

09.02 Jacob Steals the Birthright (Genesis 25:29–34; Romans 9:10–13)

✓ “Check” it out: opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher, not the student. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and/or visual aids found at the end of this lesson including circle graphs. Please give credit to sources of pictures.
- Check also “Activities” and “Handwork” below for additional suggested items.
- Dried lentils found near dried beans in a grocery store
- (optional) Red lentil stew (Progresso® has a canned lentil soup); small bowls and spoons for tasting the stew
- (optional) *Herein Is Love Commentary Series: Genesis, A Commentary for Children*, by Nancy Ganz, Shepherd Press, 2002. Thoughts or quotations borrowed from her are acknowledged as (*Ganz*). In this story I think Mrs. Ganz attributes more faith to young Jacob than is warranted.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: (Print on card stock or cut out the words and glue to card stock.)

- *birthright*: the privileges given to the firstborn son that included twice as much inheritance as the other children. [See circle graphs at the end of this lesson.] Also included in the birthright was the headship of the family upon the death of the father. Headship included making family decisions and leading the family in worship. In addition, the family of Abraham’s descendants had been promised the land of Canaan, innumerable descendants, and blessing to all nations in ✓Jesus Christ (Genesis 22:18).
- *lentils*: a kind of flat bean that cooks in about 30 minutes. The lentil variety in our story was red in color.

Scripture: (ESV)

Genesis 25:29 Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. 30 And Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!” (Therefore his name was called Edom.) 31 Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright now.” 32 Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” 33 Jacob said, “Swear to me now.” So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. 34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Romans 9:10 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, 11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— 12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” 13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

Introduction/Review:

Who were the two sons of Isaac and Rebekah? [Esau and Jacob.] Who was the older son? [Esau.] Who, then, was the younger son? [Jacob.] What did the names of these two sons mean? [Esau: hairy or rough; Jacob: heelgrabber/deceiver.]

Just by looking at them, one would be able to tell which son was a man’s man—the one who was hairy and liked to hunt in the field. He was his father, Isaac’s, favorite. He was Esau.

Jacob seemed an unlikely choice to be head of the family. After all, he was younger; he hung around the house, cooking; and he was a mama’s favorite, but he was still manly.

“It was not just the parents who made a distinction between the two boys. God Himself made a separation between them—and that was the most important difference between the twin brothers. Even before they were born, God had chosen one, but not the other. The LORD said, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated’ (Romans 9:13).

(*Loved* equals chosen; *hated* equals rejected.) Why? Why do you think God loved one twin but hated the other? Was it because one was good and the other was bad? Was it because one had faith and the other did not? No, for the Bible says that before the boys were born, before they had done anything good or bad, God had already chosen Jacob. . . . God does not choose anyone because of his goodness, because ‘there is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God’ (Romans 3:10, 11). If God’s choice depended on our goodness, no one would be loved and no one would be saved by Him. Thankfully, God’s plan of salvation does not depend upon any person; it depends upon God’s grace alone, which no one deserves. God’s eternal salvation stands not by our works, but by God’s grace. ‘It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and even this is not from yourselves; it is the gift of God’ (Ephesians 2:8) . . .” [Ganz].

God sees not as man sees. He decides how things will go. What did He tell Rebekah even before these twins were born? [“The elder shall serve the younger.”] The younger did eventually have a larger and stronger nation. Jacob’s nation, Israel, became greater than Esau’s nation, Edom, and Israel ruled over Edom. But that’s getting way ahead of our story.

Story:

How many of you have told Mom, “I’m starving!” You felt as if you would die if you didn’t get some food—quick!

That must be how Esau felt—only worse—one day when he had been hunting and had gone without food all day. He wailed, “I’m faint; I’m weak; I’m at the point to die!” (Genesis 25:30, 32).

Now, do you suppose Esau might have found some food to eat before he would actually die? Of course. But he thought his need was an immediate, “right-now” emergency.

Well, wouldn’t you know, just at that time, Jacob was cooking lentil soup. Oh, it smelled good! Oh, it looked good—all red, like chili. The smell and appearance were more than Esau could bear!

