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Genesis 26:1-35

### Sermon Outline

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Image: If you asked me in college: what is the blessed life, then I would have answered in the following way.
2. Need: People desire blessing in their lives.
3. Subject: What is the purpose of God blessing us?
4. Text: Gen 26:1-35
5. Preview. We'll look at three things. Types of Blessing. Requirement for blessing. Purpose of Blessing.

#### BODY

- I. [Requirement for blessing] God requires obedience to experience blessing
  - A. Isaac's experience of God's blessing requires his obedience even though God plans to bless him because of Abraham's prior obedience (Gen 26:1-5).
    1. God commands Isaac to do two things (26:2-3)
      - a. God commands Isaac to not go down to Egypt (Gen 26:2)
      - b. God commands Isaac to remain in Gerar (Gen 26:3)
    2. God's plan for blessing Isaac has four elements (Gen 26:3)
      - a. God will bless Isaac with his presence [relationship]
      - b. God will bless Isaac with land.
      - c. God will bless Isaac with children
      - d. God will bless the nations through Isaac
    3. God promises blessing to Isaac because of Abraham's prior obedience (26:5)
  - B. Obey God so that you may experience God's blessing.
    1. Relationship precedes obedience.
      - a. God commands Isaac because of his relationship with the Abrahamic family.
      - b. God commands us because of his relationship with us through Jesus Christ.
    2. Obedience will require you to trust God.
- II. [Types of Blessing] God blesses his people in different ways
  - A. God blesses Isaac in two ways
    1. God blesses Isaac by protecting his marriage (26:6-11).

- a. Isaac deceives Abimelech about his marital status.
      - b. God allows Abimelech to discover Isaac's marriage to Rebekah
      - c. Abimelech then issues an order to protect Isaac's marriage.
    2. God blesses Isaac by protecting him from famine (26:12-14)
    3. God blesses Isaac by protecting him from opposition (26:15-23)
  - B. Reflect on the ways that God has blessed you.
- III. [Purpose of blessing] God blesses us so that people may see that God is with us.
- A. Abimelech recognizes that Isaac was blessed because God was with him (26:26-33).
    1. Abimelech attributes Isaac's success to God's presence (26:26-29)
    2. Isaac's success compels Abimelech to make a treaty with Isaac (26:30-31)
    3. Isaac names the city Beersheba to commemorate his relationship with God and Abimelech (26:32-33)
  - B. Point others to God with the blessings you receive.

## CONCLUSION

1. Summary: We obey God to experience different types of blessing, so that people may see God is with us.
2. Closing Image: During the COVID pandemic, Elevation Music released the song: The blessing. (Consider illustration from Preaching Today)

MANUSCRIPT

**If you asked me in college, what is the blessed life? What is a good life? What does success look like?** I would have answered in the following way. First, complete my bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering and aeronautics. Do what I enjoy. Work on airplanes. Not commercial aircraft, but military fighter jets. F-16. F-18. F-22. F-35. Earn a good salary. Second, find a gorgeous godly gal. Date for a season. Get married. Wait a few more years. Have kids. Two ideally. Third, purchase a home. Maybe start with a three-bedroom home. After living in that house for a few years, we'll upgrade to a four-bedroom home. Live in a nice neighborhood in California. Fourth, hang out with friends. Develop life-long friendships who will be with me through the thick and the thin. Through the success of life and through the lows of life.

Now I'm sure that if I asked any of you, then you may answer the question differently. But all of you would want to experience success, flourishing, and prosperity. No one would ever answer the question: What to you is a blessed life? I want to be a bum. Live at home on my parent's couch as long as I can. Work at an unstable job. I don't want any friends. Can't even imagine the thought of being in a relationship. Very few people would answer this way.

