

## Lesson 1 – 2 May 2010

### Isaac, a Peacemaker

**Lesson Scope:** [Genesis 26](#)

#### Lesson Focus

Genesis 26 begins with another famine in Canaan. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all experienced famine in their lifetime. The scarcity of food and water places people in difficult circumstances. In such times, stronger people often take advantage of the weaker ones.

When Abraham encountered famine, he moved his family to a new locality. Isaac also chose this option, moving to the land of the Philistines. God appeared to him there, saying, -Go not down into Egypt sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee.-

The material blessings Isaac received became the focal point of conflict with his new neighbors. The steps he took to make and maintain peace set a worthy example for us to follow.

All men face situations in life that test interpersonal relationships. When godly principles are followed, however, most issues can be resolved peaceably. Peace seems to be a mirage for many people. Fear and trouble seem to rule among nations. The peacemaking efforts of the world's best diplomats seem to crumble without any solution or lasting stability.

But restlessness is not found only in the world. Too often we sense it in our churches as well. Could it be the stirring of the Holy Spirit endeavoring to arrest our waywardness? Or is it a hankering after the world's empty husks? Allow the peace of God to fill you and renew your commitment to live in peace. Trust the Holy Spirit to bless your efforts.

**Lesson Aim:** To discover fundamentals for making peace with our fellow men.

**Theme Verse:** [Romans 12:18](#).

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”

## Lesson Text

### "The Philistines Envied Him"

#### Genesis 26:12-17

Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundred-fold: and the LORD blessed him. <sup>13</sup>And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: <sup>14</sup>For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him. <sup>15</sup>For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth. <sup>16</sup>And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.

<sup>17</sup>And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

### "He ... Digged Another Well"

#### Genesis 26:18-25

And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. <sup>19</sup>And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. <sup>20</sup>And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water *is* ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him. <sup>21</sup>And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. <sup>22</sup>And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land. <sup>23</sup>And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. <sup>24</sup>And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I *am* the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I *am* with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. <sup>25</sup>And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

### "Isaac Sent Them Away ... in Peace"

#### Genesis 26:26-33

Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army. <sup>27</sup>And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me

away from you? <sup>28</sup>And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, *even* betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; <sup>29</sup>That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou *art* now the blessed of the LORD. <sup>30</sup>And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. <sup>31</sup>And they rose up betimes in the morning, and swore one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. <sup>32</sup>And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. <sup>33</sup>And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city *is* Beer-sheba unto this day.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **"The Philistines Envied Him"**

1. How did the Philistines express their envy?
2. Why should God's people expect opposition?

#### **"He ... Dugged Another Well"**

3. To what extent were Isaac's actions a sacrifice of his rights?
4. Isaac kept moving to avoid opposition. Is this a Scriptural pattern? Explain.
5. How did Isaac's response to opposition prepare him for worship?
6. Why are proper relationships more important than personal rights or possessions?
7. What blessing has God promised to the peacemaker?

#### **"Isaac Sent Them Away ... in Peace"**

8. Evaluate the Philistines' response to Isaac's questions.
9. How should we respond when our efforts to make peace are rejected?

### **Analyzing the Passage**

God blessed Isaac with abundant material possessions. The record does not tell us how long the famine persisted in Canaan, but the land of the Philistines had sufficient rain for Isaac to receive "a hundredfold" in his harvests. As frequently happens, Isaac's success aroused the jealousy of his pagan neighbors. After sending him away the Philistines claimed the wells that Isaac and his servants had dug. These experiences marked chapters in Isaac's life, and he named the wells according- to the experiences that surrounded them. *Esek* (Gen.26:20) means a quarrel. - *Silliah* (Gen.26:21)

means enmity and *Rehoboth* (Gen.26:22) means "broad places;" signifying that the Lord had made room for them.

Eating a meal together (Gen.26:30) was a formal part of a covenant-making, ceremony. Isaac's peaceableness was displayed in the feast he made for Abimelech and his friends. The coincidence of the meeting with Abimelech and the report of the newly dug well seems to be a crowning evidence that God was blessings Isaac for being a peacemaker.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **"The Philistines Envied Him"**

1. God's blessing may at times brim, opposition from the envious (Gen.26:12-15). God blesses diligent effort. Businesses that are carefully man- aged will attract customers and attention. Well-kept homes and farms will do the same. Faithful stewardship enables one to say no to the lavish, vain display of affluence that attracts the eyes and hearts of the envious. While we cannot divert all envious looks and thoughts, we can most surely do our part by upholding the Gospel standard of simplicity with all that God entrusts to us.

2. In a confrontation, peacemakers refuse to argue (Gen.26:10, 17). Ask God for grace to remain calm. Carefully refrain from any spoken word or facial expression that could be viewed as threatening. Be willing to accept responsibility and make amends.

### **"He ... Dugged Another Well"**

3. The peacemaker willingly gives up his rights and accepts material loss for the sake of peace (Gen.26:19, 20). Someone may enter your pasture and claim an animal that you know is yours. Let him have it. Someone may refuse to pay the balance of an invoice for services that you rendered. Entreat, but do not use liens or laws of any kind to force him to pay. Suffer the loss. Highway accidents do happen. Perhaps the other driver was clearly at fault but refuses to pay. Willingly accept the loss and repair your own vehicle.

