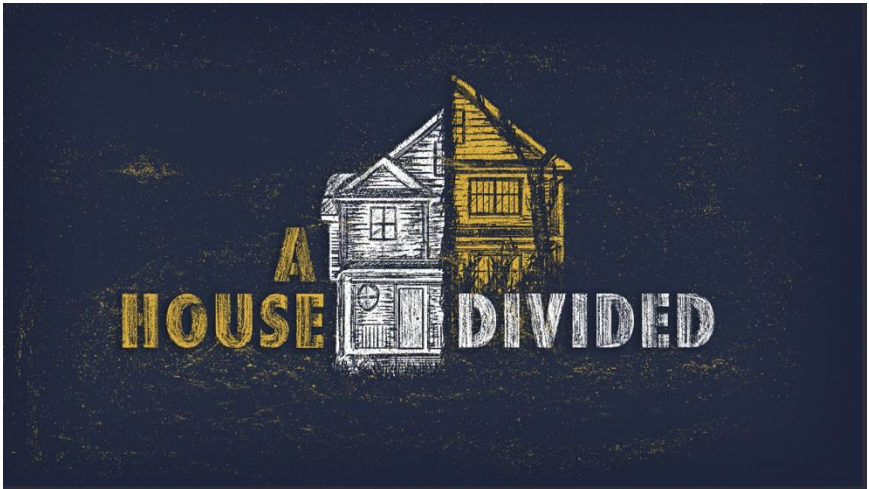




A House Divided

Learning from the Marriage of Isaac & Rebekah



Pastor Jeff South

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Session One: A Match Made in Heaven..... | 3 |
| Session Two: A House Divided..... | 11 |
| Session Three: Descent into Dysfunction | 18 |

Session 1, A Match Made in Heaven

Introduction:

- Jesus once said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand" (Matt. 12:25).
- In one of the most important confrontations between Jesus & the religious leaders, Jesus coins this important proverbial phrase.
- In the context, Jesus is seeking to defend Himself against the charge that He is casting out demons because He is in league with demons.
- Jesus makes the simple, yet profound observation that the forces of evil would not work against themselves because a kingdom, city, or house divided against itself will not stand.
- Yet this phrase has obvious implications & applications for marriage.
- I would like to look at the lives of two biblical characters, which illustrate this principle rather well. I want to examine the marriage of Isaac & Rebekah in Gen. 24-28.

Sessions:

1. A Match Made in Heaven (Gen. 24)
2. A House Divided (Gen. 27-28)
3. Descent into Dysfunction (Gen. 25-26)

A Match Made in Heaven (Gen. 24)

- Genesis 24 (67 verses) is the longest chapter in the book of Genesis and second longest narrative (the flood is 75 verses), which underscores its importance.

- It records the delightful story of how God providentially provides a wife for Isaac, and thereby, continues the covenant promises.
- The key themes of this narrative include Abraham's faith, God's faithfulness, God's providence, & human submission to God's will.

The Setting (v. 1-4)

- Abraham is old and he has seen God's faithfulness to His promises, but he is looking to the future fulfillment of God's promises.
- The future fulfillment of God's promises requires getting a wife for his son Isaac. She will serve as the mother of the "multitude of nations" God promised to Abraham.
- So, Abraham enlists the help of his eldest servant, whom Abraham places under oath to go beyond Canaan to find a wife for Isaac (v. 2-4).
- This "servant" might be the Eliezer of Gen. 15:2, which marks him out as one of "the most attractive minor characters in the Bible" (Kidner)
- The loyalty and selflessness of this servant is seen in the fact that he is willing to serve the heir that displaces him! (cf. John the Baptist, Jn. 3:29-30).

The Suggestion (v. 5)

- Abraham's servant asks him if he cannot find a woman who will come to Canaan, should Isaac go to her.
- In this exchange Abraham is characteristically the man of faith. Unable to foresee the outcome, he holds fast to two things: first, that God will not, and secondly, that man must not, go back on the main enterprise (cf. Heb. 11:15). (Kidner).

