

Genesis Chapters 25-26 – John Karmelich

1. If I had to give one lesson from these two chapters, it would be the following: God uses imperfect people to get his will done.
 - a) The great mistake Christians make is we think God is going to smack us because we had a bad day. Further, we think we have to do “something special” in order to get God’s blessings. The focus is turned away from God and unto our actions.
 - b) These chapters focus on the end of Abraham’s life and unto the life of his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob.
 - c) We will read of mistakes made, violations of the ten commandments, spiritual warfare issues, and generally, a whole lot of messy things. ☺ The common thread to watch is God’s will getting done with and without people’s cooperation.
 - d) Yes God wants obedience, and there is personal rewards for such. What one has to remember is that God has a bigger plan for mankind than just what is going on in our life. If we don’t choose to be used by God, He will find someone else. Further, God uses our mistakes for his good. It doesn’t excuse the mistakes, it is just a reminder that God is aware of our shortcomings and often uses those circumstances to get his will done.
2. We have a number of stories in this chapter:
 - a) The “epilogue” and final days of Abraham. The first set of verses focuses on the final days of Abraham. It is sort of a “happy ending” to a life serving God.
 - b) Next we have the story of the birth of Isaac’s two sons, Esau and Jacob.
 - i) These two children are the classical struggle between doing God’s will versus doing our own will. It is told in word-pictures of Esau and Jacob.
 - ii) Esau and Jacob were real people. The important thing to grasp when reading this section is how their lives were “word-pictures” of our struggles between our old human nature and doing God’s will.
 - c) Finally we have a story about Isaac that is very similar to one about his father.
 - i) At one time, Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife in order to protect his life. In this lesson, Abraham’s son says the same thing about his wife Rebekah. We are going to get into some “like father, like son” lessons.
3. Chapter 25-1: Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. ² She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. ³ Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the descendants of Dedan were the Asshurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. ⁴ The sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephher, Hanoch, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.
 - a) I have to admit that this part gets me. It is “comprehensible” to tell the story of Abraham being called by God, being obedient to God, the stories of Sarah and Isaac. You would think that after all of these chapters, we would then read of Abraham dying, going to heaven and living happily ever after. Instead we discover that Abraham had “another life” after the death of his wife Sarah and after Isaac was grown up and was married.
 - b) Therefore, the first question to ponder is, why does God want us to know that Abraham got remarried after Sarah’s death and had more children?
 - i) You can start with a technical note: This “new wife” Keturah is called Abraham’s “concubine” in 1st Chronicles 1:32. When Sarah died, she moved up in status, but she is still not considered an “equal” with Sarah.
 - c) Back to the “why” question: Why does Abraham remarry and have more children?
 - i) God promised Abraham that “many nations” would come from him. (Gen. 17:4-5) This prophecy is further fulfilled in these verses. These children born of Keturah went on to form the Arabic nations, along with the children of Abraham’s other son, Ishmael. Maybe Abraham figured, “If God promised me many nations, and

- ii) God doesn't want me dead yet, maybe I should keep going. ☺
 - iii) Some commentators suspect that when God miraculously made Abraham and Sarah able to have children again, that gift of fertility was permanent and Abraham continued to "exercise" that gift.
 - d) Abraham's love of his life (Sarah) for a century is now dead. There was a time of "closure" and we had the whole section of Abraham buying the burial plot and finding a wife for the promised son, Isaac. But even after the "great mission" is accomplished, God may still want to use you for other things.
 - e) The word "retire" is not in the bible, (at least not as we think of retiring). One can retire from a profession, even from the "professional ministry", but one never retires from serving God. Even after major goals have been accomplished, one has to be open to new possibilities and new opportunities at any age. Abraham didn't "retire" from serving God even after Sarah died and his children were now married.
4. Verse 5: Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. ⁶ But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east.
- a) Another reason why the first 4 verses of this chapter exist is to see them in contrast to Verse 5. We read of Abraham having lots of children and grandchildren. We also read that Abraham was a wealthy man, yet "he gave all that he owned" to Isaac, other than some nice parting gifts to the other sons. ☺ Again, the question is "why".
 - b) A big reason is that Abraham understood the prophetic word-picture. He understood the importance of the Messiah coming and by giving all that he had to Isaac, Abraham was "pointing the way" to this coming Messiah.
 - i) Remember that salvation to a Christian is to look back at the "cross". Salvation to Abraham was to look forward to the "cross". Abraham may not have understood all the details of God's redemptive plan, but I believe He understood there was some future event, and the offering of Isaac a few chapters back was symbolic of some future event that God had planned.
