

## Genesis 36 — Marriage and Moving

**July 3, 2016**

Great to have you, especially if you are a summer visitor. Thanks for joining us this morning in worship. Before we start with our study I want to give you a pulpit preview of what is happening on the Spirit Lake campus for the rest of the summer. Today is the last message in our Genesis series. We are pausing the series after today and I will pick it up again in the fall with Genesis 37; that starts the story of Joseph. The big question is what are we doing between now and the end of August?

Next week, we begin a short three-week series called Summer in the Psalms. I will only preach one message in that series. Pastor Jordan and Pastor Stephen will preach the other weeks. During that series we will use our video technology to have one pastor cover both the Spirit Lake and Spencer campuses.

Last year we took the hot month of August to look at the hot topic of sexuality. We focused in on what the Bible says about homosexuality and transgender. This year we will look at more hot topics in August. The series title is #Trending. We will spend two weeks looking God's vision for the role of men in life, marriage and leadership of the church. Our culture continues to blur the distinction between men and women, making men more effeminate. I hope those two weeks help our men become more godly and masculine. Another week in that series will look at something called the prosperity gospel. This is the common teaching we hear from television preachers that tells us to come to Jesus so we can be rich and successful. The most famous TV personality in

America that subscribes to this style of teaching is Joel Olstein. The final week in the series will be on politics. The current title for that message is, "How would Jesus vote?" In the upcoming election, that is a question all of us are asking. We will help you think biblically as we head into the voting booth. That brings us to September when we return to Genesis and the story of Joseph. As you can see, we have a lot of fun in store for the summer.

Last week we finished the story of Jacob in Genesis 35. Today we are in Genesis 36, which tells us the rest of the story on Esau, Jacob's hairy brother. I am going to tell you up front that nobody preaches this chapter. We are probably the only church in the entire country preaching on Genesis 36 this morning. We may be the only church in the country preaching on Genesis 36 this year. It is that kind of a chapter. It is one long genealogical list. It is like reading a page from the phone book. It is as dry as eating Grape-Nuts without milk. It has that kind of a thrill factor.

I know that leaves you asking, "If it is that boring, why are we studying it? Why don't we skip it?" I believe 2 Timothy 3:16 where he said *all* of Scripture is God's Word and *all* of it is profitable for us. Some parts of the Bible are easier to understand than others but all of the Bible is good for us. That is why I don't skip the hard parts. We study them.

Twenty years of preaching has taught me that there is usually practical truth hidden just beneath the surface of some of the hardest texts in the Bible. That is why we are going to study Genesis 36. I think you will find that truth holds true in this chapter.

Here comes the genealogy. Hold on for the ride.

These are the generations of Esau (that is, Edom). Esau took his wives from the Canaanites: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite, and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, the sister of Nebaioth. And Adah bore to Esau, Eliphaz; Basemath bore Reuel; and Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan. Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, his livestock, all his beasts, and all his property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan. He went into a land away from his brother Jacob. For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together. The land of their sojournings could not support them because of their livestock. So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir. (Esau is Edom.)  
Genesis 36:1–8 (ESV)

The main reason Moses gave us this genealogical list was he wanted us to see Esau's lineage. He wanted us to see the trajectory Esau's life took based on two key decisions he made. He was teaching us how the trajectory our lives will turn out based on some of the key decisions we make during our lives. What are these important decisions? The first one is who we will marry.

**Esau married ungodly women. They led his family away from the Lord.**

Earlier in our study of Genesis, we saw that when Jacob was a middle-aged man when he married, because he remained single when he couldn't find a godly girl. Esau was just the opposite. He refused to restrain his sexual desires. Esau married not just one wife but he married two Canaanite wives. If you were with us in previous weeks you know about the Canaanite people in the Promised Land. God later told Moses to take no prisoners and to wipe them off the face of the earth because they were so sinful and sexually perverse. Esau chose to marry not just one but two Canaanite women at the same time. Esau valued satisfying his sex drive more than pleasing his God.

