



Families, Deception, and Drama
Part 3 – The cost of Deceit
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My name is Lane McCanless. The last time I spoke was back in June and Ted gave me the message of sharing the story of what God is doing in your life and the power of a testimony. So, it was a very uplifting message, and I felt blessed to preach it. I thought maybe this message will be the same, So, I went to September 21 and saw my name, and see Families, Deception, and Drama and I thought *wow Ted, thank you so much, I appreciate you setting me up for that.*

Today we are going to be continuing in our series of Family, Deception, and Drama. If you've been with us these last few weeks, you're probably starting to realize these are not just stories from thousands of years ago. Chances are you're saying, *I know a family like that.* Or maybe you're saying, *That's my family.*

The truth is... Ted talked about Adam and Eve, and we see how all of a sudden the game can lead to guilt and shame being spun out into our world. And because they weren't willing to deal with that, it naturally gets passed onto their children.

In the story of Cain and Abel, we see vengeance and violence enter into the world. As Scotty Mac talked about last week, the sins of the father get passed down from generation to generation to generation. Abraham and Sarah not trusting in God's provision. Ver quickly, you can start to see how there is generational disfunction running ramped, there is broken trust, broken hearts, and broken families everywhere.

Today we are going to talk about maybe one of the most infamous family rivalries, one of the most infamous sibling rivalries in all of scripture. We're going to be looking at the story of Jacob and Esau. They were twin brothers, same womb, but completely different desires. And the tension we are going to be wrestling with this morning is this is not just birth rights and blessings; this is actually a lesson on impulsiveness, a lesson on entitlement. This is a lesson in what happens whenever you don't trust God's timing, and you don't trust God's word. When you manipulate. When you deceive.

The reason we are calling this particular message *The Cost of Deceit*, is because when we don't trust God's timing, what we do is we manipulate. We pretend, we take on things that we are not supposed to take on. We cover up. And the reality is that you might still get what you want in that process, but I don't think any of us quite understand what it's going to cost us along the way.

With a message as weighty as this, I don't typically offer up disclaimers, but I think it's necessary because whenever we see this nasty word of *deceit*, a lot of us go, *I'm so glad that doesn't apply to me. I'm glad I don't struggle with that. But...* Maybe today it would help to look at it like this that deceit doesn't always look like evil. Sometimes it just looks like control. Sometimes it looks like controlling something that you were absolutely supposed to trust God with. Maybe for some, it pretending to be someone you're not to get affirmation that you don't deserve. Or maybe for some of us in this room, it's even more subtle than that. Maybe you're the person that's cutting corners at work because nobody will notice. Maybe you're the one that's hiding credit card debt from your spouse because you don't want to let them know you have a problem. Or maybe you've actually deceived yourself and you're saying, *It's not an addiction. I can stop anytime I want.*

The thing about deceit is it's not always obvious, it's not always on the nose, but it is always costly. It will always cost us something. Whenever I offer up a disclaimer like that, what I want you to know is that you are in familiar territory. Picture the best family that you can right now. They have generational disfunction. They have family drama. And chances are they probably even struggle with deceit in one way or another. You say, *Lane, how are you so sure?* Well, Jeremiah tells us this. ***The heart is deceitful, above all things and beyond cure who can understand it.***

I'll never forget this story from my hometown. I was heading into my freshman year of high school and there were twin brothers about three years older. They were starting their dual credit classes. They were identical twins. One was naturally good at math and science, and the other was naturally good at reading and writing. They had the brainy idea of what if we just go to each other's best class twice, once pretending to be me and once pretending to be you, and it will all go fine, and no one will figure it out. So, that's what they did. And to their credit it worked really well. Straight A's nobody expected a thing. They were thriving in math and science and they were thriving in English and writing. Until one day, one of the brothers forgot and he accidentally wrote his real name for both class sessions. It worked really well until it didn't. and that's what deceit does, right? It works really well until it doesn't. If I'm going to give you a peek behind the

curtain, I think that deception, unfortunately, or control is probably the sin that I struggle with from time to time, if I'm not careful and I don't keep it in check. I think I come by that naturally, after what we are going to look at today when we look at Jacob and Esau because theirs was rooted in sibling rivalry, competition, and favoritism.

