

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

GENESIS 23-26

Recently, I read where the peak age of physical attractiveness is 38 years old.

But of course, *beauty is in the eye of the beholder*. And according to the AARP, *the American Association of Retired People*, the older a person gets the older their best-looking age becomes... People under the age of 35 say that 30 years old is the age of peak physical attractiveness. Whereas people over the age of 65 say the best looking age is 46 years old. *That's why I'm able to walk down the halls at the old folks' home, and have all the little old ladies whistle at me... I'm 46.*

Of course it could be that the older you get the worse your vision becomes, and that's why you view older people to be more physically attractive.

But apparently, older eyes develop a taste for older appearances.

The book of Genesis tells us, when Sarah was 65, Abraham considered her a knock out - a real beauty queen. When she reached the age of 90 his opinion had not changed. Sarah would've won the Ms. Social Security Pageant hands down.

Evidently, the pharaoh in Egypt, and Abimelech, king of the Philistines, agreed with Abraham's assessment. They both wanted to add Sarah to their harem.

Commentator, Henry Morris, offers an explanation for Sarah's ageless beauty. Since she was post-menopause... for her body to birth and nurse a son, God had to do an

extreme makeover. He had to rejuvenate her whole body. Perhaps the renewal affected her externally, as well as internally. It restored her beauty.

Whatever the reason, Sarah remained attractive long past, what many women consider their prime... I'm sure, at least to Abraham, Sarah was as pretty the day he buried her, as the day he married her... which brings us to Genesis 23...

Verse 1, **“Sarah lived 127 years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.”**

There is only one woman in the Bible whose age is mentioned at the time of her death. It's right here – Sarah was 127. Women fear that when people know how old they are it'll diminish their attractiveness. Apparently, Sarah was still so beautiful – *or at least Abraham made her feel that way* - she had nothing to fear.

“So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.” If you think Abraham's test in chapter 22 was difficult, his loss here may've proved a greater challenge.

It would've been heartbreaking to lose a child, but if it had happened, Abraham would've been able to come home and fall into the arms of his wife, and the two of them grieve together. But now Sarah is dead. There's no shoulder to cry on. His lifelong companion is gone. Abraham **“mourns for Sarah”**. He **“weeps for her.”**

And here is the first mention of *tears* or *weeping* in the Bible. I'm sure there was weeping at the fall of man - the death of

Abel - the judgment of the flood - the break-up at Babel - but that detail isn't included in those accounts.

God waits until *a man of faith* loses his *submissive wife* to the clutches of death, and He says Abraham mourned and wept... This is an experience, that if the Lord tarries, many of us will one day share. God is saying that it's proper to grieve – even for a person of faith. He wants us to cry and weep, and get out our grief.

“Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, “I am a foreigner and a sojourner among you. Give me property for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.” The land Abraham is about to buy, he already owns. In chapter 15 God marked out the boundaries of the land He'd given Abraham. This burial plot in Hebron was certainly included.

But Abraham calls himself “*a foreigner and a sojourner*”. He was a stranger in this world. This is not a lack of faith. This is a renunciation of this world. God had given Abraham a real inheritance in the earth, but this earth was not attractive to Abraham. He was looking for a heavenly home. This world was not his home.

And that's why he says he wants to bury Sarah “*out of my sight*”.

I hope no one misunderstands what I'm about to say... We've already seen that it was proper for Abraham to grieve over Sarah, and honor her at her death. But there comes a point when you need to put your Sarah “*out of your sight.*”

You've got to move on. There is a grieving that honors the

life a person lived. But obsessive, prolonged grieving dishonors the eternal life the person inherits.

If I keep looking at and focusing on the corpse of my Sarah – what she was like on the earth – I’m not giving credence to the eternal life she’s inherited today.

Guys, you don’t lose someone if you know where they are. Abraham wants to honor Sarah’s memory - but he knows Sarah is more than a memory. She’s in heaven, and he looks forward to meeting her again in the life to come.

”And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, ”Hear us, my lord: You are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places. None of us will withhold from you his burial place, that you may bury your dead. Then Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. And he spoke with them, saying, ”If it is your wish that I bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and meet with Ephron the son of Zohar for me, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he has, which is at the end of his field. Let him give it to me at the full price, as property for a burial place among you.” The rabbis interpret the word “Machpelah” to mean “*double doors*”.

This was a cave with two entrances – *literally and spiritually*. It reminds me of a quote by Alexander McLaren, “Death is but a passage. It’s only a vestibule. The grave has a door on its inner side.” The door of death is also the door to eternity.

