

99-08-15b

We're ready now to resume our study in Genesis 26. And the question comes up, and I was hoping someone would ask it, and several did, because when you begin to consider the passive approach, if you will, that Isaac takes to this conflict, how do you know when to marshal your forces and stand up and fight, and when to say, well, the meek inherit the earth, I'll just walk away, do something different, even though I've invested weeks of work, and my servants have sweated in the hot Mediterranean sun here, digging this well, you're all arguing over it, okay, fine, you can have it, knowing that this is, again, a source of life-giving water. If you bring this down into the present day and make an application, several of us, I know, have been in situations where that well of water is your local church, and there are Philistines who want to take it over and take it their own direction.

Do you stay and fight to the death for what you understand as the truth and the proper priority and so forth? When is it time to walk away and go elsewhere? To examine this a little more fully, it would be helpful to us to see what the Scripture has to say about humility or meekness, because when I think of meek, I think of situations where there are two dogs, and they're sorting out who's the top dog and who's the underdog, and they meet, and after they do their usual sniffing of opposite ends and so forth, sooner or later, these dogs are going to assert, one of them is going to try to assert dominance over the other, in most cases. And at some point, this takes place, and the top dog cows the other one, and the other one just looks cowed, and it'll hunker down or it'll roll over and stick its feet in the air and act like, oh, I was only kidding, type of thing. You see this throughout nature, you watch National Geographic specials, and you find that in a herd, in a group of animals, the males, I saw a thing recently about chimpanzees and their little society there, and there's always one head monkey there that asserts himself, and he'll keep that role for a time, and pretty soon, one of the young bucks will get strong and healthy and oust him, and then he'll be the head monkey.

So I think of the one that gets cowed, the one that gives in and rolls over and says, okay, fine, you can do what you want to do. That's the first thing that comes to my mind when I hear the word meek. It's just like, well, anything to not make waves.

And this is a misconception, and it is not the biblical concept of humility. It's not the biblical concept of meekness. And to see that, let's take a look at some of the scriptures that address this subject.

Look at Zephaniah 2. I love to say turn to Zephaniah just to see if anybody can find it. If you haven't memorized your Old Testament books, you're going to have trouble. Zephaniah 2. Zephaniah.

This chapter is an exhortation to return to God by repentance. Zephaniah 2. Gather

yourselves together. Yes, gather together, O undesirable nation.

Before the decree is issued, or the day passes like chaff, before the Lord's fierce anger comes upon you. Before the day of the Lord's anger comes upon you. Reminds me of what we saw in Luke with John the Baptist's message about the chaff being tossed up in the wind and burned with unquenchable fire.

The axe is already laid at the root of the tree, so change your mind, he said. Here Zephaniah, hundreds of years earlier, is issuing a similar challenge to his generation. Gather yourselves together before the Lord's fierce anger comes upon you.

Verse 3. Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth who have upheld his justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger.

In this light, we see that meekness, or humility, is recognition that God is sovereign. That God's plan takes priority. That it is God's evaluation that counts.

It is God's desire for the way things ought to be that should dictate the course of our lives. And to gather together and seek the Lord requires humility. It is a characteristic of genuine humility.

Someone who has that characteristic is seeking the Lord. It is a requirement to seek the Lord. You can't be seeking the Lord without it.

You can't use him as a convenient solution to a problem. I've got 80% of my life figured out, but this little 20% here, I think I'll go to God for this. I'm pretty much driving the train here, but I'd like to have the Lord's help in this one area over here.

Humility in seeking the Lord is a requirement. That is the recognition that God is sovereign. God's plan is what counts.

God's goals and God's evaluation is the only thing that counts. Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth who have upheld his justice. And this is a requirement for obedience.

It is not enough to recognize the sovereignty and the priority of God and his plan, but it requires upholding rightness, upholding justice. And this is a short, succinct way of saying, be obedient. You're not upholding the Lord's justice if you disobey, are you? Seek righteousness.

Seek humility. You start out meek, continue to seek that humility. Continue to find ways to operate within it.

Don't start humble and then get a swelled head once God begins to prosper. Isaac could easily have begun to start swaggering around with his flocks and herds and the hundred-fold produce from his seed, but he does not. He operates in humility, and even after he

has prospered, he continues in humility.