**People desire blessing in their live.** They want to experience flourishing. They wish for success. The hope to experience the good life. Blessing can take many forms. It could be doing well financially. Your job and investments yield financial fruit. It could be a wonderful marriage. You enjoy the occasional date. You cherish your conversations with one another. You appreciate how your spouse just simply knows you. One might desire

good friends. Friends who know when send you an encouraging text. They send you a birthday gift every year. They confront you because they care about you. People desire blessing.

Both believers and nonbelievers receive blessing. God allows nonbelievers to experience good and fruitful lives because of common grace. Some utilize their blessing to experience life to the fullest. After all, they believe that this life is all that there is. Once you die, that's it. This causes them to use their blessing to enjoy life. Some nonbelievers believe that at one day their works will be weighed. Good versus bad. These people use their blessing to do good in hopes that somehow it will prove to the powers to be that they deserve an eternal reward.

How about Christians? **What is the purpose of God blessing his people?** It certainly can't be to live for ourselves on the earth. After all, we believe that we will continue to live after we die. We don't use our blessing to gain God's favor. After all, we already have God's favor in Christ. Why does God bless his people? Why does allow them to experience success? **What is the purpose of God blessing his people?**

To answer this question, we'll turn to the passage that Brian just read from the book of Genesis. One could organize the book of Genesis according to different families. It begins with accounts from the life of Adam and Eve followed by Noah. After Noah, Moses focuses on the life of Abraham. Once Abraham dies, his focus turns to Jacob Last week, our church began a series to study the life of Jacob. This morning' we'll be studying a

flashback. An aside. We're going back in time to reflect on the life of Jacob's father, Isaac. This account is found in Genesis, chapter 26 if you are not there already. Genesis 26.

This morning we'll look at three things. First, **the requirement of blessing**. Second, **types of blessing**. Lastly, we'll look at **the purpose of blessing**. Requirement. Types. Purpose.

First, the requirement of blessing. What do we need to do to experience blessing? What must happen before blessing comes? Obedience. **God requires obedience to experience blessing**. We must do what God commands us. We need to carry out his instructions. We obey him joyfully, completely, and immediately. **God requires obedience to experience blessing**.

We see this in the text. Moses begins the story of Isaac by describing a time of famine in the land. Rain has not fallen on the ground for years. The grass turned yellow. The cattle look thinner. Leaves crumble in your hands. This famine causes Isaac to travel to the Philistine city of Gerar.

God commands Isaac to do two things. First, **God commands Isaac to not go down to Egypt**. When the land experienced famine in the past, Isaac remembers his father Abraham going down to Egypt where the Nile provides a regular source of water. The Nile floods at regular intervals ensuring the growth of crops. But God prohibits him from going to Egypt. Look at the first half of verse 2. *And the Lord appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt*

Second, **God commands Isaac to remain in Gerar**. Look at second half of verse two. *Dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land*”

If Isaac obeys God, then God would bless him. **God’s plan for blessing has four elements**. First, **God will bless him with his presence**. This indicates relationship. God will allow Isaac to experience a relationship with him. Look at the second half of verse 3. *And I will be with you and will bless you.*

God will bless Isaac with his presence. Second, **God will bless Isaac with land**. Look at the later part of verse 3. *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.*

God will bless Isaac with land. Third, **God will bless Isaac with children**. In the ancient near east, they considered children a blessing. This alludes to God’s first command to humanity. Be fruitful and multiply. God intended humanity to have children. God will ensure that Isaac has children. Look at verse 4. *I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands.*

God will bless Isaac with children. Lastly, **God will bless the nations through Isaac**. Look at the last part of verse 4. *And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*. Recall that all of humanity and creation is under the curse of sin. God will undo the curse through Isaac’s family.

The reason God extends this blessing to Isaac is Abraham. God promises blessing to Isaac because of Abraham’s prior obedience. Look at verse 5. *Because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.*

Whenever God asked Abraham to do something, he did it. God commands: “Go from the land of your father and to a land that I will show you.” Abraham goes. God instructs Abraham to sacrifice his son. Abraham prepares his son as a sacrifice. Yes. Abraham made mistakes. He lied about Sarah being his sister. He took things into his own hands when he produced a child through Hagar. One must assume that from this verse that Abraham acknowledged his moments of weakness and God forgave Him. Hence, Moses can write that Abraham obeyed God’s voice.