“Feed me, please, with ‘that red, that red!’” begged Esau, “for I am exhausted and faint.”

Remember how Esau got his name because it meant “hairy” and he was hairy? Well, now he’s about to get another name, a name that means “red” because he asked for the red stew. That name is Edom, the name by which his children will be known—*Edomites*, not *Esauites*. (Esau had already been known to be red because of his color at his birth, but this is the first naming of him as *Red* in Genesis.)

The transaction

Back to our story. Esau asked Jacob to give him Jacob’s red stew, but Jacob wasn’t going to *give* Esau anything. No. Instead he would sell it. How much would Esau have to pay for immediate satisfaction?

“Hmm,” said Jacob. “Are you hungry enough to pay me by giving me your birthright, Esau?”

Just a minute, kids. Did Jacob say birthright? What was that? [His right to twice the inheritance of the other sons; the headship over the family.] That’s a huge price for a bowl of stew. That means Esau would lose one-third of the inheritance; he’d lose all that land. In addition, because he was Abraham’s grandson, he would lose out on having children as numerous as the sand. Most important, although he didn’t know it then, he’d lose out on becoming the great, great, great . . . grandfather of Jesus Christ. Surely this was too high a price to pay for some stew!

But Esau said, “I’m about to die!” Was he really? No. “What profit shall this birthright do to me? ✓You can have it, Jacob.”

✓Jacob questioned, “Are you sure?”

“Yes, I’m sure.”

“Promise me,” said Jacob.

“I swear to you that you may have my birthright. Now give me some stew!”

Then Jacob did give Esau bread and stew of lentils. Esau ate and drank and went his way and thought nothing of his birthright. The Bible says he “despised his birthright” (v.34).

The evaluation

The New Testament book of Hebrews (12:16, 17) uses Esau as a bad example and warns us not to think more of things we want and like more than to think about lasting and godly things. Not that we are never to eat or never to do desirable things, but when it comes to a choice, our over-all desires are to be what God wants.

For example, when I was in high school, I used to love to play a certain game. I played that game every chance I had until I was spending a lot of time at it. One day I thought, “You like that game more than you love God. You spend more time on that game every day than you do having devotions—when you read the Bible and pray.” I knew I had to stop playing that game because I thought more of it than I did of spiritual things.

Was it wrong to play that game? [No.] But when it took the place of spiritual love, it was wrong.

Was it wrong for Esau to eat stew? No. But he was wrong because he thought more of getting immediate satisfaction than he did about things that last and last.

Lessons from this lesson:

- “Don’t sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate.”
- “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth: (Colossians 3:2).

Activities:

- Play dough: dish; bow and arrow, lentils
- Sing the last four stanzas of “Abraham” found in Lesson 08.01 or on the Songs page at teachingthebibletokids.org.
- Sing stanzas 1–4 of “Isaac” found in Lesson 19.01 or on the Songs page at teachingthebibletokids.org.
- Warm up some lentil stew and let the students eat it.
- Find pictures to sort into good, better, best categories.
- Snack: Sugar cookies: cut 4-5” circles out of cookie dough using a bowl or plastic container; cut circles in half; put red sprinkles (and, perhaps, chocolate sprinkles to resemble lentils) on the half circles to look like red soup in a bowl or frost with red icing after baking.
- Review questions: (Game: If using teams, provide a small transparent glass or bowl into which lentils are placed for each correct answer.)
 1. Name the older son of Jacob and Rebekah. [Esau.]
 2. What did Jacob’s name mean? [Heel-grabber; deceiver.]
 3. Who was Rebekah’s favorite son? [Jacob.]
 4. Describe the appearance of Esau and Jacob. [Esau: red and hairy; Jacob: smooth.]
 5. Tell one privilege of the birthright. [Double portion of the inheritance; headship of the family; in Abraham’s family, inheriting the blessings of land and descendants.]
 6. What was the color of Jacob’s lentil stew? [Red/]
 7. Another name for Esau is Edom. What does *Edom* mean? [Red.]
 8. What is the name of Esau’s descendants? [Edomites.]
 9. What did Esau think of the birthright? [He despised it.]
 10. What is one spiritual lesson to take away from this story? [Treasure spiritual things more than physical.]

