

Growing in Grace

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Text: Genesis 26

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Series: Genesis

Introduction: Tonight, we're going to look at a 4,000-year-old family at some of their lowest points and some of their most grievous sins, and we're going to go right into their home and right into their head, and we're going to learn through them.

Now as we launch in, today you're going to learn a lot about a gentleman named Isaac. His dad was Abraham. His mom was Sarah. He was married at about the age of 40 to his wife, Rebekah, who we will meet today. She gave birth to his twin sons, Jacob and Esau, when Isaac was about 60. We'll learn more about those boys next week.

God today is going to open up this man's life, and he's going to give us snapshots of three aspects of his life. We're going to Isaac's his **faith**. We're going to see his **finances**, and we're going to see his **family**.

I. **A Growing Faith** (vs. 1-11).

Genesis 26 (ESV) — 1 Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham...

This famine sets the stage for a test of faith.

Remember a similar test of faith came to Abraham. God told him to go to the Promised Land, and he got there and there was a famine! That's what the text is talking about.

It's hard for us in the USA to understand a famine. We have to understand it in terms of a recession, a depression, a serious and traumatic economic downturn. This is where Ben Bernanke gets on CNN and in front of Congress and starts making big time excuses and printing more money.

Isaac comes to a famine. In our day this means that jobs are scarce, that the cost of living is high, that inflation is not good, that unemployment is not good, that the breadlines and the soup kitchens are very busy, and that people are in financial trouble.

It's a time of stress and grief. How many of you, "I've been there!" Or maybe you are there. That's what we're talking about, and this is how some of you feel today.

1 Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines.

—Isaac is just like his Dad. Abraham had went to Abimelech —Another pagan king! This is likely a different man So Isaac now is a man. Isaac's dad is gone. Like his dad he is in the middle of a famine. He's got to go to the king.

He's got to figure out, "What am I going to do? How am I going to feed my family, pay my bills, take care of those that I love? How am I going to make it through this financial hardship?"

“2 And the LORD appeared to him and said, **“Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. 3 Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father.”** – just like he did his father – “and said, ‘Do not go down to Egypt;’ – Do not do that.

God gives two great promises: God says, “I’ll be with you, and I’ll bless you.

A. In the trial of your faith, don’t leave the place that is hard!

Here’s what he’s telling him. “Don’t” leave the place that is hard. See, the place that he’s living – economic downturn, famine, financial hardship, high cost of living, times are tough.

Down in Egypt there’s plenty of food. It’s not so hard, better job market, better upward mobility, better investment opportunity, and the question is, “Well, where should I live? Should I pack up my family and go to Egypt?”

How many of you this is an issue? Chicago is a place where people move in and move out because if you’re not from Chicago you hate it here. You just want to move on. The Larsens are from San Diego CA. If you gave them a choice, in fact if you gave the whole church a choice we’d all move to Cali! For Isaac things were good in Egypt. Things were hard where he was. How many of you would make a decision based on that criteria? That’s a way to handicap your spiritual life. That’s carnal. We have to do not what is most comfortable, but what most glorifies God.

I’m not saying it’s a sin to move. but what you need to do is you need to hear from God in the same way that Isaac heard from God. God basically said, ***“Stay in the place where it’s financially hard. It’s tough to raise a family, and making ends meet right now is a real struggle.”***

How many of your hoping God doesn’t talk to you and you get to do what you want? See that’s what’s different about Christians. They want God to talk to them.

But God called him to be there. God wants him there, why? Well, ***because there’s apparently a need there for a believing family.*** There’s a need for *ministry*. There’s an enormous opportunity just like there is here in Chicago.

B. God has you here not for your comfort, but for His ministry!!

Some of you think that God’s main goal for you is to be financially independent, healthy, and comfortable. That’s not God’s main goal. His goal is for you to be like Christ. So if hardship and sickness and financial difficulties, and Chicago elections, and 10 feet of snow and flat, boring land can make you like Christ, God’s going to use that for your good.