Verse 10, “Now Ephron dwelt among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the presence of the sons of Heth, all who entered at the gate of his city, saying,

"No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and the cave that is in it; I give it to you in the presence of the sons of my people. I give it to you. Bury your dead!" Understand this in its oriental context... Ephron, like all Middle Eastern merchants, was a haggler. He wasn't about to just give anything to anybody for free. This was just a customary starting point for negotiations.

Somebody offers it for free – then you come back with a price...

"Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land; and he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, "If you will give it, please hear me. I will give you money for the field; take it from me and I will bury my dead there." And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, "My lord, listen to me; the land is worth 400 shekels of silver. What is that between you and me? So bury your dead." It's probable that 400 shekels was Ephron's high price. He was prepared to come down, but "Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, 400 shekels of silver, currency of the merchants." Ephron expected Abraham to haggle, but he goes ahead and pays the asking price. *There's a lesson here: We always want the best price. Abraham paid a fair price. Don't be a cheapskate.*

Verse 17, "So the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field and the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field, which were within all the surrounding borders, were deeded to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all

who went in at the gate of his city. And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place.” Not only was Sarah buried in the cave of Machpelah, but so were Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, and Jacob. It will become a family burial plot.

Genesis 24 is an intriguing and exciting chapter not only because of the story it tells, but because of the story’s implications. In the Bible you’ll find New Testament writers who at times treat Old Testament stories as allegorical. The Old Testament is certainly historical, but in places it becomes larger life - bigger than history. It teaches a spiritual lesson, and there’s no more vivid an example than here...

“Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, “Please, put your hand under my thigh,” This was a customary method of taking an oath. “and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”

It would’ve been to Abraham’s benefit if Isaac had married a local girl. The political alliance would’ve strengthened Abraham’s position in the land, but he forfeits any temporal motive for the assurance that his son will marry a believer.

He couldn't bear the thought of Isaac wedded to an idolatrous Canaanite.

“And the servant said to him, “Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?”

But Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there. The LORD God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there." Abraham didn't want to risk Isaac getting entangled in the affairs of Haran, and miss out on God's promise. Eliezer had the challenge of finding Isaac a wife who was willing to walk by faith – and pledge herself to a man she'd never seen.

Verse 9, “So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter. Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, for all his master's goods were in his hand.” This is what he would use to entice a bride. He was allowed to give away his Master's blessings.

Hopefully you're starting to see the allegorical nature of this story...

Remember chapter 24 comes on the heels of chapter 22 – where Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice. That episode was prophetic of a future father who would sacrifice His only

son on that exact same spot... 2000 years later. On Mount Moriah, God the Father sacrificed His only Son, Jesus, on the cross.

But the allegory doesn't end with chapter 22... Here, Abraham sends out a servant to find a bride for his son. And though the servant goes unnamed in the story, we know from 15:2 that his name was "*Eliezer*" which means "*Comforter*".

This is the New Testament story... After Jesus was sacrificed the Holy Spirit, *our Comforter*, was sent by the Father to find a bride for His Son. And He's looking for folks who'll walk by faith. Who'll take vows to a Man they've never seen.

And how does the Holy Spirit entice us? The way Eliezer wooed Isaac's bride. The Master's goods are in His hands - as Paul said to the Ephesians - the Spirit offers us all spiritual blessings in heavenly places to those who are in Christ.

Verse 10 continues, "**And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water.**"

What Eliezer does next is ask for supernatural guidance. He plots a scenario and asks God to cooperate. "**Then he said, "O LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink' - let her be the one You have**

appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master."

Trust me, for one woman to volunteer to water ten camels would take nothing less than a miracle from God. One camel drinks 5 gallons at a time. *This gal would have to bale 50 gallons of water.* My wife loves me, but I'm glad she didn't have to prove it by drawing 50 gallons of water – we might never have gotten married.

Be careful when you concoct a plan, and ask God to bless it. God is obligated to do His will - not abide by our plans. Here though He cooperates with Eliezer...

Verse 15, "And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. Now the young woman was very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up." Remember the first Gentile convert that followed Jesus was a woman He met by the well in Samaria – John 4....

"And the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher." So she said, "Drink, my lord." Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink. And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking." I'm sure Eliezer got pretty excited at this point. He found the right gal.

"Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know

whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.”

There’s only one step left... She has to accept his proposal. And the same is true for us. The Spirit can find us, and woo us - but we have to agree to follow.