What makes this even more notable is to remember Esau's lineage. Grandpa Abraham would not let Isaac, Esau's father, marry anyone from the land of Canaan because they didn't know and love the one true God of the universe. Abraham sent Eliezer, his servant, to Paddam-Aram to find a godly girl wife for his son. Isaac waited a long time for the right girl.

Esau didn't want to wait like his father did. He didn't learn from his own mom and dad's story. He married two local pagans. I don't know why he wanted two. He probably thought of himself as quite the lover-boy. Genesis 26:35 says these Hittite women made life bitter for Rebecca, his mom. Every time they came over for the holidays Rebecca wanted to die when she saw the way they treated her son. She was crying inside when she heard the things that came out of these women's mouths. She was devastated to see the values these women held about what was important in their homes. She was shocked when she saw how they spent her son's money. She kept quiet when she saw what these women let her grandchildren watch on television. The hearts of these women were so far from God that Rebecca couldn't sleep at night. She couldn't understand what Jacob was thinking when he married these girls.

That sort of is the point. Esau was not thinking about the future. He was not thinking about where his marital decisions would lead. All he thought about was his manliness and the two hot girls that both wanted him. He married both of them.

To make matters worse, when Esau saw how distressed his pagan wives made his parents, he added a third wife to the mix that came from the line of

Ishmael. He thought that would make things better. It only made things worse.

This wife at least knew about God but she didn't worship him.

Incidentally, some of you may notice that the names of Esau's three wives are given earlier in Genesis but they are not the same names as in this chapter. The most likely reason for this is that women were occasionally given new names after marriage. Apparently, that is what happened in their cases.

Jacob eventually found himself married to four women, but he only wanted one. At least Jacob's wives all came from within the covenant family. Esau's wives were two hard-core pagans and one soft core pagan. These women will have a profound impact on his future, his children and the generations that follow.

Here is the point where it touches our lives. I can't say this strong enough. If you are a single man or woman, be careful who you date. Do not date somebody that is not a Christian. Esau dated two pagan girls and look where it led him. It led to grief for his mother and disaster for his children.

Also, do not date someone that has half-way faith, like Esau did when he married one of the daughters of Ishmael. I see this all the time. Some people call themselves Christians because they are loosely affiliated with Jesus. They are like Ishmael's daughter. They are a distant part of the covenant family not passionate full-fledged family members.

I see this all the time. Young men and women date those who do not love Jesus. The Jesus question should be one of the first questions out of your mouth, not a question you avoid.

In the same way if somebody does not understand the basics of the Christian faith, they are not somebody you should date. They may consider themselves a Christians but they are not coming from the same place of faith as you are.

This what the Bible says in this matter.

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 2 Corinthians 6:14–16 (ESV)

Equal yoking is not just a matter of having vaguely similar faith but it is a matter of having the same faith. You need to marry someone on fire for Jesus. I like to say it this way: Only date and marry a person that loves Jesus more than he or she loves you. A man's choice in marriage showcases his true values and is almost always the determining factor of his future. That was the first major choice in Esau's life that had a huge impact on his future.

**Esau wasn't careful where he moved. He led his family away from godly influence.**

From what we can tell, Esau had moved temporarily to the land of Seir. He enjoyed good prosperity in that place. He returned home after Jacob, his brother, returned home. Esau felt cramped with his livestock and Jacob's livestock together. He offered to move out of the Promised Land completely for the land of Seir. I am not convinced there was not enough room in the entire Promised Land for Jacob and Esau to dwell together. The Promised Land is a huge land to be too small for the livestock of two brothers. Reading between the lines I think Esau

wanted to return to the land of Seir because he was more prosperous in the land of Seir. He offered to leave town so he could have more success. He didn't value being around the covenant family. He didn't value being around other Christians that were following God.

Remember the stories he grew up with around the dinner table. He knew about the disasters in Grandpa Abraham's life when he moved to Egypt during times of famine. He knew when it came time for Abraham to find a wife for his son Isaac, Abraham said to Eliezer his servant that under no circumstances was Isaac to leave the Promised Land. Esau was Isaac's favorite son. He knew how important it was to stay in the Promised Land, but because the Promised Land was not as prosperous as he liked, he chose to move away and to move away from the only godly influence he had, his brother and his parents.

