

GENESIS 26:1–6, “ROLL CALL OF FAITH: ISAAC”

¹Now 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. ²And the LORD appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. ³Sojourn 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. ⁴I 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, ⁵because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”

⁶So Isaac settled in Gerar.

Discussion Questions (Choose a manageable Number to discuss)

1. In his introductory comments on faith, Pastor Jay Thomas mentioned how from our perspective, the road of faith often looks counter-intuitive and filled with twists and turns. In what ways have you experienced this “counter-intuitive” course of faith personally? How did you respond when you encountered the various twists and turns?
2. There are several connections between the story of Isaac in Genesis 26 and the stories of his father, Abraham, in Genesis 12 and 20. What are some of the similarities? Why might they be significant in understanding the portrait of Isaac in our passage?
3. In v. 2, God specifically tells Isaac not to go to Egypt. Pastor Thomas described Egypt as the ancient world’s human insurance policy (cf. Gen. 12:10-20; 42:1-2; Exod. 14:11-12; Isa. 31:1). Why doesn’t God want Isaac to go there? What modern day expressions of Egypt do people look to today? Which ones are we particularly tempted to run to instead of trusting God in the wilderness? Why does God sometimes want us to stay in the wilderness?
4. Pastor Thomas suggested that not only did Isaac walk on the foundation of his father’s faith (26:5), he also shared his father’s faith. How does the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22 reveal not only Abraham’s faith, but Isaac’s? How do you think that experience shaped their trust in the promises of God?
5. Drawing from Genesis 22 and 26, Pastor Thomas gave several principles of faith. His first principle was that faith develops through testing. How do trials or tests reveal the true quality of our faith? How does testing shape our faith? What specific trials or tests is God presently working through to grow and deepen your faith? How have you been responding? Why?
6. Twice pastor Thomas drew a connection between the Genesis narratives and Romans 5. How do the Genesis stories point us to the gospel of Jesus Christ? What functional difference does the death and resurrection of Jesus on our behalf make in the midst of our testing and trials?
7. The second principle of faith Pastor Thomas discussed was how our faith develops even when we are sinners. Even though Abraham is commended in Genesis 26:5, what evidences of his sin do we see in the previous narratives? What about Isaac’s sin? So how does genuine faith show itself in the life of a sinner (see Rom. 5:6-8; Heb. 11:8-12, 17-19)? How should we respond to God in the midst of our own sin?
8. Pastor Thomas’s final principle dealt with the role of faith in our family life, which he illustrated with the upcoming baptism of his son, Peter. What practical ways can we keep the cross at the center of our families and relationships? How do we cultivate faith in God’s promises among our families, even when the road becomes counter-intuitive?