But God says, “I’ll be with you and I’ll bless you”. ***It’s better to be in an uncomfortable place with God’s blessing than to be in a comfortable place without God’s blessing.***

The point here is this. It’s better to be in a hard place with the presence and blessing of God than an easy place, disobedient, without God’s presence or blessing. If you’re in God’s will, he’ll take care of you. If you’re out of God’s will, you may be on your own. So what looks like a good opportunity to someone may end up being a disastrous mistake.

God further states, “4 I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, 5 because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”

You’re going to have kids and grandkids and the whole nation’s going to come from you. Ultimately, Jesus will come – in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”

But maybe Isaac’s arguing with God – but there’s a great job market in Egypt!

Here’s the point. God says: “I want you to stay here. Have kids. Have grandkids. Multiply, increase. I’m going to bless you and your family.”

You say, “Well, there’s not a lot of believers here.” If there are not a lot of believers around, the best thing that young families can do is birth some children, and teach them the Gospel, and bring them into the kingdom!

A lot of times Christians want to move to an area that has a lot of good churches and a lot of good businesses, and everything is nice and beautiful, but where they’re most needed in places where times are hard, not a lot of churches, not a lot of financial mobility.

It goes on then, “6 So Isaac settled in Gerar.” He obeys God, good Christian guy. God says, “Stay, it’s going to be hard, but trust me.” “Okay, God, I trust you. I’m staying.” Isaac doesn’t sin like his dad and go to Egypt.

But we have a problem. “7 When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” for he feared to say, “My wife,” thinking, “lest the men of the place should kill me because of Rebekah,” because she was attractive in appearance. – does this sound familiar

His father, Abraham did this twice. His Dad gave away his mom, Sarah, twice. He says, “She’s just my sister.” That’s a lie. He’s is a believer, and he didn’t go to Egypt like his dad, but he is going to lie about his wife like his dad did.

That’s why we cannot ultimately look to even godly people to live by. We follow them only as they follow Christ. But if you exalt human beings, you are going to follow in their sins, no matter how godly they may be. We follow Christ.

He says, “She’s my sister” because he was afraid to say, “She’s my wife.” He’s a coward. Is cowardice a sin?

He should have said, ***“Hello. This is my wife. If you’d like to kill me, I work for God. Didn’t you see Sodom and Gomorrah? He’ll get you.”***

So Isaac falls into his dad’s sin. He sins against his wife. He succeeded in not going to Egypt, but he failed in being a coward and not protecting his wife. But God has a way in exposing Isaac’s sin. Be sure your sin will find you out!

8 When he had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of a window and saw Isaac laughing [some translations have caressing] with Rebekah his wife.

You know, Abimilech’s looking down, “What kind of crazy Louisiana family is that?!” I can say that since I lived there! **Wait a minute that’s not his sister!**

9 So Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Behold, she is your wife. How then could you say, ‘She is my sister?’” Isaac said to him, “Because I thought, ‘Lest I die because of

her.’ ” 10 Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.”

Wow, this is corporate guilt on a nation, not just on the individual. This pagan king has a better understanding of sin than some Christians.

11 So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, “Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

Now here, is Abimelech a believer or an unbeliever? Unbeliever, is he moral or immoral? Moral, so you have the moral unbeliever.

Isaac, believer or unbeliever? He the **Believer**, is he moral or immoral? He’s **Immoral**. So you have the pagan acting in a virtuous, moral way and you have the believer getting rebuked by the moral pagan. It’s very complicated and confusing.

What we see here is just because someone’s not a Christian doesn’t mean they’re wrong. The point is this. Christians aren’t always right, and non-Christians aren’t always wrong. Christians aren’t always good, and non-Christians aren’t always bad. It doesn’t mean they love or obey God or have stopped rebelling against Him.