How does this apply to us today? How much value do you place on a good church home? How important is it for you to be in worship? How important is it for your kids to have Christian friends, a youth group and AWANA? If Monday morning your employer offered you a promotion that would mean more money, a larger house and great benefits, but it would move to a place where you could not find a good Christian church for the spiritual encouragement of you and your family, would you take the job? Esau did. It spelled disaster.

These two choices, whom he married and where he moved had a profound influence on his family and his future. The rest of the chapter shows the ramifications of these choices on his children, grandchildren and descendants. It

gives us a snapshot of what can happen when we walk away from God in these two areas.

These are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir. These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. (Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son; she bore Amalek to Eliphaz.) These are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: she bore to Esau Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: the chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz, Korah, Gatam, and Amalek; these are the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah. These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: the chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah; these are the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Oholibamah, Esau's wife: the chiefs Jeush, Jalam, and Korah; these are the chiefs born of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife. These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs. Genesis 36:9–19 (ESV)

Let me simplify this paragraph. Esau had five sons and 10 grandsons. That is all you need to know. The key to understanding these verses is the word “chiefs.” The word chief in Hebrew means leader of a thousand. When Esau moved out of the Promised Land, to the land of Seir — which was a place of wealth and opportunity — he and his family became incredibly prosperous. They became rich. A number of them went into politics. They became leaders of the clans and family groups of the area. Think of Esau's family like the Kennedys, the Bushes or the Clintons. Politics was family business.

What gave him a leg up in this culture? It came from marrying a woman of the culture and moving away from his godly roots. As he moved away from his family and further identified with the world around him, his influence went up.

Then the genealogical list switches direction. Instead of focusing on the success of Esau and his family, this part focuses on the assimilation of Esau and his family into the culture.

These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir in the land of Edom. The sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna. These are the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. These are the sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah; he is the Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness, as he pastured the donkeys of Zibeon his father. These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah the daughter of Anah. These are the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. These are the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. These are the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. These are the chiefs of the Horites: the chiefs Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan; these are the chiefs of the Horites, chief by chief in the land of Seir. Genesis 36:20–30 (ESV)

One of Esau's wives was named Oholibamah. She was the daughter of Anah, a chief of the area. Esau married into money and power. Even though they were an incredibly successful family in the land of Seir, because Esau set the precedent of marrying out of the faith, his children and grandchildren did the same thing. It wasn't long until Esau and his family were absorbed into the culture and they lost any remaining glimmer of true godliness in their family line. Through intermarriage and moving they were assimilated into the culture.

These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the Israelites. Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, the name of his city being Dinhabah. Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place. Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place. Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, reigned in his place, the name of his city being Avith. Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place. Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth on the Euphrates reigned in his place. Shaul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his place. Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his place, the name of his city being Pau; his wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, daughter of Mezahab. These are the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their clans and their dwelling places, by their names: the chiefs Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, Kenaz,

Teman, Mibzar, Magdiel, and Iram; these are the chiefs of Edom (that is, Esau, the father of Edom), according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession. Jacob lived in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan. Genesis 36:31–37:1 (ESV)

The point of this section is to show us the extent of the success of Esau's family line. There were 11 people in his family that become chiefs — which were rulers over thousands. As you follow the list of kings you notice they don't have the same capital city. Each king reigned from a different location. Scholars say these capital cities represent a wide and diverse kingdom.

In short, Esau's descendants were very successful. They ruled over a large area of land. To the average person it would seem like Esau made all the right choices. He married the hot girls from the local land whose fathers were rich and powerful. He gained power and influence because he married into it. His kids had even more power and more influence than he did. They were part of a royal family that controlled land and people. They had lots of kids, lots of wealth and lots of success. In the eyes of everyone around him, Esau looked like he made all the right choices.

What was it like for Jacob who married inside the covenant family? What was it like for Jacob who stayed in the Promised Land? Not much happened. Nobody was playing a leading role in politics of the local area. There wouldn't be a king until Saul, many, many years later. As far as prosperity, a famine in the Promised Land would soon send Jacob's sons to Egypt in search of food.

