

Pursuing Peace – Genesis 26:12-32

[INTRODUCTION]

It's important to learn how to deal with conflict in a Godly manner or else we end up hurting people, and we can get hurt ourselves. I learned this painful lesson in high school at a basketball game (7 foot)

- End result – both of us kicked out of the game. My team won – I had sidelined their star player.

Satan wants to make us ineffective for God too

- He does this by giving us many opportunities to react ungodly (thus blowing our witness for God).
- We all deal with difficult people -know the right combination of buttons to push to upset us (RED)
- If we are not careful we can injure others with unkind/sarcastic words we say, bad attitudes we give, needless grudges we keep, and rash decisions we make in anger. (be careful, because...)
- Prov. 18:19 -A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, contentions like bars of a castle

I know we make an effort at peace, but are we really pursuing it like God intended?

- Psalms 34:14 - "Seek peace and pursue it" - Pursuing takes effort and Paul begs us that...
- "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." (Romans 12:18)
- Not saying you should be a "doormat" and let people walk all over you! Loving confrontation is ok.

I think peace is possible in more situations than we think if we would just pursue it patiently. Many blessings are in store for us if we represent the Prince of Peace more accurately!!!

[MESSAGE]

Difficult people will always be around. You really can't get rid of them, but you can get rid of some buttons, so that they can't bother you as much. So turn with me to GENESIS 26 and watch Isaac.

(1-11) Summarize the story

- Huge famine – tempted to go to Egypt – God's only command = " dwell in this land".
- If Isaac did that – God promised to give him ALL of this land. Isaac went to King Abimelech.
- How does God want us to dwell is what we'll discuss today? (dwell = "shakan" – "settle down" ☺)
- Isaac had the same temptation as Abraham (lied about his wife/sister) But he stays in Gerar...

(12-16) Let's start by looking at THREE (of the MANY possible) REASONS for wars and fights

- Isaac worked hard and God blessed him abundantly. His neighbors weren't too happy.
- (v.14) #1 JEALOUSY – the thought is that if it is good for my neighbor, it must be bad for me. James 4 "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet.."

Jealousy is a powerful emotion – Shown true in 2006 at a teddy bear museum in England - it was teddy bear carnage. A guard dog named Barney "just went berserk" and shredded about 100 of the bears on display (including (tragically ☺) Elvis Presley's teddy bear, Mabel – yes, a piece of history has been lost forever ☺). What would possess Barney the guard dog to become so violent? The dog's handler speculated that it could have been jealousy, "because he "was stroking Mabel and saying what a nice little bear she was." (Barney is now working at a taco factory in Spain ☺)

- (v.15) #2 HOSTILITY towards his family...
 - Water = precious; plugging a well = serious aggression that could lead to war.
 - *You know how you can react when someone does something against your family: ☺*
For instance – FATHERS of teenage daughters. When a boy wants to get to know your daughter you start with the assumption that he is guilty until proven innocent. One father told me that the only boy he was ever OK with dating his daughter was the captain of the chess team. Any guy who took that long to make a move was okay in his book! ☺
- (v.16) #3 INCONVENIENCE! (Abimelech forces Isaac to move) Isaac had a big company.
 - Nobody likes to move -packing/unpacking. Bribing friends w/pizza that helping will be fun☺
 - How is Isaac going to react to this inconvenience? Surprisingly, very calmly...
- These are just 3 issues Isaac had to deal with. (We are tempted to war and fight for many others)
Gossiped, taken advantage of, cheated, embarrassed, merge (Packer fan in a Giants home? ☺)

(17-19) Peace is more probable if you know God's Word (His promises)

- He leaves the city life without a fight. How? I believe he trusted in God and His promises to him.
 - Genesis 26:3 - God had promised Him all of this land one day...so he could leave it today.
 - One day –the Bible says God will judge the person who wrongs you– so walk away today
- Isaac knew where to find water and started digging a well.
 - The phrase we see translated "running water" is also "living water" in other translations.
 - Wells of water for us can be a picture of God's Word - and we are to drink deeply of it.
John 4 - "Jesus said to the woman at the well, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?"
 - WHERE? She misunderstood how to get this water – WE KNOW living water is in the Bible!
- The amount of time that we invest in God's Word will reflect itself in our meekness. (takes effort)
God has hidden every precious thing in such a way that it is a reward to the diligent, but a disappointment to the lazy. The pearl is buried beneath the ocean waves; the gold is imprisoned in the rocky mountains; The nut is hidden in its case; So God's truth must be earnestly sought.
- Knowing where to get the living water will help you have the right attitude in conflict, but are we really ready to do whatever it takes for peace? Let's watch Isaac story progress...