He continues to prioritize the things of God. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger. When it comes time for God to inflict discipline on the nation of Israel, the people who have found this secret and who have responded to this call are going to be preserved.

The whole book of Zephaniah is interesting, but that's the passage we want to look at first. You will notice in Luke 6, verse 29, a very well-known concept from the teaching of the Lord Jesus, often a misunderstood passage in this regard. Luke 6, verse 29, actually begins up in verse 27.

I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

Again, we just talked about the tunic. Friday night, when people asked John the Baptist, he told them, you need to change your minds and bear fruit in keeping with that change of mind. They said, what then shall we do? He said, well, if you have two tunics, give one to someone who needs it.

If you have extra food, give it to those who are in need. And that tunic is the undergarment, the one that's worn underneath your outer robes and cloak and so forth. And this, if someone takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either, that essential garment that holds your body heat in and so forth.

Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods, do not ask them back. This sort of brings up the same question, doesn't it? Well, does this mean that we should just open the doors and let any thief come in and steal and take our stuff? And if we catch him walking out the door, say, hey, wait a minute, you forgot the toaster oven.

Or, oh, here, you missed something. What is Jesus saying? Well, if you step back and look at the context in which this instruction is embedded, what do we find? Look at verse 20. He lifted up his eyes toward his disciples and said, Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you and cast out your name as evil, for the son of man's sake.

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. But, woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets. What's the contrast that Jesus has set up in this passage? Between those who are asking and seeking and knocking, those who are going to God, who recognize their poverty, spiritually speaking, who recognize that they have a need that cannot be met through one's own efforts or through the things that are in this world.

When someone is poor, this doesn't really have anything to do with material poverty. This has everything to do with recognizing our insufficiency. We are hopeless, helpless, and useless apart from the Lord.

If you are hungry, you will be filled. If you are weeping now, and we do weep. We see our failures.

We see our shortcomings. We see the evil that is in the world. We see the disrespect that is done to God and to His Word.

We see the church going off on tangents and going off in weird directions and bringing shame and disgrace on the name of the Savior. In many cases, bringing disrepute on the way of righteousness because they don't understand it. They bear the name of Christ and have no concept of who He is or what God's plan is or anything else.

It brings us to tears to see the dishonor that is done to the Word of God. Blessed are you when men hate you and exclude you and revile you and cast you out as evil for the Son of Man's sake because you are faithful, because you are asking and seeking and knocking. People are knocking you because you are seeking to live the life of faith and obedience.

The contrast that Jesus draws here, these are the people who will be blessed. Who is it that is going to be cursed? Someone who is full, who thinks they have already got it all figured out. Someone who has found the answer they were looking for and now they are not seeking anymore.

The Bible doesn't say, ask, seek and knock and it will be given, it will be granted, it will be open to you and then you are done. We are to keep on asking and keep on seeking and keep on knocking. Sometimes we have an initial flash of interest.

You see people who have sort of a short term, it's like the seed planted in the shallow soil that springs up in a day and you think, oh wow, look at the great results of interest in the Word of God. But over time it fades away and it is as though it was never there. Sometimes people reach a comfort level.

I see this in particular often with people who find a theological system such as Calvinism or such as Catholicism or some other real hard and fast set view. Once people find that, they say, wow, this is it. And the natural, just like a baby has an inborn natural desire to

suckle, to find nourishment, it's built in.

But that natural desire we have as newborn spiritual creatures to be nourished can be squelched and can be lost. And people seem to find the system or the church or the culture that suits them and they find a comfort level and they stop asking, they stop seeking, they stop knocking. They feel like, well, you know, pretty much everything I need is right here.

I've got a great social life. I've got a good spot for my kids. I've got a pleasant guy up in the pulpit who speaks things.

I don't leave there with aching feet and sore toes. It's all kind of comfortable and kind of a nice experience to go. Everything is great and my life doesn't have any interruptions to it.

Everything is fine. And that hunger goes away and that frantic pounding on the door, Lord, let me in. I want to understand more.

I want to do better. I want to succeed. We just reach a comfort level.

These are the people who are rich because what they have now, that's all there is. There's not going to be an eternal reward. They're not walking the worthy walk, although they think they are and tell themselves they are.

The Bible talks about the dangers of deceiving our own selves. Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. If you get full of that which is not nourishment now, you'll be hungry later, the Bible says.