Surrender to God's Will (v. 6-9)

- Abraham's response is profound in v. 6-8. He tells the servant not to take Isaac from the land of promise, for Canaan is where God called them to be.
- We seem to detect here a hint of the lesson Abraham learned in Gen. 12-13, namely, when he doubted God and detoured from God's plan, it always backfired!
- If the woman is not willing to follow the servant back to Canaan, than the servant is free from the oath, but Isaac is not to leave Canaan.
- We see here some interesting principles regarding this "match made in heaven."
- First, we must learn to listen to godly leaders in our life (Gen. 24:1-4).
- Isaac had to trust the wisdom of his faith-filled father, Abraham. Abraham had to trust the discernment of his oldest and wisest servant. And everyone had to look to God for the result (esp. v. 7).
- Secondly, however, we see the principle of marrying a surrendered believer (Gen. 24:1-6, 54-60).
- Given explicit commands later to avoid marriage to pagans (Ex. 34:10-16; Dt. 7:3-4; Josh. 23:12), it is likely this chapter is meant to serve as a sort of prototype for Israel to trust God and follow His pattern for marriage.
- Abraham insisted that Isaac not take a wife from among the wicked Canaanites. It is better not to marry than to marry a godless person.
- Yet even if a godly person was found in Abraham's old country, she must be willing to come to Canaan and not vice versa, because Canaan is where God called Abraham & Isaac to be.
- In other words, if she does not have the faith that Abraham had to obey God's call in chapter 12, then she is not worth marrying!

- We learn a very important principle from this portion of the narrative. Never retreat spiritually in order to get married.
- Ironically, women often marry men hoping they will change but they never do, while men marry women hoping they won't change, but they always do!
- *As one preacher put it, "Anytime you are desperate for a house, a car, or a spouse you get a bad deal!"*

The Search Ensues (v. 10-28)

- So, the servant sets off, travels hundreds of miles, arrives at the city of Nahor, and sits down by a well.
- Then the servant offers up a prayer for God's guidance (v. 12-14), whereupon we discover more profound principles.
- First, we need to be pray and seek for God's guidance in our lives. Aside from choosing to follow the Lord Jesus, the most important decision you will ever make regards who you marry.
- We are just not smart enough to succeed on our own. We must have God's guidance, so we must pray!
- "Yet as he prayed, he kept traveling—and he must have kept planning how he would proceed once he got to his appointed destination.
- This means that prayer is no substitute for action. This servant prayed and worked at the same time, for he knew that prayer is given not to make work unnecessary but to make it effective." (Boice)
- In other words, we are to pray, but also to use God's wisdom. Notice the prayer is specific, because the servant is looking for something very important.
- Remember that he is on the lookout for godliness (cf. v. 3) & willingness (v. 7-8).
- The servant is looking for someone with good character, so he proposes a test.
- He asks God to reveal a young woman who is willing to water his camels with a sweet spirit and a willing heart.

- Now the average camel can drink up to 40 gallons of water. Ten camels would call for 400 gallons of water.
- Even if we assume the average pitcher can haul up 5 gallons of water, she would have to draw up 80 pitchers of water, which is probably 2-3 hours of work.
- In other words, the servant is looking for a young woman who is not afraid to work, but she is also gracious enough to offer help even to a stranger.
- Here is another principle. While it is immensely important to pray, we are also to pray intelligently. We are to look for what God has already revealed to be "His Will."
- *God cares more about your marital relationship than you do! Do you believe that? God cares! So trust Him, follow Him, and ask Him for guidance.*

A Servant Served (v. 15-20)

- Consider this scene from the perspective of Rebekah... she comes to the well, sees a stranger, and offers him a drink. Then she graciously offers to water his camels.
- As she works hard with a sweet disposition and a willing spirit, she has no idea that she had just been prayed for. She has no idea that she is the answer to this man's prayer.
- Rather, she is simply doing the right thing, not knowing that she is simultaneously passing the servant's test with flying colors.
- Here we find yet another principle. Focus on being who you ought be, rather than looking for whom you ought have (Gen. 24:15-20).
- Note Isaac was doing the same thing (cf. v. 63).
- *Follow God, and God will guide you to someone who follows God. In other words, you get what you advertise!*

Springing the Question (v. 21-32)

- The servant waits with bated breath! Could God be answering his prayer & prospering his journey?
- Verse 22 states that by the time the camels were done drinking, the servant was convinced. This is the one!
- He takes down the gifts Abraham sent with him, then he pops the question... "whose daughter are you? & are you willing to lodge me?" (v. 23)
- When Rebekah reveals that she is indeed of the lineage of Nahor and that she is willing to offer lodging, the servant is overjoyed!
- He bows his head in humble worship to acknowledge that God has gone before him and answered his prayers. God has providentially led him to this young woman.
- Quickly, the servant reveals who he is and the errand he is on, Rebekah goes to inform her family, and the servant is brought to her home (v. 27-32).

