

Genesis in Biblical Perspective: The Gospel of Christ from Genesis – The Life of Isaac—Like Father, Like Son

Genesis 26

By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)

Let's start by looking at Genesis 26:1–6. This is the Word of God. It's the truth. Genesis 26:1–6 says

[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. [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. [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." [6] So Isaac settled in Gerar.

The grass withers, the flower fades, this is the Word of our God, it abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for Your people.

In Chattanooga, Tennessee before my first official pastorate, I had a student pastorate while I was in school. I had the privilege to work with many people. One young man I had the opportunity to lead to Christ and disciple him. I lead a young lady to Christ and disciplined her. This young man and young lady met, decided to date and we did premarital counseling with them. I married them and their family was off and running. I left went to Miami and I received a call a year later from this couple and they wanted me to have a meal with them as I happened to be doing a wedding for someone else in Chattanooga. This couple had, had a child since I left and when we went to have dinner with them the young man said to me "Would you like to see the video of the birth of our baby?" I said "Say what?" He said "Would you like to see a video of our child's birth?" I said, "No, I don't. I love you but there is a limit to my love. I'd be glad to see a picture of your baby."

Nowadays people have most of their family pictures on DVD, CD, VCR tapes, computers etc., but there was a time when people used to have scrapbooks and

we put pictures in them as people progressed through life. Then there was that predicament when you went to someone's house and they said "Hey, would you like to look at our scrapbook?" How are you going to say no? You're actually hoping you can get through that scrapbook in record time. Then finally you get to the end of it. I bring that out because that's kind of what the Holy Spirit is doing through Isaac in Genesis 26. We're in this section on the life of Isaac and it's only four chapters. Interestingly there is only one chapter that deals with Isaac and his life and we're in it in this study.

There are seven episodes in the life of Isaac. This isn't giving me seven epics in the life of Isaac that I'm to preach but this chapter is a series of events that are tied together by something. This chapter is episodic and meant to be taken together. We're going through the little section of the family scrapbook called Isaac. There are seven events and what is it that ties them together? Let's start by looking at the six verses we just read. Two events are given to us out of the life of Isaac in these first six verses.

When these events start to occur Abraham has basically been dead five years. Now we are looking at Isaac. He has these issues in his life. We are going to work our way through them in this study.

The first thing we see in the life of Isaac is that there is a famine. That is no news in the land of Canaan. There are famines then now and regularly in the land of Canaan. The text tells you there was a famine in the days of Isaac just as in the days of Abraham. That is referring to the famine that happened 80 years earlier in Abraham's time. So there is this famine and they are wondering where they're going to get food. Nearby there is only one sure food source available for people in the Middle East and it was down at the Nile River in the land of Egypt. Isaac packs up his family and heads south through Gerar headed to Egypt, just like Abraham did. He stops off in Gerar just like Abraham did. When Isaac gets there the Lord appears to him just He did with Abraham. He had appeared to Abraham eight times and for Isaac this is the first of two times.

The Lord appears to Isaac and tells him not to leave the land. "Stop here, stay here and sojourn here and I'll bless you here." More importantly He says in Genesis 26:3 that He would be with him here. You need to understand that they are not stopping in friendly territory here. The Philistines despised nomadic tribes in general and they certainly despised the seed of Abraham. So the Lord tells Isaac to stop in hostile territory and remain here. The Lord tells him that He'll protect him for He'll be with him but just stay here. You can't imagine the relief that must have been to Isaac for this was the first time the Lord had appeared to him. His father Abraham has been gone for five years and when the Lord appears He reaffirms the covenant. He tells Isaac the promises will come to him for he is the heir of the covenant and the God of the covenant will be with you. So Isaac obeys and stays.

