

WEEK 5

Isaac, The Man Who Accepted God's Sovereignty

Isaac is one of those characters in the Bible who seemed to have a good life. He married a woman whom he loved. He saw God answer his prayer concerning children. He had two healthy sons and became wealthy. God continued to bless him throughout his life. Yes, he did make a mistake by being deceptive, but that allows us to see his human nature. At first glance, I wondered, "Lord, what could you possibly want to teach me from Isaac's life?"

But as I began to spend more and more time looking at his life, I saw Isaac as a man who seemed to have everything going his way, and yet, in the end, was an unknowing and unwilling participant in the deceptive plan of others who were close to him. Was it unfair? Yes. But was God in control? Definitely. What a great reminder for us of God's sovereignty in everything that happens in our lives. He is aware of it before it even happens. He has a purpose for all things that He allows to happen. Isaac accepted God's sovereignty even though it must have been painful for him when he realized what had transpired. I pray that as you study Isaac's life you would be encouraged by God's hand in the circumstances around you, and that you would trust that God is still in control.

"Father, teach me from Isaac's life. Help me trust that you are in control of everything that happens in my life, even when those circumstances seem unfair. Help me see your hand in the events of my life. Help me accept your sovereignty, not with bitterness, but with calm trust in your love for me."

DAY 1: God's Choice of Isaac's Wife

Abraham was now 140 years old (Gen. 21:5; 25:20) and would live another 35 years (25:7).

Looking to God's Word

Genesis 24:1-33, 54-67

1. Why did Abraham want Isaac to marry someone from his own people and country, not from Canaan?
2. Why was Abraham adamant about Isaac not going back to the land from which they had come?
3. How did Abraham's servant choose a wife for Isaac?
4. What do you learn about Rebekah from this passage?

Looking Upward

5. How do you see God's sovereign hand at work in this story?
6. How have you asked God to lead you in making a decision and following His will?

Looking Deeper

Read the entire chapter (Genesis 24).

- What observations do you make about the servant's heart and attitude toward God?
- How would you counsel a Christian who wants to marry a non-believer, or a Christian who has a dynamic walk with God who wants to marry a non-believer? What Scripture would you use?

Looking Reflectively

God will guide those seeking to do His will.

- If you are seeking God's guidance in a decision, take it before the Lord and ask Him to make it clear what He wants you to do.
- Meditate on Proverbs 16:9. "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps."

DAY 2: Isaac and Rebekah

Looking to God's Word

NOTE: Genesis 25:1-6 gives us the history of Abraham's family through another wife, Keturah. Genesis 25:7-11 records his death and burial and Genesis 25:12-18 lists Ishmael's descendants. In verse 19, we pick up the story of Isaac again.

Genesis 25:19-23

1. How old was Isaac when he married Rebekah?
2. What do you observe from these verses concerning both Isaac and Rebekah's relationship with God?
3. Abraham and Sarah took things into their own hands with Sarah's barrenness. Why might Isaac and Rebekah have waited on God instead?
4. What did the Lord prophesy would result from the "struggle" within her body?

Looking Upward

5. What role does prayer have in bringing about desired results? Can you change God's mind through prayer?
6. How do you handle disappointing or confusing situations?

Looking Deeper

The oracle that God gave to Rebekah in Genesis 25:23 indicates God's choice of the one who would be the blessed heir of Isaac. Usually, the heir would be the first born son, but God chose to not follow the "norm" in this case. Scripture does not tell us why God chose Jacob over Esau.

- What insight does Romans 9:10-18 give?
- What do you learn about God from this passage in Romans?

Looking Reflectively

We may not always understand God's hand, but we can always trust His heart.

- Is there something that you are struggling with today in understanding God’s actions or silence?
- Go to God in prayer with the desires of your heart and trust Him to answer in His way and according to His will, not yours.

DAY 3: Isaac’s Sons, Esau and Jacob

Looking to God’s Word

Genesis 25:24-34

1. What do you observe about Esau?
2. What do you observe about Jacob?
3. How old was Isaac when the twins were born? How long did Isaac and Rebekah have to wait till they had children? (See Gen. 25:20.)
4. Why was the birthright important? What did Esau give up by selling his birthright (see also Deut. 21:17)?
5. Why was God’s prediction to Rebekah in Genesis 25:23 significant to this incident?

Looking Upward

6. What are some possible reasons why Rebekah favored Jacob, and Isaac favored Esau?
7. What causes sibling rivalry? Have you experienced it in your life, either with your own siblings or with your children? If so, how has it affected you and them? What have you learned from it?