If you're laughing now, you're going to be mourning later because you're satisfied. You're comfortable. Everything is great.

You don't recognize. How could we ever get to the point of thinking, well, I am full. I am satisfied.

I have everything I need. Remember how Paul rails against the Corinthians? You say, we are full. We are kings.

We have all things. He says, don't you understand that because of your divisiveness and your strife and these other problems, you're like the church over in chapter 2 and 3 of Revelation. Remember the letters to the seven churches? You do not know that you are poor and miserable and blind and naked.

You think you're full and you're not. That's what Jesus is talking about here. So, back to our question.

What is genuine humility? Does it mean that when a conflict comes up, the default

response is to yield, to roll over, to be the dog that rolls over and whines and sticks its feet in the air? No. What it means is, your dependency is on the Lord and there is a wisdom that is associated with humility. As we are going to see, Galatians 5, 22 and 23, a very well-known passage to us that gives us a summary of the fruit of the Spirit.

This again, it's helpful to see the context in which this fruit is born. Look at verse 16. Paul, after warning people that if they bite and devour one another, they need to be careful, they are liable to be consumed by one another.

He says, I say then, walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. This is a greater battle. This is a harder victory to achieve than any other.

You can be in a situation where you are deeply wronged, where you are tempted to be very indignant and hurt that something has taken place. I have close friends who are in this situation, just even within their own family, where something is going to take place that's inevitable and it's heart-breaking to them and it goes in the face of everything they stand for. It goes against their counsel.

It's a wrong that is being done against them by someone close to them. But there are certain circumstances that come up and you have to decide, is this a time to fight or is this a time to step back and operate in love, operate in recognition of the way things stand in the eternal divine perspective. Paul says here, walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

You can be sure that if you're fighting at the wrong time or if you're yielding at the wrong time, it is because the lust of the flesh has asserted itself. This can take the form either of aggression or of fear. We saw Isaac give in to fear when he goes to Gerar and lies about who Rebecca is because he's afraid.

And that was a victory of the lust of the flesh, the desire for self-preservation. I'd rather lie than be killed because of my beautiful wife. The key in understanding when to stand and when to run away, we have this in many areas of life.

Part of the scripture you go to and it says, flee youthful lusts. And then there's another one that says, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Well now, which is it? Do we stand and wait for the devil to flee or do we see a lust and flee it? Where does that discernment come from? Where does the wisdom come from? Well, the discernment, the marker of which way to go, it's as though you're standing at a crossroads.

And you can't be like Yogi Berra, when you come to a fork in the road, take it. There is one right way and there's another wrong way. So, which way do you go? Do you go down the road that says, I'm going to stand, I'm going to resist the devil and he will flee from me, I'm going to stand up for what is right, I'm going to speak, I'm going to hold the high ground here, I'm going to die in place if necessary for this principle or this idea or this

thing, or I'm going to do what Isaac did, I'm going to pull back, I'll go dig another well somewhere else.

The first key is, you really have to want to know. Some people will find an occasion like this and they've been itching for a scrap anyway. And this is a nice excuse to get in there and let fly tooth and claw.

And that's an asserting of the lust of the flesh. And how do you know if that's what you're doing? Well, you have to stop and look. What is the critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart? It's the Word of God.

This is why our time of meditation in the Word, our time of reflection, our time of prayer is so important. And a lot of times we kind of neglect this until we hit a crisis, and then all of a sudden we're great people of prayer and we're great students of the Word and we drag out tapes and dig up our notes and do one thing and another because now it's a decision point. This needs to be the pattern of our life every day because every day's decisions are equally important.

Some of them seem big and loom large in our minds and others seem insignificant and small, but in God's estimation, every decision, every setting and observing of priorities is measured. It's kind of like they used to say in the Marine Corps. Whatever you're doing when you're on active duty, it all counts on 20.

You may be standing guard duty or you may be out there yanking a lanyard and blowing up things and killing people. Whatever it is, it's all a part of your responsibility and that's what our daily life is like. So we need to be just as concerned about the small decisions of life as we are the large ones.

We need to be just as hungry, just as seeking, knocking just as much on the door for the small things of life because if you think about it, they're just as important in God's eyes. It's just as great a failure to lose your temper with a child or with a co-worker as it is to fail a big test in some other area. It's a characteristic of the soul that is seeking to please God to take all of these things equally importantly and to practice meditation on the Word of God.