Memory Verse[s]:

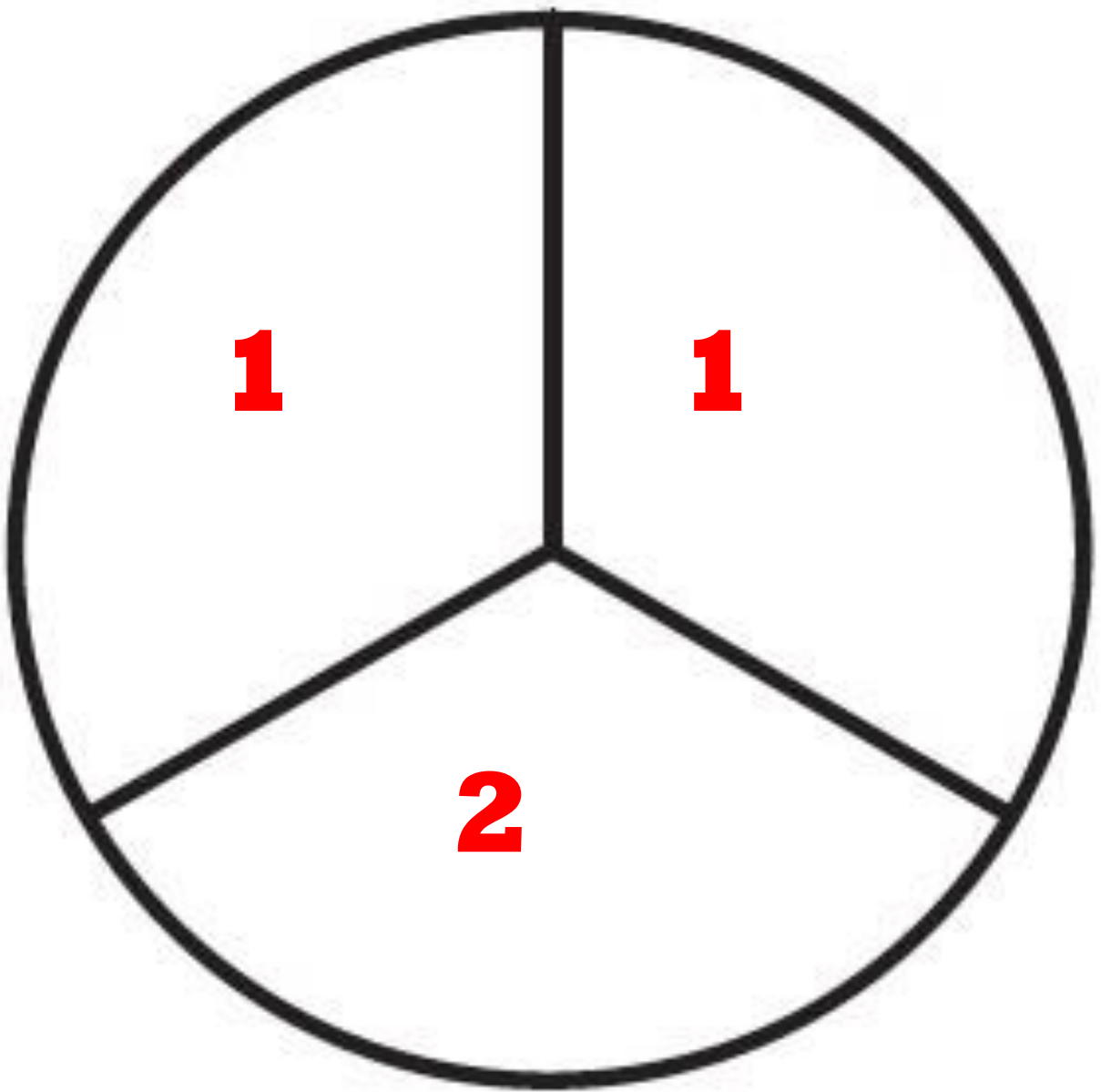
- Colossians 3:2—“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

