

THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

"Numerous external forces may shape us, but the family we have grown up in is the primary and, except in rare instances, the most powerful system that will shape and influence who we are." —Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*

"God & Isaac"

His Early Life:

- Isaac's birth was the result of God's special grace to Abraham and Sarah in accordance with all that he had promised them. (Gen. 17:19)
 - Apart from his birth, the first significant portion of the Genesis narrative in which he is meaningfully involved comes in Gen. 22 when Abraham is told to take the young man and offer him as a sacrifice to Yahweh.
- ⇒ If anyone had reason to question his parent's religion or the God that his parents worshipped, it was Isaac. And yet, what we see in the life of Isaac is that he _____ and _____ Yahweh through even the most difficult circumstances of his life.

His Struggles and God's Goodness:

1. The Death of his Mother (Gen. 23:1-2)

- Given the circumstances of his birth, Isaac and his mother were in all likelihood very close and therefore her death must have been very hard on the young man.
- The death of Sarah became the impetus for Abraham to find a wife for his son (Gen. 24:1-4)

Now Isaac had returned from Beer-lahai-roi and was dwelling in the Negeb. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening. And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, there were camels coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel and said to the servant, "Who is that man, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. —Gen. 24:62-67

"meditate"— In the Hebrew, this word *shu-akh* appears only in this place. In the Septuagint (LXX) the Greek term which is used is *adoleskeo* which is also used throughout this translation of the Psalms, Ps. 119 in particular.

Ps. 119:15—I will meditate on your commandments, and consider you ways.

Ps. 119:23—For princes sat and spoke against me: but your servant was meditating on your ordinances.

Ps. 119:27—Instruct me in the way of your ordinances; and will meditate on your wondrous works.

Ps. 119:48— And I lifted up my hands to your commandments which I loved; and I meditated on your ordinances.

Ps. 119:78— Let the proud be ashamed; for they transgressed against you unjustly: but I will meditate on your commandments.

- ⇒ Though he had lost his mother, God graciously provided Rebekah to be Isaac's _____ in order that he might be comforted after the death of his mother.

2. Infertility

These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham fathered Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. —Gen. 25:19-21

- The duration of their infertility was nearly 20 years.

⇒ God graciously answered the _____ of Isaac on behalf of his wife and she soon bore him two sons.

3. His Own Sin

- While Isaac broke certain patterns of sin which characterized the life of his father, he walked in others, and even established some which would carry over into the lives of his sons.
 - Unlike his father Abraham and his sons Jacob and Esau, Isaac was not a _____.
 - Like his father Abraham, however, Isaac was _____ and placed his wife in harm's way. (Gen. 26:6-11)
 - Isaac favored his son Esau over Jacob for his own _____ reasons. (Gen. 25:28)

⇒ The Lord, however, was faithful and gracious to Isaac in spite of his sin.

Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines. And the Lord appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." –Gen. 26:1-5

- God reiterated to Isaac the same covenant promises that He had made to his father, Abraham. (Compare with Gen. 12:1-3)
 - His offspring would possess the land that the Lord would give to them.
 - His offspring would become an innumerable multitude.
 - In his offspring, all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

⇒ Remember, 'offspring' is both plural (referring to the physical descendants of Abraham & Isaac) as well as singular, referring to Christ who would come as the fulfillment of promised 'seed.'

Gal. 3:16—Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

⇒ Isaac's hope was not in himself or the things of this life, but was ultimately in the _____ of God.

4. His Marriage

- The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah is a useful illustration of how marriage can bring into our lives comfort and joy as well as heartache and conflict.
 - One of the most significant conflicts within their marriage revolved around their children.
 - Rebekah encouraged Jacob to deceive his father in order to obtain Esau's blessing.

⇒ God used even these marital conflicts and sinful choices to bring about His plans and purposes.

Rom. 9:10-13— And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

5. His Sons

Esau:

While Esau was loved by Isaac, as he grew into a man his choices brought great pain to his father.

- Selling his birthright (Gen. 25:29-34)
- His marriages to Hittite women (Gen. 26:34-35) "...made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah."
- His desire to kill Jacob (Gen. 27:41)

Jacob:

Though he favored Esau, Isaac surely loved Jacob and was grieved by many of his choices.

- His deception which led to the stealing of Esau's blessing (Gen. 27:1-40)
- His polygamy (Gen. 29:21-30:22)

⇒ God, in His grace, allowed the sons of Isaac to be reconciled and for him to see God's blessing to him in the form of his children and grandchildren.

And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned. Now the days of Isaac were 180 years. And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him. –Gen. 35:27-29

Our hope in this life must be found not in the things which are seen, but in the things which are unseen.
Hope for the present is found ironically in our confidence and faith in what awaits us in the future.

2 Corinthians 5:1-7