4. Peace calls for patience in the face of repeated injustices (Gen.26:21). As with Isaac, others might take advantage of us repeatedly. We must remember to keep in focus our desire for the salvation of those who do us wrong. Perhaps their comprehension of God's love depends on what they see in us.

5. A peacemaker credits the Lord for the peace lie enjoys (Gen.26:22).

Taking God's way brings His blessing. Giving Gospel measure, going the second mile, giving a soft answer, and loving our enemies are all commands of God. Practical obedience brings personal peace and blessing in any situation, regardless of the outcome. This is true even in time of war.

6. Peacemakers seek and receive the Lord's approval (Gen.26:24-25). "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7). Groups who practice the doctrine of nonresistance are known as peace churches. We have a heritage of faithful examples left by those who sought and received the Lord's approval by the way they lived and died. Their desire for peace was amply rewarded.

#### **"Isaac Sent them Away ... in Peace"**

7. A peaceful man tries to understand the other person's point of view (Gen.26:27). Not everyone else thinks exactly as we do, nor does he see situations from our viewpoint. Finding a peaceful solution requires the communication of a face-to-face encounter rather than the suppositions and conclusions of our own imagination.

8. Peaceful people do not insist on having the final word (Gen.26:29). Practical Christ-likeness is not offensive. Repairing or replacing a line fence should not produce ill will or unkind words. Respecting those who take issue with the smells coming from one's farming and livestock operation may sometimes be resolved only by our relocating. Disputes regarding produce, merchandise, or services can usually be resolved by offering to replace the items or redo the service.

9. Returning good for evil promotes peace (Gen.26:30-31). Deliberate acts of ill will dare not arouse in us the spirit of retaliation. Those who were responsible for three flat tires at the construction site should still receive our cheery good-morning the next day. We can calmly meet the person livid with road rage with a declaration of peace: "I have the love of God in my heart.

10. God amply rewards peacemakers (Gen.26:32). God's rewards go far beyond time. Receiving God's approval, maintaining a clear conscience, and possessing a good name produce a stable foundation on which to build a life of peace. May the blessings of peacemaking rest upon us now and for eternity.

#### **Important Teachings**

1. God's blessing may at times bring opposition from the envious

(Gen.26:12-15).

2. In a confrontation, peacemakers refuse to argue (Gen.26:16-17).
3. The peacemaker willingly gives up his rights and accepts material loss for the sake of peace (Gen.26:19-20).
4. Peace calls for patience in the face of repeated injustices (Gen.26:21).
5. A peacemaker credits the Lord for the peace he enjoys (Gen.26:22).
6. Peacemakers seek and receive the Lord's approval (Gen.26:24-25).
7. A peaceful man tries to understand the other person's point of view (Gen.26:27).
8. Peaceful people do not insist on having the final word (Gen.26:29).
9. Returning good for evil promotes peace (Gen.26:30-31).
10. God amply rewards peacemakers (Gen.26:32).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. How did the Philistines express their envy?

They became spiteful in their actions. They endeavored to hinder Isaac by filling with earth the valuable wells that had been used for years. They insisted that Isaac leave the area. They claimed water rights to the newly dug wells, even though they had not dug them.

2. Why should God's people expect opposition?

Choosing God's way places one in direct conflict with the kingdom of darkness. Jesus said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 1.5:19).

3. To what extent were Isaac's actions a sacrifice of his rights?

Apparently the grazing lands were open; Isaac was not trespassing. Isaac's servant had dug the wells; by right of personal labor, they belonged to him. He could have defended and kept them, because even Abimelech admitted that Isaac was greater than they.

4. Isaac kept moving to avoid opposition. Is this a Scriptural pattern? Explain.

Yes. Jesus told His disciples, "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another" (Matthew 10:23). This pattern was followed in the Book of Acts and through the early Church Age. Hebrews 11:37 and 38 gives us a picture of those who lived faithfully in the Old Testament era despite their circumstances: "They wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; ... they wandered in deserts, and

in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

5. How did Isaac's response to opposition prepare him for worship?

He could worship with a clear conscience because he had absorbed injustice with a right spirit. His love for God had enabled him to extend this love to others. This always conditions the heart for worship.

6. Why are proper relationships more important than personal rights or possessions?

The souls of men are eternal. God wants to use us to make an eternal difference in the lives of others. Conflict and ill will close doors to further positive influence. We should endeavor to be redemptive in all our relationships.

7. What blessing has God promised to the peacemaker?

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). Peacemaking sets one apart with a positive, godly identity. It is natural for sinful man to fight and defend himself. It is godly to love others and suffer loss.

8. Evaluate the Philistines' response to Isaac's questions.

They acknowledged God's blessing only they denied any wrongdoing and desired to make a covenant that appeared rather lopsided. Isaac made no effort to correct their version of events.

9. How should we respond when our efforts to make peace are rejected?

We should continue loving and praying. Allow God time to work; all our efforts are vain without His blessing. Wait patiently on Him. Try again as God directs and opens the door.

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

Living in these last, evil days gives us abundant opportunities to share and display the love of God. Divine love in the heart will enable us to respond in a God-honoring way. even though the challenges may be difficult and ongoing.

### **Research Guide**

1. Meditate on Matthew 5:9, the only place where the word peacemakers is found in the Scriptures.

2. Read Numbers 6:22-27. Notice the emphasis on the Lord, the only source of peace.