What does this mean for us? Obey God. **Obey Him so that you may experience God’s blessing.** Follow his commands so that you might experience success. Do what he tells you to do so that you can experience a flourishing life.

Now some of you may be thinking. This doesn’t sound right. It sounds a little transactional. But notice that the text prohibits you from adopting such a mindset. Why?

The text teaches us that **relationship precedes obedience. God commands Isaac because of his relationship with the Abrahamic family.** Because Abraham obeyed God, Isaac experiences a relationship with God. God bases his relationship with Isaac on Abraham’s past actions.

**God commands us because of his relationship with us through Jesus Christ.** We have a relationship with God because of Christ’s past obedience. Since Jesus followed God’s will by dying on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead, we can have a relationship with Him. God is our Father. We are his children. He is our Lord. We are his servants. We do what he commands us to do.

But I confess this is not easy to do. Some of the parents at our church ask their children this question: “How should you obey?” The correct answer: Joyfully, Completely, and Immediately. God asks us the same question: “How should you obey?” Our answer: Joyfully, Completely, and Immediately.

But this is not easy. **Obedience requires you to trust God.** To do what God commands means that we believe that it will be good for us. Sometimes, we can’t foresee any good outcomes from obedience. This requires trust.

For example. God prohibits us from lying to others. Put positively, it means we must speak the truth in love. But to speak the truth to someone in love is hard. How do I tell a person that when they failed to invite me to play basketball, I felt left out and hurt? This might make me seem weak. I don’t want to be seen as needy. To speak in love is even more difficult because it requires me to think about what I say. I can’t just blast the other person for how they wronged me. I need to reflect: Will what I say come off as loving?

Imagine though if this conversation occurs. Your friend listens to your words. He expresses his surprise. He never meant to hurt you by not inviting you to the basketball game on Saturday. This prompts him to remember to invite you next time the guys get together to play ball. You experience the blessing of not only a transparent relationship but participation in a basketball game.

We talked about the requirement of blessing. Let’s discuss the types of blessing. **God blesses his people in different ways.** His blessing takes different shapes and forms.



It may be different for you than for other people. God chooses how to benefit each person differently. **God blesses his people in different ways.**

We find this in the text. **God blesses Isaac in three ways.** First, **God blesses Isaac by protecting his marriage.** Isaac obeys God's instruction to live in Gerar. But something causes him to feel anxiety. Worry. He looks at his wife and thinks: Man. She looks as attractive as the day I met her. Beautiful. Gorgeous. I'm sure the men here will think the same. If someone asks us: "So Isaac, who's your friend?" If I say: "My wife. One of them may possibly drag me into a dark alley and stick a knife in me."

He remembers his dad Abraham recounting the time when he went down to Egypt. Dad told mom to tell everyone: She was his sister. Technically, Rebekah is my cousin. Cousin. Sister. Close enough.

Instead of trusting God, Isaac passes Rebekah off as his sister. If he didn't take things into his own hands, then he might lose his life. Look at verse 7. *When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister." For he feared to say, "My wife," thinking, "lest the men of the place should kill me because of Rebekah," because she was attractive in appearance.*

Before any man takes Rebekah to be his wife, God intervenes. **He allows Abimelech, the king of Gerar, to discover Isaac's marriage to Rebekah.** Look at verse 8. *When he had been there a long time, Abimelech, king of the Philistines looked out of a window and saw Isaac laughing with Rebekah, his wife.*

Note the word that Moses uses to disclose Isaac's marital relationship. Laugh. What does Isaac's name mean? To laugh. His laughter brought blessing to his parents: Abraham and Sara. But now his laughter brings horror to Abimelech and the men of Gerar. This laughter has a sexual connotation to it. We don't know exactly what caused the laughter. Maybe they acted in a way only married couples do. We know that it has a sexual connotation because the wife of Potiphar uses it later to accuse Joseph of attempting to take sexual advantage of her.

