

Jacob 3 - The Opposite of Love

1. Love demonstrated

Before we can consider the opposite of love as it appears in the next event in Jacob's life, we have to understand what love *is*. Sometimes it's important to think in binary terms like when you are driving, as in turn left, turn right, or in biology, as in male or female. With such things you can think in terms of opposites. However, sometimes what is opposite is not so easy to determine. When it comes to driving and gender, it is still easy to do, but when it comes to personality and attitude, there are multiple dimensions. Determining what is opposite may not be so clear. This is specifically the case when it comes to love. How you define love can make the difference. If by love vs. hate you are talking about ice cream then the definition of love is not so significant.

Many people define love as an emotion. As I often teach, love is a decision to want the best for someone else. When we try to determine what the *opposite* of love is, things get a little complicated. Here, the opposite of love is not hate. Hate could actually be a reference to something else. You can love your enemy while you are at war and trying to kill him. You still want the best for him, but you can't give him the best while he is shooting at you. If he stops shooting at you then you are free to help him get the best for him.

You might define the opposite of love as being malignant. That is, you want to hurt that person no matter what they are doing. You could also define the opposite of love as being apathetic, or not caring about others at all. In the life of Jacob, the opposite of love is not the decision to want the *worst* for someone else. Instead, the opposite is the decision to want the best for *self*.

This is a message that shows up in so much of our teaching because it is at the root of Christianity and our attention is drawn to it often. This is a core component of the Gospel where God's concern was not for Self, but for others —

specifically, us.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The sense of God's selflessness is contained in

Phil 2:5-8 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Rom 15:1-3 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2Let every one of us please *his* neighbour for *his* good to edification.

3For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

1Cor 13:5 [Charity, or love,] Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

Whether it be our love for God or our love for others by God, self-love is a foreign concept. It is only mentioned in ironic way in Mark 12:33. After describing the great commandment about loving God with all our heart, Jesus described the corollary to that:

Mark 12:33 ...to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings

and sacrifices.

This passage does not imply that before you can love someone else you have to love yourself, as popular as this might sound. It is a matter of irony because it is not possible to love your neighbor as yourself. If that means putting him first as you put yourself first then that is not possible because there can only be one "first." If you first put yourself first and then do likewise with your neighbor, then the love of your neighbor displaces you. Jesus is mentioning self here for context.

Imagine what intangibles would look like in a concrete way. For instance, if I use the word *hit*, it is *tangible*: the word immediately evokes an image of *hitting*. The same could be said of *sit*, *stand*, or *move*. But what about the word *forgive*? You could have two people standing face to face and not seem to move a muscle. In a moment, one of them forgives the other and it is possible to miss that it happened. If you looked closely, you might see it in their faces, but there would be nothing you could hear, smell, taste, or touch that would let you know that it happened. The same could be said of the word *love*. An illustration was given in *The Gospel Chimes* publication about a child in the remote kind of place where you are more likely to find a missionary than a tourist. She had been sold into modern day slavery at the age of four.

She had never known what love was. Even her name, Keodi, meant "Nobody loves me!" When she grew to be about ten years old, her body became covered with ugly sores. The natives turned her out and would have nothing to do with her. But some kind missionaries took Keodi in and cleaned her up, cared for her sores, and put clothes on her. At first she could not believe any one loved her. She went about saying, "I am only Keodi; nobody loves me." The missionaries told her that Jesus loved her, and tried

to teach her what love meant. Then she looked down at her dress, clean body and bandaged sores, and said, "Is this love?" They told her that it was.

What does love look like? What does forgive look like? It looks like a cross. It looks like the Masters hand in the form of our hand reaching out and touching those around us. It looks like a pair of eyes looking into ours and it sounds like the teaching us of the Gospel.

2. The opposite of love

This brings us to Genesis 27. In other Biblical narratives it is interesting to see theological developments are woven into the historical context. Up until now in our examination of Genesis, we have seen just that as we observe the unfolding of God's redemptive plan. When we arrive at Genesis 27, there are no major or clear theological themes that jump out at you. The lessons we have learned from the Biblical figures have been pretty positive, whether or not they were hard learned lessons. Because of the nature of the narratives to come in the rest of the book, there will be many life lessons that also reflect how real life is mixed with difficulties and joys. However, this particular chapter is depressing because it represents how dark human nature can be. It is not humanity at its worst as though we were analyzing a Hitler. Even though we have enough of those sprinkled all throughout history, the greater proportion of our life is filled with day to day to relationships where the self-centered nature of man plays out. Genesis 27 is filled with the opposite of love. Of the characters presented, each one acts out of self-interest and the whole chapter is sad. If there was a lesson overall to learn from the chapter, it is "Don't do this!" As we read through the chapter, watch and see how each one contributes to the dysfunction of the family. We will see how over and over their self-love, self-interest, and self-centeredness brought grief into their lives.

Gen 27:1-46 And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, *here am I*.

2And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:

3Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me *some* venison;

4And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring *it* to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

As you read through this passage, you want to remember that Isaac and Rebekah each had a favorite child according to Gen 25:28:

Gen 25:27-28 And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob *was* a plain man, dwelling in tents.