One other thing the Lord says to Isaac is that “Your father Abraham would obey My laws, statutes and commandments and I want you to do the same thing. I want you to look at the best days of your father and put them in front of you. I’m with you. I’ll bless you, now obey my laws, commandments and statutes.” Now that brings me to the third event in Isaac’s life. The third event happens in terms of the same lie and the same Divine protection. So Isaac says he is going to obey the Lord just as Abraham did so we’re off and running with Isaac as he obeys the Lord, right? Wrong! As far as the laws and statutes go he is about to violate the one that says not to bear false witness, he’s about to expose his wife to danger and he’s about to expose his family to danger as he now does something that sounds extremely familiar. This is déjà vu all over again. Genesis 26:7–11 says

[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. [8] When he had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of a window and saw Isaac laughing with Rebekah his wife. [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.” [11] So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, “Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

So here we have a famine. He has stopped in Gerar on the way to Egypt in the land of the Philistines. This may be the same Abimelech as was in the days of Abraham for the name Abimelech is a title as well as a name. This could be Abimelech the second or the third. Because Rebekah is attractive Isaac thinks they may want her and if he is known as her husband he is afraid they may kill him to get to her. So he tells her to say she is his sister and they’ll plan to meet up every once in a while. Doesn’t this sound familiar? It is just like Abraham did and Abraham even did it two times, once in Egypt and once right here.

So when Isaac and Rebekah met up they were spotted laughing together. This is a little bit more than a laugh. Nobody would assume that is your wife because you tell a joke and laugh together. How did God deliver Abraham? It was miraculously letting Pharaoh and Abimelech know that he had lied but here God did not reveal this miraculously to Abimelech. God allowed by His Providence for Abimelech to see them privately ‘laughing’ together and he figured out they were husband and wife. I want to try and give you the closest interpretation of this for this is not common language of the day but there used to be the phrase referring to a married couple when it was said “They sure are sporting together, aren’t they?” The idea behind that is jovial intimacy but the English Standard Version has brought out the root word of it in the Hebrew which is laughter. Why would

they do that? Isaac's name meant laughter and his relationship to his wife has to do with laughter. Their intimacy brought them laughter and joy – jovial intimacy. That is as far as I can go with this in this study. You'll have to go do your own study on this from here on out.

Whatever was going on between them Abimelech saw it, realized they were husband and wife and then rebuked Isaac just like he had rebuked Abraham. Then Abimelech put a wall of protection around him so that no one would touch him just like he did with Abraham. Now we come to a fourth event. Genesis 26:12–17 says

[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. [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.) [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.

So the fourth thing that happens in the life of Isaac is that he gains material prosperity. The Lord begins to bless him. Here is a man that exposes his wife to the possibility of adultery and exposes all of those covenant blessings for this is the family of the line of the blessings, in order to preserve himself. God gets him rebuked through a pagan king and now God blesses him by giving him all these things. He entrusted all these resources to him. You might be thinking like me "God why did You do that for he wasn't even obedient?" Why would God bless him when he hadn't *earned* it? I think we have a word for that and that's grace. God was gracious to him. God had been gracious to entrust a certain amount of resources to him. God not only protected him but God now provided for him. God had done the same thing in the same place for Abraham. When that happened to Abraham the Philistines envied him and began to attack him and so it is with Isaac. Abraham was even using the wells of his fathers and they began to fill them up just as with Isaac. That leads us to another episode of the Philistine opposition. Genesis 26:18–22 says

[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. [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. [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."

So he has Philistine opposition in the land just like in the days of Abraham and he doesn't fight them. This is his land. God has promised him this land but he doesn't claim it with warfare even though according to the text he is stronger than the Philistines. He doesn't flex his muscle in the flesh he just moves to the next well. When he gets to the third well God gives peace just like He did in the days of Abraham. That peace now becomes a reason to give honor to the Lord. Let's look back in the text. Here is the sixth episode. Genesis 26:23–25 says

[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.

Now he has come to another place and digs another well. He realizes the blessing of the Lord has been upon him so he builds altar and gives praise to the Lord in Beersheba, just like Abraham. Abraham not only did that at Beersheba but he did it at three other places. Abraham four times built altars to the Lord to give Him praise for His goodness to him. Now we have one more episode in this episodic narrative. Now comes a peace treaty. Genesis 26:26–33 says

[26] When Abimelech went to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army, [27] Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?" [28] They said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you. So we said, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, [29] that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD." [30] So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. [31] In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths. And Isaac sent them on their way, and they departed from him in peace. [32] That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well that they had dug and said to him, "We have found water." [33] He called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

This ends the seven episodes in the life of Isaac. This one ends with a peace treaty with the Philistines. Ahuzzath and Phicol basically say to Isaac, "We've been watching you. The Lord is with you. He has blessed you. We want to make a treaty with you. We haven't done evil to you." Although he is kind of fudging there because he did try to run Isaac out of town but he says "We sent you away in peace. We were being very kind to you when we ran you out. Now would you

be good to us? We won't harm each other. Let's sign a covenant of peace." It is just like he did with Abraham. So now Isaac settles in Beersheba, just like Abraham. The water of well is filled just like the days of Abraham and Isaac dwells in peace just as his father did in Gerar.