 - c) Getting back to the big-picture of Genesis, remember that this is a book of "beginning's"
 - i) It is about the foundation of the people that populate the earth.
 - ii) It is also about the foundation of the specific Jewish nation that God would use to bring in the Messiah and be God's witnesses to the surrounding world.
 - iii) It is also about "the land". This cannot be under-emphasized. The specific Promised Land, what we know as Israel, is an unconditional promise to the descendants of Abraham, then only Isaac and then only Jacob. This has nothing to do with Jewish obedience and comprehension of Christianity. This has to do with God keeping his unconditional promises about the land belong to those people.
 - iv) This ties back to Verse 5. All the descendants of Abraham except Isaac were sent "to the east", out of the Promised Land territory.
 - v) Remember the only piece of real estate that Abraham owned was his burial plot. Yet he understood and believed in God's promise that one day all of the land will go to the descendants of Isaac and then to the descendants of his son Jacob. Abraham acted on that promise by sending his other sons out of that land.
 - vi) This is also a word picture of why Abraham gave his other sons gifts. The other sons would be blessed because they are sons of Abraham. The "special blessing" goes to Isaac. Not because Isaac was a better person than the rest, but because God is choosing to work through Isaac to lead to the Promised Messiah of Israel.

5. Verse 7: Altogether, Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years.⁸ Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.⁹ His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite,¹⁰ the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah.¹¹ After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.
- a) Here we have the actual death and transition point from Abraham to Isaac.
 - b) In Verse 8, we have Abraham's "obituary". There is nothing said about Abraham's faithfulness, his obedience, his offering of Isaac or of all his sons. The final words about him was that Abraham was that he was "full of years" and "gathered to his people."
 - c) The phrase "full of years" means he lived a full life. The greatest way to experience life is to live in full obedience to God. In a sense, all of Abraham's biblical accomplishments can be summed up by the phrase "full of years". He lived in obedience to God.
 - i) By discovering the specific talents God has given us, by using the passion God has placed in our heart, by abiding close to God via His word and prayer, we too, can be "full of years" at our death.
 - d) Jesus in a parable tells about what we should expect when we get to heaven. Jesus was describing the rewards in heaven and said, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." (Matthew 25:21b-22, NKJV)
 - i) In a sense, that is the description given to Abraham. He was "full of years", as he was faithful in what God had called him to do. He was "gathered to his people" as he was saved for eternity.
 - e) The second key phrased is "gathered to his people". This is not about being buried next to Sarah. This is about being resurrected. In fact, Jesus himself comments how Abraham is resurrected. (Reference: Matthew 22:32, Luke 16:24).
 - i) Never lose sight of the fact that we are saved and will live forever. We can debate over theological differences, but salvation is the key issue.
 - f) You know, I just noticed there are other verses in this paragraph besides Verse 8. ☺
 - i) I'm fascinated by the fact that Isaac and Ishmael buried him. My first thought is what happened to the other kids that were mentioned in Verses 1-4? Why did they not join in the burial process? There is no answer given.
 - ii) It shows that Ishmael was still in contact with his father or at least with Isaac. Despite the fact that Ishmael was cast out by his father at age 14, he still had enough respect for his father to bury him.
 - iii) I give some credit to Ishmael's mother Hagar for this. She was the one who was "there" in the early days of Abraham and understood Abraham's relationship with God. She probably put that fear of the true God into Ishmael and explained to him why it was necessary to be cast out. The point is that Ishmael still had enough respect for Abraham to be there at the burial. He understood that his father was a great man and "did what was necessary".
 - g) Verse 11 says, "After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac."
 - i) We are going to read of Isaac's struggles and issues over the next few chapters. I believe the specific "blessing" described in Verse 11 is another verse tied to the fact that Isaac is to be "something special" and part of the Messianic line.

6. Verse 12: This is the account of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's maidservant, Hagar the Egyptian, bore to Abraham. ¹³ These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴ Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵ Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. ¹⁶ These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers according to their settlements and camps. ¹⁷ Altogether, Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people. ¹⁸ His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt, as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers.
- a) The key to understanding this paragraph is to read it in context with Verse 19:
 - i) Verse 12: "This is the account of Abraham's son Ishmael."
 - ii) Verse 19: "This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac."
 - b) The good news is that I'm not going to do a study of the individual sons of Ishmael, the meaning of their names, and their geographical and locational history! ☺
 - i) There actually is some interesting facts behind those names, but I don't think it is relevant to the topic-at-hand of how does "Genesis" affect our life personally.
 - ii) The people we refer to as the "Arabic nations" are the decedents of Ishmael along with those of Abraham's concubine Keturah.