Just by a show of hands, if you are the favorite child, would you raise your hand? Look at all those proud hands. Did you see how quickly... You're like, *that's me, that's me*. Now raise your hand if you were not the favorite child growing up. I'm right there with you. I was not the favorite child growing up. You say, "Lane, how do you know that you weren't the favorite child?" Easy, two words Middle child. I've come to grips with that reality, but I called it my second nature, but it was actually my sin nature because I was a middle child, I got really good at being whoever I needed to be to get attention, to get accolades, to get praise to make sure that I didn't get lost in translation. While it might have been cute when I was younger, sin does what it always does, and it followed me into my college years. At that point, it had spun out of in my junior year. I found myself looking in from the outside. People thought I had it figured out, I had friends, I had popularity, I had opportunities, but it was the most miserable I had ever been.

Why? Because I had deceived everybody around me. Nobody actually loved me for the version of me that I actually was but that's not even the scariest part. The scariest part is that I looked at myself in the mirror and realized that I had actually deceived myself. I had gotten so good at pretending that I forgot I was pretending.

Maybe that's where you're at this morning. If you have your bibles or your devices, we are going to be in Genesis 25. It's important to have a quick history recap. In Genesis 15, we roll up on Rebekah and Isaac. Isaac is the son of Abraham. Abraham was the guy that was given the blessing of all blessings. He was told that he would be a father of many nations. He was told that he would inherit this land and fill it with God's people. Ultimately, he was told that hope would come through his lineage, alluding to the Messiah.

And now, he's passed that to Isaac and Isaac is in his old age. In fact, scripture says his eyesight was failing and he knew he was nearing the end. So, it's time for him to pass that blessing along to his son. Everything is going according to plan, but Rebekah gets pregnant with twins. This is not your average pregnancy.

In Verse 22, it says ²² ***the children struggled within her***. they get so crazy that at one point she looks up toward heaven and goes, "What is going on in my womb right now." ***God's responds with this prophetic word – The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in***

your womb and two peoples from within you shall be divided. One shall be stronger than the other and the older shall serve the younger.

Now that obviously, in that culture and that age, would have been something that took them by surprise. That was counter intuitive to everything they knew. What do you mean that the older will serve the younger? The birthright, the blessing, all of that, but sure enough, Esau is the first born and he comes out as hurray, according to scripture. And then literally grasping onto his brother's heel, is Jacob. Jacob means the deceiver, the manipulator, the supplanter, I think some of you just figured out what your name means for the first time. I'm so sorry about that.

But Jacob means the deceiver, the manipulator. Bends things to get his way. And from the beginning, they are in competition mode. Esau is an outdoorsman, works with his hands, a hunter, a fisher, all of this stuff and dad couldn't be prouder. He's dad's favorite. Jacob, on the other hand, is a momma's boy. He stays home with her and helps with the cooking and the cleaning and the chores. And just like that, you have twin brothers that couldn't be any more opposite. What's going to happen is, in our time today, we are going to look at what happens when you try to take things into your own hands and don't actually let God do what he intends to do. We are going to be able to look at first, the life of Esau, and then the life of Jacob. Hopefully we'll learn some lessons from them, so we don't have to learn them for ourselves.

Let's look at the life of Esau first. *Don't trade what's eternal for what's immediate.* Something eternal that's kind of hanging in the midst, don't trade it. Especially for something that won't fulfill.

Let's look at what he does in Genesis 25. ***Once, when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field and he was exhausted. Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew from I am exhausted. Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now. Esau said, "I'm about to die, what good is my birthright to me anyway. Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So, he swore to him and sold his birthright to his brother, Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate it and drank it and rose and went on his way. Thus, Esau despised his birthright.***

Picture that Esau out for a hunt, stumbles in depleted, exhausted, empty, and Jacob is a schemer. He's a manipulator so he hits him with Hey, do you want some stew? They probably have this brotherly banter back and forth, "Yeah, what's it going to cost me?" and he hit him with "Your birthright. That is a bad trade. I don't know if you guys know

that or not. That's a terrible trade. Inheritance, the family name, leadership, blessing, land, legacy. Everything that Father Abraham was going to pass down to his son and we are going to give that up? And, yes, Esau does in fact trade something eternal for something of utmost importance for something immediate.

If you are anything like me, I even remember hearing this story in Sunday school in our children's church growing up. Maybe you're hearing it today, *Going, Yeah, that's a stupid trade. I know I wouldn't do that*

But, church, the reality is that you and I trade legacy for lentils all the time. We do it all the time. We give up peace for moments of counterfeit control, thinking that will make us feel secure. We give up purity for one-night stands. Infatuation, lustful desires, or respond to a DM that we knew better. We give up our patience for a bad decision that then leads to more bad decisions.

