

## Better than Isaac Genesis 26

This Semester, we're studying the book of Hebrews to better understand Who Jesus is and What He's done. What we will find is that Jesus is better than anything our world has to offer. This week, we're looking at the life of Isaac which shows us that God loves us based on our Position rather than our Performance.

### Intro – Gaston Push-up Challenger (Video)

- Whether or not you've been **foolish enough to challenge Gaston** to a pushup contest, we've all failed to measure up in a variety of ways and circumstances. Many times our failure is can be frustrating or humiliating and can have a **lasting effect on our lives!**

### The Truth is...

- **We've all damaged or lost a relationship** because we weren't "good enough" in some respect. You lost a **friendship** because you weren't good enough. You got **dumped** by that girl because you weren't good enough. Your **parent** was never proud of you because you weren't good enough.
- The problem is that **Christians** are surrounded by relationships that depend on us being "good enough" and we **assume our relationship with God works the exact same way.**
- **We think: I have to live a certain way for God to love me.** I have to read my Bible or pray or serve or stop sinning or else God won't really love me. I have to be good enough for God or else He will either abandon me or maybe I was never His child to begin with...

### This Semester...

- **We're studying the book of Hebrews to better understand Who Jesus is and What He's done. Our world tells us we deserve "The Best" so we try to be "The Best" or we try to know "What's Best." But Hebrews tells us that no matter what anyone thinks, says, or does, Jesus is Better.**

### This Morning...

- We're setting up the series rather than jumping straight in. Hebrews can be an intimidating book, so we're spending the first two weeks of the semester establishing the main ideas and themes before we get into the nitty gritty – it's basically a syllabus day, but way more fun because...
- The book of Hebrews loves to use historical men and women to make certain points, so we're looking at the life of **Isaac**, who is one of our greatest Biblical examples of a person who isn't "good enough" on any level...
- But we see through Isaac one of our greatest Biblical examples of the simple truth that **God doesn't love you because you're good, God loves you because He's good. We see that Jesus is Better than Isaac.**

### The Context

- Whenever we talk about Isaac, it's generally because he's in **someone else's story** – Abraham, Jacob and Esau (**supporting actor**)
- But **Genesis 26** changes the game: **Isaac gets his one and only chapter as the headliner**, and it starts off great! It begins with...

### God Gives a Promise

- **Read: Genesis 26.3-5** – There's a **famine** where Isaac was living, just like there had been a famine with Abraham, so God tells Isaac not to worry because God's got his back
  - At this point, we're thinking, "Awesome! God just reminded us of all that **great stuff Abraham did**, and Isaac was already pretty cool about that whole sacrifice thing, so I **can't wait to see what he does** now!"

- Unfortunately, we quickly see...

### Isaac Has a Problem

- **Read: Genesis 26.6-7** – Isaac stays where God says, but just like his dad years before, he gets **concerned about how attractive his wife is**
  - While this would make an incredible Valentine’s Day card (**Ex: You’re so beautiful... It’s Dangerous!**) it displays an incredible **lack of faith** on Isaac’s part
  - In fact, Isaac has less faith than the nearby Philistines! Turns out...
- **Read: Genesis 26.8-11** – **King Abimelech** sees through the ruse, and confronts Isaac about it since he probably **remembers his dad telling him** the story about taking Abraham’s “sister” and getting cursed for it
  - Isaac obviously doesn’t appear ready for the spotlight, so at this point we’re thinking, “Okay, **Isaac, that was a bad call**, so God’s going to have to discipline you or force you through some sort of extreme trial to **keep or prove your position in God’s family**”
  - Which is why it’s so confusing when...

### God Keeps His Promise

- **Read: Genesis 26.12-14** – **In the midst of Isaac’s unfaithfulness, God gives him incredible material blessing** to the point where the Philistines hate him, which seems like the **wrong message** to send
  - **Ex: Penelope biting her sister?** – I have a niece named **Penelope** who’s almost 3 and a niece named **Katherine** who’s almost 4. They’ve just entered the amazing stage where they can play together by themselves, so we’re happy to let them run off and play muffin factory, or whatever. However, the last time we were all together, I noticed **Penelope would get frustrated** if they were both tugging on the same toy, and she’d **bite the toy**. I thought “**well, there’s an omen**” and sure enough, the next day, Katherine came up to me, said “**Penny bit me!**” and lifted her shirt to show me her **teeth-marked stomach**.
    - Thankfully, Penelope has amazing parents who **disciplined her** and told her no biting. But what if they’d just patted her on the back and told her to really use those sharp teeth on the bottom?
  - Isn’t God just reinforcing bad behavior?
- **Read: Genesis 26.27-29** – Abimelech and his men saw Isaac’s life and the only conclusion they could reach was “**God is with him.**”
  - **In the midst of Isaac’s unfaithfulness, God gives him blessing because it ultimately brings glory to God!**
  - God is reinforcing the truth that **God doesn’t love you because you’re good, He loves you because He’s good!** Unfortunately...

**We Have a Problem** - We generally respond to God’s saving grace in one of two ways: We want to DO something to **keep it**; or we want to DO something to **prove it**

- **We want to DO something to keep God’s love:** I simply can’t wrap my mind around what another pastor described as a “**God who cannot love me more and will not love me less**”
  - **Read: Romans 3.3-4a** – **God is faithful to the faithless!** Which we’d all agree is much more impressive than “God is faithful to the ones who are worthy of love thanks to their deeds”
    - Instead, we know that God so loved the World that He sent Christ to die so that we might live
  - **Ex: I tell my wife “I love you”** and not “I love you as long as you pick up those clothes and take my car in for an oil change and build a headboard for the guest bed” – because my **love is not based on her performance, but on her position!**
    - My wife has done all of those things, but what if she did them to keep my love? Because she was afraid not doing them would bring our relationship to an end? – **How would that reflect on her? Me?**
  - Jesus told us that if we love Him, we’d keep his commandments. He wants our **obedience born out of love, not out of a selfish fear** that otherwise I’d lose my salvation – **look up & out – not in**

- **We want to DO something to Prove God's love:** I'm afraid that if I don't prove to be a **worthwhile investment**, I was never truly saved
  - **Read: Romans 3.27-28** – I could **never boast in my works** because I'm saved by faith alone! If works can't gain my salvation, why would I assume they can prove my salvation?
  - It's very beneficial to **check yourself for the works that God calls us to**, but **not in a selfish attempt** to prove your salvation – check to make sure you're **loving the God who first loved you!** The God who is **faithful** when you're unfaithful! **The God who doesn't love you because you're good, but because He is Good!**

#### Application

- The **knowledge of God's unmerited love** and forgiveness should fill us with a **love for both God and His people!** Let's go out into our world **Speaking and Showing Grace**
  - **Speak Grace** – Share the **Gospel** (Christians are for, not against)
  - **Show Grace** – Share the **Grace** you've experienced with someone you know – **forgive, trust, love despite faults**

[3] Sojourn 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. [4] I 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, [5] because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

[6] So Isaac settled in Gerar. [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. [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. [9] So Abimelech called Isaac and said, "Behold, she is your wife. How then could you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac said to him, "Because I thought, 'Lest I die because of her.'" [10] Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." [11] So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, "Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

[12] And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him, [13] and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy. [14] He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him.

**(Genesis 26:3-14 ESV)**

[27] Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?" [28] They said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you. So we said, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, [29] that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD."

**(Genesis 26:27-29 ESV)**

[3] What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? [4] By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written,

"That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."

**(Romans 3:3-4 ESV)**

[27] Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. [28] For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

**(Romans 3:27-28 ESV)**