

Confronting Rivalries

Bible Verse

Let there be peace on your walls; let there be rest on your fortifications.
(Psalm 122:7)

Did You Know?

God's covenant promise to Abraham and Sarah results in the birth of Isaac. Isaac marries Rebekah, who gives birth to twins, Jacob and Esau. The account of their birth chronicles that the brothers' rivalry began in utero. The boys "pushed against each other," and Jacob was born "gripping Esau's heel" (Genesis 25:22, 26). The name *Jacob* derives from the Hebrew noun for *heel*. Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the verb for *heel* is used to describe one brother usurping another.

This ominous birth doesn't bode well for the brothers' relationship in the future. At some point, Jacob convinces Esau to sell his birthright for a bowl of stew. In ancient Hebrew culture, the birthright allowed the oldest son to collect a larger share of his father's inheritance. This act of selling the birthright is largely symbolic, as only the father could recognize one son as the heir. This is why Jacob, with the help of his mother, tricks Isaac into giving Jacob Esau's blessing.

We have all experienced rivalries with others, whether they be siblings, classmates, or individuals on an opposing sports team. Remind your students that unchecked competition can be detrimental to their relationships with others. Jacob and Esau were estranged for many years because of the animosity that resulted from their sibling rivalry. Invite your students to put aside any bitter feelings of competition that they might be harboring, in order to reconcile with someone.

Exploration Points

- Rivalries can get in the way of our friendships with others.
- Reconciliation requires a change of heart.

Bible Story

Genesis 25:19-34 and
27:1-40

Compass Point

God calls us to
reconcile with one
another.



Requires
preparation.

Supplies

Diver's Log—pp. 8-9,
pens, pencils, colored
pencils

Supplies

masking tape,
yardstick, tennis balls,
permanent markers
(2 colors), kitchen
brooms, dry-erase
board set

Jump In

Choose from the following activities those that best suit your group.

DIVER'S LOG

- Make pens, pencils, and colored pencils available.
- Give each student their copy of the Diver's Log.
- Encourage them to respond to the prompt on page 8 and to write, doodle, or draw their prayer concerns on page 9.
- After some amount of time, invite your students to share their responses as they are comfortable.

SAY: Our Bible reading is about a rivalry between two brothers.

ASK: Do you have any rivalries with your siblings, classmates, or anyone else? Against whom are you competing? What is the reason for your competition?

GAME - BROOM BASHBALL



On one side of your space, use masking tape to make 3 foot-by-3 foot boxes, one for each two teams of four to six students. Tape a bowling line on the floor some distance away from each box.

- Divide your students into teams of four to six. Assign two teams to each box.
- Give a broom to each set of teams and a tennis ball to each player. Make permanent markers available. (Opposing teams will each use a different color.) Invite each player to mark a ball with a unique design.
- Inform your students that the game is like shuffleboard. The object is to use the broom to hit the ball into the scoring box.
- Each player may attempt to play offensively by aiming for the box, or play defensively by trying to knock out a ball belonging to a player on the other team.
- Players from each team will take turns shooting. Alternate which team shoots first each round.
- A round is complete when each player from both teams has played. Each ball that is in the box at the end of the round scores one point for the team.
- Use a dry-erase board to keep score.
- Repeat the game as time and interest allow.

SAY: Our game was pretty competitive. It might have been easy to form a rivalry with the other team, or with any of the individual players on the other team.


ASK: What are some situations that lead to the development of rivalries? Do you think rivalries are okay? Why or why not?

Dive Deeper

READ THE BIBLE

- Invite your students to look up Genesis 25:19-34 and 27:1-40 and to take turns reading.


DRAMA - DOUBLE-CROSSED

 Photocopy page 23, one for each student.

- Assign each of the roles.
- Invite your students to complete the dramatic reading together.

ASK: Do you think Esau deserved to lose his birthright after symbolically selling it for a bowl of stew? Why or why not?

DISCUSS IT - CONFRONTING RIVALRIES

 Photocopy page 24, one for each adult discussion leader.

- Divide your students into groups of four to six.
- Assign each group an adult discussion leader.
- Invite your leaders and students to spend time discussing the questions.

TIP: If your group is small, consider discussing the questions as one group.

Grow Stronger

ALL-TIME GREATEST RIVALRIES

- Give each student their copy of the Submerge magazine.
- Invite them to read the article on pages 10-11 and to respond to the prompt.

SAY: Knowing the difference between friendly rivalries and unhealthy competition is important.

ASK: What are some examples of healthy rivalries? What are some examples of unhealthy rivalries?

GROUP TIME - WORK IT OUT

- Invite your students to speak about their own experiences of reconciling with others.
- Encourage them to use a dry-erase board to write down ideas about ways to mend broken relationships.

Supplies

Bibles (CEB)

Supplies

Leader's Guide—p. 23

Supplies

Leader's Guide—p. 24

Supplies

Submerge magazine—
pp. 10-11, pens

Supplies

dry-erase board set

Supplies

macramé or hemp cord,
clay beads, scissors

Supplies

Leader's Guide—p. vi

CREATIVE EXPRESSION - SIGNS OF FRIENDSHIP



Gather the necessary supplies.