And then we wonder why we feel empty. It's because we got full on something that could never satisfy. We took something that God meant to be holy and treated it as common. God has it on a silver platter. This is for you. And he says no, it's no big deal. He deceives himself into thinking that it's not worth value.

The thing that I'm trying to write on my heart that I would encourage any young adult or young professionals in the room to also write on their heart is that *instant gratification is almost always long-term result*. That thing that's running around in your mind seems like a good idea right now in this moment, if you're not careful, it will offer a lifetime of regret.

So, if you are anything like me, as I'm studying this and preparing for the past month and a half, I'm on the edge of my seat of like how do I make sure I don't pull an Esau? How do I make sure I don't do this? How do I avoid it? I think I came to these two conclusions.

1) we've got to get good at choosing what is good over what feels good. And the practical way I've been able to go about that is that. 2) have surrounded myself with good brothers in Christ who know everything about me. everything they could possibly know about me.

I do that because I want them to be able to offer up a gut check to me when they need to. *Lane, Is that actually good for you or does that just feel good in the moments*. It's been super helpful for me.

Next, I think we have to define our values before our decisions define us. Because if we are not careful, what's happening here is that Esau just doesn't value the thing that he has in his hands.

I brought a picture of my son with me because this is actually our front door. It's the very first thing you see when you walk in our house. It says, *McCanless Core Values* on it. Just quick hitters it's like Characters over comfort, gratitude over greed, kindness over keeping score, service over selfishness. These things that we want to be written on Shep and Banner's heart as they grow up in our house. And also, mine and Aspen's. We do that because when we are about to have our Esau moment of stumbling in depleted, exhausted, worn out, ready to make a bad decision, we can now throw it against this as a filter and say, actually, does this contribute to who we are? What we're doing where we're going, why we're going there, and how we're going to get there. No? Okay, then I'm going to avoid making that decision like Esau. And while this moment might feel personal for Esau or like *well that really is bad on him, he just messed up a lot of things up for him*. No, it affected his entire lineage. And I think we can clearly see that in Matthew 1 whenever we are reading the genealogy of Jesus.

As we see Abraham had Isaac, Isaac he had Jacob. That was supposed to say: Abraham had Isaac, Isaac he had Esau. But instead of his name being tied to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, he decided to become a poster child for instant gratification. Let that settle in for just a moments.

Because while Jacob's name gets to ring out through all of eternity, Israel as God's chosen people, Esau is only referenced one or two other times in scripture and when he is, it's in this demeanor. See to it that one is like Esau who sold his birthright for a single meal.

The danger, Church, is that we get full on things that don't matter. We get in the habit of deceiving ourselves into treating something as common when God actually wants us to treat it and revere it as holy. In a room this size, there is a good chance that some of the families that are fractured in this room, some of the family drama that's happening in this room today is because someone in your family decided that they wanted to trade something that was eternal for something immediate.

Maybe you're the child that had to grow up in a broken family because someone chose an affair. Maybe it was the parent who walked out when the going got tough. Maybe someone in your family made a really poor financial decision that really set you guys back. When we let our appetites lead, when we choose what feels good in the moment,

When we pull an Esau, we're not just hurting ourselves. We are wreaking havoc on those we care about the most.

Okay, so, we've talked about Esau's deceit being deceiving himself into giving up something that actually mattered but now let's switch gears to talk about his brother, Jacob, who was a little more strategic, a little more on the nose in the way he deceived people. *Deceit can get you what you want, but it might cost you what you need.*

I think something I didn't realize until I was truly studying this text is that he didn't really come up with this plan on his own. Yes, he deceived his brother outright into giving up his birthright, but now that he's deceived his brother, he kind of has to double down on that sin, right? He starts to let it mull over in his brain... Wait... *Now I've got to fool Dad.* How am I going to fool dad? So, he rallies the troops because he feels like he's losing control. All of the sudden, Rebekah gets brought into things. Rebekah has a favorite child and it's Jacob. She says, "Don't worry. Your father is in old age. He has bad eyesight. Go get your brother's clothes. Go get some goat skin and put it on. We can do this. We can pull this off"

Don't we do that too? When we start to lose control and we start to rally the family. The spouse and you get in a fight. She calls her mom; I call my mom. Now we are at war with each other, inviting deceit, deception, and drama into the people that we love the most.

Or maybe it's a sibling rivalry. I have to call my brother because we have to team up on my sister or we have to call my sister so that she's on my side. He said/she said. With people that we actually care about. With people that we actually value.