Meditation is a word that's kind of been lost in our strand of the Christian tradition. We think, well, it's the dogmatic, straightforward, monologue teaching of the Word of God and it's done under authority and you sit and soak and take notes and this, that and the other. This is really the smaller part of what the Word of God means in our souls.

It's not the hearing and it's not the taking in. It's what you do with it after you get it that counts. Many of us in times past have sort of measured our spiritual health by how often and how regularly we're taking in the Word of God.

That's not the measure at all. You look at some of these old parties in the patriarchal

days. God might have spoken to them two or three times in their life.

It's what they do with what they have in their soul. Do they make those covenant promises the object of their faith day in and day out? God can deliver the promise once or twice or three times but every day they're having to make decisions and live in the light of that Word from God. That's our calling.

It's not the frequency or the regularity of our intake that is the measure. Those things have value in other ways. It reflects self-discipline.

It reflects consistent observing of a good priority. But it's not the measure. Anybody that has ever had the opportunity to have good, consistent intake can then be put in circumstances where you can't.

You get in the service and you go on float or something and you can't pack a reel-to-reel tape recorder out in the jungles of Thailand. I know because I was in that situation. You just can't do it.

You think, oh my gosh, what am I going to do without my intake? Well, surprisingly enough, it's not the intake. What about all of those dozens and perhaps hundreds or even thousands of hours of Bible study that's already been done? What happened to all of that? Where did it go? The tree planted by the rivers of water draw on the reservoirs that the roots are sunk into. That's what we use day in and day out.

How do you know whether to stand? How do you know whether to flee? The first measure is meditate on the Word of God because the Word of God is a critic, a judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Why are you leaning toward fleeing? Why are you leaning toward standing? Is this an expression and manifestation of the lust of the flesh? Should I back off when all of my anger and my wrath and my fretting and my frustration says, I'm going to give evil for evil? I'm going to hurt that person the way they have hurt me. They've made me uncomfortable.

I'll make things hot for them. I will return in kind evil for evil. There's a good reason why water is used as the symbol of the Word of God in the Bible because as you spend time in reflection and meditation in the Word, that anger and that flame in the soul, that water will cool it.

It will moderate it. It will give us a calmer, objective, balanced perspective to see what really counts. When we step back, it gives us a chance to reestablish the divine perspective in our soul, to look at things in the long term from an eternal perspective and say, you know, this isn't worth a schism.

All of the things that Paul tells the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians, the first couple of chapters there where he says, I can't believe that there are all these strifes and divisions among you and some of you are arguing for Paul and some of you are arguing for Peter

and some for Apollos. What's the matter with you? He says you're taking each other to court to assert your rights and make sure that you don't get defrauded. He says it would be better to be defrauded than to be putting your faith in the court or be putting your faith in your teacher, the apostle or the teacher that you think is the best.

You have all things in Christ. Why are you quibbling over these little things? This is the perspective that we need. This is how to know the answer to the question, do you stand and fight or do you move on? It's in the word of God.

The word of God is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee. It is sharper than a two-edged sword.

It pierces to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit and the joints and the marrow. It is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness so that the man of God may be mature and thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

It should shame us a little bit if we come to a decision point and we say, boy, I really need to sit down and spend some time in reflection. If we have been allocating time on a daily basis for meditation and reflection, the big tests aren't going to seem so big and the little tests aren't going to seem so little. We will see them all as interwoven into the fabric of God's plan.

This is humility. Subjugating ourselves to the plan and the purpose of God. Recognizing that we are here for a purpose, that our lives and our circumstances are a story problem that give us the opportunity to exercise faith.

What is the course of faith? What is the course that relies upon God? There are times when we are to defy authority. The apostles and early teachers in the church were told, do not preach the gospel in this city. They failed to follow that instruction.

They disobeyed, duly constituted. You know, the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord, so why not wait until the king changes his mind? Why not wait until the Romans will tolerate the teaching of the gospel? They didn't wait. Why? Because they were steeped in the word of God.

They had the mandate from the Lord, preach the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the outermost parts of the earth. And that was their mandate. That was their instruction.

