

For GC Discussion

- Just spend some time thinking how your faith is having an impact on those around you. Are there things you need to change to increase the impact you could/should be having?

- Are you listening carefully for the voice of God however He chooses to speak to you? Are there ways we can encourage that more in our lives?

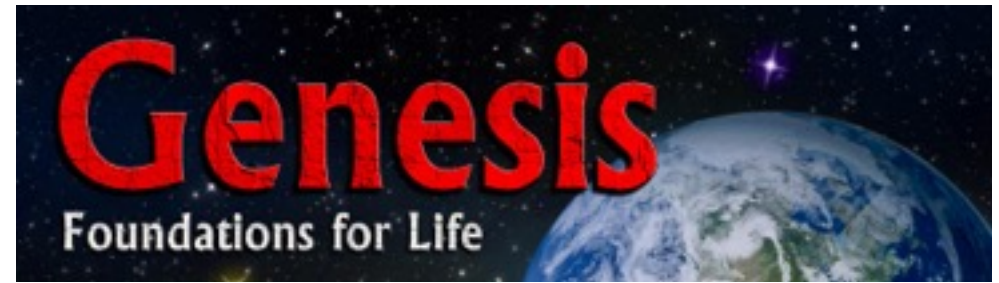
For the Kids

What is the most important thing in your life?
How can we live for something more important than ourselves?

Next Week: we begin a new section of the book of Genesis as we study the life of Jacob.

Notes and Questions

For Worship: Listen to *'Faithful'* by Chris Tomlin. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



Week 13: Isaac: A Legacy of Faith - Ch 23-26

This Weeks Summary

In our text this week, Abraham dies at the age of 175, but not without leaving the legacy of his faith, primarily in his son Isaac through whom the promise of God will continue to go forward.

For Study:

Read the following verses, all on subjects touched by this weeks passage:

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| A legacy of faith | - Deuteronomy 6:1-15 & Psalm 78:1-4
- 2 Timothy 2:1-2 & 4:6-8
- 2 Peter 1:1-15
- Hebrews 3:12-15 & 10:19-25
- Romans 12:1-21 & 1 Peter 4:7-11 |
| God's guidance | - John 10:1-16 & 27-28
- John 16:5-15
- Psalm 119:97-105
- James 1:2-8
- Philippians 4:6-7 |

This week we looked at a large portion of Scripture, asking the question, 'what was Abraham's legacy of faith?' Here are a couple of other things that come out of this section:

The influence of a man of God

Over the course of these chapters we see different responses to both Abraham and Isaac by those who are around them. These kinds of responses will surely mirror the way those we spend time with will respond to us as our faith becomes visible to them, so let's just briefly look at a few of them:

Respect from outsiders

When Sarah passes away in chapter 23 we see Abraham having to provide a place for her to be buried. He goes to the authorities in the city of Kiriath-arba and asks them for a place to bury his wife, and this is what they say to him:

"Hear us, my lord; you are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb to hinder you from burying your dead." (23:6)

These Hittite men have seen Abraham living amongst them for many years - they've seen and heard of his faith and trust in his God, and his confidence has earned their respect. Not only that, but they have seen God come through for Abraham, and therefore cannot have anything but a healthy fear and respect for this man and that leads to them granting his request. We too should have such a confidence in our God which, though it may not cause people to believe in the same things as us, it will cause them to know there is something of substance to our faith.

Salvation for his family

There is something often overlooked about the process of Abraham's servant finding a wife for Isaac. In chapter 12 we saw Abraham leave his household to follow the call of God, and we have also discovered that Abraham was formerly an idol worshipper (Joshua 24:2). From that point until now we hear nothing of Abraham's pagan family which he has left behind, and yet as Abraham's servant comes into contact with one of Abraham's close relatives we see something very different. Bethuel and Laban, the men of the house are more than happy to hear the servant's tale of prayer and God's guidance and to say that this 'thing has come from the Lord' (24:50). However it has happened, Abraham's faith has not only affected those close to him, but has drawn his family back in Haran to acknowledge that the God he has followed away from them is truly the 'Lord'. Had he stayed where he was all those years ago then it surely

wouldn't have happened, but Abraham's faithful obedience has given him this amazing testimony of impact in his family. Those of us who long for the same in our own families should be encouraged what can happen if we simply follow the call of God wherever He leads.

Opposition and Jealousy

As Isaac takes on the mantle as God's man to take the promise forward we see some of the same positive reaction to him as Abraham received (26:28 for example) but he also receives some opposition. The Philistines became jealous of the blessings of God on Isaac's life (26:14), and make it hard for him to provide his travelling party with water by digging a well. This is a timely reminder to us that though there may be times in our lives when the reaction to our faith is respect and even agreement and salvation, God has made it clear to us that His presence with us does not guarantee an easy ride. Opposition will come, and sometimes it will even be vicious and painful. Our responsibility is to continue to be faithful to the call of God - He is with us, and will help us to endure through the testing, and come out the other side stronger in our faith and confident that God has been working out His purposes despite the opposition.

The Guidance of God

This is one of the big issues that is thrown up in the search for a bride for Isaac. Is the servant's method of praying for a sign the normal way we seek the will of God or just an exception? Clearly we don't have the space to deal with the subject in any depth. Suffice to say that though God was clearly pleased to answer the servant's prayer for guidance, there are clearly many other ways in which God guides His people, and this isn't even a hugely common one in the Scriptures. Along with the specific answers to prayer we see here, these are just a few other ways that God leads us through life:

- the Scriptures - the primary place where we're guided, and the ultimate authority in every area of our lives
- the godly wisdom and understanding God has given us
- the circumstances and providence God brings into our lives
- a supernatural sense of peace can show us we're on the right track
- the wise counsel of other believers

In all this, our job isn't to tell God how to guide us, but to do our best to listen as well as we can, with the confidence that Jesus' words were true when He said 'my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me' (John 10:27). Our hearing the voice of God depends far more on His ability to speak to us, than on our ability to listen.