

# Sermon-Based Small Group Bible Study

## Provoking Grace: The Nature of Grace (Genesis 25:29–34)

### Open

Select one of these “ice breakers” to get the conversation going toward the study.

- If you have siblings, tell us where you fit in the birth order and what that’s like for you. If you’re an only child, tell us what that’s like for you.
- Are you a person who can skip meals with no hardship or one who needs to eat on time? Do you get “hangry”?
- Have you ever made a trade that is memorable? Or as a sports fan is there a player trade that is memorable for you? Or do you have a favorite story about a trade someone made (say, a cow for magic beans)?

### Dig

After reading Genesis 25:29–34 together, discuss these questions.

1. As background to this story, reread Genesis 25:19–28. What are you expecting from these two brothers in light of the previous text? What in particular do you expect from Jacob, whose name means “heel grasper” or “trickster”?
2. What do you think of Esau’s statement in verse 30 that he is exhausted? Reasonable? Exaggerated? An indication of failure as a hunter? A genuine cry of need?
3. The birthright is the role of primacy in the family. It means inheriting the larger part of the father’s possessions (with two sons, the one with the birthright inherits two thirds) and taking the role of family head when the father is gone. What does Jacob’s demand for the birthright tell you about him (verse 31)? How does it fit the story of his birth?
4. Compare Esau’s statement in verse 32 to the one in verse 30. Does it seem reasonable or exaggerated?
5. What do you think this story would be like if both brothers were more inclined to trust God’s promise and less inclined to act according to impulse and instinct?

*Summary: Genesis gives us a very real perspective on the founding fathers of Israel. Esau is impulsive. Jacob is scheming. Neither is a model human being. Neither has the wherewithal to trust God, whether for his next meal (Esau) or for his position in the world (Jacob). The trade they agree to is not simply wrong because of what it expresses of their character (for Esau, inability to delay gratification; for Jacob, selfishness expressed in injustice) but also what it neglects: their need for God’s grace to overcome the evil in their character. Yet God’s is at work patiently and persistently to bring his blessing to the world, despite their (and our) failure. Into this family, with many more generations like Esau and Jacob’s, he gives his grace and promises his grace for all peoples.*

### Reflect

Use any of these prompts to encourage group members to apply the text to their own experiences.

- Have you ever faced a decision of trust in God versus self-reliance, or are you facing one now? Tell us about it if you are comfortable doing so.
- What kinds of situations press you to trust God's grace? What have you learned about God from those situations? What have you learned about yourself?
- Pastor Bryan noted that in our story, we want to be the hero who just needs a little help, but we really need God's grace from beginning to end. How does that idea strike you? How have you experienced it?

## Pray

Invite the group to pray together using any of these suggestions.

- What needs have you heard from others in the group that we can pray about?
- Feel free to pray about a challenge to your trust in God that you face presently.
- Let's pray that God would continue to work in us to renew our character and make us more like Christ.