Soliciting a Response (v. 33-49)

- Yet before they sit to eat, the servant expounds the purpose of his visit (v. 33-49).
- The fact that this portion of the story is repeated makes it emphatic. The author of Genesis wants us to slow down and savor the sweet providence of God in this scene.
- Some scholars point out that this sort of repetition is common to A.N.E. "epic literature," which seeks to elevate this scene in its significance.
- Yet the purpose of this rehearsal is to solicit a response from Rebekah & her family. The servant must answer the question, "is she willing to come?" (cf. v. 39 & 49).

Searching the Heart (v. 50-60)

- After the servant rehearses the story, he calls for a response. Both Rebekah and her family are willing to let her go in fulfillment of God's plan.
- Verse 58 is the key verse of this paragraph. "Will you go with this man? and she said, "I will go!"
- Rebekah's willingness to heed the call has caused some scholars to call her, "the female Abraham."
- She is willing to leave family and homeland in order to follow the call of God on her life.
- In the words of Jesus, "What God has brought together, let not man put asunder!
- So they go! The servant returns to Abraham and Isaac with a bride, whom God has provided!

Sealing the Deal (v. 61-67)

- As the entourage arrives from Mesopotamia, it meets Isaac meditating in the field (v. 63).
- Notice how Isaac sought to cement his own personal relationship with God as he patiently waited for God's provision of a wife.
- Verse 64-65, as they approach, Rebekah catches a glimpse of her future husband and appropriately veils herself.
- Recall that she is a virgin (v. 16), and now she presents herself with due modesty.
- We find here yet another principle. We must resolve to maintain purity & modesty in our relationships with the opposite gender (Gen. 24:16, 65).
- It is a dramatic contrast to compare Rebekah with the immoral woman of Proverbs 7!
- *Don't muddy the water; don't create baggage that will haunt you later. Stay sexually pure!*

- The scene closes with a beautiful conclusion that reports the marriage of Isaac & Rebekah, their love for one another, and the sweet "comfort" they enjoyed.
- **Isaac & Rebekah are the classic, biblical example of a match made in heaven!**

Session 2, A House Divided

A House Divided:

- Last session we examined a "match made in heaven" in Genesis 24. It portrays a wonderful example of a couple brought together by faith.
- Yet this session we are going to look at Genesis 27 and see "a house divided." The contrast could not be greater.
- Next session we will examine Isaac & Rebekah's descent into dysfunction and analyze how their beautiful relationship devolved into the divisive home we see in Genesis 27.

The Setting (Genesis 27:1-4)

- Isaac's old age sets the scene as he begins to think about his impending death and the passing on of the covenant blessings.
- As often accompanies old age, Isaac was functionally blind, a detail which will be important later in the story.
- Though this refers to literal blindness, it metaphorically represents Isaac's spiritual condition as well.
- Note that Isaac initiates the situation by insisting Esau hunt and prepare for him the venison that he "loves" so that he can in turn bless Esau. Isaac is in direct rebellion to the revealed will of God (25:23).
- There is a stark contrast between Abraham's faith in his old age (cf. Gen. 24:1-4) and Isaac's failure in his old age (Gen. 27).
- The whole scene portrays Isaac as a man easily controlled either by his own appetite for venison or the manipulation of others.
- Isaac seems more like a pawn than a Patriarch!
- In fact, Isaac passed on these character flaws to his favorite son Esau, who also indulged his appetite by selling his birthright for a bowl of stew.