 - c) The main reason they are listed is to compare and contrast the promises and blessings given to Ishmael and those given to Isaac.
 - i) Back in Genesis 17:20, God told Ishmael's mother Hagar that Ishmael would be the father of 12 princes. Here in Verse 13-14, we see that prophecy literally becoming true. This gets back to why I believe Ishmael was at Abraham's burial. He understood that his father had a special calling by God and this "12 son prophecy" came true helped Ishmael to understand the God of the Bible.
 - d) This gets back to the question of why would God bless Ishmael like this? After all, he's a "product of the flesh" and not the promised son Isaac.
 - i) Despite the fact of how Ishmael was born, God made an unconditional promise that "kings" and "many nations" would come from Abraham.
 - ii) This is not about Abraham's faithfulness. This is not about Ishmael's faithfulness. This is about God's faithfulness.
 - iii) One of the secrets of a great prayer life is not to approach God based on our "good deeds" but on God's unconditional promise to bless us. The mistake we make is we think that because we have been "especially good" on a certain day that "God owes us" or if we have a bad day, God is going to punish us. God is aware of all we do before we were born. God blesses us only because God wants to bless us. A great prayer is to approach God based on His faithfulness to bless us, and not on our deeds. It reminds us of what God wants to do and His will getting done.
 - iv) If you study some of the great prayers and interceding by people like Moses, Daniel and even Jesus himself, you will see that the prayers are not based on anything these people or Jesus did, but on God being faithful to His promises.
7. Verse 19: This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac, ²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean.
- a) One thing to keep in mind in this text is that there is a time overlap. We read of Ishmael's sons and grandsons, and this overlaps Isaac's sons and his grandsons. As another bit of trivia, many of the people we have read about many chapters ago, lived a lot longer than we think about. For example, Noah's son Shem died during the lifetime of Abraham. Abraham could have heard the story of the flood first hand. One of the reasons Abraham may have sent his servant back to "his people" to get a wife for Isaac is that people like Shem were still around to be an influence of the true God of the Universe.

- b) I bring this up as we read in this verse of the emphasis of Isaac's wife Rebekah and where she "came from". Her brother and father are mentioned in Verse 20.
 - c) Also notice that Isaac was 40 when he got married. Which means the arrangement of the marriage happened when Isaac was 39 or 40 years old. This is why many commentators think Isaac was in his early 30's when Abraham "offered him" as a sacrifice. Jesus was about 32 when he died on the cross. That also fits the "word picture" very well.
8. Verse 21: Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant.
- a) First, notice that there is a 20-year gap of not having any children!
 - i) Verse 26 says, "Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth..."
 - ii) Verse 20 says they were married when Isaac was 40.
 - b) The first thing to discuss is the "spiritual warfare" behind the scenes of barrenness.
 - i) Remember that Abraham was barren for a long time before either the birth of Isaac or Ishmael. Satan knew that God had promised the "seed" through Abraham and one has to wonder if there are spiritual forces that caused this barrenness.
 - ii) Now we read of this 20-year gap for Isaac. Again, Satan knew that the messianic seed ran through Isaac. We read in Verse 21 of Isaac offering prayer, and then Rebekah became pregnant.
 - iii) Way back in Chapter 3, when God put a curse on Satan, part of that curse is that the "seed" of Eve's offspring will strike Satan's head (See Genesis 3:15 NIV). Satan is trying to prevent that from happening, and one has to ponder if there are spiritual forces preventing the next generation from succeeding.
 - c) I should also discuss barrenness itself. One of the painful things a couple can experience is to be barren when they desire children. (For those of you who can't "relate" to this problem, fill in your own dilemma or problem to these next set of comments.)
 - i) You look at this verse and say, "OK, all I have to do is pray about it, and God will get us pregnant". People who think like that forget about the "20 years" part! ☺
 - ii) First of all, God desires that we have children. His command to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:22) was never rescinded. Given that, why does God allow barrenness, especially for someone who believes in God?
 - iii) One possibility is that God is testing us. God tested Isaac and Rebekah for 20 years! God allows us to go through difficult situations to test our faith.
 - iv) In some particular cases, there may be some other reason. For example, when God told King Hezekiah it was time to die, Hezekiah asked for additional time. God "gave in" and Hezekiah lived another 15 years. During that time period, King Manasseh was born, who was considered one of the most evil kings in the history of Israel. (See 2nd Kings Chapter 21).
 - v) I am also a believer in using "modern science" to help barrenness. My wife and I have gone through invitro to have children. I figure if God gave us the gift of scientific discovery, he expects us to use that gift.
