

**TEXT** Genesis 25:27-34; Hebrews 12:14-17

**SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE** Genesis 27:30-40

**OBJECTIVE** The students will be able to relate the failure of Esau—one who lost his inheritance because he did not put a spiritual value on it. By contrasting his example to the example of Isaac in the previous lesson, the students will recognize the importance of evaluating their choices in the light of eternity.

**KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER** For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? — Mark 8:36

**KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH** Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have witholden good things from you. — Jeremiah 5:25

**ANSWER  
TITLE:** **A Lost Inheritance**  
**SEARCH  
TITLE:** **Esau**

**REFERENCE INFORMATION**

In a Hebrew family, the firstborn son was very fortunate. He was treated with great respect and honor, and given the privilege of the family birthright. The birthright was the father's special blessing to his oldest son. This gave the son leadership over his brothers, but it also gave him the responsibility of taking care of the family after his father's death. He was to manage the family property, and support his widowed mother and unmarried sisters. When the father died, the oldest son inherited twice as much as his brothers. Israelitish custom did not allow the daughters of the dead father to inherit anything unless there were no

sons, because it was the duty of the son with the birthright to take care of his sisters.

A birthright could be sold or given away. If the father thought the oldest son did not deserve the birthright, he could give it to a younger son. In order to pass the birthright on, the father gave a special blessing to whoever was receiving it. Once the blessing was given, the birthright could not be taken back. This was one reason why the father waited to hand over the family birthright until near the time he was expected to die.

**YOUR OPENER**

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# Esau

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**KEY VERSE:** Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have witholden good things from you. — Jeremiah 5:25

## RESPONSES

1. In discussing this question, your students may surmise that Esau seemingly was an impatient person, one who wanted his own desires gratified immediately. He was perhaps given to exaggeration, and did not appreciate or properly value the blessings that were his. He became vindictive when his goals were not realized.

2. Edom's response was extremely hostile in refusing passage to the Children of Israel. The significance of their response was that they treated God's people with disrespect, much the same as Esau had treated God's blessing with disrespect nearly four hundred years previous to this. Point out that one man's failure has a far-reaching influence upon others.

3. Your students may need to refer to sources outside our text for information about the birthright. Discussion should bring out that the physical birthright was given to the son because he was the eldest and not because of his special gifts or endowments. We receive our spiritual birthright through no merit of our own. The physical birthright brought a responsibility to be a spiritual leader and teacher of the family. Our spiritual birthright gives us a responsibility to be a spiritual guide to others. The physical birthright brought a blessing and material advantages. Our spiritual birthright also brings a blessing and a promise that all our needs will be supplied.

In the previous lesson we learned that Isaac's attributes included submission, meditation, affection, peaceableness, and prayerfulness. It was noted that these are qualities we can each develop. An analysis of Esau's character teaches us that it is possible to live without these qualities, but the consequences are not what anyone would desire.

1. Genesis 25:30 indicates that Esau was given the name *Edom*, which means "red," in memory of his having sold his birthright for red pottage. Using this incident, and other clues in the text, outline a possible personality profile of Esau.

2. As the Children of Israel left Egypt and journeyed toward Canaan, what kind of response did they receive when seeking to pass through the territory of Edom, whose people, the Edomites, were the descendants of Esau? See Numbers 20:14-21. What significance do you see in this as it relates to Esau's failure?

3. Galatians 4:7 indicates that our spiritual birthright is our privilege to be born into the family of God, and to become joint heirs with Christ himself. Without that experience of salvation we are heirs of no good thing, but as sinners entitled only to eternal punishment. Compare our spiritual birthright with the physical birthright of Esau's time.

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## ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

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4. Esau sold his birthright because he apparently did not consider it of much value compared to his physical need at that moment. People today are faced with a choice based on how much they value their spiritual birthright. Name some things for which the spiritual birthright is exchanged.

5. What are some ways we can protect our spiritual birthright?

6. How do we know that Esau lived to regret selling his birthright? Did his regret do him any good? See Hebrews 12:17.

7. What do you think is the most important lesson to be learned from a character study of Esau?

4. Allow time for your students to offer their suggestions. Some possibilities might include monetary gain, prestige, and fashions of the world. The point of this discussion should be to bring out that anything which becomes more important than their spiritual birthright, in actuality, has as little value as the bowl of red pottage for which Esau gave up so much.

5. Your students may bring up such thoughts as prayer, reading of the Word, and staying close to God. Bring out that it is also very important to subject decisions to the will of God. Let students indicate some choices that they must face in everyday life. Examples are job selection, decisions at school, choosing friends, and even where one lives. Point out that the best way to protect a spiritual birthright is to evaluate choices in light of eternal values.

6. Hebrews 12:17 tells us that he found no place of repentance though he sought it carefully with tears. Contrast godly sorrow with the sorrow of the world (2 Corinthians 7:10). Also discuss the outcome of waiting too long to properly evaluate the spiritual blessings available to us.

7. Answering this question should reinforce the lesson's objective which is to recognize that Esau's failure was the result of his making the wrong choice—a choice which had eternal consequences.

## YOUR WRAP-UP

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## SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

What is a birthright? Why was it so important in Biblical days?

What is the birthright of a Christian?

How can a Christian lose his birthright?

What did Esau trade his birthright for? Do you think it was worth it? Why or why not?

Why is it important to make plans and set goals for your life? What happens if you don't?

What types of things should we be doing to gain or maintain our eternal inheritance?

In our ANSWER story, Neil lost a highly treasured Bible. Have you ever lost or broken some very valuable family "treasure"? How did you feel and did you learn any lesson from the incident? If so what?

## THINGS TO DO

Draw a comparison between Esau's selling of his birthright for a mess of pottage, and a person's losing his soul for a season of sin. See Hebrews 12:14-17.

Make a certificate to represent a Christian's inheritance. Show some objects or pictures that represent worldly goods which might tempt a Christian and cause him to exchange his inheritance.

Bring something you treasure very much which has sentimental value (i.e., heirloom, antique articles). Show that we hold onto these things because we treasure them. Dis-

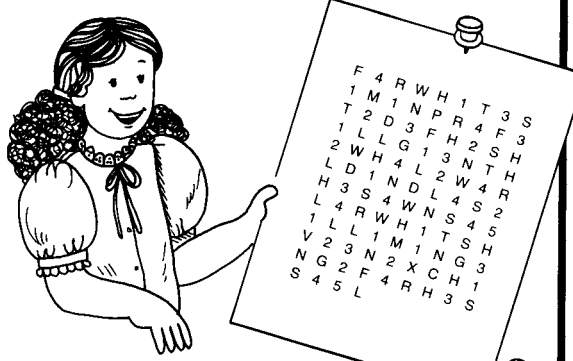
cuss why we must hold on even more to our salvation and the promise of eternal life. If we trade it, we might never get it back.

Ask students what they would do with \$50,000 if it were left to them. How many would invest it for the future?

## Answers for ANSWER

### How Much Is It Worth?

The verse below asks two important questions. To find out what they are place each letter in order on the blank lines, starting with F. Each time you come to a number change it to the letter it represents. (1 = A, 2 = E, 3 = I, 4 = O, 5 = U)



FOR 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?