Jacob was being disciplined in deception by his own mother. And we do that all the time.

Let's see how that works out for them in Genesis 27. ***So he went to his father. He said, "My father, here I am. He said, "Who are you, my son? And Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau." Then Isaac said Jacob, Please come near that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not. So, Jacob went near to Isaac, his father who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he did not recognize him because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands. So, he blessed him. He said, "Are you really my son, Esau?" And he answered, "I am."***

Jacob literally puts on his brother's clothes, uses his brother's name, takes on his brother's identity. You might say, "What's the problem with that other than the deception there?" There's even a bigger problem and it's the fact that God had already promised Jacob this blessing. Don't forget the word he spoke over him earlier in Genesis 25. The Older will serve the younger. God had already made that promise, but Jacob didn't think that God's plan could possibly work. He didn't trust in his timing.

Rebekah didn't trust that it would come to fruition so instead of walking by faith, they chose to walk by manipulation. They had literally convinced themselves that God's plan could not possibly be sovereign enough unless they helped I along.

God needs me because it's not moving along fast enough. God needs me because this timeline doesn't align with my timeline. God needs me because his strategy was just a little bit off from what I'm actually seeking out to do.

What happens here is God is trying to give him something, give him a blessing, but look at his posture... grab. Literally, just like he grasped his brother's foot, he's trying to grab something God is trying to give. And whenever you do that, what happens is something that's supposed to feel like a blessing feels like a burden. Because now he's living under the weight of a stolen blessing, rather than the way God actually intended for it to play out.

So, Jacob gets the blessing, the plan works. But here's the problem. Look at what it cost him. Genesis 27 – ***Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him. And Esau said to himself – the days of mourning for my father are approaching then I will kill my brother Jacob.*** That's the cost of deception. His brother hated him. The cost is that deceit actually promises unity, but it divides. It promises that things are going to work out, but it divides. It promises that no one will know, but it divides. It promises that you'll be fine until you're not. It will divide time and time again. It will fracture trust. It will tear apart families and it will wound your heart and so many others in the process.

So, you have to ask yourself, what did Jacob actually gain here? A blessing? Maybe. But what did it cost him? It cost him his relationship with his brother. It cost him his relationship with his father. It cost him his relationship with his mother. It cost him his place in the family for decades. It cost him his place... period, as he had to flee. It cost him his home, his identity, and peace and so much more. Was it really worth it? Was it worth it to go after the right thing in your timing, in your way?

I'm no stranger to pulling a Jacob. I also tend to panic whenever control fades, whenever I start losing control, I freak out. I don't want to spend too much time on this, but I brought a picture with me. 2025, transparently, has been a really tough year in the Mccanless household. We started it off like we start off every year. My wife and I go to a coffee shop in January, and we have what's called McCanless family planning day. I don't know if anyone else does this but we write out all the things that we want to accomplish throughout the year. What are the trips we want to take? What do we want to do with shepherd? What do we want to do with Banner. We start to put together our plans, our timelines, our vacation, our healthy goals, our spiritual goals, our financial goals.

I left that meeting, that date with my wife take, full. It was awesome because we had our plans, our timeline, our ways. And yes it was rooted in Proverbs 16: 9 – you can make your own plans, but the Lord determines your steps. but inside, it was these are my plans. And this is what's going to happen.

I'll never forget because the next morning I wake up on January 19 and my son having one of what would be five seizures, a loss of consciousness, an ambulance ride to the pediatric ICU in Springfield, EEG, MRI, Hooked up to more wires and tubes than I ever care to see on my son ever again. I'll never forget, as I'm frantically following the ambulance that my wife and my son are in. I just gazed down at my hands and I can just see my white knuckle grip on the steering wheel. Now, given, I was doing what any dad would have done the moment. I get that. But for me, this image was about so much more than just this trip to the hospital. This was my posture towards everything in life. My way, my plans, my timing, I did it all through this mirage that that gave me peace? That that was what God actually had for me, but it wasn't until that moment and a lot of tears later and, thankfully, the healing of our son that ultimately I realized that God did not want my posture to be gripping a steering wheel. He wanted my open-handed surrender. He didn't want me to go after the right thing the wrong way anymore.

Jacob spent years carrying around a blessing, trying to control God's plan, trying to control God's timeline. He lived under this weight of pretending to be someone he was not. Jacob had to learn this lesson the hard way and I hope we learn it as well. That is that identity *is not something you can steal. It's something you have to receive. It's something only the King of kings and Lord of Lords could give to you.*

So, obviously we've talked about control, but church, hear me this morning. I think if you get nothing else, I just want you to understand you also don't have to pretend. You don't have to live under this guise of being someone that you're not.