The Scheme (Genesis 27:5-17)

- As Rebekah overhears Isaac’s plan, she takes a preemptive stance and employs a plan of her own.
- She enlists Jacob into a cold and calculated plan to deceive Isaac by preying upon his weaknesses of blindness and love of venison.
- Note how Rebekah refers to Jacob as, “my son,” yet refers to Esau as “your brother” (v. 6)
- This scene dramatically contrasts the Rebekah we met back in Genesis 24. There Rebekah was faithful in her character and humble in her trust in the providence of God.
- Yet here in Genesis 27, Rebekah is suspicious, prying, manipulative, deceitful, and greedy to claim God's blessing without following God's ways.
- She fails to trust the very promises & providence of God that brought her and Isaac together to begin with.
- Yet as Rebekah explains her plan, Jacob spots a potential weakness to the plan. Rather than experiencing guilt as a result of weaving this deception, Jacob only experiences fear of the deception failing.
- Jacob is no child in this scene. Some calculations estimate that he is 77 years old when he foolishly joins his mother in a scheme to ruthlessly deceive his father Isaac.
- Verse 11 includes a subtle wordplay when Jacob describes himself as “smooth,” because the Hebrew word can also describe lying lips (Prov 5:3).
- Note also the response of Rebekah when Jacob shows the potential weakness in the deception.
- She says, “upon me be thy curse, my son, only obey my voice...” The author of Genesis makes a not-so-subtle allusion to Genesis 3:17.
- Note also, however, how far Rebekah is willing to go to manipulate Isaac, dominate Jacob, and thereby enforce her own will.

- Rebekah also displays her own resourcefulness when she is able to use the skins of the goats to make Jacob’s smooth skin appear hairy.
- Do not miss the ironic contrast between this scene and the first appearance of “skins” in the book of Genesis (Gen 3:21)!

The Subterfuge (Genesis 27:18-29)

- Jacob goes ahead with the duplicity as he enters his father’s tent. In the conversation that follows Isaac airs his suspicions, as to the identity of his son, several times (v. 20, 22, 24).
- Note how each time Isaac asks a question, Jacob has to create another lie. One lie always leads to another lie!
- Note that the last thing that neither Jacob, nor his mother thought of in their plan was Jacob’s voice.
- When the whole plan is about to fall apart, Jacob limits himself to one-word answers, and approaches his father in order to allow the smell and feel of the skins to work their magic.
- The ploy works! Jacob receives the blessing (v. 28-29) that Isaac intended for Esau.

The Scandal (Genesis 27:30-42)

- The next scene is drama at its finest. Jacob leaves the presence of his father, and without a moment to lose, Esau enters.
- As Esau addresses his father, Isaac immediately understands that he has been duped.
- The text records the opposite reaction of Isaac and Esau to the situation. Isaac is so overcome by fear that he begins to shake violently, while Esau erupts into loud and bitter lamentation.

- As Esau pleads with his father for a blessing, Isaac has nothing left to give but a prediction of the ultimate triumph of Jacob, and the servitude of Esau.
- The anti-blessing of Esau (v. 39-40) possesses only 3 poetic lines. This is half the length of the blessing intended for him in verses 28-29.
- Esau's resentment turns into murderous rage, which Esau nurses in order to "comfort" himself.
- In other words, Esau self-medicated with thoughts of sweet revenge (cf. ironic contrast of v. 42 with Gen. 24:67).

The Separation (Genesis 27:42-28:5)

- Rebekah learns of Esau's intentions so she continues to manipulate Isaac, protect her son Jacob, while blaming everything on his older brother Esau (v. 42).
- Rebekah calls her son Jacob with another plan to counter Esau's ill intentions (v. 43).
- Notice again the use of the term "voice" in verse 43, which appears 6x in this chapter (v. 8, 13, 22, 38, 43).
- Notice the irony... in a sense, Jacob & Rebekah won. Their ploy worked, but it gained them nothing that God would not have given them anyway. Rather, they lost much more!
- The next scene (27:46-28:5) portrays Rebekah lamenting over the wives of Esau, and using them as the reason why Jacob needs to depart and go to Padan-Aram.
- Once again Rebekah weaves an elaborate web that not only masks the real reason why Jacob must flee, but also seeks to fool Isaac & transfer guilt to Esau.
- Though Esau is by no means a guiltless individual, the real villains in this episode are Rebekah and Jacob.
- They once again fool Isaac into doing their bidding. Isaac calls for Jacob, blesses him, and sends him to Padan-aram (28:1-5).

- In a last ditch effort to regain his father's acceptance, Esau decides to go and take a wife from the daughters of Ishmael.
- Now two disenfranchised firstborn sons intermingle their lineage, which will later produce the greatest enemies the nation of Israel has ever faced, Muslim Arabs.