“So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels of gold, and said, "Whose daughter are you? Tell me, please, is there room in your father's house for us to lodge?" So she said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah's son, whom she bore to Nahor. Moreover she said to him, "We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge."

Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the LORD. And he said, "Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren." Abraham wanted a bride for his son from his own people. When Rebekah identified herself as Abraham’s niece, Eliezer knew God had directed his steps. There are no accidents with God.

The rabbis use to say, “Coincidence is not a kosher word.”

Verse 28, “So the young woman ran and told her mother's household these things. Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well. So it came to pass, when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying, "Thus the man spoke to me," that he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at

the well. And he said, "Come in, O blessed of the LORD! Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels."

Then the man came to the house. And he unloaded the camels, and provided straw and feed for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. Food was set before him to eat, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told about my errand." And he said, "Speak on."

So he said, "I am Abraham's servant." And Eliezer goes on to talk about God's blessing on Abraham – the miraculous birth of Isaac - his journey to find a wife for his master's son, the sign he proposed, and the way God confirmed His will.

Which brings us down to verse 49, "Now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. And if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left." In other words, will you or won't you give Rebekeh to be married to Isaac?

In essence, Eliezer is saying, God supernaturally guided me, and arranged a miraculous meeting – He put all this all together - *but you still have to decide.*

And that's exactly what the Holy Spirit says to us. God providentially leads us, and crosses our paths, and confronts us with opportunities – but it's always up to us to choose whether we go with Him or stay put. It always requires a choice...

"Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you either bad or good." In other words, how can we argue with God? It's

obvious God is at work. "Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as the LORD has spoken."

"And it came to pass, when Abraham's servant heard their words, that he worshiped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth." And all the angels in heaven rejoice when one sinner responds to the Holy Spirit's invitation to follow Jesus.

"Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. And he and the men who were with him ate and drank and stayed all night. Then they arose in the morning, and he said, "Send me away to my master."

But her brother and her mother said, "Let the young woman stay with us a few days, at least ten; after that she may go." They sound like the man who wanted to follow Jesus, but first he needed to bury his father. And to that the Spirit said the same thing... The offer is for now - not tomorrow. "Today is the day of salvation."

"And he said to them, "Do not hinder me, since the LORD has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master." So they said, "We will call the young woman and ask her personally." Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go." There was no hesitation.

So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her: "Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants

possess the gates of those who hate them."

Verse 61, "Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and they rode on the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed." And notice she followed the Comforter. Guys, this is the next step after you agree to marry Jesus. You live the Christian life by trusting in and riding with the Holy Spirit.

"Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he dwelt in the South."

This is the first time we've seen Isaac since chapter 22. There he was offered as a sacrifice. Now the next time we see him... he's coming out to meet his bride.

What a picture of Jesus! After the resurrection Jesus ascended to heaven. The earth won't see Him again until the rapture - when he returns to receive His bride.

"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming." If you're single notice the lesson here... Isaac didn't go out looking for a bride. The Comforter brought his bride to him. When Rebekah shows up, she finds Isaac meditating in a field...

Guys, if you're single you don't have to comb the singles' groups to find a mate. Chill out, be patient, trust God - and let the Spirit bring your spouse to you.

"Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel; for she had said to the servant, "Who is this man walking in the field to meet us?"

And the servant said, "It is my master." So she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.

Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. Here's the second mention of the word "love" in the Bible. The first mention was in chapter 22 – Abraham's love for Isaac - or a father's love for his son. The second mention is a husband's love for his wife.

"So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

Chapter 25, "Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah."

When Abraham bought a burial plot for Sarah, he said, "Give me property... that I may bury my dead out of my sight". The implication was, once Abraham buried Sarah, he moved on with his life. And here is proof – he's not the grieving widower forever. He gets it together and marries *another wife* - starts a *second life*.

"And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah." He had six sons after the age of 100. Once he had Isaac, the old boy got on a roll.

"Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. And the sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoah, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah."

Verse 5 is important "And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac." His only son Isaac was still his heir. None of his other offspring diminished Isaac's inheritance.

“But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines (this must’ve been in addition to Keturah’s kids) which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.”

Verse 7, “This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: 175 years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.” Here’s an inference to the afterlife - he didn’t *drift into oblivion*, or *hover over the living*, or *cease to exist*.

“He was gathered to his people.” Apparently, the Old Testament believers had a place they gathered after they left this world. The Bible even names that place after Abraham... In Luke 16 Jesus refers to a place called “Abraham’s bosom.”

