

Short Sell

1. Warm up: On Sunday we talked about instant gratification. Instant gratification is not innately bad. It becomes detrimental only when it gets in the way of longer-term benefit for ourselves or others. So before we talk about negative side of instant gratification, first tell us about a harmless form of instant gratification you often enjoy.
2. Esau and Jacob were twin brothers. Esau came out of the womb first, so he was technically the oldest. Under the customs of the time, the oldest brother was entitled to inherit a double portion of the family estate. For example, if there were two sons in a family and the father died with an estate worth \$100, the younger brother would get \$33 and the older twice as much, i.e., \$67. The older brother's double share was called a "birthright." With that as background, let's now read Genesis 25:21-34, as printed on p. 3.
 - a. Our scripture passage offers clues about the personality of Esau and Jacob. Jeff compared them to the Young Sheldon (Jacob) and Sheldon's older brother George (Esau). Esau comes off as a macho man who was rough around the edges. Jacob comes across as a quiet, refined fellow who loved to stay inside and cook. Tell us about someone you've encountered in your own life that reminds you of Esau or Jacob. How well would you guess these two brothers' personalities meshed?
 - b. What do you think of Jacob's behavior in this story? Do you think his actions were pleasing to God? Does Jacob sound like someone you'd like to be friends with?
 - c. In our story, Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew. What food would most tempt you to sell your birthright? ☺
 - d. How do we explain Esau's behavior from a psychological perspective? In other words, what psychological processes might have been at work within him that would prompt such rash behavior? Do you really think he thought he was going to starve to death or was something else going on here?
3. The key to the meaning of our Scripture story is captured in the phrase, "Thus Esau despised his birthright." He traded something really valuable over the long term for a quick hit of instant gratification. Although this story is 4,000 years old, it's actually about you and me. Because each of us also has a birthright, and life constantly confronts us with temptations to "sell" it.
 - a. Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." What does it mean to say we are "heirs of God"?

- b. The Bible tells us that, like Esau, we too have a birthright. Isaiah 61:7 says, “Instead of your shame, you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace, you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion . . . , and everlasting joy will be yours.” I Peter 1:4 adds that our inheritance will be imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.” What do you think it means to say God promises us a double portion? A double portion of what? When do we receive that double portion? Do we have to wait till we die?
4. Life constantly tempts us to trade our birthright as children of God – a double portion of unfading joy – for quick temporary hits of gratification. Doing the right thing is often the hard thing. God says, “Go high; do the hard thing; that’s the true path to happiness.” Satan says, “Go low; take a shortcut; you’ll get there quicker.”
- a. Jeff shared the story of NASCAR crew chief Tim Shutt who was tempted to install an illegal device on his driver’s car to give them an edge in the Taladega 500. Tim got halfway through the install before he felt convicted and removed it. His driver (Mike McLaughlin) went on to win the race clean. Suppose Tim had only two choices: (1) run the race clean and lose, or (2) install the illegal device and win. Which choice would contribute most to Tim’s long term peace and joy – and why?
- b. Take a look at the text box on p. 3 entitled “Two Ways of Life.” The perspective presented there is based on the premise that “Kingdom values” are the true path to deep soul satisfaction, whereas living “baser values” leads to long-term deep unhappiness. Do you buy that? Why or why not?
- c. Tell us about an Esau moment you’ve faced, i.e., a time when you were tempted to embrace a quick, easy way to feel good even though that was detrimental to your long-term peace and joy and serenity. Did you yield to the temptation? How did you feel in the moment? How did you feel much later looking back on it?
- d. We all have different vulnerabilities. Acknowledging the areas of life where we’re most tempted to stumble can help us be more self-aware and on guard. In which of the following areas are you most apt to be tempted to embrace instant gratification even if it’s detrimental to your long-term happiness? Why do you think that area is so hard for you?
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|-----------------------|---|
| Anger | Shrinking from a situation that calls for courage |
| Lust/sex | Serving self rather than others |
| Shopping/spending | Words that harm |
| Food | Too much screen time |
| Addiction | Hoarding money or things |
| Exercise or body care | Hoarding your time instead of sharing it |
| Vengeance | Other? |
- e. When we’re tempted to embrace instant gratification over long-term benefit, what are some strategies that can help us do better? What works best for you?

Genesis 25:21-34

²¹Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. ²²The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. ²³And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger."

²⁴When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. ²⁶Afterwards his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

²⁷ When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. ²⁸Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob. ²⁹Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. ³⁰Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.) ³¹Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." ³²Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" ³³Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Two Ways to Live		
<u>Treasure Your Birthright</u>	<u>Live Kingdom Values</u>	<u>Result</u>
Child of the King satisfaction:	Love	Deep soul
	Kindness	Joy
	Honesty	Peace
	Generosity	Contentment
	Humility	Purpose
	Nonviolence	Accomplishment
<u>Despise Your Birthright</u>	<u>Live Base Values</u>	<u>Result</u>
Child of the Fall	Material things	Guilt
	Personal advantage	Regret
	Whatever it takes	Chaos
	Immediate gratification	Brokenness
	Creature comforts	