(20) Next we see that peace is possible, even with those who are against us (who are wrong)

- He leaves them without a fight, but they are thieves! They dont deserve it. No, we don't deserve it
 - Hebrews 12:14 – "Pursue peace with ALL PEOPLE...without which no one will see the Lord."
 - Do you remember another thief that received peace in the Bible? (thief on the cross)
 - Jesus set the example – no matter who it is – work for peace to be a good witness for God.
- Let's not be surprised when sinners sin, let's surprise them with our patience.

- NAMED IT – Esek (“quarrel”) – that’s a place of fighting, I don’t want to be there because
 - “a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all...” (2 Timothy 2:24)
 - We get into some stupid arguments at times don’t we? There is rarely a good reason too.

While on a car trip an old couple stopped at a restaurant for lunch. The old woman left her glasses on the table, but didn't miss them until they were back on the highway. By then, they had to travel quite a distance before they could find a place to turn around. The old man fussed and complained all the way back to the restaurant. When they finally arrived, as the old woman got out of the car to retrieve her glasses, the old man said, "While you're in there, you may as well get my hat, too." ☺

- “It is honorable for a man to stop striving, Since any fool can start a quarrel.” (Prov. 20:3)
Thing about that – it’s nothing special to start a fight (want a plaque/certificate/biscuit?)

(21) In this we learn peace is more likely when we look behind the scenes

- Isaac knew this hatred towards him wasn’t normal. What was really going on here?
 - Maybe this person had a bad day? You’ve had a bad day before... (React with grace)
 - Why do I think Isaac is looking behind the scenes this time...
- He NAMES IT Sitnah (“hatred” or “accusation”) He calls it what it is... (same root as “satan”)
- This is a spiritual attack – “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age” (Ephesians 6:12)
 - I like this method of NAMING IT – pausing to realize there is spiritual power at work here.
 - Prov. 17:14 -The beginning of strife is like releasing water, so stop contention before a fight.
 - When you realize the spiritual nature of a conflict, you can deal with it spiritually:

How do you fight spiritually – with PRAYER: (a cool thing happens when you prayer)
I can no longer hate a brother who I pray for, no matter how much trouble he causes me. His face, which may have been intolerable to me, is transformed in intercession into the face of a brother for whom Christ died, the face of a forgiven sinner.
 - So the next time you feel the temptation to really let someone have it – pause...maybe the enemy is different one than you think. Maybe this is a bigger battle – a spiritual one. PRAY.

(22) Better chance at peace when we remember that the God of peace is still on the throne

- Finally – the Philistines gave him some space – or did they?
 - I believe it was God who gave Isaac the room – and Isaac knew that too!
 - He NAMED IT Rehoboth (“spaciousness”) and thanked the Lord for making the room.
- Do you know what that means? The Lord DIDN’T make the room at the previous wells.
 - Isaiah 45:7 “I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these *things*.” - Are you mad at God? (NO!) That’s your only option. ☺
 - There is nothing, no circumstance, no trouble, no testing that can ever touch me until, first of all it has gone past God and past Christ, right through to me. [Job – Satan asked God]
 - When I remember that God allowed this trial/attack – then I can respond like Job 1:21 “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

- How many wells would Isaac have dug to live in peace (1 more, 5 more, 50 more)?
 - How many would you dig? 😊 “But it’s not fair... I’m obviously right!”
 - Maybe God wants to show your neighbor AMAZING GRACE/MERCY by your reaction.

What mercy do you find in how this couple handled strife: drove down a country road for miles, not saying a word. An earlier discussion had led to an argument and neither of them wanted to concede their position. As they passed a barnyard of mules, goats, and pigs, the husband asked sarcastically, “Relatives of yours?” “Yep...” the wife replied, “in-laws.” 😊

- Funny, but where is the love in silence/sarcasm? Better to patiently work through anger.
- Anger is like a fire. Patience is like water. (except with grease fires / CCOB not liable...)