After Abimelech discovered that Rebekah is Isaac's wife, **he issues an order to protect Isaac's marriage to Rebekah.** Look at verse 10. *Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have laid with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us."* So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, *"Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."* God protects Isaac's marriage by allowing Abimelech to discover that Rebekah is Isaac's wife.

Second **way God blesses Isaac is by protecting him from famine.** God grants him success in harvest and husbandry. Look at verse 12. *And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The Lord blessed him, and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very healthy. He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him.* Remember that famine affected the land. But despite the meager rain and eroded earth, Isaac's crops flourished.

God protects him from famine. Last way that **God blesses Isaac is by protecting him from opposition.** God defends Isaac from his enemies. The remainder of Genesis 26

records Isaac's well digging endeavors. Isaac digs a well. He finds water. People argue with Him. This occurs multiple times. Look at verse 18. *And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stoped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names s that his father had given them. But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water, the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "the water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him.*

Note Isaac's response to the argument. He expressed no fear. He also did not retaliate. Per the text, he had many servants. He could have mobilized an army and fought to defend the well. But he decides to move on. Dig another well.

Look again at verse 21. *Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also, so he called its name Sitnah.* The word Sitnah means enmity. The root of the word means adversary. It's the same root found in the name Satan. But again Isaac refrains from retaliation. Again, he moves on. Digs.

Look at verse 22. *And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, "For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."*

Every time Isaac dug; God enables his servants to find water. He didn't need to retaliate. God would provide for Him. Wells in this part of the middle East was important. It provided water for your crops, your animals, and yourself. You could not survive without a well. God protected him from his enemies by not allowing him to experience harm.

In the text, we see Isaac experience three blessings. God blesses Isaac by protecting his marriage. God blesses Isaac by protecting him from the famine by enabling him to prosper. God blesses Isaac by protecting him from his opposition.

Studying this made me wonder. How often do we reflect upon our experience of God's blessings? For instance, when I look at my life, I see how God blessed my family through unexpected ways. Let me share with you one instance.

During my seminary, I wanted to join my professor's short-term team to teach at a Bible college in Ethiopia. I remember talking to Josephine about the trip in January 2016. She supported me going. But I expressed to her that I would like for her to come too. She dismissed the idea because she would never be able to take 8-weeks off from her work. Besides, how would we be able to pay our bills and seminary tuition? I remember in March, Jo returned home from work a little sad. She shared with me that her firm had just laid off two designers. She suspected that her firm may be shuttering. Closing. Shutting its door. I thought aloud: I wonder if this is God telling us maybe you should quit your job. After all, it's only a matter of time before they lay you off too. We prayed about it. Jo decided to give her two-week notice in April. We served for 8 weeks in Ethiopia and had a great time of service. We learned a lot. Shortly after we returned from Africa, someone in the lighting industry asked if Jo was free for lunch. At lunch, this person encouraged Jo to apply for an opening at her firm. Jo applied. She got the job. This new job was better than her previous job that she left. Better hours. Better team. Better salary. This experience reminds me that God will bless us in ways we can't even imagine when we decide to take a step of faith to follow him. I'm sure that many of you also have such stories. It's important for us to remember

accounts of these blessings. It could be the blessing of a child. The blessing of acceptance into school. The blessing of seeing someone come to faith. Remember these blessings.

We talked about how God blesses his people in different ways. Let's turn our attention to the final point of this morning's message. The purpose of blessing.