Some people say, “*Oh, I can’t listen to my boss. I can’t listen to my parents. I can’t listen to my coach, my teacher because they’re not even believers.*” Well, it’s not whether or not they’re a believer or an unbeliever. The question is are they right or wrong? If they’re right, then listen. They may be speaking truth, like this pagan king.

Sometimes we need to accept the stinging rebuke of an unbeliever because they’re at times right. This brings humility.

Transition: So God is all about growing us. This family is a believing family, but they have tons of ways they need to grow. They are growing in their faith. Isaac needs to stay where he is and not go down to Egypt. He obeys. But he puts his wife in harms way. God protects his wife Rebekah. Isaac’s sins are found out.

Can I just say that your sins will find you out. You are not getting away with anything.

So now we move on from Isaac’s faith to his finances. We all in America tend to think that lots a money is a sign of God’s blessing. It actually is a curse sometimes.

II. **Godly Finances** (vs. 12-21).

The story continues, “12 And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him, 13 and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy.”

Don’t misunderstand this. This is not the prosperity Gospel. This is not a verse about wealth, but about God’s **grace**. Isaac was unwise and sinned, and God still blessed him!

Maybe you’re saying, we don’t need to talk about money because I don’t have any. That’s why we need to talk about it. It’s important. You’ve got to stop wasting it. Perhaps you are one who never gives to God’s work. That indicates a spiritual problem. You say, “Here he goes talking about money...” God talks about money, and if I’m to be faithful, I have to talk about money. But it’s not what you think. I’m not asking for anyone’s money. I hate even talking about it.

But do you realize Jesus talked about money about 25 percent of the time?

So we have to talk about money. We're told, "12 And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold

All the theological nuts on TV say if you give a dollar God will bless you a hundredfold, like Isaac. It's the hundred fold blessing. What they are encouraging is not godliness, but laziness. God becomes the big lotto machine for many people in this country. They don't know God, but they'll send a hundred dollars into Benny the heretic Hinn to see if they can get that hundredfold blessing. They're no different than a person in a casino trying to get rich quick, and wagering their livelihood.

This is not a get rich quick scheme.

A. There are two basic extremes regarding money.

1. Prosperity theology is one. Have you heard of it? Here's the gist: ***If you love Jesus, you'll be rich.*** Usually the guy or lady that's promoting it has a hanky or wants to send you a hanky and promises that if you pray with this hanky and send in some money God will bless you. So their message is, "The more you love God, the richer you'll be, the healthier you'll be"

It's actually gotten more of a face lift with a guy down in Texas talking about how you can be "God's Champion for Life" and "Live Your Best Life Now".

2. The opposite is a poverty theology. It says if you're poor, you're close to God. You've got people who won't kill a bug or bathe or shave, and they won't buy a car because they don't want to ruin the environment. And poverty is godly. Monks of the middle ages believed this. Cut yourself off from riches and you'll be godly.

Do you see the problem in this? It's not money that's bad. It's our heart! Take money away from me, and I can make anything my idol.

Here's my recommendation. Live off of 70 percent of your income. Tithe 10 percent. Save 10 percent. Invest 10 percent. Live off of 70 percent. The problem with most people they live off of about 127 percent of their income.

I hear, "I can't make ends meet." Well, that's because you don't spend wisely. You don't invest wisely. You don't save wisely. You don't tithe wisely.

Here's the point: Don't worry about being rich; worry about being righteous.

14 He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him." How many of you think, "Man, if I could just get rich, that'd be great. All my problems would go away." No, you just get different problems. Rich people have problems. Poor people don't have certain problems.

No one breaks into your house to steal your bus pass!

Listen money and prosperity has it's problems!!

14 He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him.” 15 (Now the Philistines had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father’s servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father.)

That’s pretty mean. Wells are vital in the ancient world and in the new? What comes out of the well? Water, and you need water to drink and breathe.

You need water to feed your crops, feed your family. You need it to feed your animals. You need your water. Everything grows around the well. So the Philistines decide to sabotage Isaac’s wells.