As you look at these seven episodes that are just strung together, they are not chronological because there are some in terms of chronology of life that are not in order. They are clearly analogical. So what are the clues here, why these seven episodes and why are they strung together the way that they have? I believe that there are three unmistakable clues as to why these seven episodes in the life of Isaac have been put together.

Number one is that there is a message here for all of you and the message is the challenges you face in life are the challenges your children are going to face in life. Will you have them ready? There is the challenge of temptation, sexual immorality, the challenge of Satan's attack on your marriage, the challenge of boredom with the toys and play things of this world. We keep buying them when they tell us to buy them but perhaps it will be the next one that gives meaning to life. There are the challenges of disappointments in your vocation and job. The challenges that you face are the same ones that your children will face. Like father, like son – those things that Abraham faced, Isaac faced. If you'll go back to Genesis 12 through 20 you'll see that every episode in the life of Isaac in Genesis 26 will be found in the life of Abraham in the same order. It's not chronological but he has clearly arranged it that way to tell you something. Having by faith left the Chaldeans to be a man of God by the grace of God, serving the Lord he faced the challenges of life and the challenges that faced Abraham then faced Isaac. Will we have our children ready?

That brings me to a second takeaway from the text. In this second takeaway I have good news, bad news and then I have great news which will be the third takeaway. Did you notice how many times I said "just like Abraham" in this study? The good news in the second takeaway is there are heights of blessings in his responses. He worships God for His blessings. He stays in the land where God shows him. He uses his resources wisely. He doesn't seek conflict. He even ends up at peace with his enemies. The Bible says when a man's way is pleasing to the Lord, the Lord will make even his enemies be at peace with him. All of this is taking place and Isaac's responses are just like Abraham's and in some cases even better than Abraham's. For instance Isaac walks away from a fight to take the land and just builds another well where God gives him peace in the land. He doesn't try to take the land in the flesh but waits for the hand of God to give him the land that He promised.

There is absolutely no doubt that one day your children will face the challenges of life that you face but what you do now in their life will show up then. Are there exceptions? Yes, but by in large God has ordained the family as the mechanism through which He raises the next generation. God works through parents and

that's the good news. I know you don't believe it particularly if you're children somewhere between the ages of 13 and 18, but you are the most influential people in their life. Be ready to think that you're not. You'll have family worship. You'll go to church. They will go to the youth group. You'll talk with them about the Lord. You'll share your testimony and tell them how important it is to have a quiet time before the Lord. Then they go on a retreat and come back and say "Dad and Mom do you know what it means to be a Christian? And you ought to have a quiet time!" You're thinking, "I've been saying that for 16 years." So get ready because that will happen. That does not mean that what you've done is futile or vain.

That's why the Proverb contains this piece of wisdom. This isn't a promise but it's Divine wisdom that has been given to us. *[6] Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.* (Proverbs 22:6 ESV) Are there exceptions? Yes because there is sin in this world but by in large what you put in is what begins to come out. Parents, you are positioned to be the most influential people in the lives of your children and don't ever believe that you're not, no matter what it looks like. I'd like to narrow the funnel just a little bit. I believe not only parents used in the life of their children but I believe the text warrants me saying that fathers have a special influence on their sons and mothers on their daughters.

I believe this so strongly that when I'm counseling with young people for premarital counseling one of the things I will tell the future wife is go look at his father because whether he believes it or not or wants it or not, the way his father treats women in general and a wife in particular is he's learned it that way. I say to the young man, "You go look at her mother." To try and cement it I tell them to imagine the groom's dad married to the bride's mother because that's what they are starting off with. You're young so you won't have to end up there but that's what you'll be starting off with. Parents impact their children. Fathers impact sons and mothers impact daughters in a very special way.

