

verse reports Isaac's obedience. It wasn't automatic. Remember, there was a famine. To obey, Isaac had to trust the Lord and change his plans. But he did it. When Isaac finally moved to Beersheba, where Abraham had lived, the Lord appeared to Isaac a second time, reconfirming His blessing and protection (26:24). Beersheba means, "Well of the Covenant."

3. God uses ordinary people... who obey Him... to accomplish His purpose.

Just like He did with Isaac, God has blessed us, not just so that we'll be blessed, but so that we can become a blessing to others.

God wants us, ordinary though we are, to be His channel for taking the message of the Savior to all nations. That sounds glorious, but all too often it involves hassles as mundane as digging wells and contending with aggressive people.

We may have to struggle inch by inch, hassle by hassle, in taking God's message of salvation to those in Peru and in every part of the earth. So remember to view the hassles of your life in light of God's bigger plan for history. If you'll obey Him, He will use those everyday problems that you, His ordinary child, go through, to accomplish His purpose of blessing all nations.

True Story:

Dr. Howard Hendricks of Dallas Seminary is an extraordinary man who has had a worldwide impact for Christ. The beautiful thing is, God used an ordinary man who obeyed Him to reach Dr. Hendricks.

Howie (before he was Dr.) was from a broken home, raised by his grandmother in Philadelphia. He often wandered from tavern to tavern, looking for his alcoholic grandfather. A man named Wait, who taught a Sunday School class, came upon young Howie and some other boys and invited them to his Sunday School class. Howie didn't know what Sunday School was, but since it sounded like school, he wasn't in favor of it.

But Wait took an interest in those boys, challenged them to a few games of marbles, beat them at it, and then taught them how to play better. Eventually, there were 13 boys off the streets of Philadelphia who attended Wait's Sunday School class. Nine were from broken homes.

Even though Wait never went beyond high school, 11 of those 13 boys went on to vocational Christian service, becoming pastors, missionaries, and seminary professors. God was accomplishing His purpose by using an ordinary man who obeyed Him.

God wants to use you like that. If you struggle with trials and fears and sins and hassles and family problems, you qualify, as long as you're also growing in obedience. As God blesses you, commit yourself to be His channel of blessing to others.

Series: Biblical Gen. Ed.

Title: Dig That Well

Topic: God uses ordinary people

Our main character:

- Isaac was the ordinary son of a famous father, and the ordinary father of a famous son.
- Although he lived longer than Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph, Isaac's life is pretty much covered in one chapter.
- Isaac was kind of blah.
- He wasn't bold like his father Abraham, who made a daring raid against the kings of the east.
- He wasn't shrewd like his son, Jacob, or a gifted leader like his grandson, Joseph.
- But God used him to work out His covenant promises.

Genesis 26:1-6: A _____ causes Isaac to travel.

We notice right away that God is making sure we know this famine is not the same one that Abraham went through.

If part of this passage looks familiar about God's promises, it is because we have seen God confirm and clarify His covenant with Abraham 6 times: Genesis 13:14-17; 15:1, 18-21; 17:1-7ff; 21:12; 22:17-18. However, as far as we are told, this is the first time God spoke these words to Isaac.

Verses 7-11: Like father, like _____?

Similarities between this sin of Isaac and that of his father Abraham:

- Both sinned in the presence of Abimelech, and both were rebuked by him.
- Both had a beautiful wife and feared for their own safety, thinking that they might be killed so that someone could marry their wife.
- Both lied by saying that their wife was their sister.
- It would also appear that neither Abraham nor Isaac recognized the gravity of their sin or fully repented of it.

However...something does not add up:

Many years have passed between the two encounters with Abimelech.

There seems to be evidence that there were two different Abimelechs.

Scholars believe the term "Abimelech" is a title of office, like "Pharaoh", rather than a given name. Another thought is that sons were often named after their grandfathers.

Timing:

Sarah was 65 when she and Abram went to Egypt because of the earlier famine. Sarah was 90 when Isaac was born (which occurs right after the trip to Gerar where Abraham lied to Abimelech). Abe lied to both Pharaoh and Abimelech calling Sarah his sister. Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born. Does it seem likely that Rebekah had not had kids yet when Isaac passed her off as his sister?

Verses 12-25: Isaac _____, and encounters envy and animosity.

In spite of his sin of lying, God blessed Isaac. God used prosperity and opposition to move Isaac to where He wanted him to be.

Digging a well was making a claim of ownership of the land on which it was located. It enabled a man to live there and water his herds. The Philistines tried to wipe out Isaac's claim to ownership by filling in the wells. They would rather fill in a well, an asset of great value, than to allow his claim to ownership.

While Isaac may not have realized it for some time, it was the disputes over the ownership of the wells he dug or reopened that served to guide him in the direction of the land of promise. To Isaac these wells were a necessity for survival, but to the Philistines these were a claim to the land. Opposition was thus _____ explainable, but it was a _____ ordained means of guidance as well.

Verses 26-33: God's _____ witnessed by the Philistines.

1. God uses ordinary people...

A. Ordinary people have ordinary _____.

Trials are the ordinary lot of God's people; they always have been and always will be, until Jesus returns. Trials are the normal experience of God's people, even when they're right where He wants them to be.

B. Ordinary people have ordinary _____.

Isaac had ordinary fears. He was heading toward Egypt, when the Lord intercepted him at Gerar.

You also see Isaac's fear when he pawns off Rebekah as his sister (26:7), following in the footsteps of his father.

And, after a section which describes repeated quarrels about wells with the local shepherds, the Lord appeared to Isaac and said (26:24), "Do not fear, for I am with you."

C. Ordinary people have ordinary _____.

There was a mixture of sin and obedience in Isaac's life. He starts off for Egypt without consulting the Lord. The Lord graciously appears to him and tells him not to go any farther. He obeys. The Lord even reaffirms the covenant which He had made with Abraham, and applies it to Isaac. But the next thing Isaac does is to lie about Rebekah because he's afraid he'll get killed!

Let's be clear: Point "C" is not that we should tolerate our sin, but rather that we not despair that God cannot use us because we wrestle with sin. The ordinary people God uses are ordinary sinners just like you and me, but, sinners who are working at obeying God.

D. Ordinary people have ordinary _____.

Isaac had ordinary hassles. Chapter 26 shows the repeated hassles he had with neighboring shepherds over his wells. The Philistines had stopped up the wells which Abraham had dug. Isaac dug them out again. He dug some new wells, only to have the Philistines hassle him by claiming that the wells belonged to them.

Each Hassle over a well forced Isaac to move a bit closer to the Promised Land, until finally he was so close to Beersheba that he decided to move there. If Isaac hadn't had any hassles in Gerar, he probably would have been content to stay there all his life. God used the hassles to move him back where he was supposed to be.

Have you ever thought about why God allows hassles in your life? Maybe it's a hassle with your car, or with the plumbing in your house, or a hassle at work. If you'll submit to the Lord and be teachable, you'll discover that He uses everyday hassles to move you closer to the place where He wants you, the place of His blessing. Isaac never built an altar until the Lord got him to Beersheba. But when he got there, after all his hassles, he built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord (26:25).

2. God uses ordinary people... who obey Him.

Isaac's growth in obedience was slow, and it was never perfect. If we would read on into chapter 27, we see that as an old man he was still partial to blessing Esau over Jacob, in spite of Esau's godless ways.

But, in spite of his imperfection, you can see progress in obedience, and the Lord responded to it. When the Lord first appeared to Isaac to tell him not to go to Egypt, the Lord emphasized Abraham's obedience (26:5). The next