 - vi) If you break your leg, you don't say "its God will" and just lie there in pain, you go to the hospital and use the best medical technology you can get to recover. You still pray for recovery and let God work through those people for recovery.
 - vii) The same goes for any legal method to end barrenness. If God wants to continue to allow barrenness (or any other trial you are going through), it will happen no matter what you do. It is up to us to "take footsteps" to bring suffering to the end. We pray to God for trials to be over, but at the same time God does not expect us to just "sit there". He wants us to keep moving through our trials. At the same time, there must be an acceptance of God's will, no matter what the outcome.

- d) Before I move on, there is another “word-picture” being taught here:
- i) It was Isaac who prayed on his wife’s behalf for a baby.
 - ii) I believe the bible teaches God intended the man to be the “high priest” of the family. One of the responsibilities of being the “head of the household” is to pray on behalf of those “under you”. If you are single, then you are head of a household of one. If you are married with children, God wants you to pray and intercede on behalf of your family members.
9. Verse 22: The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. ²³ The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."
- a) Give Rebekah a little credit here. She knew “something was going on”, and she went to God first to seek answers.
 - b) This prophecy was given directly to Rebekah and spoken by God to her. It does show that God does speak to women in the bible and they too can be given prophetic messages.
 - c) What does this message mean? Essentially, it is that each of the twins will be the father of a great nation. The one born second will rule over the one born first.
 - i) The one born second was Jacob. He became the father of the 12 tribes of Israel. The one born first was Esau. His descendants were many of the nations that resisted the 12 tribes of Israel entering the Promised Land in the first place.
 - d) This is the first story of twins born in the bible. We are going to read how each of the twins has a different personality. It shows that people are born with certain personality traits despite being twins and being raised in the same household with the same values.
 - e) OK, onto the big question: Why did God allow this to happen? Why did God allow these twins to be born? Why did each be the father of a nation and each hate each other?
 - i) Why not just have Rebekah give birth to Jacob, and he continues the messianic line? Why bother with twins and have them struggle? What is the word picture?
 - ii) To understand this prophecy, you have to grasp that this was bigger than just the twins in her womb. This is about an eternal struggle between the twins.
 - iii) Part of the answer is to understand that “our old “human nature” now battles with our “spiritual nature”. When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives as new believers, his job is to get you to do God’s will. Our ego’s struggle to do things “our way”, and thus the struggle. This is the word-picture of “twins” being born.
 - iv) The reason God uses this word picture of “struggling twins” is because before we became born-again, our old egotistical nature didn’t struggle with anybody. To be born-again means to constantly fight against our old human nature. Therefore, to “give birth to a new spiritual being” also gives birth to the struggle with our old human nature. Thus, to be born-again is to “spiritually give birth to twins”.
10. Verse 24: When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁵ The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. ²⁶ After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.
- a) I find it interesting that Isaac and Rebekah waited until the twins came out to pick names for them based on how they acted on their birthday. Maybe they are like typical parents of today, arguing and debating for months over what to name their children. ☺
 - b) More likely, because Rebekah knew about this prophecy of “two nations in her womb”, she then wanted to see how they looked when they came out to pick their names.
 - c) The first twin out was named Esau. The name can be literally translated “Hairy”.
 - d) The second twin was named Jacob because he caught the heel of Esau. The name can be literally translated “heel-catcher”. The name implies “conniving” in a deceitful way.
 - e) Roughly a thousand years later, the prophet Hosea commented on this birthday:

- i) “In the womb he grasped his brother's heel; as a man he struggled with God.” (Hosea 12:3 NIV)
 - ii) In context, Hosea was commenting on the nation of Israel. In fact the word “Israel” means “struggle”. This gets back to the concept of our spiritual nature “struggling” with our old human nature. It is about our internal struggle of wanting to do God’s will versus doing our own will. It is a struggle with God.
 - iii) Remember that the prophecy given to Rebekah teaches that “the older (Esau) will serve the younger (Jacob).” This means that God’s-will, will eventually rule over our own will. If we let God work in our lives, our desire to serve God will rule over our own spiritual nature.
 - f) How do we let our spiritual nature “win”? The answer is to “feed the spiritual nature and starve the human nature”. There is an old illustration about a man who has two fighting dogs. When asked which one wins, the man says, “the one I feed the most that day”. If you spend your time abiding in the things of God, you are “feeding your spiritual nature”. If you spend your time in non-Godly pleasure, you are “feeding the human side”. Notice what happens to you when you spend time away from God, away from prayer and away from his Word. I have seen the physical and emotional changes in my own life when I have “feed the wrong twin too much”. Luckily God can alleviate “that stomach ache” ☺ by confessing sin and then feeding the “correct twin”.
