earlier.

A nail gun backfired on Lawler, 23, on Jan. 6 while working in Breckenridge, a ski resort town in the central Colorado mountains. The tool sent a nail into a piece of wood nearby, but Lawler didn't realize a second nail had shot through his mouth, said his sister, Lisa Metcalse.

Following the accident, Lawler had what he thought was a minor toothache and blurry vision. On Wednesday, after painkillers and ice didn't ease the pain, he went to a dental office where his wife, Katerina, works.

"We all are friends, so I thought the (dentists) were joking ... then the doctor came out and said 'There's really a nail,'" Katerina Lawler said. "Patrick just broke down. I mean, he had been eating ice cream to help the swelling."

He was taken to a suburban Denver hospital, where he underwent a four-hour surgery. The nail had plunged 1 1/2 inches into his brain, barely missing his right eye, Metcalse said.

"This is the second one we've seen in this hospital where the person was injured by the nail gun and didn't actually realize the nail had been imbedded in their skull," neurosurgeon Sean Markey told KUSA-TV in Denver. "But it's a pretty rare injury."

Lawler was recovering Sunday in the hospital, where he was expected to spend several more days. Despite his lack of medical insurance to cover hospital bills expected to total \$80,000 to \$100,000, Katerina Lawler said her husband is in good spirits.

"The doctors said, 'If you're going to have a nail in the brain, that's the way you want it to be,'" she said. "He's the luckiest guy, ever."

Ask – Is it hard for you to imagine how Patrick Lawler did not realize that the four-inch nail had been imbedded in his skull?

State – This is a powerful illustration of the danger of sin. Just as Patrick Lawler didn't realize that the nail had entered his skull, so we humans often don't realize it when sin manifests in us.

As one wise pastor once painfully observed, "Sin will always take you farther and cost you more than you ever imagined or intended."

Ask – How did sin subtly manifest within the lives of each family member in today's biblical story? How did sin take each person farther and cost them more than they ever intended or imagined?

Ask – Have you discovered that seeking to accomplish God's plan of blessing through deceptive means only brings unnecessary tension and lasting devastation to you and those around you? Are you ready to commit to living life trusting and obeying God's perfect will and authoritative revelation, rather than relying upon your own limited human reason and your own deceptive human means for achieving desired blessings?

Close – in prayer, begging God for mercy to trust and obey His perfect will and authoritative revelation. Moreover, beg Him for the mercy to not allow your class to be led into the temptation of relying upon their own limited human reason and their own deceptive human means for achieving desired blessings.

DISCUSSION GUIDE
(Teacher's Copy)

1. What had Yahweh previously revealed to Rebekah (and presumably Isaac, as well), concerning the transmission of His covenantal blessing to Jacob, the younger son? (Gen. 25:23)
(Jacob's descendants would be raised up by Yahweh to be stronger than Esau's descendants. Thus, Esau's descendants would serve Jacob's descendants as separate peoples.)

2. How did Isaac allow his sensual desire for food and his corresponding favoritism toward Esau to attempt to circumvent Yahweh's previous revelation (Gen. 25:23) concerning the transmission of the covenantal blessing to Jacob (Gen. 27:1-4)?
(Isaac summons Esau [intentionally going behind Rebekah's and Jacob's backs?] to prepare him his favorite food, so that he might [deceitfully?] transmit the covenant blessing to Esau.)

3. Why do we often find it so easy to disregard God's revealed will, deciding to do things our way instead? Is there an area of your life right now in which you are doing this (or are being tempted to do this)?

4. How does Rebekah allow her favoritism towards Jacob and her determination to see God's covenantal blessing come true in his life to deceitfully compromise her relationship with Isaac, Esau – even Yahweh? (Gen. 27:5-17)
(Rebekah commands Jacob to deceive the aging Isaac into giving him the blessing, instead of Esau.)

5. What unforeseen, long-term, negative consequence occurs between Rebekah and her favorite son, Jacob? (Gen. 27:41—28:5)
(Esau threatened to kill Jacob after Isaac's death, so Rebekah pleaded with Isaac to send Jacob far away from Esau's wrath, that he might live with extended family and find a wife among them. Apparently, Rebekah never saw her beloved son, Jacob, again.)

6. How does Jacob allow his deception to turn into blasphemy? (Gen. 27:20)
(With shocking candor, Jacob carries his personal deception all the way to an outright lie regarding Yahweh!)