After Jesus completed salvation – now when we die we go straight to heaven.

Verse 9, “And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife.” And more was buried than Abraham that day. It seems Isaac and Ishmael *buried the hatchet*. They reconciled long enough to bury their father.

“And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi”. It was by this well that God appeared to Hagar after she was rejected. The name is “*Well of the Living One Who Sees*”.

It's interesting that Abraham was always building altars - while Isaac majored in digging wells. Isaac left behind sources of water where others could be nourished.

Abraham worshipped. Isaac watered. Abraham gave God praise. Isaac helped other people quench their thirst... And both were remembered as men of faith. We need both attitudes - *the upward look of worship and the outward look of witness.*

Verse 12, “Now this is the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant, bore to Abraham. And these were the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.” Twelve sons in all.

“These were the sons of Ishmael and these were their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations. These were the years of the life of Ishmael: 137 years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people. (They dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt as you go toward Assyria.) He died in the presence of all his brethren.”

Verse 19, “This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac. Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian.

Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his

wife conceived.” Notice, God gave Rebekah a child when her husband, Isaac, prayed. Husbands, you are the priest in your home, and God wants you to pray for your wife and children.

Guys, *we like being king, but what about priest? We can't point our finger and boss everybody around.* But can we drop to our needs and *lift everybody up?*

Twice I've shared this verse to infertile couples, and challenged the husband to plead with God for his wife – and twice God answered the husbands' prayers.

Men, if your wife is going through a barren time – perhaps spiritually – then you can serve your wife, by interceding for her in prayer... Be the priest in your home.

Verse 22, **“But the children struggled together within her;”** Notice he says **“children”** – Rebekah had twin boys – Esau and Jacob. And apparently, they didn't get along even in-utero. Jewish legend says the boys tried to kill each other in their mother's womb. They were at each other throats from the start.

“And she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" Rebekah had some prenatal complications, and she calls her doctor... She asks God for a diagnosis...

“So she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.”

According to custom, the firstborn son had all the rights - but not in God's family. The older son, Esau, will serve the younger son, Jacob. And this was prophetic of the future of two nations... Esau, the father of the Edomites, will be

dominated for most of their history by Jacob's descendents, the Jews.

Verse 24, "So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau." Rebekah gave birth to two sons.

The oldest was Esau, which means "hairy". He looked like a bear cub.

"Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them." Jacob was born second, and tried to overtake his older brother even from the womb. He came out holding Esau's heel. "Jacob" means "heelcatcher" But the name also meant "scoundrel, crook, con-artist". It was descriptive of Jacob's character.

Verse 27, "So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents." Esau was a rugged man – a man's man. As Arnold would say, "Jacob was a girly man". He was more cultured and domesticated. Esau liked to hunt. Jacob liked to cook, sew, and cross-stitch.

And here's what happened, "Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob." Isaac loved the taste of venison, so he gravitated to *wild man, Esau*. But the *mild man, Jacob*, ended up being a *momma's boy*.

"Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. And Esau said to Jacob, "Please

feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called Edom." Which means "red"... Esau was famished, and he loved the reddish stew Jacob had simmering in the crock pot.

"But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day." This birthright – Isaac's inheritance – was more than a toolbox or a few shares of stock. This birthright included the covenant God made to Abraham – which was passed on to Isaac - *sod, seed, salvation*. Special nation status to the end of the age was on the line.

And Esau traded it in for a bowl of Campbell's chunky lentil soup.

This was Esau's downfall. He was *physically-oriented* – rather than *spiritually-oriented*. He would rather feed his belly, than feed his soul on God's blessings.

"And Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?"

Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright." Certainly, this was a pitiful revelation into the soul of Esau. He was a superficial, hollow man.

But Jacob doesn't fare much better from the episode. He's a heelcatcher – he's deceptive, and manipulative – and he cons his brother out of his birthright.

This might rank as the greatest swindle of all time. Jacob, and all the Jews, received God's greatest blessing in exchange for a measly bowl of chilli.

Remember though, Jacob didn't have to be so conniving. In verse 23, God promised Rebekah, "the older will serve the younger." It was God's will from the beginning for Jacob to inherit the birthright. He took matters into his own hands.

It's through faith and patience we inherit God's promise. Jacob was guilty of what the Bible calls walking in the flesh. He tried to accomplish God's will his way.

And the works of the flesh always yield pain. Jacob's actions end up alienating Esau, creating a deep-seated hatred between them, and ripping apart the family.

