

Lesson 8

On Your Best Behavior

Genesis 25:27-28; 27:30-35; Luke 12:13-15

Week of Jan. 19, 2014

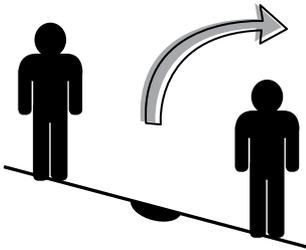
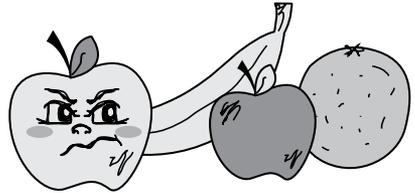
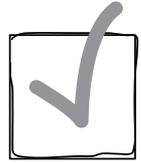
Attitude Check

We have all been around them – people with bad attitudes. When someone snaps at you for no apparent reason, how does it make you feel? Do you jump for joy? Probably not. Often, that anger can rub off on you.

What about when someone hassles you because of something that isn't your fault – do you feel like you can conquer the world or that the world may conquer you? Likely, you will feel the urge to respond to anger with anger, negativity with negativity.

There are some exceptions, but as rotten fruit spoils good fruit, a bad attitude can spoil the attitudes of friends and family. And regardless of whether you want to admit it, even people with a healthy outlook on life have bad attitudes at times that can hurt others.

Many factors contribute to a bad attitude, but no matter what causes it, if someone in your family has one, it affects everyone in the home. It may be a daily struggle, but thinking of others first can help keep attitudes in check. Your attitude should be modeled after that of Jesus, who always thought about the needs of others.

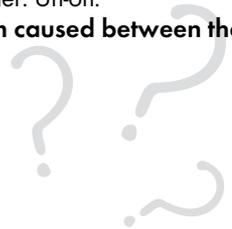


Playing Favorites (Read Genesis 25:27-28)

Have you ever had an argument with a sibling about who was the favorite? When there is disagreement, that's usually a good sign there is no favorite. In this story, though, it was obvious the parents had favorite children.

Isaac and Rebekah had twin sons: Esau and Jacob. Because Esau was more of a "man's man" – a guy who liked being outdoors and hunting – his dad liked him more than he liked his brother. And because Jacob was a quiet guy who liked sitting at home and cooking (see Genesis 25:29), his mother liked him more than his brother. Uh-oh.

What kinds of problems do you think this favoritism caused between the brothers?



It's natural for everyone to have unique interests and hobbies, and it's also natural to enjoy spending time with people who share our interests. When you have common ground with someone, it can make a relationship flow smoothly, but that doesn't mean you can't love and appreciate someone who has different interests than you.

Why might it be a good thing to occasionally hang out with people who have different interests than you?

Looking Out for Number One

(Read *Genesis 27:30-35*)

Isn't the story of Jacob and Esau sad? How did these people living in the same home grow so far apart and stop caring about each other? This didn't happen overnight. It happened slowly over years.

The brothers allowed the favoritism of their parents to infect their attitudes toward each other. It got to the point where they were manipulating each other to get what they wanted. They were solely focused on looking out for themselves.

Somewhere along the way, Rebekah and Isaac let their common interests with one of their children get out of hand. At one time, before they were parents, they had been a married couple who loved each other deeply. How did this husband and wife grow so far apart that they were on separate sides of a divided family?

Again, this likely didn't happen overnight. Did they fail to look to each other's interests when their marriage was young, which would cause them to grow apart and feel lonely? And if they felt lonely when they were supposed to be a team, did they allow resentment and bitterness to grow between them? And then did their children become just additional factors to compete against each other, to try to keep the other down because he had hurt her and she had hurt him?

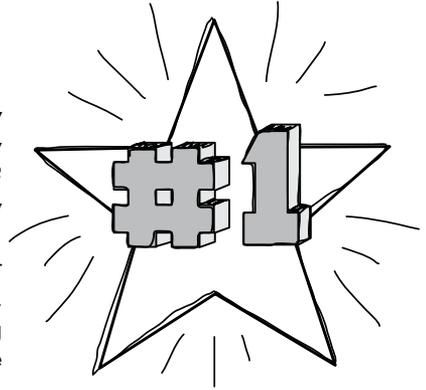
It's possible that any of these things could have been a contributing factor, but the real issue ran deeper.