Handwork:

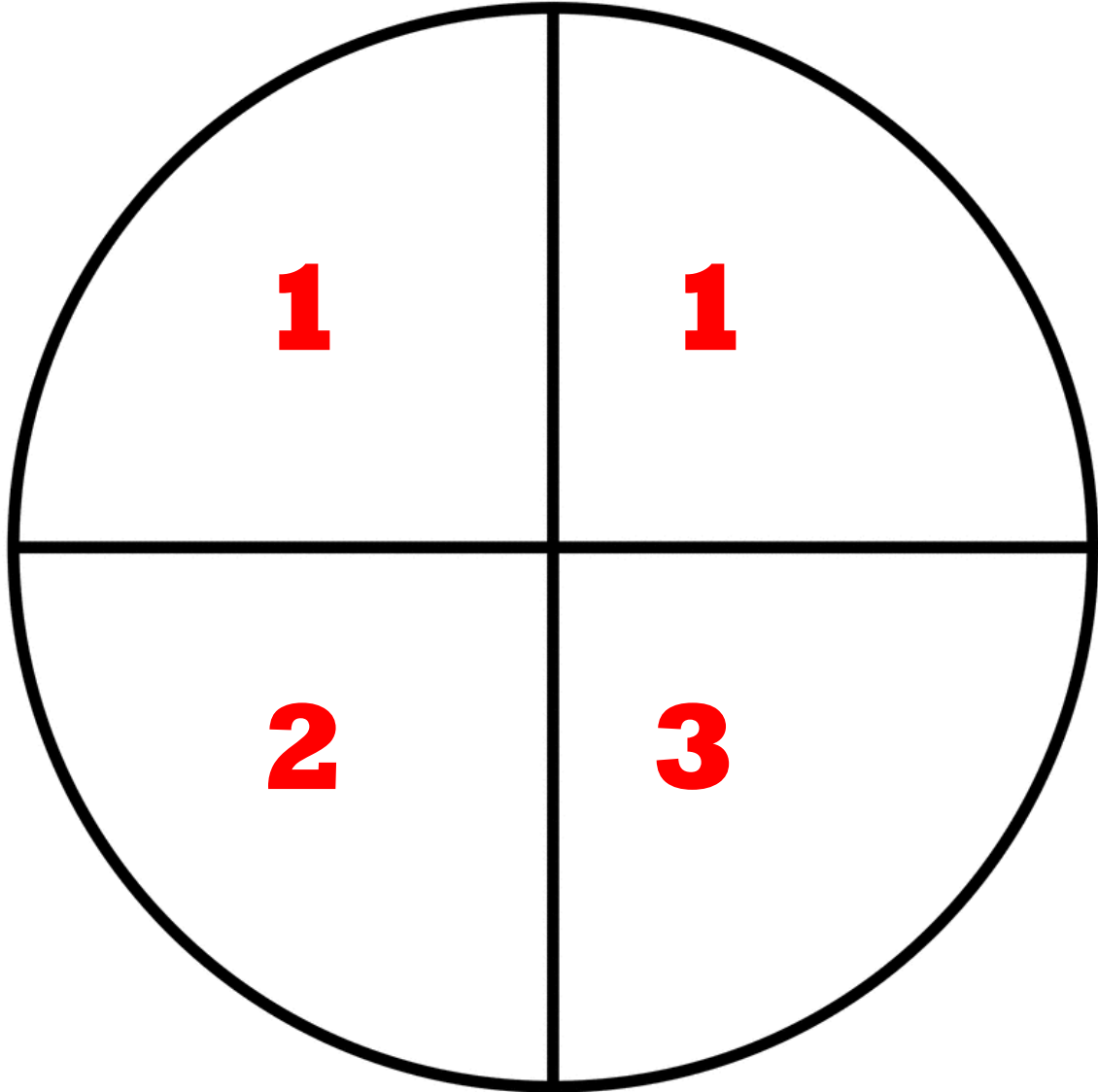
- “What Lasts?” (See page and instructions below.)
- Make a lentil mosaic of different-colored lentils [Ganz].