Jacob was a swindler – a thief – *deception was his middle name.*

But apparently, God saw in Jacob a desire for spiritual things. He wanted God's blessing. Esau didn't care about anybody's blessing. He could do it all himself. He was a man's man. Jacob had faith. Esau didn't. That was the deciding difference.

And that's why God will later say in Malachi 1, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." It wasn't because Jacob was more honest or moral than his brother. To the contrary, if ever there was a person who needed grace it was Jacob...

Once a woman approached CH Spurgeon, "I cannot understand why God should say that He hated Esau." Spurgeon responded, "Madam, that is not the difficulty. My trouble is trying to understand how God could love Jacob."

Chapter 26, "There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went

to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar. Then the LORD appeared to him and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." God repeats the promise He made to Abraham.

And this is a strategic passage. Islam teaches the Abrahamic Covenant was passed on to Ishmael. Thus, the land of Israel belongs to the Arabs. But the Bible teaches that God confirms the Covenant with Abraham's son, Isaac – not Ishmael.

Verse 6, "So Isaac dwelt in Gerar. And the men of the place (the Philistines) asked about his wife. And he said, "She is my sister"; for he was afraid to say, "She is my wife," because he thought, "lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold." *We've heard this before...*

This is the philosophy Isaac's parents, Abraham and Sarah, adopted when they traveled among pagan nations. Now Isaac is following in their footsteps. Parents, always remember, *the apple never falls far from the tree*. It's said, "Don't tell your child to follow in your footsteps, until you make sure you've covered your tracks."

Kids are prone to repeat the blunders of their parents. Isaac

married a pretty girl like his daddy did, but he's afraid and treats her in the same selfish way.

Verse 8, "Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked through a window, and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah his wife." They were smooching.

"Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Quite obviously she is your wife; so how could you say, 'She is my sister'?" And Isaac said to him, "Because I said, 'Lest I die on account of her.'" And Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us." A godly man is rebuked by a pagan king. "So Abimelech charged all his people, saying, "He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death." An executive order protects Isaac and Rebekah.

Verse 12, "Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the LORD blessed him." This isn't a blessing Isaac deserved. It comes on the heels of a colossal failure. But as with all God's blessings, Isaac is a recipient of grace. God blesses *because we trust Him, not because we're worthy.*

"The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous; for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants." God poured it on. "So the Philistines envied him."

"Now the Philistines had stopped up all the wells which his

father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, and they had filled them with earth.

And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we." Then Isaac departed from there and pitched his tent in the Valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham. He called them by the names which his father had called them." Remember their signature traits: *Abraham built altars - Isaac dug wells.*

Abraham dug wells that the Philistines covered over, and now Isaac goes back and unplugs the same wells – *which provide an interesting picture for us...*

Satan is like the Philistines. He wants nothing more than to plug up sources of spiritual refreshment. He'll bury the joys of prayer, or worship, or Bible study under mounds of tradition or neglect. And often it takes a new generation, an Isaac, to re-dig the well - to rediscover and re-emphasize the significance of what was lost.

Verse 19, "Also Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found a well of running water there. But 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 quarreled with him." The word "Esek" means "quarrel".

"Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that one also. So he called its name Sitnah." Or "hostility". And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, because he said, "For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall

be fruitful in the land." The word "Rehoboth" means "spaciousness". Isaac finally finds some peace.

Isaac's life is a good example to us. The world we live in is full of obstacles, and detours - but when one door shuts look for another door to open. Hey, dig another well. Keep digging wells, and eventually you'll find your Rehoboth.

Verse 23, "Then he went up from there to Beersheba. And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake." Again, God transfers the Abrahamic covenant to Isaac.

"So he built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well." They settled in Beersheba.

"Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath, one of his friends, and Phichol the commander of his army. And Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?" But they said, "We have certainly seen that the LORD is with you. So we said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, between you and us; and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, since we have not touched you, and since we have done nothing to you but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD.'" So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank.

"Then they arose early in the morning and swore an oath with one another; and Isaac sent them away, and they

departed from him in peace. It came to pass the same day that Isaac's servants came & told him about the well which they had dug, & said to him, "We have found water." So he called it Shebah." Which mean "oath". Therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day." *"The well of the oath."*

Verse 34, "When Esau was 40 years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah." It was another example of Esau's lack of desire for spiritual things. He married two idolatrous wives – Canaanites. He married wives that had no love for God. It must've broken his parent's heart.