The question now is God has blessed him, but he has a whole other series of problems. Some of you, you understand this. “I’m making money, and I’m getting killed on taxes. I got a whole other set of issues. My employees are stealing from me. My competitors are undermining me. Man, now that I’ve made a buck, it’s really getting hard to keep that buck.” How will Isaac respond? This is the question. His faith is being tested. It was tested with his family. Here it’s being tested with his finances. What will he do?

16 And Abimelech said to Isaac, “Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we.” 17 So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there.

You’re doing too good, leave. Would you leave? Business is booming. It’s your land. You inherited it from your father. They’re your wells. God’s just blessed you a hundredfold. Would you leave? Would you say, “Tough, you take it up with God.” Here’s what he does. Isaac moves.

If God blessed Isaac in one place he can bless him in another. He goes to a place where business is not booming. AGAIN!

B. We must always choose our witness over our wealth.

Isaac has to choose between his wealth and his witness.

What does he choose? His witness – his witness, this is a man of faith. When it comes down to making a buck or having people think well of God and his grace, he chooses to lose money and preserve his witness.

Would you be willing to choose witness over wealth?

Miles Crouse Story

Started a company and invested 300K of his own money into it. He got 49%. His partner who was not a believer got 51%. Miles built the company up from a hole the wall to a multimillion dollar company that provides fences for many of the major golf courses in the suburbs. Then one day, his partner decided that since he had majority ownership, he’d fire Miles. Many lies were told about Miles. Miles could not tell lies back. He’s a Christian. So he just had to walk away. He got a small settlement, but lost hundreds of thousands in cash and millions of his own future earnings. Why? Because it’s not about the money. If you knew Miles, you knew it was about eternal souls.

Miles is now an associate Pastor in North Carolina. He's administrating the evangelism ministry of the church. Does that surprise any of you? Its not about wealth. It's about witness!

This is a man of faith. God blessed me here. If I maintain my witness, my integrity, my righteousness, he could bless me here too. I'll just trust him." Again, Isaac is not pursuing riches; he's pursuing righteousness.

18 And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them.

Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham," – these wells belonged to him. They belonged to his father. Abraham died. A bunch of people filled them up with dirt, and he goes there and re-digs out the wells.

Is this a lot of time, work and expense? Yeah. If you're a business owner that's like they burn down your business. You go find another piece of real estate, and you rehab an old building, and you set it up for business again. This is an expense. This is a lot of work.

III. A Godly Family (vs. 22-26).

A. God's dark and difficult providences. Why?

19 But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, 20 the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him. 21 Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also, so he called its name Sitnah."

Esek," –FIGHT

Sitnah" – OPPOSITION, Hatred

Jeremiah 29:11,

It doesn't matter where Isaac goes. It seems somebody's trying to rip him off. How will he respond? How would you respond? Would you be like, "Enough already, I've dug out enough wells. I've moved enough times. We're already in the middle of a famine. It's an economic downturn. This is costing me a ton of money to get back on our feet. None of you has any legal claim.

22 And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, "For now **the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.**" Rehoboth means "spacious land".

"Fine, I'll take whatever you'll give me, and you'll see. God will take care of his people. God will bless." Is this faith? This is total faith. Has he preserved his witness? Absolutely. **It's cost him wealth, but he's preserved his witness.**

“From there he went up to Beersheba. That night the Lord appeared to him” – God shows up again and speaks to him – “and said, ‘I am the God of your father Abraham.’” Let me drill down on this for just a minute. You men, you want God to be able to show up to your kids one day and say this same thing. “Hi, I’m God.” “Which God?” “The God of your daddy.” “Oh, well, I know all about you. My dad told me all about you, how you saved him and forgave him and sent Jesus for him and loved him and blessed him and provided for him. I know all about you. My dad told me all about you.”