Which brother was living where God wanted him to live? Which brother obeyed God when it came to marriage? The one who looked least successful, not the one who looked most successful.

True success in this life doesn't mean you will be rich. It doesn't mean life will be easy. True success is not the number in your checkbook or the power and influence you hold.

True success comes from honoring God even when it doesn't seem to make sense.

Moses gave us the story of Esau's descendants and what happened when he made choices about whom to marry and where to move so we could see the trajectory his life took from that point forward. The rest of the Bible tells the rest of the story. Five hundred years after Esau left the family, when Moses was leading Israel out of Egypt back to the Promised Land, the Israelites needed to pass through Edomite territory on what was a public highway to get to the Promised Land. The Israelites offered to pay their Edomite brothers for any water they used when they passed through, in spite of the fact they were brothers. Just to make life difficult, the Edomites refused to let the Israelites through their territory (Numbers 20:14-21). How could they do this to their own brothers?

After they entered the Promised Land by another route, the Edomites became one of Israel's bitter enemies, when they should have been friends. Jacob and Esau reconciled but because of who Esau married and where Esau moved, they returned to bitter enemies. King Saul had to defend Israel from attacks from their Edomite brothers (1 Samuel 14:47). King David also had to fight against the Edomites to protect Israel. Hadad, an Edomite prince, escaped to Egypt and later became a big source of trouble for King Solomon during his reign.

The darkest moments in this bitter history happened when the Babylonians conquered the city of Jerusalem and sent the Jews into exile. In Israel's darkest hour, the Edomites stood in the hill cheering as they watched the death and destruction of their own Israelite brothers. When people ran to the Edomites, desperately looking for help to save their lives, the Edomites turned them into to the Babylonians instead of coming to their aid. This famous event is talked about multiple times in the Bible. The entire book of Obadiah in the Old Testament is about God announcing the destruction of Esau's descendants, because of their lack of compassion to their own flesh and blood brothers during the invasion by the Babylonians. Let me read you some of these verses.

Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, "Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!" O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us! Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock! Psalm 137:7–9 (ESV)

This is strong judgment. The Edomites were so uncaring toward their own brothers they were just as bad as the Babylonians that were destroying them.

This Psalm oozes the pain of deep betrayal and hatred.

Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin; do not boast in the day of distress. Obadiah 10–12 (ESV)

Imagine the descendants of your own brother cheering as they see your family murdered and your children put into chains and taken into captivity.

God was so furious about the way Esau's descendants, the Edomites, treated their own flesh and blood brothers during the invasion by the Babylonians that God wiped out the nation of Edom forever and will never allow it to be rebuilt.

"I have loved you," says the Lord. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert." If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the Lord of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country,' and 'the people with whom the Lord is angry forever.'" Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel!" Malachi 1:2-5 (ESV)

While Esau's descendants, the Edomites, were forever destroyed as a nation because of their heartless treatment of their own brothers, the Edomites as a people continued to exist in the ancient world. Just like they tried to oppress Jacob's descendants in the Old Testament, they also tried to destroy Jesus in the New Testament.

The most infamous Edomite was King Herod from the Christmas story. We all know the story of the wise men that came to Herod seeking where Jesus was born. Herod told the wise men to find Jesus and after they found him to return so Herod could worship him too. In the Christmas story, we know the truth. Herod didn't want to worship Jesus. He wanted to kill Jesus. Why did Herod hate the great descendant of Jacob to ever walk the earth? He was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau.

What an incredibly dark legacy. Brothers that were reconciled had their children turn into bitter enemies. Esau's descendants were one of the most bitter oppressors of God's people.

What set this catastrophe in motion? How did this all start? It all began with two crucial choices in Esau's life: Who he married and where he moved. Those two choices set the trajectory for his children, grandchildren and the generations that followed.

I speak to those of you who are young and dating. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of only dating a man or woman of passionate faith. Anything less can lead to a troubling legacy.

I also speak to those of us who are considering where you may live. If your boss offers you a new job on Monday that means a good promotion and more success, if you can't find a good church home, be careful. You may be walking in the footprints of Esau and destroying your family and future.



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