A House Divided:

- Notice how no one in this household trusts anyone else!
- Isaac did not trust his wife Rebekah, nor she her husband. Jacob knew that his father would not trust him (“What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him,” v. 12), & neither of the two sons trusted the other.
- What a miserable way to live! A house divided is full of selfishness, manipulation, deceit, blame shifting, & bickering.
- When we sow these seeds, we reap awful consequences!

Analysis:

- What are the root causes to such division? How did this household become so dysfunctional?

Why Was Isaac Partial to Esau, and Neglectful to Jacob?

1. **Social Factors (Gn. 21):** Isaac himself was the favored child over Ishmael. This perhaps produced patterns of favoritism in his own life. Perhaps Isaac had a hard time relating to his more mild-mannered younger son.
2. **Selfish Factors (Gn. 25:28):** “Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison.” The way to a man’s heart is often his stomach! Isaac is portrayed as enslaved to his appetites.

3. **Spiritual Factors (Gn. 25:23):** God foretold that the younger would rule the elder. Yet Isaac seemed disinterested in this prophecy, and even opposed to it.
 - Many scholars point out that Isaac may well have been in rebellion against God. When the leader of the home is in rebellion against God, nothing good can come of it...

Why was Rebekah so Manipulative?

- **Manipulation** is to cleverly, unfairly, or unscrupulously seek to control a person or situation.
- Manipulation seeks to get what is best for oneself rather than for other people. Manipulators use bribes, false promises, lies, and deceit to get what they want.
- Manipulators act out of a desire to control and to win at any cost. Their desire to control is actually rooted in a distrust of others. They control because they really believe other people will always get it wrong.

The Root of Manipulation

- Manipulators are not only distrustful of others but ultimately distrustful of God, either His goodness or His sovereignty.
- They believe either that God cannot do what is best for them, or that God will not do what is best for them, so they take things into their own hands.
- Rebekah refused to trust Isaac to lead the family. She refused to allow Jacob to make his own decisions. She refused to let Esau be the favored son. She did not believe that God would fulfill His promise without her “help.”

Why Was Rebekah Manipulative?

1. **Selfish Factors (Gn. 25:28):** “Rebekah loved Jacob.” She preferred Jacob over Esau.
2. **Social Factors (Gn. 24, 26, & 28):** don’t forget that Rebekah grew up with a master manipulator, whom we encounter later, Laban. She was also a beautiful woman, who enjoyed attention from men (Gn. 26:7-8).
3. **Spiritual Factors (Gn. 25:23):** Ironically, Rebekah was no different than Isaac. They took different paths in their distrust of God, but neither obeyed God, and trusted Him to work out the details of His own prophecy.

The Result of A Dysfunctional Family:

- Between the partiality of Isaac and the manipulation of Rebekah, they created between themselves a dysfunctional home, which resulted in rivalry, resentment, and rebellion among the children, and the ultimate disintegration of the home.
- **Isaac’s** Unjust Partiality drove a wedge between his sons, and created rivalry in the home...
- **Rebekah’s** deceitful manipulation resulted in her never seeing her favored son ever again...
- **Esau’s** Bitter Rebellion turned to hatred, murderous rage, and alienation from his parents...
- **Jacob** was exiled from his home, ran for his life, and never saw his beloved mother ever again...

Summary:

- "If you are not trusting God and are therefore trying to do your will instead of his, or even his will in your own way, learn that the plottings of sin never work out and that the path of disobedience is always rocky."

Session 3, Descent into Dysfunction

Descent into Dysfunction

- Genesis 24 pictures an ideal beginning to marriage, a "match made in heaven," the blessing of God, and happiness in the home.
- Yet Genesis 27 is the opposite. Genesis 27 reveals a dysfunctional marriage relationship between Isaac & Rebekah, which evidenced itself in deceit, manipulation, and disintegration of the household.
- So what happened between Genesis chapter 24 & 27? What caused the match made in heaven to descend into division & dysfunction?
- *For clues, we must consult Genesis 25 & 26. There are two major events that give us what we are looking for.*

A Barren Womb (Internal Desires)