Today, how many people do you know that if God came to them he could actually say this? “I am the God of your father, the God whom your father worshiped faithfully. That’s the God I am.” Not many people – not many people could God say that to today. To Abraham, Isaac’s daddy, he couldn’t say that about Tara, Isaac’s granddaddy because that man was an unbeliever. That’s why we don’t worship the god of Tara and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. We worship the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob because Tara, Isaac’s granddaddy, Abraham’s daddy, was not a worshiper of God. He was an unbeliever. Numbers says he was an unbelieving pagan man.

You men want to be part of a legacy. You want to worship God. You want your children to worship God. You want your grandchildren to worship God, and should God speak to them, you want God to be able to say, “I am the God of your dad. I’m the God of your granddad. I’m the God of your great granddad. That’s who I am.” Man, I tell you what; Abraham’s dead and gone. The only time he gets mentioned here is by God. Isn’t that beautiful? To remind the son that the relationship that God seeks with the son is like the relationship he had with the father. Man, I love this. I pray when I’m dead and gone that my grandsons worship the same God, Jesus, that I do, and if God should speak to them, that he could tell them, “I am the God of your grandpa. I am the God of your great grandpa.” That’s what we all pray.

“Do not be afraid,” – does he have anything to be afraid of at this point? He’s relocated a few times. They keep filling up his wells, the equivalent of burning down his business. It’s a famine. He’s blowing a ton of startup capital to finally get a chunk of real estate and a well. There’s no guarantee that he won’t get further litigation and opposition. Yeah, there’s a lot to be afraid of. Here’s what God says, “Don’t worry about it. Don’t be afraid of anything.” See, all we’re supposed to fear is God, and that’s it. Previously he had feared being harmed. God’s telling him, “If you’ve learned anything, learn not to fear anything but me.”

Here’s what God says, “I will bless you. I will increase” – he says, “I am with you,” – first thing, the presence of God and the blessing of God. God says, “I’m with you, and I’ll bless you. I’ll increase your number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham.” “You’ll get kids, grandkids. I’m gonna take care of you, the future, the generations, the extended family. I’ll take care of everybody. Don’t be afraid. Remember two things, I’m here, and I’m good. I’m present, and I’ll bless.” Here’s the key. You may not be in the best place, but if God is with you, and God is for you, you’re in the best place. It doesn’t matter necessarily what everything looks like spiritually or financially. If you’re in the place God has called you, doing the things God has asked you, having integrity like God requests of you, growing in faith and worship of God, God will be present, and God will bless you. You will be okay. That’s what God is promising, and it’s a great comfort.

Here’s how Isaac responds. “He built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord” –

love that. Apparently there wasn't a church there, so he builds one. There wasn't a place to go worship, so he made one. That's why Isaac's there. God wants to bless his people in front of the other people. He wants his people to worship him so that the good news of God would spread out that there's this loving, gracious God who knows us and walks with us and cares for us and protects us and provides for us. So that, what? So that evangelism could happen. So that other people could hear about God, so what does Isaac do? He's got a lot of things to do. He still doesn't have a fully functioning well. He still doesn't have a permanent, settled piece of real estate. He doesn't have all of his business in order, but before he gets to all of his business he takes time to worship God. He sings, prays, has church, teaches his family.

Guys, it is so important that you don't worship God just after he has provided, but you worship him before he shows up because that is the essence of faith. Some people say, "I have a hard time worshipping because with my family or my finances or my faith, it's not a good season. It's a hard time. God hasn't straightened everything out. Why should I worship God?" You worship God by faith until you see him show up by sight. That is true worship. Worship is claiming the goodness of the character and the trustworthiness of the promises of God until he shows up, and our Bible is filled with promises. That God loves us. That he won't leave us. That he won't forsake us. That somehow before it's all said and done he will work out everything for good. That one day, even if it's in the life to come, we will be restored to perfect health. We will have restored relationships that are strained. That things will be corrected.