11. Verse 27: The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. ²⁸ Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.
- a) Verses 27 and 28 comment on the different natures of each child. Each was born with a different personality. Some commentators see Jacob as somewhat effeminate, but I disagree. The word translated “quiet man” implies “whole” or “complete”.
 - b) Let’s get back to the discussion of the “flesh and the spirit”. The “flesh” or our old human nature wants to “see the world” and “see what it has to offer”. Esau is a perfect example of this. Esau is a “man’s man”. He wants to grab his hunting rifle and “go for the gusto”. Esau would star in beer commercials today! ☺
 - c) Next, we have Jacob. Jacob is content hanging around the house. Rebekah knew that Jacob would be in charge one day (“the older will serve the younger” prediction) and Jacob stayed home and was “raised” by Rebekah. Again, we have the word picture of “feeding the spirit” as opposed to “feeding the flesh”. In this word picture, Jacob was content to stay and learn of God, to “spend time with the Godly issues” as opposed to being “a man of the world” like Esau.
 - d) One has to remember the point of these verses is not to teach that hunting is wrong and hanging around the house is right. This is a literal, historical story, but it meant to teach us about the eternal struggles between our human nature and our spiritual nature.
 - e) I should comment a little on Isaac here. This is the first we read of Isaac “sinning” in the sense that he favored Esau over Jacob. I suspect Rebekah told her husband Isaac about the prophecy of Jacob, yet Isaac preferred Esau because he was a “man’s man”. The text says that Isaac “had a taste for wild game”. This is a word-picture of Isaac, despite being the “Promised Son”, still has his own human nature to contend with and he is “tempted” by Esau and what Esau brings him.
12. Verse 29: Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. ³⁰ He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.) ³¹ Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." ³² "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" ³³ But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

- a) Here we have one of the more famous stories in the bible: Esau “selling” his birthright to Jacob for a pot of red stew.
 - b) First, I need to explain what is the birthright. In Jewish law, the first born son is to have a double-portion of the family inheritance. For example, if there are three sons, the father splits his inheritance four ways, and the oldest gets two portions. If there are four sons, the father splits it five ways, and the oldest gets two portions, etc. (See Deut. 21:17)
 - i) There is also a religious concept of the first-born is the “spiritual representative” among the brethren. He is to be the “high priest” of the family and the spiritual leader among his younger siblings. (Reference: See Numbers 3:13)
 - c) To understand Esau, is to comprehend that he didn’t care about the birthright of the firstborn. He figured, “I’m a good hunter, I can provide for myself, why do I need the double-portion of the firstborn son? Further, I don’t care for that “religious stuff”, so I don’t want to be the high priest of the family”.
 - i) The fact that Esau was willing to sell his birthright for a pot of red stew means that he would sell it for anything. The concept of the red stew is that “any old excuse” was good enough to give up the birthright.
 - ii) Our world is full of Esau’s. There are millions who acknowledge the existence of God and even do religious things, but they don’t turn their lives over to God. They go about their business, and trust in their own skills or fate, or emotions for their life. For all intents and purposes, God is ignored on a daily basis.
 - iii) Some commentators believe that Esau came to Jacob starving, and that Jacob was “blackmailing” him into selling his birthright. I disagree with this view. I do believe that Esau came back hungry, and his emotions took over his rational thinking. But I see Esau as a “type of the flesh” who is driven by emotions and feelings rather than by Godly intentions. If it wasn’t this incident of the red stew, I guarantee some other incident would have caused Esau to sell his birthright.
 - iv) The book of Hebrews also uses Esau as an word-picture of those who don’t care about God: “See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son.” (Heb. 12:16 NIV)
 - d) It is also important to grasp now why it was symbolically important of why Esau was born first. Esau represents are old human nature. That is always born first. When we are “born again”, we are now born with a second spiritual nature. It is then that the two natures struggle with each other.
 - e) Before I move on, I should also talk about the words “Esau” and “Edom”.
 - i) Esau means “hairy”. Edom means “red”. It is a word play on the “red stew” that was cooked. Esau gave up his birthright because of the red stew. The nickname “red” stuck as to remind us of what caused Esau to give up his birthright.
 - ii) The word “red” is a pun and is associated with “earthy” as in the red-clay-like material that makes up “dirt”. It is another word-picture of how Esau is associated with “the world” (i.e., human nature) as opposed to Jacob who is a word-picture of his struggle to be God-like.
 - iii) Verse 30 says that Esau was also called “Edom”. Esau’s descendants became known as the Edomites.