(23-25) No we see that aiming for peace will take you to new places in your relationship with God

- Something happened that made him want to leave Rehoboth.
 - It seems God’s goodness in giving him peace from his enemies led him to want to be closer.
 - So he heads to where God met his father – and God meets Him and encourages him.
- A fugitive is fleeing from home; a vagabond has no home; a stranger is away from home; but a pilgrim is heading home. Tents identify Isaac as a pilgrim, and the altar pointed to his true home.
 - We aren’t home – we are in enemy territory...Expect attacks. We forget this is a war.
 - Instead, let God use the difficult times to bring you closer to Him and His comfort.

(26-27) As we read it looks like Isaac was holding a grudge. Perfect peace includes true forgiveness

- Sure he left Gerar quietly, smiling on the outside but kicking and screaming inside? 😊 Bitterness.
- God wasn’t finished working on Isaac’s heart – He wanted Isaac perfect (TURN To – Matt. 5:43-48)

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

- It’s one thing to walk away – it’s PERFECT to walk away forgiving, praying and loving that person.

(28-31) Back in Genesis - I’ll tell you what...People notice when you pursue peace

- Having a calm spirit in frustrating times is a noticeable attitude.
- And when a man’s ways please the Lord He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him”
 - “Isaac may have seemed weak to the herdsmen of Gerar. They didn’t appreciate his peace.
 - Who cares – they smell like sheep. You don’t need their approval (they are baaad dudes) 😊
 - But the King noticed! The king pursued a good relationship with him. (our King notices!)
- Isaac finally forgives Abimelech (In that culture, having a feast is declaring friendship)

(32-33) God blesses Isaac for his peaceful living by giving him another well

- Matthew 5:9 – “Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.”
- He NAMES IT Sheba (“oath” or “seven”) and he builds his life around this well.
 - Why 7? It’s the number of perfection/completion/maturity. Forgiveness was the final key.
 - He had to let go of that grudge – to fix his heart’s attitude, not just his outward actions.

REVIEW: Take a look at 7 ways that Isaac worked at peace:

- LOOK at the reasons for your fight - - they’re not worth it
- LOOK into God’s word - - you’ll find strength in His promises
- LOOK at the one who wronged you - - so he’s a sinner like you
- LOOK behind the scenes - - to see what is really going on
- LOOK up and see Jesus - - He’s still on the throne
- LOOK forward to new places - - that you’ll go with God
- LOOK within your heart - - God wants you perfect

- DO THESE THINGS and people will notice
- DO THESE THINGS and God will bless you

[CONCLUSION]

PEACE IS MORE POSSIBLE THAN YOU THINK – but it can require tremendous SACRIFICE as we saw.

A 5th century monk named Telemikiss lived in the pursuit of God - He arrived in Rome at a time when the Roman general, Stillcho, had won a great victory over the Goths. Rome was officially Christian, but one pagan practice still lingered - the gladiator games. While Christians were not thrown to the lions, prisoners of war were cast into the arena to fight and kill each other. Telemikiss arrived on the day of the games. Following the noise, he made his way to the arena where 80,000 people had gathered to celebrate. He stood horrified. Men for whom Christ had died were about to kill each other to amuse a supposedly “Christian” population. He jumped into the arena and stood between the two gladiators, imploring them to stop. The crowd was furious at the delay of their “entertainment,” and it stoned the monk to death. The rest of the contests were cancelled that day. But, three days later, Honorius (the Roman Emperor) declared Telemikiss a martyr and ended the gladiatorial contests for good. Historians say, “His death was more useful to mankind than his life.”

Will we sacrifice ourselves for peace? It will involve the death of our flesh on a whole new level...

- “When you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;” (1 Peter 2:20-23)
- JESUS was 100% innocent. 100% right, He could have fought back, but He chose not to... and although it lead to his death, it also lead to peace on earth...
- Are we willing to give up your well, to win a soul – to work towards peace?
- LET’S ALL BE READY to make the sacrifices necessary to represent our Prince of Peace properly.