

What Runs in the Family

Isaac inherited his father's wells, his father's faith, and his father's lies. Every family hands something down, and the question isn't what you received but what you'll pass on.

Pastor Jon Dunwell · Gateway Church Monroe

THE BIG IDEA You don't choose what you inherit. You do choose what you hand down.

PART 1 · ISAAC'S INHERITANCE

Genesis 26 is a rerun. "Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine in Abraham's time" (v. 1). Isaac walks his father's road and carries the good, the bad, and the ugly.

26:1-6

THE SAME ROAD

Same famine (12:10), same city of Gerar (20:1), same promise: "the oath I swore to your father Abraham" (v. 3). But a different word: "Do not go down to Egypt" (v. 2). Isaac has to walk it himself.

26:6-33

THE GOOD

He obeys (v. 6), reaps a hundredfold in a famine (v. 12), re-digs his father's wells and gives them "the same names his father had given them" (v. 18), chooses peace at Rehoboth (v. 22), worships (v. 25), and others see "the LORD was with you" (v. 28).

26:7-11

THE BAD

Same lie: "She is my sister" (12:13; 20:2). Same root: "because he was afraid" (v. 7). Abraham told a half-truth (20:12). Isaac tells a flat lie. The pattern isn't just repeating. It's growing.

26:34-35

THE UGLY

Esau marries two Hittite women, "a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah." Abraham guarded his son's future (24:3-4). Isaac didn't. And the favoritism is already in the house (25:28).

26:24

THE HINGE

"I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you." The God Isaac inherited speaks straight to the fear he inherited.

WORDS TO KNOW

gur

(goor)

to live as a foreigner

be'er

(beh-AIR)

well

yare'

(yah-RAY)

to fear

morat ruach

(moh-RAHT ROO-akh)

bitterness of spirit

THE CORE REALITY · MORE IS CAUGHT THAN TAUGHT

Isaac never saw Abraham lie about Sarah. He did it anyway. Our kids inherit what we are, not just what we say.

Deut 6:6-7

HOW IT'S PASSED

"Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road." Faith is passed down in everyday life, and so are our bad habits.

Exod 34:6-7

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Sin's effects reach "to the third and fourth generation," but God maintains "love to thousands." Mercy outruns judgment.

2 Tim 1:5

WHAT'S POSSIBLE

A faith that "first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice" and "now lives in you also."

Ezek 18:20

THE WAY OUT

"The child will not share the guilt of the parent." You may inherit the pattern. You don't have to inherit the sin.

NOTES

Isaac received wells, a lie, and a God. Every one of us is handing down the same three things.

1 Release the Road 26:1-6, 24

You can't live your kids' lives. You can't take their famines, make their choices, or have their encounter with God for them. Abraham was gone, and "the LORD appeared to Isaac" (v. 2). Prepare them, point them, pray for them, and release them.

THIS WEEK Name one "famine" you're tempted to fix for someone you love. Pray for them instead of rescuing them.

2 Re-dig the Wells 26:18

The good we pass on: prayer, Scripture, church as a rhythm, keeping your word, choosing peace, telling God's stories. Good inheritance doesn't maintain itself. Somebody has to pick up a shovel.

THIS WEEK Pick one well, like praying at a meal or telling a story of God's faithfulness, and dig it out this week.

3 Name the Fear 26:7

The bad we pass on. Isaac's lie came from fear, and our kids absorb our fears and coping strategies: money anxiety, blowing up or shutting down, "what will people think?", shading the truth, sarcasm, and hiding in screens or work.

THIS WEEK Write down one thing you do under pressure that you saw your parents do.

4 Guard the Next Generation 26:34-35

The ugly we pass on is often what we don't do: passivity, favoritism, unresolved conflict, and assuming faith will "just happen." What you don't deal with doesn't stay with you. It lands on your kids, and sometimes your grandkids.

THIS WEEK Ask yourself: what am I not doing that my family will feel later? Do one thing about it.

5 Make Him Your Own 26:24

Pattern-breaking doesn't start with trying harder. It starts with meeting God yourself. Your kids need to see that God is real to you. You can be the transitional generation, and it's never too late.

THIS WEEK Spend ten minutes alone with God. Tell Him what you inherited, and ask Him to make you the turning point.

KEEP · BREAK · MEET

Keep the good. Break the bad. Meet the God who makes you the turning point.

REFLECT & RESPOND

1. What well did someone dig for you that you're still drinking from today?
2. What do you do under pressure that you saw your parents do?
3. What are you not doing that the next generation will feel later?
4. Is God the God of your parents, or has He become your God?

MY NEXT STEP One well I want to keep digging, and one pattern I want to stop with me:

NOTES