13. Chapter 26, Verse 1: Now there was a famine in the land--besides the earlier famine of Abraham's time--and Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines in Gerar. ² The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. ³ Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. ⁴ I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, ⁵ because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws." ⁶ So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

- a) We now have the story of a famine in the Promised Land. God instructs Isaac to “stay put” and don’t go to Egypt for food.
 - b) Among those living in this Promised Land is the Philistines. They were first mentioned in Chapter 21 as one of the tribes living in this area.
 - c) We also have the name Abimelech appearing again. If you remember, there was a King Abimelech who had a number of encounters with Abraham. This is not the same guy. Abimelech is a title like “Caesar”. Most likely, this Abimelech was the son of the one Abraham encountered.
 - d) Genesis makes a big deal about Isaac never leaving the Promised Land.
 - i) Back in Chapter 24, we had a whole chapter about Abraham sending his servant to fetch a bride for Isaac as Abraham didn’t want Isaac to leave the land.
 - ii) Here we have God himself appearing to Isaac and telling him to stay put.
 - iii) The word picture of this chapter is that despite the fact that a famine exists, it will not be permanent. The Land will still be fruitful one day and go to the descendants of Abraham and Isaac.
 - e) Isaac was living in Gerar. This is border town between the Promised Land and Egypt.
 - i) You could build a whole sermon on how “Isaac was living on the edge”. God told him to stay in the land, but Isaac “was pushing it” as he got close to the edge. It is a word picture of about when sticking close to God, don’t go to the “edge”.
 - f) We should talk a little about famines. Famines are not a good thing. It means starvation.
 - i) God allows famines for His greater purpose just as God allows struggles and problems in our lives for His greater purposes. We don’t always understand why God allows these things to happen, but God wants us to trust in Him and continue to abide in Him through these times. This is the “word-picture” in this paragraph as God commands Isaac to “abide” in the Promised Land through this famine.
14. Verse 7: When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," because he was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful."
- a) This next section can be titled, “Like father, like son”.
 - b) Two times in his life, Abraham told a half-truth to King Abimelech how his wife Sarah is also his sister. Sarah was Abraham’s half sister, and his wife. (Ref.: Gen. 12:19, 20:2, 20:5).
 - i) Now we have Isaac telling another King Abimelech, essentially the same thing about Rebekah. The only difference between Isaac and Abraham is that Abraham was telling a “half-truth” and Isaac was telling a “whole lie”. Both are a violation of one of the Ten Commandments. (“Not bear false-witness” Exodus 20:16).
 - c) OK, the big question: Why did this happen? Why does God want us to know that Isaac repeated this sin of his father and why did he do it?
 - i) Like his father, Isaac was scared for his life. He ignored the fact that God said He would bless Isaac and focuses on the fears of the problem-at-hand.
 - ii) It is a reminder to us that “sin does not die with old age” or that “sin does not die when our parents die”. The same problems and issues are going to continue from generation to generation. We can learn from our parents’ mistakes. It is a reminder that our parents are human. We have the choice of making the same mistakes of our parents or learning from them.
 - iii) Just because Isaac was the “promised son”, doesn’t mean he didn’t struggle with sin. One of the reasons that God shows the faults and sins of Isaac is to show that the Messiah is not Isaac. Isaac is a word-picture of a promised future Messiah in many ways. It was important to show Isaac’s imperfections in order to show that the Messiah was technically not Isaac and it was someone to come in the future.

15. Verse 8: When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. ⁹ So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, "She is really your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac answered him, "Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her." ¹⁰ Then Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." ¹¹ So Abimelech gave orders to all the people: "Anyone who molests this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."
- a) If you get a sense of déjà vu reading this text, you should. The story is very similar to that of Chapter 20. In Chapter 20, we had King Abimelech being the "good guy" and doing the right thing" and preventing anyone from having sexual relationships with Rebekah.
 - b) I stated earlier that you could call this whole section "like father, like son".
 - i) Not only did Isaac repeat the "bad" mistakes of his father Abraham, but this King Abimelech repeated the "good part" his father taught him about how Abraham was a prophet and therefore, not to mess around with his son. Remember that the King Abimelech that Abraham knew was barren. Abraham prayed for that king, and then that king had children, which is probably one of the guys talking to Isaac.
 - c) Without going into too much detail, why does God include this section? What is there for us to learn by Genesis "repeating these details" unto the next generation? Here again, is a pagan king "doing what is right" and Isaac telling a lie (violating a "10 commandment").
 - i) I think it is a reminder that that God's promises are unconditional. Here is Isaac messing up and God works again through a pagan king to remedy the situation. I see this as being more about God's unconditional promises of the Land belonging to Isaac's descendants, no matter how bad Isaac messes things up.