It was their calling from God. Saul was struck down on the Damascus road and given the commission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. In meditating and reflecting, it doesn't matter if he's going to be imprisoned.

And he was imprisoned, and chained up on numerous occasions, and beaten and

flogged, and he could have gotten all in a quandary over it. But he knew that that was a time to stand and fight. That was a time to continue forward in the face of adversity.

There were other times when he yielded. They would go someplace, and there was lack of faith. There wasn't interest.

Jesus himself would go to a town and teach. He couldn't do many miracles there. There was so little faith, so little interest.

People came in crowds, but for all the wrong reasons, and Jesus left. He didn't stay there and preach and browbeat and try to bring them along. He left and went somewhere else where there was response.

The Word of God will give us that discernment. This is the wisdom that characterizes humility. Take a look at 2 Timothy 2.25. This is Paul's instruction to Timothy the pastor.

2 Timothy 2.22 is our passage. 2 Timothy 2.22. Same idea. It's not just fleeing the youthful lust.

It's pursuing something else. You're not so much running away from the lust as you are pursuing the good things and the right things. You can't do one and not do the other, or you wind up just running away all the time.

We forsake the pursuit of youthful lusts so that we can pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace. We join a class. We join a category of people who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. This is something that probably all of us have failed at at one time or another. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach.

You can contend and you can argue for the truth, but if you're watching, you know that there's a certain point that has reached where you're no longer able to teach. You can contend too strongly. You can argue too heatedly, and it is no longer a teaching, learning opportunity for anyone.

It becomes a battle of egos or a battle of wills. It becomes a contest for its own sake. This verse, which is the Word of God, tells us, A servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient.

We can contend and be patient, and be in a teaching mode where we're attempting to share the truth and not get into a quarrel. Inhumility, correcting those who are in opposition. You can't just walk away if you're going to correct those who are in opposition, can you? You have to stand and speak.

You have to debate in some cases, but the debate has to be characterized by love, by

humility, by patience. We don't raise our voice. We don't yell.

We don't get into ad hominem arguments. We don't say, How can you do this to me? And all these other things that tend to come up. Inhumility, correcting those who are in opposition.

If God, perhaps, will grant them a change of mind so that they may know the truth and that they may come to their senses. Obviously, these people are out of their senses, or you wouldn't be talking to them in the first place. They may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil having been taken captive by him to do his will.

And sometimes these people that are coming and claiming your will, that's exactly what has happened. They have been taken captive by the devil. They're captive to their own lusts.

They seek power. They seek gratification. They seek approbation, whatever it may be.

They're in the grip of these things. You can contend. You can state the truth.

But never quarrel. Never lose patience. It has to all be done in love.

And Paul says this to Timothy, knowing what he says in chapter 3. There are going to come perilous times when men are going to be lovers of themselves and lovers of money and so forth. So this is the peaceable fruit of righteousness. You can stand in a sense and yet remain peaceable.

Same thing is mentioned in Titus 3.2. To speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. James 1.21. Lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to deliver your souls. James 3.13. Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

Meekness and wisdom go hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other. Your wisdom is useless to you and will become a club in your hand if you don't have humility.

And your humility will lead you to roll over and fail to stand and fail to contend, to fail to resist the devil or resist the lust pattern of nature if we don't have wisdom that tells us that there is a time to stand and fight. There is a time to hold the high ground. There is also a way to stand and fight.

And there is a way to hold the high ground. And it is all done in the production of the fruit of the Spirit. And if at any time we sense, as we often do in conversations and in disagreements or debates with others, when you begin to sense that the fruit of the Spirit is being lost and self-control is going away and patience is going away, it is not worth creating strife because strife is sinful.

Strife is uniformly condemned in the Bible. You can have a disagreement without having strife. And you can contend for the truth without creating division and without creating strife.

Let someone else create the division. They will do so. We don't have to create it.

We can simply stand for the truth. We don't have to foster and encourage division. This is the great thing that Isaac does.

And he has the wisdom. And he knows, based on the promise of God, based on the experience of his father, there is other land available. If he has the option of backing up, of moving further into the wilderness so that there is not a squabble over these wells, isn't that the better course? Isn't that the more peaceable course? He puts his trust in God that he can move out into the wilderness and dig another well.

God will give him water. God will give him space. It's not like it's this well or nothing.

