

CONNECTED

WEEK TWO: #NOFILTER

CONNECT

Do you know who you really are? Who do others think you are? What do they say about you, especially online? Who do I want to be? Who I want others to think I am. When we share, are we sharing the real us? These are questions many of us are asking, and many more are forced into asking themselves because of the mixed messages they hear from what people say about them online. This week we'll look at what happens when we hide ourselves and think about what could happen if we lived with #NoFilter.

- What is the first Halloween costume you remember or character you remember dressing up as?
- If you could be someone else online for one day, who would you be?
- Have you ever been mistaken for someone else and played along as if you were them? If so, briefly share that experience

DISCOVER

Read Genesis 27:1-4, 18-38

¹One day when Isaac was old and turning blind, he called for Esau, his older son, and said, "My son." "Yes, Father?" Esau replied. ²"I am an old man now," Isaac said, "and I don't know when I may die. ³Take your bow and a quiver full of arrows, and go out into the open country to hunt some wild game for me. ⁴Prepare my favorite dish, and bring it here for me to eat. Then I will pronounce the blessing that belongs to you, my firstborn son, before I die."

¹⁸So Jacob took the food to his father. "My father?" he said. "Yes, my son," Isaac answered. "Who are you—Esau or Jacob?" ¹⁹Jacob replied, "It's Esau, your firstborn son. I've done as you told me. Here is the wild game. Now sit up and eat it so you can give me your blessing." ²⁰Isaac asked, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" "The Lord your God put it in my path!" Jacob replied. ²¹Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come closer so I can touch you and make sure that you really are Esau." ²²So Jacob went closer to his father, and Isaac touched him. "The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's," Isaac said. ²³But he did not recognize Jacob, because Jacob's hands felt hairy just like Esau's. So, Isaac prepared to bless Jacob. ²⁴"But are you really my son Esau?" he asked. "Yes, I am," Jacob replied. ²⁵Then Isaac said, "Now, my son, bring me the wild game. Let me eat it, and then I will give you my blessing." So, Jacob took the food to his father, and Isaac ate it. He also drank the wine that Jacob served him. ²⁶Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come a little closer and kiss me, my son." ²⁷So Jacob went over and kissed him. And when Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he was finally convinced, and he blessed his son. He

said, "Ah! The smell of my son is like the smell of the outdoors, which the Lord has blessed!"²⁸ "From the dew of heaven and the richness of the earth, may God always give you abundant harvests of grain and bountiful new wine."²⁹ "May many nations become your servants, and may they bow down to you. May you be the master over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. All who curse you will be cursed, and all who bless you will be blessed."³⁰ As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and almost before Jacob had left his father, Esau returned from his hunt.³¹ Esau prepared a delicious meal and brought it to his father. Then he said, "Sit up, my father, and eat my wild game so you can give me your blessing."³² But Isaac asked him, "Who are you?" Esau replied, "It's your son, your firstborn son, Esau."³³ Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably and said, "Then who just served me wild game? I have already eaten it, and I blessed him just before you came. And yes, that blessing must stand!"³⁴ When Esau heard his father's words, he let out a loud and bitter cry. "Oh, my father, what about me? Bless me, too!" he begged.³⁵ But Isaac said, "Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has taken away your blessing."³⁶ Esau exclaimed, "No wonder his name is Jacob, for now he has cheated me twice. First, he took my rights as the firstborn, and now he has stolen my blessing. Oh, haven't you saved even one blessing for me?"³⁷ Isaac said to Esau, "I have made Jacob your master and have declared that all his brothers will be his servants. I have guaranteed him an abundance of grain and wine—what is left for me to give you, my son?"³⁸ Esau pleaded, "But do you have only one blessing? Oh, my father, bless me, too!" Then Esau broke down and wept.

- Why was Isaac so easily deceived by Jacob, even though he had doubts about who he was? Why are so many people still so easily deceived?
- In biblical times, the blessing of the firstborn son was significant in carrying on the family name, heritage, property rights, and more. While we don't have this significance in our culture, whose approval do boys and girls tend to seek as they grow up in the family?
- Whose approval did you strive for growing up? Did that person want to support you as much as you wanted it from them?
- Who do you identify with most in the story?
 - Isaac, who is looking to pass on the family heritage and legacy to his children
 - Esau who pleased his father, no matter what he did
 - Or Jacob, the son whose personality was different from his father's and was willing to do whatever it took to win his father's approval
- What impact on Isaac's family do you see because of Jacob's deception?

GROW

- Besides yourself (And God), who knows the real you?
- Why do you think people tend to hide parts of themselves from others? Do you think that includes our spouses? If so, why?

- Have you been deceived or betrayed by someone you thought you knew, perhaps someone who said something online who said something you weren't expecting? What has happened to that relationship? How has it impacted your ability to trust others?
- What would it take, and what would happen, if you truly lived with no filters (not no manners!), no masks, no walls, or barriers? In other words, what if you dropped all the baggage and everything you hide behind, and instead were bold for Christ in your life, living as he truly created you to live, without fear?
- How does our inability to be real impact our relationships with people in the world as we try to model Christ as his "Ambassadors" (2 Corinthians 5:11-21)?

NEXT STEPS

- What do you want others to know you for? Is that what they know you for now? Do they know you for being like Christ? What step can you take this week to move toward becoming more like Him in your life? Share with one person in the group who will commit to keeping that confidential and to praying for you this week and checking back with you next week to see how you did. Take your next step at Growth Track at palmvalley.org/events!
- Who are you without filters? If you're like many who have work masks for so long, you don't know anymore. Perhaps you need help rediscovering who God made you to be. Go to palmvalley.org/events and sign up for a class that will help you grow!

Doing these as a group is great too!