7. How does sin so often, in the words of a wise pastor, "take us farther and cost us more than they ever imagined or intended"?

8. How do we see God's sovereign transmission of His covenantal blessing over-riding the choices of evil by each family member? (Gen. 27:33-36)

9. What is the significance of Isaac's extensive blessing of Jacob? (Gen. 27:27-29) What is the significance of Isaac's meager blessing of Esau? (Gen. 27:36-40)
(Isaac unknowingly communicated the Yahweh's covenantal blessing to Jacob, just as Yahweh had sovereignly declared. Isaac's "blessing" of Esau also affirmed Yahweh's sovereign will, in spite of Isaac's and Esau's deceit and disobedience.)

10. How do you see God's promised, covenantal blessings over-riding human choices of evil in your life?

DISCUSSION GUIDE
(Student's Copy)

1. What had Yahweh previously revealed to Rebekah (and presumably Isaac, as well), concerning the transmission of His covenantal blessing to Jacob, the younger son? (Gen. 25:23)
2. How did Isaac allow his sensual desire for food and his corresponding favoritism toward Esau to attempt to circumvent Yahweh's previous revelation (Gen. 25:23) concerning the transmission of the covenantal blessing to Jacob (Gen. 27:1-4)?
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10. How do you see God's promised, covenantal blessings over-riding human choices of evil in your life?

What is Your Moral Leadership Style?
“No man is justified in doing evil on the ground of expediency.”
THEODORE ROOSEVELT

There is much discussion in the news today about ethics, particularly in the business sector. Many major corporations have been guilty of accounting irregularities and fraud. Each individual possesses his or her own values and ethics that are reflected in their leadership style. This is true of business executives and others in high-level management positions. This tip will discuss four particular leadership styles. Each style is built on a different level of ethical standards and can be observed along a continuum from least ethical to most ethical. Take some time to consider these four particular leadership styles. *What are the ethical standards reflected in your leadership style?*

1. The Manipulator – the “ends justifies the means” approach [Least Ethical]

This style is amoral and is driven by the motive of power and control. It is essentially an economic or egotistical ethic. The end result of any decision or action “justifies the means” taken to manipulate others. It is based on a Machiavellian ethic that views leadership unscrupulously. It is based on short-term gain and relationships lack trust. The motives of this style are amoral but the effect upon others is typically immoral. Other stakeholders are considered unimportant and mere pawns for personal advancement.

2. The Bureaucratic Administrator – the “rules” approach [More Ethical]

This rule-based style is based on the ideal principles established within the organizational bureaucracy. The administrator is interested only in maintaining efficiency rather than effectiveness, by enforcing fixed rules and applying the “chain-of-command” control structure. The problem with this style is that legitimate human needs may be neglected because the ability to intercede was not included or spelled out in the rules. This creates a “sin of omission” where others are hurt unintentionally because their unique need is not included in the rigid rule-based organizational structure.

3. The Professional Manager – the “social contract” approach [More Ethical]

This style reflects the proverbial “company man or woman”, but with more flexibility than the Bureaucratic Administrator. The Professional Manager’s style is based in the organization’s “social contract” between the managers and corporate executives. This agreement includes the explicit or implicit set of ethics and ground rules that govern the manager’s behavior. This management style relies on amoral techniques and basic assumptions on how to get work done like the previous two styles. The major ethical problem with this style is that the corporate culture may be amoral or immoral and this will dominate the Professional Manager’s approach due to the social contract. The collective corporate culture may lead itself astray due to Groupthink or other factors.

4. The Transforming Leader – the “personal ethic” approach [Most Ethical]

This style is grounded on a personal ethic. This type of leader elevates the values and motives of others and is not hesitant to counter the “social contract” if it is deemed amoral or immoral. Transforming Leaders base their effectiveness on relationships and they actively motivate others to reach personal growth and self-actualization. They maintain a moral approach to the work environment and in the words of William Hitt, “it raises the level of human conduct and aspirations of both leaders and led, and thus has a transforming effect on both.”

- Adapted from Strategic Management Systems Pty Ltd (www.theleadershipcollege.com)

THE Word For The Week

Genesis 28:10-22

"Worship: How to Respond to God's Grace"

Monday – Read Genesis 28:10-11

- Why was Jacob traveling to Haran (see Genesis 27:43)?
- How do you think the dissension between Jacob and Esau affected his journey?
- How do relationship rifts affect you in your spiritual journey?
- Ask God to give you insight about any rifts that might exist in your relationships. Ask Him to give you the courage to resolve the conflict (See Matthew 5:23-24).