- Make macramé or hemp cord, clay beads, and scissors available.
- Invite your students to create friendship bracelets or other items they can give to family members and friends.
- Encourage your group to be creative.
- After some amount of time, invite your students to share their creations.

Worship



Photocopy and cut apart the September 27 Worship (p. vi), one for each worship volunteer.

- Invite one student to read the Bible verse.
- Invite a second student to read the prayer.

Drama - Double-Crossed

NARRATOR: Do you ever compete with your brothers or sisters? It can't be as confrontational as the relationship between Esau and Jacob. They were competing with each other before they were born.

REBEKAH: It feels like there's a boxing match going on in my stomach. What's going on?

VOICE OF GOD: Rebekah, you will give birth to two competing nations. The older will serve the younger.

NARRATOR: It's funny to think of twins as being the older or younger brother. Anyway, Isaac and Rebekah were surprised to find out they were having twins.

ISAAC: Twins? But I bought only one car seat and one crib. How was I supposed to know?

VOICE OF GOD: What do you think I meant when I told Rebekah that she will give birth to two nations?

NARRATOR: God does have a point there. Esau was born with lots of red hair, which is how he got his name. The Hebrew word for *hair* sounds like *Esau*. Jacob was born gripping his brother's heel. Can you guess the Hebrew word for *heel*?

ISAAC: I'm 60 years old. I'm too old to care for two babies.

NARRATOR: The boys grew up. Jacob was quiet and preferred to stay home. Esau was an outdoorsman. Isaac was closer to Esau, while Rebekah was fond of Jacob. One day, Esau came home from hunting. Jacob was boiling stew.

ESAU: I'm starving. Let me have some of that stew.

JACOB: I'll trade it to you for your birthright.

NARRATOR: In ancient Israelite culture, the oldest son had unique rights called a birthright. This allowed the oldest son to receive the majority of the family wealth when his father died.

ESAU: What good is my birthright if I die today of hunger? Sure, why not?

NARRATOR: Esau sold his birthright, but only Isaac's formal recognition of Jacob as his heir would confirm that Esau had given up his birthright. Esau wasn't worried. Fast forward a few years.

ISAAC: Esau, my son, I'm really old and it is time for me to bless my heir. Take your hunting gear and hunt some delicious food. Make me something to eat, and then I will bless you.

NARRATOR: Rebekah overheard Isaac and sprang into action.

REBEKAH: Jacob, you're my favorite. You were smart enough to get the birthright from your clueless brother. You need to get this blessing. Put on Esau's clothes and these animal skins. Go to your father and tell him you're Esau.

JACOB: Father, it's me, Esau. I've been out hunting and I'm here for my blessing.

NARRATOR: Jacob was blind, so he blessed Jacob. The brothers didn't speak to each other for a long time after Jacob double-crossed his brother. Check out Genesis 33:1-17 to read about their reunion.

Discuss It - Confronting Rivalries

SAY: Even though they were twins, Esau and Jacob had very different personalities and interests. Esau enjoyed hunting and spending time outdoors. Jacob was quiet and preferred staying at home. Because of this, Isaac was closer to Esau, and Rebekah was closer to Jacob.

ASK: Do you identify more with Esau or Jacob? Why? What do you think their relationship was like growing up? How do you think they felt knowing that each of them was the special child of one parent? Do your interests or hobbies affect how much time you spend with certain family members? How so?

SAY: Jacob convinced Esau to sell his birthright for a bowl of stew. In Bible times, the birthright allowed the oldest son to collect a larger share of inheritance. Esau's act of selling the birthright is symbolic, as only his father could recognize one son as the heir. But it does represent the rivalry that existed between the brothers.

ASK: Based on ancient customs, who would hold the birthright in your family? Do you think it's fair that the oldest son inherits so much of the family property? Why or why not? Have you ever bought and sold or traded anything with your siblings or friends? How did things turn out?

SAY: When Esau and Jacob were older, it was time for Isaac to name his heir. Isaac told Esau to go hunting for some wild game and to prepare a special meal. Rebekah overheard this and came up with a plan so that Jacob could steal the birthright blessing and inherit Isaac's wealth.

ASK: Why do you think Rebekah helped Jacob trick Isaac into blessing Jacob? How do you think Esau felt when he found out his mother had helped Jacob do this? How do you think this affected Esau's relationship with his mother? How do you think this affected Jacob's relationship with his father?

SAY: A little competition with others can be fun, such as during a family game night or a Thanksgiving flag football game. Competing with others too often can hurt our relationships with others and take the joy out of activities that we enjoy doing.

ASK: When have you witnessed or been a part of a healthy rivalry? When have you witnessed or been part of an unhealthy rivalry? Has a rivalry or competition ever damaged your relationship with another person? How? What are some ways that you can prevent this from happening in the future?