And we sometimes think it is. Well, I've got to have this thing or nothing. And we don't explore the other options that God may have made available to us.

This is the wisdom that Isaac exemplifies here, that he demonstrates. And so, in the face of this disagreement with these others, even though the wells are rightfully his, he moves away and trusts God that there will be water at the bottom of this next hole that they dig. And, in fact, there is.

Verse 19, returning now to Genesis 26, They dug in the valley and found a well of running water there. The herdsmen quarreled with Isaac and called that one Ezek. 21, they dig another well.

He calls that one Sidna. He moved from there and dug another well and they did not quarrel over it. He called its name spaciousness, open space.

And he said, Now the Lord has made room for us and we shall be fruitful in the land. Then he went up from there to Beersheba. In Beersheba, we looked on the map, this is down there.

This is the southernmost area of the land. This is down, if you go much past Beersheba, you're getting down into Egypt. But Beersheba is the dividing place between the land of promise and the land of the Philistines.

Between the land of promise and the land of the Egyptians. Beersheba is the well of the oath. Remember it got named a couple of chapters back when Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech, this Abimelech's father probably.

And they had the seven new lands. And he said, I want this to be a testimony and a witness. And there's a double entendre in the name because Sheba in Hebrew means

seven and Shaba in Hebrew means rest.

And to swear an oath is Shaba. And so there's all of this. Remember John the Baptist's mother, Elizabeth, Eli, Shabbat, my God has sworn, my God has sworn an oath, Shabbat.

So Beersheba is the well of the oath. It's the well of seven. It's the well of rest.

It's the dividing line. Between Isaac's heritage, Isaac's promise, and everybody else. That's where he goes.

And the Lord appeared to him that same night because he went to there and he stopped. Isaac is still obeying the injunction he got at the beginning of this chapter. Don't go to Egypt.

He went to Beersheba as he had all this contention, all this heartache with the Philistines. But he stays in the land. He obeys the promise of God.

He's consistent. And God appears to him there that same night. He gets to Beersheba, the well of the oath, the well of the covenant.

And this was a covenant between men. But God appears to him here and reiterates his oath and his promise. 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. So Isaac 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. You might say redug a well because this was the well that Abraham had dug.

And they had an argument with Abimelech's servants and that's the whole reason they had the seven lambs and so forth. And oddly enough, Abraham met with Abimelech at this place and had that covenant and named the well Beersheba. Isaac's going to do the very same thing because Abraham was a man of faith.

Isaac finds himself following in his father's footsteps. But he is doing everything himself. He doesn't go to Abimelech and say, Oh, hi there Abimelech.

Remember when your father and my father were here He gets his own well. He digs his own dirt out and gets that water. And he makes his own covenant with Abimelech.

Same place. Same principle. But you can't live off of somebody else's spirituality.

You can't live off of someone else's relationships. We have to establish our own. And that's true whether it's in a marriage or in a family or in a church.

You can't be a parasite on a pastor or on another believer. And a lot of that is being encouraged and foisted on people with this whole mentoring, discipleship approach to

Christianity. Every believer has to go and dig their own well and find their own word from God as far as the perception and understanding of God's promises and God's calling in this life.

We all have to arrive at that ourselves. You can't get it from someone else. You can't get it by proxy.

Interesting. Abimelech comes to him from Gerar with Ahuzath, one of his friends. This word for friend is Marah.

And Ra, later in the Bible, in 2 Samuel and so forth, the friend of the king is a title for a high office in the land. And you get the idea here that this friend of the king, this is an official post. In fact, in a cognate language from Mari in this region and from this time, there's a title called Maru, which is probably from this same root.

And this is the guy who is the chief herdsman over the king's flocks and herds. And he has a police force, a constabulary, to enforce territory rights. And this is probably who Ahuzath is.

He is Abimelech's chief over all the flocks and herds and territorial disputes. This guy didn't show up with the previous Abimelech and Fechol, the commander of the army. And it's interesting because how many witnesses does it take to establish an oath, establish testimony? Remember what the Bible says, in the bowels of two or three witnesses, a thing shall be established.

You can't be condemned except on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Last time, Abimelech only brought one witness, which was Fechol. So in a way, Isaac's covenant with Abimelech is better.