Tuesday – Read Genesis 28:12-15

- How did God choose to communicate with Jacob?
- How do you think God communicates with us today?
- Can we claim the same promises Jacob was given in vs. 15?
- What do those promises mean to you in your daily walk with God?
- Thank Him today for being a God who keeps His promises.

Wednesday – Read Genesis 28:16-17

- What was Jacob's response when he woke from his dream?
- How do you respond when you experience God in a radical way?
- Jacob viewed his surroundings as "awesome." What made his environment an "awesome" place of worship?
- What environment do you need to experience awe-inspired worship?
- Pray for God to give you a sense of awe as you worship Him regardless of your surroundings.

Thursday – Read Genesis 28:18-19

- What did Jacob do to remember the experience he had?
- Why is it important for us to establish spiritual road markers?
- Can you think of a time when God asked you to develop a visual representation of a spiritual experience? If so, how did it benefit you?
- Pray about developing a visual reminder that you could place on your desk or in your home to remind you of God's grace.

Friday – Read Genesis 28:20-22

- Is Jacob's commitment to God a conditional one?
- Are you placing conditions upon your relationship with God? If so, ask God to help you surrender to an unconditional commitment to Him.
- In v. 21, Jacob says, "then the Lord will be *my* God." What significance is there to his utilization of the word "my?"
- Are you at a place in your walk with God that you feel comfortable referring to him in a personal way?
- Ask God to reveal Himself to you in a personal and intimate way today.

Ancient/Future - A Journey through Genesis
"Deception: When the End Does Not Justify the Means"
Genesis 27:1-29, 41

(Exegetical . . . What it meant to Israel back THEN)

JACOB'S DECEPTION OF HIS FATHER

[who planned to go against the Lord's plan to bless the younger son]

WITH THE DIRECTION AND HELP OF HIS MOTHER

[who pursued the Lord's plan to bless the younger son, but by deception]

RESULTED IN JACOB'S RECEIVING THE BLESSING

IN THE PLACE OF HIS OLDER BROTHER

[The Lord's plan all along, though it should have been
in some other, more righteous, way]

BUT DEEPLY DIVIDED THE "CHOSEN" FAMILY.

- i. The competing plans of the aging and blind father, Isaac [to bless Esau], and the mother, Rebekah [to see that Jacob was blessed, even if by deception], both of which were contrary to God's plan or will, placed the unity of the "chosen" family in jeopardy, (1-10).
 - A. The response of Esau, the older (see 25:23b) son, to his father's call, when Isaac was old and blind, was, "Here I am," (1).
 - B. Isaac's plan [the goal of which was contrary to God's revealed plan – 25:23] was that Esau hunt down and prepare some savory wild game for him to eat, the kind he loved so much, thus providing a context for him to bless his son [to pass on the birthright] before he died, (2-4).
 - C. The alarming message of Rebekah, who had overheard Isaac's plan as he told it to Esau, recounted to Jacob, while Esau was on the hunt, his father's plan to bless Esau in the presence of the Lord [to pass on the birthright to Esau], (5-7).
 - D. Rebekah's command to Jacob was that he listen up and obey her, (8).
 - E. Rebekah's plan [the goal of which was consistent with God's revealed plan, but the timing and means of accomplishment were contrary to God's will] was that Jacob would bring two goats from the flock near by, she would prepare them in the savory way Isaac loved, and Jacob would take the food to his father, who would eat it and then bless him (Jacob) before he (Isaac) died, (9-10).

Note: Moses' readers have seen this kind of plan fail already, many times. Lying did not help Abraham before Pharaoh (12:18-19). Taking Hagar to be his seed-bearing concubine did not help in 15:4. Abraham's deception before Abimelech did not help (20:9). Isaac's lying to a later Abimelech did not help move God's plan along (26:9-10). All these actions of "taking things into my own hands" turned out bad. So, here, Rebekah's LACK OF FAITH IN GOD TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PLAN resulted in devastating collateral damage within the family.