 - d) Remember that this paragraph is not suggesting, "I can go ahead and mess up, because I'm saved no matter what and God will use my mess for his good". That is Paul's main point in Romans Chapter 6:
 - i) "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (Romans 6:1-2 NIV)
 - ii) This paragraph in Genesis does show that God's will, will-be accomplished despite our sins, but it doesn't excuse our sins. We live a much better life in obedience than we do in resisting God's will. It is almost like God constantly asking us, "Are you going to be part of the problem or part of the solution? Because with you or without you, My will, will be done".
 - e) I also wanted to talk about this paragraph in context of the previous chapter.
 - i) We read of Jacob "blackmailing" Esau to sell him his birthright. Next, we read of Isaac "messing up" with King Abimelech. Why does one story follow the next?
 - ii) I can summarize the "connectedness" of these stories with Paul's comment: "For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." (1 Corinthians 1:25 NIV)
 - a) John's loose translation: "You can't make this stuff up if you tried." God allowed strange circumstances to occur in order to validate the bible as the word of God. If we were to make up stories about Isaac and Jacob, they would be heroes who overcame their weaknesses. That is not the pattern we see in the bible. We read of lying, disobedience to God, fear of one's life, deception and depravity of man. Despite all of this, God works in our lives because He loves us as we are, sin and all and God's will gets done despite our faults. Isaac "messed up" like his father, but despite that he was still blessed by God.

16. Verse 12: Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him. ¹³ The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. ¹⁴ He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. ¹⁵ So all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth.
- a) We just read of Isaac lying and God “bailing him out”. ☺ Yet here in Verse 12, we read of Isaac planting crops and getting a great harvest.
 - b) This verse alone is a wonderful picture of the grace of God despite our faults. God said he was going to bless Isaac in the Promised Land and God meant it. When God told Isaac He was going to bless him back in Verse 3, the only “condition” was that Isaac remains in the land. Despite his sin before King Abimelech, God kept his promise.
 - c) This section is about being a good witness for God. Let’s face it, when you are being blessed by God. You have a good attitude. God is blessing your ministry and it is growing. There is no “logical” explanation for it other than the grace of God. At that point, don’t expect non-believers to say, “Well, good for you, you’re being bless by God”. This is often when the persecution comes.
 - i) Remember that Satan does not want new converts. It only brings him one person closer to his ultimate destruction. There will only be a fixed number of people in heaven (as opposed to infinite: see Romans 11:25). Therefore Satan doesn’t want to hit that “magic number” and will persecute any movement that helps the growth of the number of saved people.
 - ii) I say all of this as we read in these verses of how the Philistines envied Isaac. It is an example of persecution that believers will receive.
 - a) “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (2nd Timothy 3:12, NIV)
17. Verse 16: Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us." ¹⁷ So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. ¹⁸ Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them.
- a) Notice Isaac did not say to the Philistines... “Sorry, I’m not moving. God gave me and my descendants this land, so you better get moving”. ☺
 - b) This is actually a wonderful example of meekness. Meekness means to have power, but not to use unnecessarily. An example would be a karate expert who gets verbally insulted, but has the wisdom to walk away even though he can kill him.
 - c) Isaac knew he would one day inherit all of this land. God was blessing his crops. But to show love, Isaac simply walked away from his crops and his blessings in order to be a good witness.
 - i) With that in mind, now read what Jesus said about meekness:
 - ii) “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5 NIV)
 - iii) Jesus point, like the karate expert, like Isaac is that we eventually get everything, why fight over “stuff” when we will inherit all things?
18. Verse 19: Isaac's servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. ²⁰ But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen and said, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they disputed with him. ²¹ Then they dug another well, but they quarreled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah. ²² He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth, saying, "Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish in the land."
- a) In this chapter Isaac digs three wells. The first two cause quarrels, and Isaac names the wells “dispute” and “opposition” based on what happened at those locations.

- b) One has to remember that this is a desert location. To collect whatever rainwater does come, it is necessary to dig wells for a water supply.
 - c) The third well is named “room” as there is room for everyone.
 - d) I heard a sermon by Jon Curson on the “three wells” tying to the concept of doing God’s will for your life. Let me summarize his main point: If you find the enemy “digging dirt in your well”, God may be calling you to move on to a different location. It may be God’s way of getting you to move to where God wants you to be.
19. Verse 23: From there he went up to Beersheba. ²⁴ That night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham." ²⁵ Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.
- a) Time for my standard question: Why did God appear at this point? Why here, why now?
 - i) Isaac dug three wells in three locations. The location of the third well was a place of peace. Verse 23 says he left that place of the third well and went to Beersheba.