So what's the bad news? The bad news is what you do effects your children. Wasn't that the good news? Yes it was but it's also the bad news because we're not doing everything right. I'd give anything in the world if I had done everything right but I haven't and that's why with one of my children we had the blessing of sitting down one night to dinner while they were in college and it just came to me. First of all we talked about some areas where I could have done better and I needed to ask forgiveness and then I said "Let's have a reality check. Thanks for the forgiveness and now let's go to the next point. You have a better daddy than I had and I had a better daddy than my daddy had." When I look at my grandfather because I knew my great grandfather I could tell you that my grandfather never sat on the knee of his father. I can tell you he never received a hug or kiss. The things I know my grandfather longed for he never received from his father, the things a son wants a father to do, but God saved him by His grace and God used him to lead his father to the Lord at 74 years of age. Praise God for grace. So he

was a whole lot better father than the one he had. Then when my father came to the Lord I got a better father than my grandfather. My father took it to another level. I was able to stand on his shoulders and then praise God grace keeps growing and my children can take it to another level.

What you do counts but be careful of your life because what you're doing is impacting your children. Abraham's lies about his wife went to his son and it impacted his son. That's why we need to hear number three in closing. There is something else that ties this text together.

God said in Genesis 26:3 that He would be with Isaac. "I will be with you." The second time God appeared to Isaac He said in Genesis 26:24 "I will be with you." What does Abimelech say after watching Isaac's life? He said "God is with you." One thing that ties these things together is that clearly it is the same order in Isaac's life and the same events in Abraham's life. Our children are going to face the same issues and clearly Abraham's life has impacted his son's life. What we do as parents count. GIGO – garbage in, garbage out or grace in and the work of grace out. I know my children are going to face the issues of life. I want to prepare them by teaching, mentoring and modeling but I know the key to their life ultimately is not the parents but the God who is with us is with them. It is that they know Him and have a relationship with Him and that the Lord their God is their God. So that is what brings the victory.

Isaac is a very ordinary man, who had an extraordinary father. He is a very ordinary father who will have an extraordinary son, but what is it about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? It is the gracious, sovereign hand of God that says I will be with you. It is the presence of the Lord. Paraphrasing what A.W. Tozer said, he said "Don't ask me the question is the Lord here or is the Lord there. The Lord is not simply here or there for the Lord is here and the Lord is there. He is the Here and He is the There." If you're in victory He's there. If you're in defeat, challenge and adversity He is there. It's not "Lord, I need You to get through this" but it's "Lord, I need You in this." I find Him here in my brokenness, here in my laughter. The Lord is here. The Lord is there. The Lord holds here and there in His hands and the Lord holds you here and there in His heart and delights over you and embraces you. Why?

It is because it wasn't Abraham who kept the laws and statutes with perfection. It wasn't Isaac who kept the laws and statutes with perfection. It wasn't Moses who wrote it who kept the laws and statutes with perfection that He calls for and it wasn't Israel who read this while it was being written, who kept the laws and statutes. It was the Almighty who sent His Son, Immanuel, God with us, who kept the statutes and then went to a cross to pay for our sins that He might in holiness be with us by grace. There is the hand of the Lord in the text. It is God with us, through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord is with you here and there because the Lord came here to go to a cross, to take you there and if you make your bed in

the grave, behold He is there. There is nowhere you can go that He is not there. Matthew 28:19–20 says

[19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” He will never leave you or forsake you. God has come. God is for us. Nothing can separate us from Him for our God is gloriously triumphant. Romans 8:31–32 says [31] What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

The Lord our God is with you. He has embraced you. He delights in you because He sent His Son to a cross so that He could embrace sinners, cleansed by the blood and clothed with His righteousness. Now have you embraced Him? He is your Protector, Provider, your Prince and your Savior. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Friend, if you have not made that commitment to Jesus Christ, may I invite you to Him today? Come and put your trust in Christ today. The Lord your God is with you but you must come to Him even as He calls you now. Say, “Lord, I know I'm a sinner and my sins separate me from You but I know that Jesus has come and gone to a cross to pay for my sins so I receive You even as I repent of my sins. I put my trust in You.” Dear friend, when you know Him, He is not just here and there, He is in you. We His temple, as the Psalmist says, has risen to His rest. He rests in you and takes delight in you. Now delight yourself in Him. O Lord, thank You for Your presence. Thank You for Your power. Thank You for the Prince of Prince, the preeminent Savior who saves us from our sins and who will never leave us nor forsake us until we go to be with Him. Now O Savior, who has come, who has given us of His Spirit, come again and until then, take us to victory unto victory, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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