28And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of *his* venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Esau was more of the outdoors man, athletic type. Jacob was more of the Mama's boy who was favored at home. Between Isaac and Rebekah, the brothers were pitted against each other. Isaac's self-interest led him to want to bless Esau. He had already been given the prophecy that the elder would serve the younger, but his favoritism evidently contributed to overruling this in his heart and caused him to act against God's revealed will.

5And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt *for* venison, *and* to bring *it*.

6And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying,

7Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death.

8Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.

Isaac and Rebekah's favoritism did not serve their relationship well. Instead of respect for Isaac, Rebekah moved to act in her own interest against her husband. Because of their favoritism, the ability for them to be able to discuss serious issues had long been compromised. Her self-interest led to deception, which is never a good thing for a marriage.

9Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

10And thou shalt bring *it* to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

11And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother *is* a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth man:

12My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

13And his mother said unto him, Upon me *be* thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me *them*.

Isaac's self-serving favoritism would be consistent with any resentment Jacob had not only for his brother, but also for his father. It didn't take much prompting for him to disrespect his father and join in the deception.

14And he went, and fetched, and brought *them* to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved.

15And Rebekah took goodly

raiment of her eldest son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

16And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck:

17And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

18And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I; who *art* thou, my son?

19And Jacob said unto his father, I *am* Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

Jacob had already laid the foundation for this deception earlier when in his jealous self-interest he bought Esau's birthright in an underhanded way. Now, it is such a short step to take the next step to outright *steal* the blessing.

20And Isaac said unto his son, How *is it* that thou hast found *it* so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought *it* to me.

21And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou *be* my very son Esau or not.

22And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice *is* Jacob's voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau.

23And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

24And he said, *Art* thou my very son Esau? And he said, I *am*.

25And he said, Bring *it* near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought *it* near to him, and he did eat: and he

brought him wine, and he drank.
26And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son.

27And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son *is* as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed:

All of Isaac's senses were failing him in his old age. He couldn't call on Rebekah perhaps because he didn't have confidence in her.

28Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:

29Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed *be* every one that curseth thee, and blessed *be* he that blesseth thee.

30And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

31And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.

32And Isaac his father said unto him, Who *art* thou? And he said, I *am* thy son, thy firstborn Esau.

33And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where *is* he that hath taken venison, and brought *it* me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, *and* he shall be blessed.

34And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless

me, *even* me also, O my father.
35And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

Most of Esau's self-interest had been demonstrated when he had despised his birthright and sold it off to Jacob. In despising his birthright, he had disrespected his father. Now he was eating the bitter fruit of his self-centeredness.

36And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

37And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

38And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, *even* me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

39And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;

40And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

41And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

Esau revealed that he was aware of the prophecy because he recalled how

Jacob had been appropriately named supplanter. But the prophecy didn't matter to him. He minimized his own part in the sale of the birthright and saw Jacob as the sole culprit. He was given the consolation prize that at least the dominion by his brother would not be forever. Instead of yielding his heart to God and working with God's plan through his brother, he maintained his self-centeredness and sought to *kill* his brother.

42And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, *purposing* to kill thee.

43Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran;

44And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away;

45Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget *that* which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?

46And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these *which are* of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

The sad thing here at this point is not so obvious. Sometimes silence speaks louder than words for those who know how to listen for it. Jacob is Rachel's favorite son. In her self-interest of advancing him she loses him. She sends him away to find a wife, but the Bible is silent about her ever seeing her son again. She died before he ever had a chance to get back from her brother's house.

The narrative is advanced in this chapter but there is nothing positive about the lessons here in this event.

There are times when God directly intervenes to take action in a situation, but other times He simply works with the situations that man creates for himself or that are introduced into his life by others. When we don't live a life yielded to God and seeking His will and serving Him, there should be no surprise that things will go from bad to worse. The cycle of self-centeredness *must* be broken by stepping out of our comfort zone and a lifestyle that is governed by what is "in our own best interest." Retiring and retreating from life is demonstrably disabling. As some of us get older, we need to make sure to stay engaged in life to keep from mentally shrinking and atrophying. For the Christian, this should not be all about doing crossword and sudoku puzzles. It should be about continuing to learn and know God, serving Him and staying active in serving others. Take the time to be the mentor, the soul-winner, the one called alongside in the time of need. This lesson is possibly the most common lesson that the child of God needs.

Matt 16:24-26 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

25For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

26For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

If you have received the love of God and given Him your heart, it will show in dedicating your life by publicly confessing Him in baptism. It will be followed by your service to Him as you join your brothers and sisters.

What is God calling you to do? Not just in some grand career move, but day by day in your service to Him? Protecting yourself from every possible life threat is important, but at what point

does it turn into serving self and self-interest? There must be a balance to life. When was the last time you presented the Gospel to someone? When was the last time you handed someone a Gospel tract? Or made a phone call, provided for the maintenance of the Lord's house, prayed with someone, blessed a child, shared time with and eaten with someone homeless, or shared your wisdom?

1. Love - John 3:16, Phil 2:5-8, Rom 15:1-3, 1Cor 13:5, Mark 12:33
2. The opposite of love - Gen 27:1-46, 25:27-28, Matt 16:24-26