- The **first** major clue we find is in Genesis 25:19-21. In a sort of replay with what happened to Sarah and Abraham in Gen. 12-20, Isaac & Rebekah cannot have children for nearly 20 years.
- On the other hand, Isaac's brother Ishmael had 12 sons, which became rulers over 12 peoples, which would come to dominate the territory of Arabia (cf. Gen. 25:13-16).
- In other words, God was keeping His promise to Ishmael (cf. Gen. 17:20), but what about His promise to Abraham, Isaac, & Rebekah?
- "Scripture gives no indication of Isaac's thoughts in this period, but we can imagine how he might have wondered at God's working or even cried out to God to ask why his brother should prosper so abundantly while he continued childless." (Boice)

- We can easily read over this fact with little notice, because it is given such a brief statement. However, if you have ever known someone, or perhaps you yourself have struggled to have children, then you understand how debilitating this can be.
- Apply the passage at this point, particularly if you are going through a barren period or are not prospering.
- Has your career reached a dead end? Has it been years since God moved in your life in any dramatic way? Have you been left behind while others have surged ahead?
- This does not mean that God has abandoned you, or even that you are less well off than others. God is teaching you to depend on him. He is showing you that he is more interested in what is happening inside you than what is happening around you. (Boice)
- Like Abram and Sarah in Genesis 16, Isaac & Rebekah had a deeply rooted desire, which was delayed. Recall what kind of path this can take.

Path to Relational Conflict and Disintegration:

1. It Begins with a **Desire** that becomes
2. A **Craving** that becomes
3. An **Expectation** that becomes
4. A **Demand** that becomes
5. A **Disappointment** that becomes
6. A Source of **Discontentment** that
7. Descends into **Depression** or
8. Boils over into **Frustration & Lashing Out** at Others, often those closest to you.

Waiting on God:

- Did God have a plan for Isaac & Rebekah? Did God fully intend to keep His promise and give them a son? YES!

- Recall Proverbs 13:12 *“Hope deferred makes the heart sick: **but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life!**”*
- Delay & disappointment can be debilitating, yet note how Isaac & Rebekah did not repeat Abram and Sarah’s failure of using a surrogate mother.
- Rather, Isaac wisely goes to God in prayer! God graciously bestows not one, but two children.
- *When they, or we, receive what we have patently hoped for we experience great joy, but we also face a cross roads...*

The Gift vs. Giver:

- Whenever we receive that for which we have carefully and patiently waited, that very thing can become an idol to us, and thus our undoing.
- *We must never love the gift God gives, more than the Giver Himself!*
- Note how Genesis 25:24-28 goes on to note how both Isaac and Rebekah fell prey to this.
- Note that these verses say that both Isaac and Rebekah each loved one child to the neglect of the other.
- Their impartial love toward one child not only led to the neglect of the other child, but also to the neglect of the marital relationship.
- We all have been here. We must be diligent to never miss-prioritize the parental relationship over the marital relationship. This is SO EASY to do.
- Children are incredibly needy, therefore we tend to focus much of our time and energy on children. “The squeaky wheel gets the grease!”
- One author put it this way. "What does a child bring to a marriage? The inescapable presence of a dependent, demanding, selfish, vulnerable creature with two ends to wipe!"

- Yet if we are not careful, we tend to neglect the marital relationship, and begin to look to the children or career or something else for emotional fulfillment.
- The primary focus must be on the marriage, not on the children. we must concentrate on what we give to the children, not on what they bring to us.
- Dr. Armin Grams emphasizes, "Children were never meant to be the hub of the family. Their place is on the periphery, sheltered and loved, but respected as children and expected to behave that way.
- The center of a family is a relationship between the husband and the wife. All else revolves around that.
- In this way, when children leave the family, they can do so, with the least disturbance of the family unit. If they are in the center of the cell, they cannot emerge without a serious rupture of the whole.
- Our function as parents is gradually to make ourselves unnecessary & to equip and permit the children to orbit the family in ever widening circles until they establish themselves in society as a fellow adults."

A Fear Filled Crisis (External Pressures)

- For the second clue of how Isaac & Rebekah descended into dysfunction, read Genesis 26:1-11.
- This account hits us like a broken record! It is so parallel to Genesis 12, the account in the life of Abram, that it makes our heads spin. But that is sort of the point.
- First, note how sinful patterns and tendencies can infect generations. So many of our bad habits we learn from our parents, but then we never grow past them.
- Abraham's struggle to trust God in Canaan amidst a famine caused him to go to Egypt where he feared for his life and fell prey to cowardice, deceit, and almost an extra-marital affair (cf. Gen. 12:10-20).