And we worship God by faith, until what? Until we see it. That's why we're here today. This is our little altar. This is where we come to worship God in faith, not because everything is the way that we wish that it were; sin has come into the world, but because we believe that God is not done, and that God is good, and that we need to be connected to God, and that righteousness is more important than riches, and that witness is more important than wealth, and so we set aside time for work. We set aside time for income, for what? For worship and witness, for honoring God and letting others see that he's worth our time, that he is, in fact, our highest priority, and before we tend to anything else, even something as urgent as drinking water, worship comes first.

This is what he does. "There he pitched his tent," – settles down – "and there his servants dug a well." We've worshipped. Now we go to work. We spent our time with God. Our minds are straight. Our hearts are clear. Now we're ready to work, dig the well. See, at this point he doesn't even know if he's gonna have drinking water, but he knows that God's good. "Meanwhile, Abimelech had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces. Isaac asked them, 'Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?'" "What are you doing here? Every time I see you guys you stop up one of my wells and cut into my bottom line and be really mean to me, so why are you here?"

"They answered, 'We saw clearly that' – what? – 'the Lord was with you.'" You know, friends, maybe this is what it's all about. Maybe the whole thing isn't about Isaac. Maybe it's about Abimelech. Maybe God's not punishing Isaac. Maybe he's growing him in character and maturity, but maybe it's primarily so that his witness would go forth for Abimelech. Maybe a lot of the hard times in your life right now aren't God punishing you, aren't God opposing you, aren't God trying to harm you; it's God trying to refine your character in a public way so that you will worship and trust him because lots of

other people are watching. Friends, family, coworkers, they're watching. They want to say, "Is he gonna be hostile? Is he gonna cuss us out? Is he gonna declare war? Is he gonna turn his back on God?" No, he keeps loving, forgiving, being gracious, just like the God he proclaims. He still loves that God. He still worships that God. You can't stop that guy, and God keeps blessing him. Maybe this God is real. Maybe this is a God we need to know. That's what it's about. So many people are about riches and not righteousness. They're about wealth and not witness. He's about righteousness and witness. He wants to walk with God, and he wants others to be encouraged to walk with God too.

So often times we hit these hard points tested with our faith or our family or our finances. We stop worshipping. That's when we need to worship most fervently, why? Because it renews our heart, and it's a witness to others that we trust God until he shows up, not just because he does. I love this about Isaac. He's suffered tremendous loss. In the middle of it all the unbeliever comes and says, "God is with you. We all see it. We all see it." "So he says, 'There should be a sworn agreement between us' – between us and you. 'Let's us make a treaty with you.' Let's sign a contract. Isn't it interesting, once somebody does know that you love God, God loves you, that God's blessing you, all of a sudden they want a contract, and here's what they want the contract to say, "That you will not do us any harm." Okay? "Let's right this down. You be nice to us, okay? Now that you're getting powerful, and rich, and prominent" – could Isaac at this point leverage this deal, say, "Oh, yeah, I'm powerful, rich and prominent. God loves me. I want my land back. I want my wells back. I want a public apology."

He could leverage this. He doesn't. He lets it all go. He's demonstrating, "My God is a God of grace. I have everything I have by the grace of God. It doesn't belong to me. It belongs to God, and if you've stolen it, you've stolen it from God. That's between you and God." He's pursuing righteousness, not just riches, witness, not just wealth. Here's what he says, "We want a contract with you that you won't do us no harm, just as we did not molest you but always treated you well and sent you away in peace." That's a bit of an overstatement, isn't it? (Laughter) The guy keeps getting his wells filled up with dirt, and he keeps getting run out of town. Isn't it interesting though, if you would be struggling, people kick you when you're down. You finally get on your feet. Things are going pretty well. Then everybody wants to be your friend, and they all say, "Hey, buddy." You're like, "Buddy? I don't remember that." "And now you are blessed by the Lord." That's true. They see it.