birthright

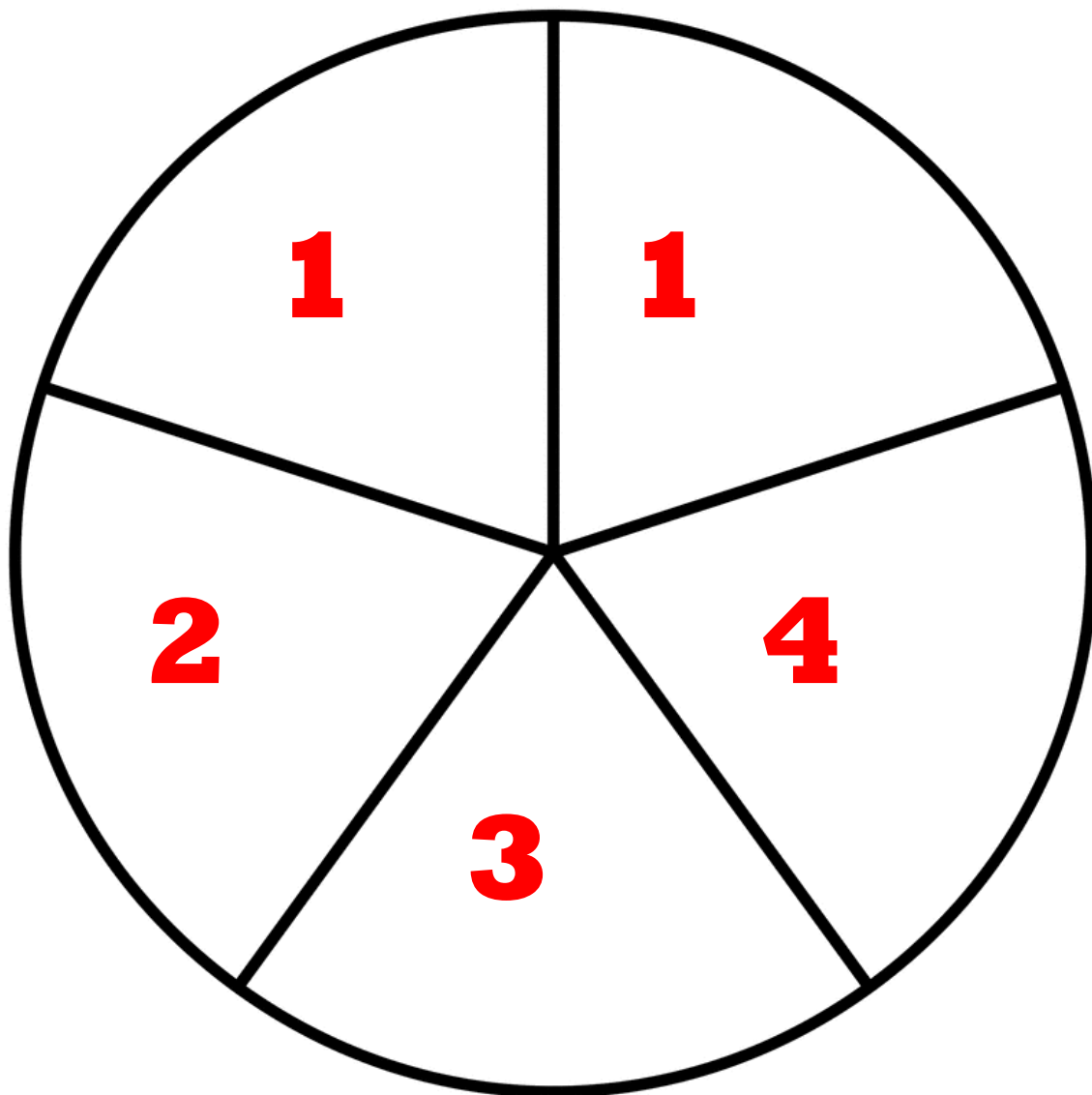
lentils



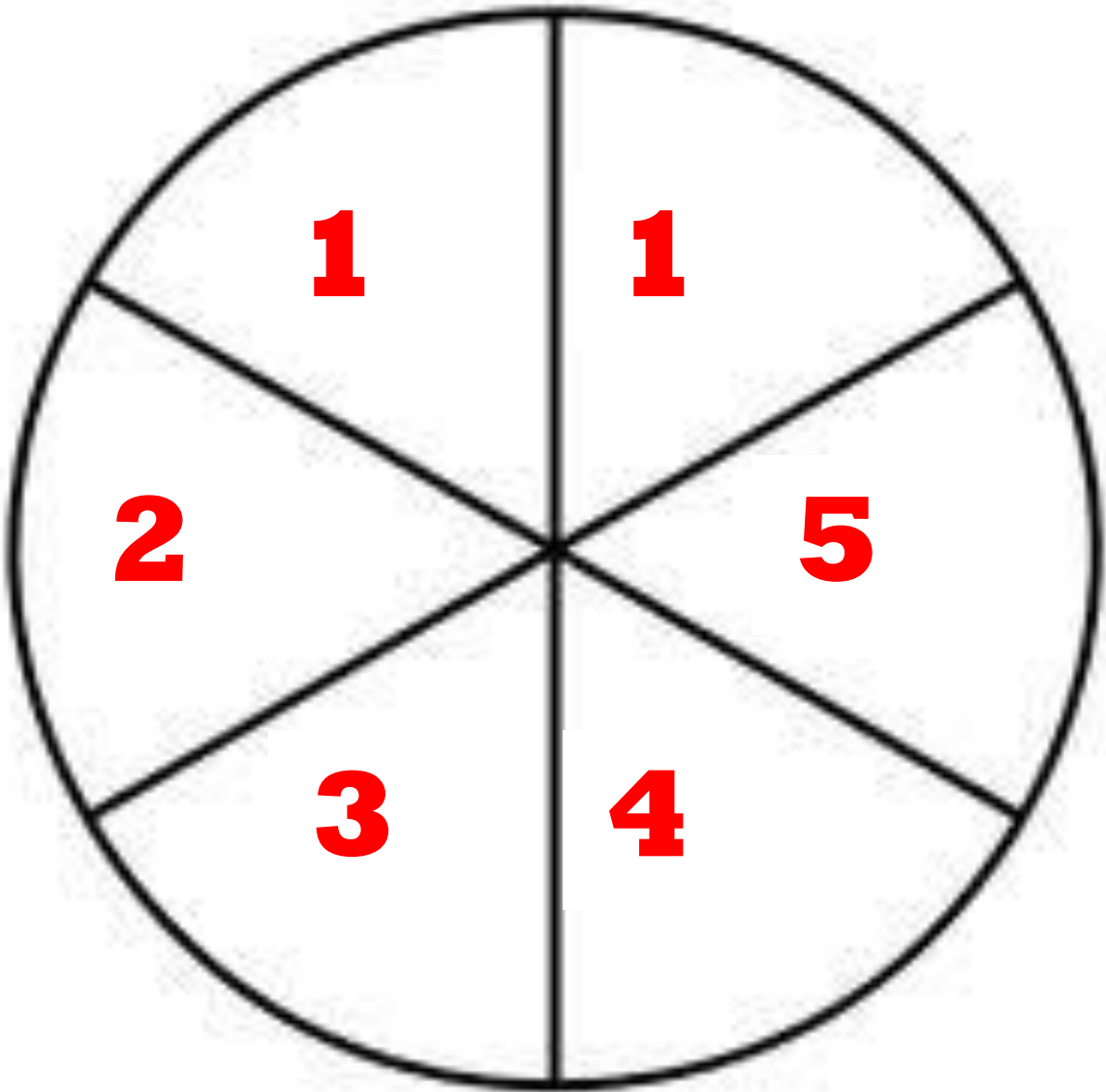
Two Children



Three Children



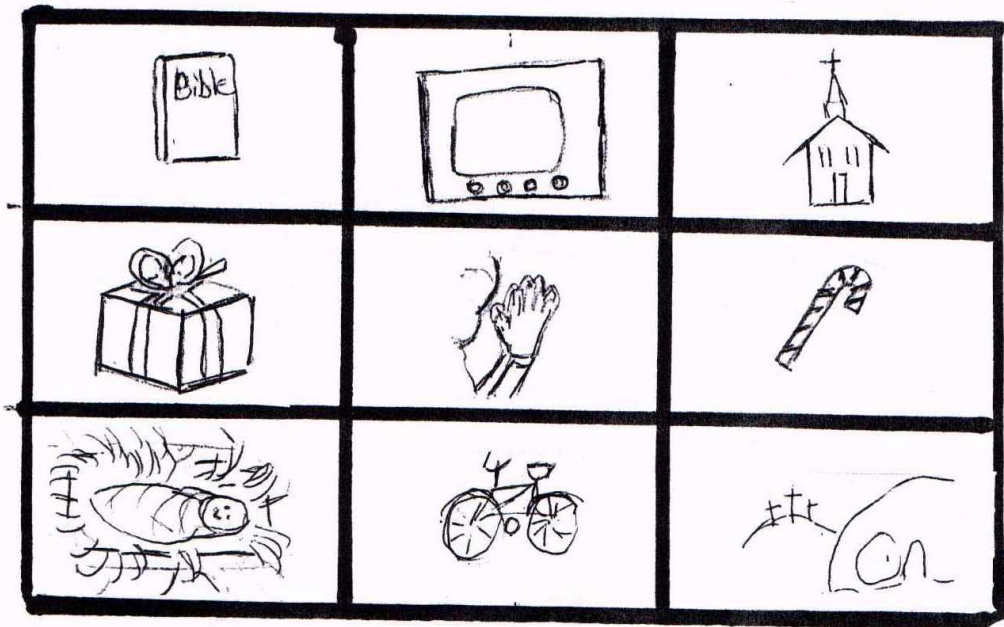
Four Children



Five Children