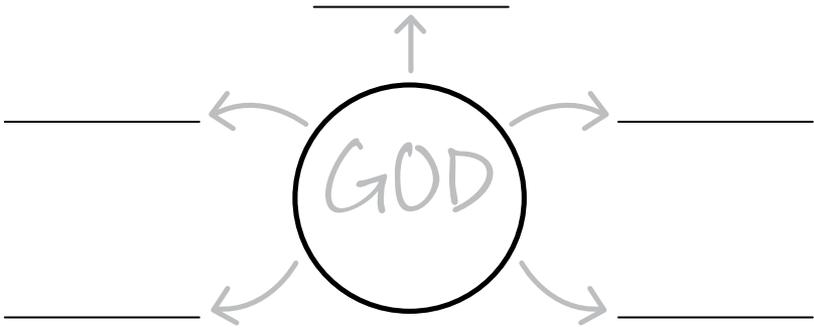
God in the Center

The real issue for Isaac and Rebekah was that God wasn't the center of their lives, marriage and family. No matter how important earthly relationships are, they must always be second to your relationship with God.

It's not that these relationships have to take a back seat; instead, all of your relationships should be grounded in your relationship with God. Your love for family, friends or a significant other must flow from your love for God. Without God, these relationships will fail.

In the diagram on page 36, write "God" in the center and the names of several people you have relationships with in the other lines. These might be friends, family members, a boyfriend/girlfriend, teachers, etc. Then write responses for all of the prompts that apply to you.





Because of my relationship with God, I will be this kind of **child**:

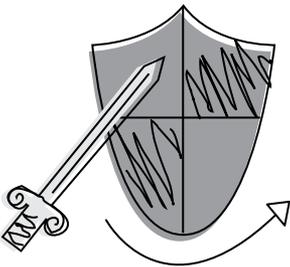
Because of my relationship with God, I will be this kind of **sibling**:

Because of my relationship with God, I will be this kind of **friend**:

Because of my relationship with God, I will be this kind of **boyfriend/girlfriend**:

Because of my relationship with God, I will be this kind of **student**:

How does this diagram help you understand how your relationship with God should influence all your other relationships?



Watch Out! (Read Luke 12:13-15)

After these verses, Jesus told a parable of a man who got all of the possessions he desired and stored them in buildings to protect his future (to ensure his success) ... but then he died. What good did all that stuff do him after he died?

To be on your guard - another way of saying "take heed" - indicates that you have to keep watch over your desires just as a soldier stands guard through the night, keeping his eyes open against assaulting enemies.

★ First Peter 5:8 tells us to "be _____, be _____; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may _____." Check yourself, and be honest about your desires. Are they pleasing to God? If not, let them go.

The only desires you are really aware of are your own; and the only attitude you can control is your own. Choose to be positive and to put the desires of God ahead of your own.

Life Lesson #1

Avoid _____ competition.

The dangerous thing about favoritism among people is the competition it fuels. Competition in a sporting event is healthy, but competition among family members indicates underlying issues and causes hurt.

Competition suggests that one is better than the other, whether we are talking about teams or people, and that there is some prize to be won. It fuels selfishness and greed: *What can I keep away from others so I can have more for me?*

Some want more money, more stuff, more time alone to the point they forget to care about the needs of the most significant people in their lives. In a family, each person has different roles, interests and talents, but no one is worth more than another. Each person has specific needs that other family members need to consider.

Similarities became reasons for Isaac and Rebekah each to value one son over the other. This favoritism led to Rebekah tricking her blind, elderly husband into giving what was intended for Esau by cultural rules to Jacob. Rebekah deceived her husband and one of her sons because she liked her other son so much more – unbelievable!

The only prize our families should be striving for, as members of the same team, is to live through eternity with God.

Life Lesson #2

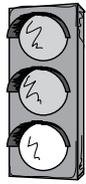
Treat _____ the way _____ did.

Paul gave practical advice to use in our relationships with others in order to protect our families from favoritism and bad attitudes. Philippians 2:3-5 says:

“Let _____ be done through _____ or _____, but in lowliness of mind let each _____ others _____ than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his _____ interests, but also for the interests of _____. Let this mind be in you which was also in _____.”

Nothing is wrong with a husband and wife providing for their family's needs and for a successful future. Isaac and Rebekah wanted the future of their family to be blessed. However, they let their selfish ambitions and desires blind them from the best interests of their family, and they hurt their children more than they blessed them.

Thank God for His grace because He did bless the future of Isaac and Rebekah's family to ensure the well-being of Christ's family, which, graciously, includes us.



Before You Go: 3-2-1

3 family members you can pray for this week:

2 things you need to watch out for with your attitude:

1 thing you can do for a sibling or parent that puts his or her needs first:

Be sure to follow through with what you've written throughout the week.