To the husband and wife that walked in here this morning, and you walked in with smiles on your face, but your marriage is actually falling apart, you don't have to pretend. You can say, "We're struggling, we need marriage 911, we need help."

To the Mom and dad who walked in drowning in bills and diapers and in the trenches and you're smiling like life is great. You don't have to pretend. You don't have to hold up this image that you are trying to maintain for your family.

To the mom who whenever you were greeted by a welcome team member and you said, "I'm great, but you are actually grieving inside, you don't have to say your great. To the individual who feels like they are lost in translation and that no one knows that they are even here, you don't have to keep pretending that everything is okay. You can be honest. You can stop pretending. Because if you look at the life of Jacob, he spent years pretending to be something wasn't, wearing Esau's clothes, speaking with Esau's name, and living under the weight of a stolen blessing.

But I love how this story ends because years later, he has the opportunity to see his brother, Esau, again. And this is going to be his first interaction with his brother since their falling out. And, on the night before he sees Esau, it's one of the best stories in all of scripture, Jacob literally wrestles with God. He has a wrestling match with God. And in the middle of that wrestling match, God poses a question. He says, "What's your name?" What an odd question to ask in the middle of a wrestling match. But not for Jacob because whenever Jacob heard that question, it penetrated. It hit deep. Because the last time he was asked that, it was by his father, and he lied. He said, "I'm Esau."

But this time, when he is asked the question, he doesn't lie, he doesn't scheme, he doesn't cover up, he doesn't pretend, he doesn't try to run away. He just does this: "I'm Jacob." In other words, he says I'm a manipulator, I'm a deceiver. I'm a coward. I'm a fake. I'm tired. I'm lonely. I want my family back. And I think that's when God goes, "That's the moment I was waiting for because now we can get to work. You're willing to be honest.

I know from me this morning and probably for you, that's the point we need to get to. "I'm Lane. I'm a deceiver, I'm a manipulator. I'm anxious, God. I'm lonely, I'm tired, I'm stressed out. I'm Lane."

God says, "Okay, Lane, now we can get to work because your posture is the fact that you're not trying too try hard for God. You realize that he can work with your

brokenness. He can work in the midst of your shame. He can work with your surrender. You just need to receive that identity from him this morning.

As we're wrapping up, I feel the need to just say, with a message as weighty as this, a lot of time we go, *I wish so and so were here to hear this because they really need it.*

I hate to admit it to you but after the very first week of Ted's message, I texted one of my friends and I go, "I wish that he could have heard this message. As I was prepping for this one, I just felt the holy spirit nudge me and go, "Lane, this one is actually for you. You need this one. I love that because it stepped on my toes a little bit and maybe it will for you as well in the best kind of way because you can deceive others, you can deceive your self, but you can't deceive God. And honestly, you don't need to.

But a lot of us are still pulling a Jacob and trying to earn something that God want's to give us. You're waiting for a blessing from someone else. If not blessing... I don't know what that looks like in your life or your family drama. Maybe that blessing you're looking for is maybe from a family member or a sibling or a mom or dad that never said I love you, I'm proud of you. Maybe you're waiting for an I'm sorry. And if I could gently tell you something, you might never get that from that family member. We may never get that, I'm sorry. But you are chosen, you are loved, you are enough. Why? Not because mom or dad did or didn't say it, but because your father in heaven did. Because your father in heaven loves you so much.

We can rest in the fact today that Philippians 2 literally tells us that Jesus gave up his rights. He had rights. He could have stayed at the right hand of God, he could have said, "I don't want to get involved in the midst of this mess with this brokenness." But Philippians 2 says, he did not think of his equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges and took on the position of servant. So much so that he carried and died on a criminals cross so that you and I could have the blessings of all blessings of eternal life. May we receive that today.

God, you are gracious and loving and holy and true. We just want to give you glory and honor and praise this morning. In a series like this that is weighty because there are stories in here I do not know, but I know there are families that feel like they are too far gone or that the generational disfunction is too out of control. Thank you for a story and a reminder like in the story of Jacob and Esau. That we don't have to pretend anymore,

that we don't have to cover up, that we don't have to manipulate or deceive because ultimately, you desire to heal and restore and redeem.

May we receive that this morning. We love you, Lord and it's in your name we pray.
amen.