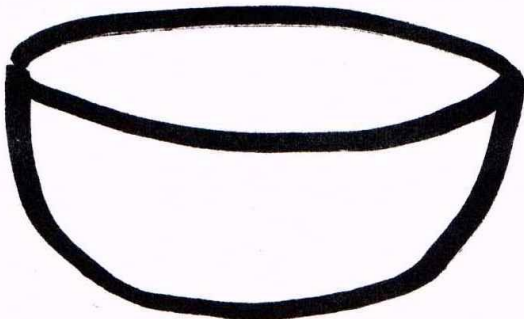
What Lasts?

Cut out the pictures. If the picture is of something that doesn't last in comparison to spiritual things, place/glue it in the bowl of soup. If it is a thing that is of eternal value, place/glue the picture on the heavenly city.

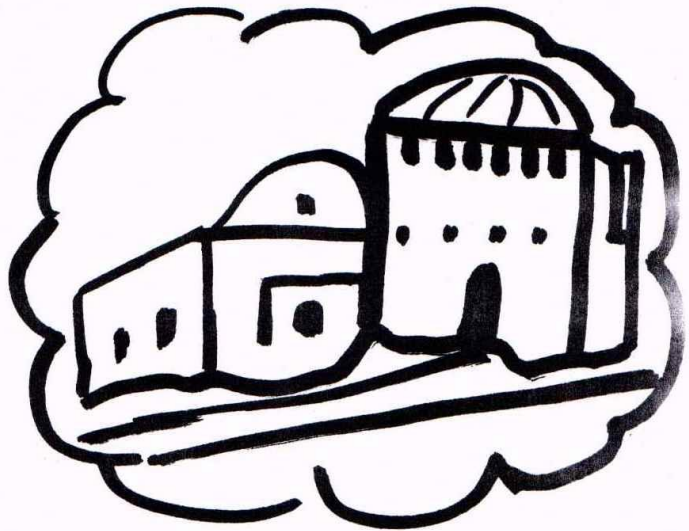


Esau cared about passing things.

Jacob cared about lasting things.



Has short value



Has eternal value