 - ii) By “coincidence”, Beersheba happens to be the town where Abraham and the other Abimelech (the father of the one Isaac dealt with) made a “covenant of peace” as a border between them (See Chapter 21). Here is the same “place of peace” between Isaac and this “next” King Abimelech.
 - iii) It is probable that God is getting Isaac to move where he wanted him to be. Isaac left the place of the 3rd well, where there was no strife to go to Beersheba. God is speaking to Isaac here and reassuring him of the blessing is God telling Isaac “this is where I want you to be.
 - b) OK, John that’s neat. What does any of this have to do with us? What’s the application?
 - i) First it is the reminder that the promise of God’s blessing is not “just” to Abraham or Isaac, but to their descendants. It is another reminder of the unconditional promises made by God.
 - ii) Second, I have found that if God has you “on the move” in your life, He often gives us a reassurance of when we get to the place he wants us to stop. I am not guaranteeing a “great sign” from heaven will appear when you get to the right place, but I have often seen some sort of blessing, or reassurance or indication that I am (for that moment) where God wants me to be.
20. Verse 26: Meanwhile, Abimelech had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces. ²⁷ Isaac asked them, "Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?" ²⁸ They answered, "We saw clearly that the LORD was with you; so we said, `There ought to be a sworn agreement between us'--between us and you. Let us make a treaty with you ²⁹ that you will do us no harm, just as we did not molest you but always treated you well and sent you away in peace. And now you are blessed by the LORD." ³⁰ Isaac then made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. ³¹ 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.
- a) Let me summarize this section: Isaac had a lot of strife with those under King Abimelech. The King gave orders not to touch Isaac’s wife Rebekah some verses ago, but his people got jealous of Isaac’s financial success and fought over his wells. Here in this paragraph we read of the same guys wanting to make peace with Isaac. They saw God blessing Isaac and realized that Isaac was blessed by God.
 - b) This reminds me of one of my favorite biblical principals and promises:
 - i) “When a man’s ways are pleasing to the LORD, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.” (Proverbs 16:7 NIV)
 - ii) What this proverb is saying is that if you are in obedience to God, God will cause your enemies to be at peace with you. That is an amazing statement.

- iii) The next time you are having battles with someone, instead of thinking how you can harm them or even settle with them, first ask God if there is some area of your life where you are not in obedience. It is an amazing thing to watch as when you fix your relationship with God, “somehow”, those problems with your enemies work themselves out by themselves.
 - iv) Here is Isaac, moving to Beersheba. I suspect he had some fears because of his previous strife with these people. Isaac gets to where God wants him, and by “shear coincidence”, ☺ there is peace between Isaac and these enemies!
21. Verse 32: That day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug. They said, "We've found water!" ³³ He called it Shibah, and to this day the name of the town has been Beersheba.
- a) Notice it was after the enemies made peace that “all of a sudden” ☺ water was found there. Again, remember this is desert country, and finding water is a necessity.
22. Verse 34: When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. ³⁵ They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.
- a) The story changes to this one verse about Esau marrying the wrong girl!
 - b) This verse is truly isolated by itself, as the next verse, which is Verse 1 of Chapter 27, starts a different story.
 - c) I think this verse is here simply to show additional contrast between Isaac’s two sons Jacob and Esau.
 - i) When we last read of Esau, he gave up his birthright to Jacob. Esau was a “man of the world” and didn’t care about being obedient to God.
 - ii) Here in Verse 34, we have another example of that fact by Esau taking to wife two local pagan women.
 - d) I think the point of this verse is not so much to focus on Esau, but on his parents.
 - e) We just read of all of the travels of Isaac and the blessings he had when he was following God’s will. The chapter ends with this statement about “grief” when their 40 year old son picks his own wives, as opposed of going through Isaac.
 - i) It is a reminder that even when we are on a “high” of God blessing us, one never knows what is “around the next corner” of our lives.
 - ii) You get the impression that Esau “eloped” with these women and married them without Isaac’s permission. The grief felt by Isaac and Rebekah was that their son Esau was turning away from God in disobedience. To someone who spends their life seeking God, there is nothing more painful than seeing your children go in disobedience.
23. OK, I’m running way long. My apology for that. Let’s just go to the closing prayer.
24. Let’s Pray: Father, there are lots of lessons in these chapters for us to grasp, but none more important than the concept of living in obedience to you. Help us to comprehend your will for our life. Help us to be aware of what particular sin or problem is blocking our relationship with you at this moment. Give us discernment as we walk with you and help us to submit to your will. We ask this in Jesus name we pray, Amen.