Looking Deeper

Hebrews 12:15-17

- How does the author of Hebrews describe Esau and why?
- What insight does Genesis 26:34-35 and 28:6-9 give?
- Why was he not able to find a “place for repentance even though he sought for it with tears” (NASB)?

Looking Reflectively

I don’t have children but I do have two cats that are like children to me. Before I got them, I wondered if I would have a favorite, but I soon realized that each one is special and unique. They each have different personalities, different quirks, different things that make them special. Do I love one more than the other? No. But I do love them each in their own special way because of their uniqueness. In the same way, God loves us each because of who we are and our special uniqueness that He has given to us.

- Do you ever struggle with feeling that God loves you less than another Christian brother or sister? Why? How do you handle it?
- Take a moment and confess any jealousy or rivalry toward someone else. Thank God that He has created you uniquely, and that He loves you just the way you are.

DAY 4: Isaac's Time in Gerar

Looking to God's Word

Genesis 26:1-6

1. Why did Isaac go to Gerar and stay there?

Genesis 26:7-11

2. How did Isaac follow the negative example of his father Abraham (see Genesis 12:10-13 and 20:1-2)?
3. What do you learn about Isaac from this incident? Was his deception a lack of faith? Why or why not?

Genesis 26:12-17

4. How did God bless Isaac in this land?

Looking Upward

5. Isaac was not perfect, as seen in the story of how he lied to Abimelech for fear he might be killed. He took things into his own hands. How have you taken things into your own hands and what resulted?
6. What mistakes have you made in life that you would like to go back and redo?

Looking Deeper

- God appeared to Isaac twice in this chapter (Genesis 26:2-5 and 26:24). What was God's message to Isaac in both instances?
- Why might God have chosen these instances to appear to Isaac?

Looking Reflectively

God is faithful to His promises. Our response should be one of trust in Him moment by moment.

- Thank Him for His faithfulness to you. Confess the ways you have shown a lack of faith in Him.
- Write out Isaiah 26:3-4 in your own words and meditate on it. "The steadfast of mind Thou will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in Thee. Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock."

DAY 5: The Stolen Blessing

Looking to God's Word

Hebrews 11:20

1. Why was Isaac's blessing of his sons, Jacob and Esau, by faith?

Genesis 27:1-41

2. Read the entire chapter. What do you learn about Jacob and Rebekah from this story? Who was responsible for the deception?
3. How do the two blessings differ (27:27-29 and 39-40)?
4. How do you see God's sovereignty in this situation? (See also Genesis 25:22-23).

Looking Upward

5. How do you keep "bitterness" from creeping in when someone has treated you unfairly? How should you handle an unfair situation?
6. How have you seen God take an unfair situation and bring good out of it?
7. What are some examples of strong desires that might cause us to give up what really matters?

Looking Deeper

Look further at Genesis 27.

- How did Isaac and Esau respond when they realized the deception?
- What was the significance of a blessing in those days and why could it not be reversed?
- What was the difference between a birthright and a blessing?

Looking Reflectively

Even in the midst of surprises in life, God is still in control.

Life is not always fair, but God is. Trust in His sovereignty.

- Have you ever been deceived or taken advantage of by someone else? How did you handle it?
- If there is an issue in your life that is unfair, how are you dealing with it? Have you forgiven those who have wronged you? Go before the Lord and be honest with Him. Ask Him for the grace to accept His sovereignty in your life.

“The mess of pottage that is dangerous to you and to me is any temptation to gratify the 'feelings' of the immediate moment in a way that shows we 'despise' the promises of the living God for our future.”¹

- Are you in danger of being tempted to give up something precious in order to indulge a sudden strong desire?
- In what ways have you seen God’s sovereign hand in your life?

Isaac was a man who loved God. By faith he blessed his two sons. Even though the blessings were not as Isaac had planned, they were indeed as God had planned. He was grieved at the deception, but nonetheless accepted what happened. Can we do the same? Can we accept what God’s plan is even if it contradicts what we think is right? God is in control. We can rest in that, no matter what surprises life has in store for us.

“Lord, thank you for Isaac’s example. He accepted his circumstances as from You and didn’t fight it. Help me to trust you in the midst of situations that I don’t like or think are unfair to me. Help me see through your eyes and accept with grace what You have allowed to happen in Your sovereignty.”

Meditate on Isaiah 55:8-9. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

¹Edith Schaeffer, "What Is My Mess of Pottage?" *Christianity Today* (March 14, 1975), p. 50.