How is Isaac gonna respond? How many of you, you would just rub their face in it? How many of you would at least demand an apology and all of your lost money back? Here's what he does. "Isaac then made a feast for them." Oh, man, that's convicting. Isaac said, "You can be my friends. I forgive you. I love you. I understand who God is, and I understand what God does. I have sinned against God. He has forgiven me and blessed me. You have sinned against me. I will forgive you and bless you. God has made me a friend though I was his enemy. You will now be made my friend though you were my enemy." He's just showing the gospel. He's just showing the love and the grace and the mercy of God. That's all he's doing. His witness is intact. Forgives the debt, forgives the theft of land, lets it all go because what he's worried about is the salvation of these people, not just his income.

"Early the next morning the men swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they left him in peace. That day Isaac's servants came and told him about

the well they had dug.” See, they were still working on the well when he said, “We’re at peace. I don’t want my well back. I don’t want my money back. I don’t want my land back. I forgive you.” He still didn’t know if he was gonna have water in his well. He could still dehydrate. He could still starve to death, but here’s what he said, “God, you’ll take care of us.” This is faith. “They said, ‘We’ve found water!’” God showed up. God blessed us. After we trusted him he showed up. “He called it Shibah,” – which means oath – “and to this day the name of the town has been Beersheba” – which means well of the oath.

Looks like his life is great, isn’t it? Beautiful wife, nice piece of real estate, booming business, the presence of God, the blessing of God, everything’s great. “His son Esau was forty years old, married Judith daughter of Beerli the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.” This is the last two verses of the chapter. His meathead son married two strippers and gave him an ulcer, the end. (Laughter) How many of you go, “That’s a different ending.” I was expecting, “They live happily ever after, drank a lot of water, the end.” (Laughter) Right? No, why? This really troubled me all week. It was a great story, and then the son marries the two strippers and gives his dad an ulcer. This is the Christian life. Amen? This is the Christian life. It’s not, “And then we conquered all our problems and got naked and just swam in the well and ate the fruit.” (Laughter) It’s not like that. The test of his character regarding his finances leads to a test of character regarding his wife, leads to more tests of character regarding his finances and his faith, and then it comes back to where his character is again tested with his family.

How many of you keep thinking, “If I could just get through this one thing, then it would be smooth sailing forever,” and you get there, you’re like, “Duh, there’s always something else. If it’s not the family, it’s the finances. If I get the finances nailed down, then it’s the faith. Once I get the faith nailed down, then it’s the family again, and it’s always something.” Welcome to the Christian life. There is no, “And they live happily ever after,” until you die, and you go to heaven, and the curse is over, and the effects of sin are lifted. In the meantime, God in his providence allows us to go through different circumstances and hardship and trial and testing, why, ‘cause he hates us? No, ‘cause he’s growing in us faith, worship, so that we can have witness.

So that other people would be blessed and God blesses us, so that, what? So that it wouldn’t be a place that is in financial ruin and spiritual darkness. That God could financially and spiritually begin to bless a people, who bless a people so that there becomes this process of transformation to where it’s not just one family that loves the Lord. It’s many families. It’s not just one family who’s righteous and rich. It’s many families that are righteous and rich, and they can employ other people and take good care of their customers and allow other people to get traction so that, what? So that God’s blessing flows through his people to others.

Here’s my conclusion, if you had to look at your life today, where is your biggest test of character? Where are those places right now you say, “Man, I wish I didn’t have to deal with this, wish I didn’t have to go through this. I wish God would just take it away because it is just frustrating and hard.” Is it in regards to family? Your parents driving you nuts? Your kids driving you nuts – aunts, uncles, cousins? You’re single? You don’t have a family? You got a cat that’s driving you nuts? (Laughter) You wish you had a family to drive you nuts? At least if I had a wife to drive me nuts it would be a wife and

not a cat. It's frustrating. How many of you are there? Yeah, I'm frustrated with my family. Okay, God's testing your character. God's growing you. God's working through that. He brings everything into your life, not to crush you but to grow you. So you can have a witness for others.