- Now, Isaac does the exact same thing! A famine occurs in the land, so Isaac starts heading toward Egypt until God stops him.
- God appears to Isaac to remind him of the divine promises he possesses and commands him not to go to Egypt (Gen. 26:2-5).
- So Isaac settles in the Philistine territory of Gerar, but soon encounters a difficulty, which tempts him to resort to deceit
- External pressure like a *famine* (i.e. hard times financially) or a *Pharaoh* (i.e. a powerful personality in our lives) often endanger us.
- If we are not what we should be in our relationship with God, then we are easily manipulated by outside forces.
- Isaac's disordered priorities are perhaps most clearly seen in verse 9 when he admits that he lied because he feared he would have to die for his wife...
- Whoa! Wait, wait! Aren't we supposed to be willing to die for our wives?! (cf. Eph. 5).
- Now consider the relational dynamics at play in this story between Isaac & Rebekah.
- Can you imagine being Rebekah? Can you imagine the feelings of betrayal, neglect, and perhaps contempt for the cowardice of your husband Isaac?
- Just like his father before him, Isaac was willing to sacrifice the welfare of his own wife and family in order to save his own skin.
- What happens when you suffer disappointment in a relationship? A relationship that has suffered neglect, will also suffer disappointment, frustration, conflict, & possibly disintegration.
- When we do not feel loved and satisfied in one relationship we often selfishly begin to look for it in a different relationship.
- In other words, if our most basic need is to feel loved, we will search for love anywhere and everywhere.

- Here is what the typical path of a self-seeking relationship looks like.

Searching for Love:

1. We first look for love from our parents. Yet at some point, some sooner than later, we will discover that this is an imperfect love.
 2. So, we next look for love from our peers, that is, those around us, i.e. siblings, friends etc.
 3. Yet when that bubble bursts, we tend to seek for love and acceptance a single peer, who becomes our spouse.
 4. Yet if the marital relationship is not fulfilling, we often look elsewhere for love, acceptance, and appreciation. Many look for this in their children, or in a career.
 5. When children and/or career bring disappointment, we look for escape in a hobby, substance abuse, extra-marital affairs, etc.
 6. If in our older age we still have not found love, and acceptance, we may look to grandchildren, retirement, or pursuit of longevity as our primary goals in life.
-
- What's the point? The point is that we as humans so often look for love, acceptance, meaning, and purpose outside of the **ONLY ONE** who can ultimately give it.

The Love of God

- The love of God is the only source of selfless, sacrificial, and spotless love we will ever experience.
- Not only this, but multiple passages in the Scripture declare that our personal awareness, acceptance, and admiration of

God's love for us is the single most important thing about us.

- **Read Romans 5:1-5; 8:31-39; Ephesians 3:14-21.**
- Our inner strength, satisfaction, meaning, endurance, hope, and joy are **DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL** to our awareness, acceptance, and admiration for God's love toward us.

As the Song Writer Wrote:

“The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen could ever tell; It goes beyond the highest star, and reaches to the lowest hell.

The guilty pair bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win; the erring child He reconciled, and pardoned from his sin.”

“Oh love of God, how rich and pure, how measureless and strong. It shall forever more endure the saints and angels song.”

“Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made, were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade; to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry; nor could the scroll contain the whole, tho' stretched from sky to sky.”

“Oh love of God, how rich and pure, how measureless and strong. It shall forever more endure the saints and angels song.”

Love for Others

- Only when we personally experience the love of God in our lives, do we find security, meaning, and purpose. When I possess this sort of security, it frees me to properly love others selflessly!

Recall John 13:1-4

- Jesus served selflessly and sacrificially because He knew and embraced His own identity and destiny. He knew Who He was, Where He was going, and What to do in the meantime.
- Just like Jesus, I love because I have been loved. I am free to sacrificially love and serve others, because I myself have been loved and served sacrificially by God.
- If you seek to be satisfied in marriage, or children, or anything else but God, you will sap the life from your relationships.
- Humans can never love you the way God loves you. If you need people more than love people, you as too much of them, you place too much upon them, you will ruin your relationships, because you ask of them what only God can give.
- Rather, investigate, revel, and rest in the love God has for you. Allow that you equip you to love others, rather than need others. Then enjoy God's blessing!