**God blesses us so that people may see that God is with us.** God grants us success so that other people may see that we have a relationship with God. God enables us to flourish to draw attention to him. God's blessings point people the fellowship we have with Him. **God blesses us so that people may see that God is with us.**

We see this in the passage. **Abimelech recognizes that Isaac was blessed because God was with him.** No matter how hard Abimelech attempted to impede Isaac's success, it would never succeed. This prompts Abimelech to assemble his cabinet to see Isaac.

Look at verse 26. *When Abimelech went to him from Gerar with Ahuzzah his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army, Isaac said to them, "When have you come to me seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?"*

**Abimelech attributes Isaac's success to God's presence.** Look at verse 28. *They said, "We see plainly that the Lord has been with you."* Isaac couldn't have succeeded on his own. In a time of famine, no human effort could yield the success that Isaac experienced.

The text also shows a progression of God's presence in Isaac's life. First, God promises that he will be with him. Look again at verse 3. *I will be with you*. This is a future idea. Second, God states that he is with Isaac. This occurs when God appears again to Isaac at Beersheba. Look at verse 24. *And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake. Note the phrase: I am with you.* It occurs in the present tense. Lastly, Abimelech recognizes that God has been with Isaac. Note the past tense verb in verse 28. *The Lord has been with you*. Moses through these references highlights that God has been with Isaac in the past, the present, and the future.

**Isaac's success compels Abimelech to make a treaty with him.** Look at the later half of verse 28. *So we said, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you have done to you nothing but good and sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the Lord.*

**Isaac then names the city Beersheba to commemorate this treaty with Abimelech.** Look at verse 33. *He called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.* The word Shiba, which is also in the name Beersheba means oath. Isaac and Abimelech made with one another an oath that they would not harm one another.

Now we are not Isaac. But we have the promise that God is with us. Jesus in his final message to his disciples before his crucifixion says that after he ascends into heaven, he

would send the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. Even before Jesus ascends to heaven, he gives his followers the great commission. He states that if we are faithful in making disciples of all nations by baptizing them in the name of the father, son, and holy spirit and teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded us then Jesus will be with us until he returns.

Whenever we experience blessing in our lives, it should direct the attention of others to God. **Point others to God with the blessings you receive.** If you think about it, then I wonder if the greatest blessing that we have as Christians isn't necessarily material. Yes. God does bless us when we live according to his word. If we faithfully do our work as God commands and love our co-workers, our bosses may take notice and promote us. If we care for the needs of others, then we will likely befriend them. But again, as Christians we experience more than material blessings.

For instance, we can experience a supernatural peace. Many of you know that my mom has been battling lung cancer for two years. But we have run out of chemotherapy treatments, she decided to enter hospice a few weeks ago. This is why after service; I'll have to jet out of her to catch a flight to the Bay Area to spend some time with her while she is lucid. I apologize in advance for not being able to greet you after service is dismissed.

But during my mom's battle with cancer, some people have asked how do you have peace? I explain to them that there are two reasons. First, my mom is a Christian. This means death is only a transition to glory. I look forward to when my mom will no longer experience the suffering associated with her cancer. Second, God will take care of us. Now the care may not look like what we want. But God knows what we need. Whatever God care

he provides will be what we need. How do I know this? God sent Jesus Christ to care of our biggest need. Our sin. If God is willing to go to the extent of sacrificing his most precious son to take care of our sin problem, then how could God not take care of us in this hour of need. Ultimately, God demonstrates that he is with me by enabling me to conform my thoughts in a way that accord to his word. I hope that when I explain this to others that it would point them to God.

Let's return to the original question. What is the purpose of God blessing his people?

**God allows his people to experience blessing when they obey so that others may see that God is with us.**

During the COVID pandemic, I saw a song named: The Blessing showing up on my YouTube feed. It showed up not only in English but in other languages like Spanish, Japanese, and Mandarin. The writers based the song off the Aaronic blessing. *The Lord bless you and keep you. Make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn His face toward you. And give you peace.* This song reminds us of the blessing that we have as God's people. May the Lord help us to use this blessing and others to point others to God.