How many of you right now it's your finances? "I'm broke. I got nothing. I'm unemployed. I'm underemployed." Well, keep digging your well. Keep sending out your resume. Keep working your plan. Eventually you'll hit water, but you gotta keep digging. A lot of people are like, "Jesus, bless me." Jesus will tell you, "Dig your well. Work your job. Put out your resume. Watch your spending." How many of you right now it's finances? "If I just had more money, I'd be happier." No, you'd just have different problems. How many of you right now it's faith? You're having a hard time worshipping 'cause life's not as good as you were anticipating. You feel disappointed. You're not sure God's a good God. You're not sure God's in charge. You're not sure that God's for you and not against you. You're not sure that God's with you and not left you. You're not sure that God is a God who's going to bless you. You're getting envious and jealous of others. You can't rejoice with those who rejoice. Your faith is waning.

Okay, here's where we always come to. We always come to this point in the service where we take the story. We pull out the principles. We look at our life, and we ask two questions. Where have I sinned, and where have I been blessed? Am I sinning in regards to my finances? Am I sinning in regards to my faith? Am I sinning in regards to my family? Then I need to repent of that, and God's grace through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection will do two things – forgive me and empower me to go live a new life as a new creation in Christ. Also, where has God blessed me? Where should there be gratitude? In all of this do you have an opportunity to be a good witness? Do you have an opportunity to live in righteousness? Do you have an opportunity to be a blessing to others? Do you have an opportunity to worship God? How has God provided with family, with finances, with faith? How has God already shown up? Thank him for the ways that he has shown up, and worship him until he shows up in those other ways that are desperately needed.

We bring you to this point, and we call you to the Lord Jesus, and then we're gonna respond in worship. Some of you will worship today just thanking God for blessing. Some of you will worship God because others can thank God for blessing, and you rejoice with them, not be envious and jealous like the Philistines, and some of you today will worship God knowing that with family or faith or finances there are real needs, and God will need to show up, but in worship you are thanking him in advance because you are banking on the character of a good, sovereign God until it becomes sight. So when you're ready you can partake of communion which is remembering Jesus' body and blood shed for our sin. If you're not a Christian, you need to ask Jesus to forgive your sin first and commit yourself to him before you partake, and then you're welcome to. We're gonna give of our tithes and offerings. We're gonna sing and worship, and we're gonna leave here, for what? For witness, the whole world is watching in a place that's not unlike the place of Isaac, financially hard, spiritually dark. God starts here because he wants to bless many. I'll pray.

Rehoboth means ROOM. So God makes room for Isaac somewhere else and blesses him, and blesses his family with fruitfulness.

So Isaac's attitude is: "Fine, I'll take whatever you'll give me, and you'll see. God will take care of his people. God will bless." Is this faith? This is total faith. Has he preserved his witness? Absolutely. It's cost him wealth, but he's preserved his witness.

23 From there he went up to Beersheba. 24 And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. **Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake.**" 25 So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

B. God spoke with a father named Isaac. Does God speak to you?

You fathers and mothers say you know God, but do your kids know your God. Can they say, yes I know my dad's God or my mom's God. He's the only true and living God. And I love Him. I don't just know about him, but I know Him!!

You men want to be part of a legacy. You want to worship God. You want your children to worship God. You want your grandchildren to worship God, and should God speak to them,

God met with Isaac. Is God meeting with you?

C. Isaac settles down with his family. Does church start at home for you?

Here's how Isaac responds. "He built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord" – love that.

This is what he does. "There he pitched his tent," – settles down – "and there his servants dug a well."

Isaac worshipped and he worked!

Conclusion: Sometimes we think really spiritual people are the ones up front doing all the ministry. If you want to be really godly, serve God where you are. Grow in grace. Grow in the practice of grace. Grow in your faith, your finances, and if you have a family, grow in godliness at home. Leave a legacy of godliness!