And you notice, they don't remember the one they made with Abraham. They filled in the well and they're coming out to kind of argue over it here. But now, there are two witnesses for this oath.

So you have Ahuzath and Fechol, the commander of the army. Isaac says, Why have you come to me since you hate me and sent me away from you? They said, We have certainly seen that the Lord is with you. They can't argue with what God has done in, through, and for Isaac.

And even though they've seized the wells, even though they've displaced him a time or two from these re-dug wells and so on, he's still prospering all over the place. And they're having a hard time holding on even to what they have. So they come out and they say, We've 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. Isaac has gone from being the supplicant and being the sojourner

and the poor guy coming down to find sustenance for his family at the beginning of the chapter. Now, he's got the Philistines coming to him saying, Please make a treaty with us.

We're afraid of you. You get the idea that maybe Abimelech is a little nervous that his herdsmen have been arguing with Isaac. Isaac will probably get ticked off and come in there and just take the whole place.

So that you will do us no harm, he says in verse 29, since we have not touched you and since he's trying to put a good face. You know, they actually did kind of mess with him. They messed with him over the wells.

They ran him off from the town of Gerar. But they're putting a real nice polish on this. They're saying, Oh, we have not done anything but good to you.

We sent you away in peace. You are now blessed of the Lord. So they make this covenant.

They have a feast to seal the bargain. They ate and drank. 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 and told him about the well which they had dug and said to him, We have found water. So he called it Sheba.

Therefore, the name of the city is Beer Sheba. Beer means well. Sheba once again, oath, seven, rest, all rolled up in that name.

To this day, he gave it the same name, Abraham had given it. But he dug his own well. He made his own covenant.

God spoke to him there. It's such a great illustration of the fact that Abraham and Isaac are both men of faith. They arrive here in different ways, but they both dig a well.

They both seal a covenant with what could have been their enemies. They both have a blessing from God and they both name the well Beer Sheba. Then at the close of this chapter, the last two verses are quite interesting.

This is a new subject. When Esau was 40 years old, the same age as Isaac, by the way, we're backtracking a little bit because how old was Isaac when he married Rebekah? He was 40. We've had some intervening episodes, but now we're backing up a little bit.

When Esau was 40 years old, of course, they're twins. I'm sorry, I'm thinking of Jacob. Isaac was 40 and now Esau is 40 years old.

He takes his wives, Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basamat, the daughter

of Elan the Hittite, and they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah. Remember the priority that Abraham placed on Isaac not marrying someone from the land? Well, Isaac hears his favorite son Esau, but Isaac doesn't really say, wait a minute, Esau, let me go send a servant up to the land of our forefathers and find you a wife. But if he did, Esau paid him no heed.

Because you get the idea, Esau, he's very independent, independent-minded. He goes out and spends a lot of time out in the countryside, probably runs across little villages and things out there. He's gotten friendly with the Hittites.

His eye fell on a couple of the daughters out there. And he probably brought them home as a fait accompli and said, hey, I'm taking them as a wife. And here's a case where perhaps Isaac should have asserted himself and did not.

We don't really know the details of this. The Bible simply tells us. And by way of contrast, you remember we saw that Hagar took a wife for Ishmael from where? Egypt.

Ishmael was the one that sort of missed out. He was the firstborn son of Abraham, wasn't he? But he follows the pattern. He marries a woman of Egypt, and that just sort of demonstrates the kind of man that he is.

What if God had said, well, okay, since he's the firstborn, he can have the blessing. Look at the man he turns out to be. He marries a woman.

You know what God's attitude toward Egypt is. Don't go down there. Well, Ishmael marries a woman from there.

Esau, who is the firstborn by a couple of minutes, who has the opportunity for the blessing and the double portion and so forth, when he turns 40, he takes wives from the land. They're Hittites. They're Canaanite women.

They are not women from the family the way Abraham and Isaac have married and the way that Jacob is going to marry. We'll know in the future that Jacob is going to go back to the same household his mother came from to find his wives. But these women, it's interesting, Judith, this is the word later on that means Jewess or Israelite woman.

But here it has the idea of someone who is beautiful. Basamat means balsam, which is a fragrant thing. So you get the idea that one of them looked good and one of them smelled good.

Sensual pleasure is what's intimated by these names. And that, of course, is the hallmark and trademark of Esau. That's what got him to trade away his birthright.