

Sunday 18 February 2024

Life Group Leaders' Notes

Series: God Of Abraham, Isaac And Jacob

Title: Keeping The Blessing Of God Flowing In Your Generation

Key Text: Genesis 26:1-6

God is interested in every person and in every generation. As we continue our series on the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, we now start looking at the next stage in this line of family and generational blessings.

The line of blessing started with Abraham, but Abraham's son Isaac was key to keeping that going in his generation. Isaac's life was the result of great faith: ^[SEP]He was the believed for child, when the dream of Abraham and Sarah having a child of their own seemed impossible due to their age (Hebrews 11:11-12).

Isaac was a source of great joy: ^[SEP]his name means 'laughter'. People would have seen that he was a living embodiment of how God can do miracles can bring great joy to us, no matter our age and stage of life or the challenges we have experienced. And Isaac is also seen to represent a Christ-like figure in the Old Testament, because, when God tested Abraham, it looked like Isaac was going to be sacrificed and then he was received back to life (Hebrews 11:17-19).

Yet Isaac was not simply a product of his upbringing with his best days in the past. Like each one of us, he needed to take action to ensure he and his family continued to receive the promised generational blessings. We see from Isaac's life how each one of us can keep the blessing of God flowing in our generation:

1. Isaac prayed for the continuation of God's purposes in his generation (Genesis 25:19-21; Genesis 25:21, 26; Luke 18:1)
2. Isaac had his own encounter where he received the promises of God for his generation (Genesis 17:8; Genesis 26:24; 2 Kings 2:14; Joshua 1:3-5; Genesis 17:17; Genesis 25:2-5; 35:12; Deuteronomy 4:37)

3. Isaac prioritised obeying God's will over his own comfort for the sake of his generations (Genesis 26:1-6; Ruth 1:6)

Apply

1. Isaac prayed for the continuation of God's purposes in his generation. While Isaac was a child of promise whose very life was a miracle from God, that alone was not enough to guarantee the continuation of God's blessings down the generations. Isaac had to take his own stand and conquer for his generation and the generations to come (Genesis 25:19-21). Isaac had been blessed with a godly wife, just as Abraham was blessed with Sarah. But like Abraham, Isaac faced the reality of natural and spiritual barrenness. While there was a promise of generational blessings to come, there was a very real and naturally unsurmountable challenge to seeing the line of blessing continue: Rebekah was barren. Maybe you are confronted with barrenness. Maybe the issues you face have also been a challenge to your parents or previous generations. Perhaps it is natural barrenness, of wanting your own children but not yet seeing that answer. Maybe it's spiritual barrenness, where you've invested in people but haven't yet started your life group or been able to develop in the ministry. It might be financial barrenness and debt. Or maybe you are looking at the state of your nation and seeing how desperate it looks. Unlike his father, Isaac did not take matters into his own hands, but he 'prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife'. Isaac prayed and waited for 20 years for a child (Genesis 25:21, 26). The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. Despite the waiting, there came a double blessing of twins, Jacob and Esau. There comes a time for every Christian to make a stand of faith for their generation. However impossible the situation looks, God cares for you and wants to bless you, your family, your ministry and your nation. So each of us must pray for God's purposes to continue in our generation, just as Isaac did. We cannot assume that the blessings of God for you and your generation are going to come easily and be handed to you. You must pray for your generation, for fruitfulness both naturally and spiritually. Pray for your marriage, pray for your children, both those you have and those you long to have, at every stage. Pray your family through every challenge. Pray that everything God has purposed for you and your generations will come to pass. Determine today that you are going to do as Jesus said, and 'pray and not give up' (Luke 18:1). We are told to 'watch and pray' (Matthew 26:41): don't let

the enemy come and rob you and your kids, both natural and spiritual descendants, at any stage. You started well, don't stop now! Pray, pray, pray!

2. Isaac had his own encounter where he received the promises of God for his generation.

Isaac didn't just hear about the old stories of God's promises to the previous generation (Genesis 17:8): Isaac received the same promises from God for his generation as Abraham received (Genesis 26:2-5). In fact God repeated these promises to Isaac (Genesis 26:24). The promises of God are for all generations, but we must have our own encounter with God. Isaac knew he'd had good parents who had themselves experienced big battles and seen great victories in their lives, of which he was a living example. But now Isaac had to have his own encounter with God. This is what happened with the prophet Elisha when his mentor, the prophet Elijah, went to heaven (2 Kings 2:14). After the death of Moses, Joshua had to know that God was with him. It wasn't enough to have been close to Moses and hear the promises he had received. Joshua needed a personal encounter with God for himself and to receive the promises for his generation (Joshua 1:3-5). You have to know that God is with you, to know the promises of God for yourself and the promises of God for your family and your descendants after you. The God of the Bible is the multi-generational, covenant keeping God (Genesis 17:17; Genesis 25:2-5; 35:12; Deuteronomy 4:37). Yet we won't see the line of blessing continue to flow if we just live with handed down convictions. Each of us must live being confident in the promises of God for us and our descendants after us, promises that are impressed on your heart, that are your own personal convictions. Have you had the promises of God for yourself? Our Senior Pastor, Wes Richards, has had to know that the God of his father, the founding pastor of this church, Billy Richards, was also his God when his father died at a young age and Pastor Wes became Senior Pastor aged just 27. We have the living example of how the Lord has been with him and his family. Do you not only know the promises to be able to recite them, but are they truly rock solid promises your life is built on, part of your very being that no matter what anyone else says or does, what your circumstances look like and whichever generations come and go, that you are secure in your call and know that you know God's promises for yourself? Every one of us needs that encounter with God to know the promises for ourselves, and for our marriage, for our family, for the church and our nation.

3. Isaac prioritised obeying God's will over his own comfort for the sake of his generations.

It's very important to stay where we have been planted by God. Isaac made it a priority to obey God over his own will, comfort and desires. He paid the price in staying where God had placed him to ensure the continuation of God's blessing. (Genesis 26:1-6). Isaac was clearly thinking about moving on and was tempted to go down to Egypt. On the surface, the prospects probably looked better for Isaac and his family there. Isaac wanted to go, but God told him to stay. How often do we want to go and pursue our own goals and, the vision we have for our life? Isaac had to pioneer something for his generation. Abraham's act of faith had been to obey God's command to 'go'; now Isaac's was to obey the command to 'stay' (Genesis 26:6). Gerar was a place where the Philistines were in charge. But this was Canaan. Isaac was in Canaan, in the Promised Land. He was in the place of blessing, even though it might not have looked that way at the time. Many times people move from the place of blessing. That's what happened with Naomi, whose family moved away from Bethlehem when famine came, yet experienced more hardships as a result of going away from the place of God's blessing. Naomi lost her husband and two sons, and came back in bitterness and distress when she saw how 'the Lord had come to the aid of his people' (Ruth 1:6). When God has placed you somewhere, that is where you need to stay. Are you committed to pay the price to be obedient? Maybe this is something you must face right now - you've been unsettled and you're looking somewhere else, the grass is looking greener elsewhere and you think you should move. Be very careful what you're looking at and not to entertain any doubts and temptations in your thoughts and feelings which can ultimately rob you and your generations from God's blessings and His best for your life. Whether that be in your marriage, your family, or this church - when God has placed you, that's where you need to stay, where you have to work and be committed to pay the price to see the blessing. Like Isaac, when you determine to stay where God has put you, both you and your descendants will be blessed. God has the best plans for your generation and for every generation, so don't miss out!