- ii. Rebekah's response to Jacob's concerns about getting caught in deception and paying the consequences was to take all responsibility upon herself, to command Jacob to obey her, and to continue preparations to deceive her husband into blessing the younger son, Jacob, including dressing him in Esau's clothes, (11-17).

Note: Rebekah did pay the consequences of the deception she had planned when her beloved son had to be sent away in order to preserve his life (42-45). Rebekah never saw her Jacob again after he left for Padan Aram (28:5).

- A. Jacob's three-fold concern with his mother's plan was that he might get caught [since Esau was hairy and Jacob was smooth], and as a result might be seen as a deceiver, and as a result might bring down a curse upon himself rather than a blessing, (11-12).

Note: Jacob's concerns were not for what was true, but for getting caught and paying the consequences. Jacob revealed a deep character flaw.

- B. Rebekah's response to Jacob's concerns was to take all responsibility for the deception (to take any curse upon herself) and to, once again, command Jacob to obey her, (13).

- C. Rebekah's preparations for the deception included making the savory meat that Isaac loved from the goats Jacob had brought her, dressing Jacob in Esau's clothes, wrapping hairy goat skins around Jacob's smooth skin, and placing the prepared food in Jacob's hands, (14-17).
- III. Jacob's deceptive presentation of himself to his father claimed [lied] that he was Esau, Isaac's firstborn, and that he had done as his father had told him, so that he would bless him, (18-19).
 Note: In verses 20-40 Jacob continued his elaborate deception and lying until Isaac was convinced that he was Esau and blessed him. When Esau brought his savory game to his father, seeking his blessing, both father and brother realized they had been tricked. When Esau demanded his own blessing, Isaac offered a "quasi-blessing" that placed him under the authority of his younger brother.
- IV. Jacob's multiple deceptions of his father resulted in Isaac's blessing him, (20-29).
 A. Jacob's lying answer to Isaac's question concerning the speed with which he had completed his task (see 2-4) was that the Lord has caused it to happen, (20).
 Note: Jacob took God's name in vain in order to legitimize his deception.
 B. The reason blind and aging Isaac could not recognize that Jacob was deceiving him was because, though he sounded like Jacob, his hands felt like Esau's, having hairy goat skin on them, (21-23a).
 C. The result of Jacob's deception was that Isaac blessed him, (23b).
 D. Jacob's lying answer to Isaac's question concerning his identity was that he was Esau, (24).
 E. The reason Isaac decided to bless Jacob in spite of his doubts was because after Jacob served him food and drink and when Jacob leaned close to his father to receive a kiss, he (Isaac) smelled Esau's clothes (see 15), (25-27a).
 F. The content of Isaac's blessing reflected the earlier blessing which the Lord spoke to Abraham (12:1-3); including the cursing and the blessing, and the building of respect among the nations, (27b-29).
- V. The result of Rebekah and Jacob's deception in tricking Isaac into blessing Jacob, rather than Esau, was that Esau hated Jacob and promised himself that when Isaac died [which did not happen for 43 more years], he would kill his brother, (41).
 Note: Jacob, the younger, was blessed, as God had planned, but not in the way God intended [i.e., not by deception], and with the result of a deeply divided "chosen" family.

(Theological . . . What it means to believers **ALWAYS**)
**SEEKING TO ACCOMPLISH GOD'S PLAN THROUGH DECEPTIVE MEANS
 DEVASTATES THE SPIRITUAL FAMILY.**

- I. Replacing God's plan with one's own plan creates spiritual-family tensions, (1-5).
- II. Seeking to accomplish God's plan through deceptive means multiplies the tension, (6-27).
- III. God's plan to bless whomever He chooses will be accomplished, (27-29).
- IV. The consequences of using deception to accomplish God's plan devastate the spiritual family, (41).

(Pedagogical . . . What it means to us **NOW**)
SHUN THE TAINTED BLESSING.

- I. You can try to defy God's plan, (1-4).
- II. You can try to effect God's plan, but in sinful ways, (5-27a).
- III. You can even "accomplish" God's plan [to bless you], (see 27b-29).
 BUT . . .
- IV. When you "accomplish" God's plan your way the cost is high, (41).
 THEREFORE, show some faith and . . .
- V. **SHUN THE TAINTED BLESSING.**
 1. Don't cheat to get a degree.
 2. Don't lie to get a job.
 3. Don't deceive to get a promotion.
 4. Don't commit adultery to be happy.
 5. Etc.