Taking After Our Parents

Genesis 26:1-33
Key Verse: Genesis 26:24
That night the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham.”

This past Father’s Day my wife and kids gave me a gift called 23andme. For those of you that may not know, this is a DNA home kit, where you spit into a test tube and send it back to them and they analyze your DNA. Then they send you various reports on your ancestry history, medical DNA markers, and so forth. I was hesitant to participate because I was afraid the company would use this information to inundate me with spam and sales pitches. But because it was from my wife and kids, I decided to do it. Also, because I do not know who my biological father is and it would be interesting to find out about that side of my family line.

So, do you want to know what I found out? I will be brief. I am 52.2% Eastern European (mostly Czech with a little bit of Polish, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian), 16.6% Scandinavian (mostly Swedish, with just a touch of Norway), 6.8% German & French, 3.1 % Welsh. And less specifically, 15.7% broadly northwestern European and 4.6% broadly European. This information confirms what we already know, my mom’s father came from Czechoslovakia and her mother came from Sweden (that’s where I get my blond hair from). But we found out that my father’s parents must have also come from Czech and several other mixes. My mother’s relatives came from the middle east before migrating to Scandinavia while my father’s relatives came from east Africa before migrating to eastern Europe. I also found out that I’m related to Marie Antoinette on my mother’s side and to Alexander Hamilton on my father’s side. Also, I am likely to consume more caffeine, predisposed to weigh more than average (now I have an excuse), likely to be lactose intolerant, and my muscle composition is common in elite power athletes.

So, why am I telling you all these things? Well, the last couple of messages dealt with such topics as legacy, which was the good things that we pass on to our kids. And last week it was about Birthright, which was the good things that we receive from our parents. Today’s passage reveals the negative side of things that we receive or pass on to our kids, that’s why I’ve titled it, “Taking After Our Parents”

Have you ever wondered why do people take on certain mannerisms, characteristics or personality traits of their parents? Have you caught yourself (or maybe heard someone) saying, “You’re beginning to sound a lot like your father”, or “You look like your mother.” The other day at my cousin’s daughter’s graduation, I saw how she really looks like her mother. And have you ever wondered, “Why does it always seem to be the negative traits that kids pick up and not the positive ones?” As we continue our walk through the book of Genesis, we are getting more into of Isaac’s and we are going to witness Deja’Vu as we watch Isaac follow in his father’s footsteps of

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sinfulness.

Let's take a look at verses 1-6. "Now there was a famine in the land—besides the previous famine in Abraham's time—and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar. **2** The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. **3** Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. **4** I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, **5** because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions." **6** So Isaac stayed in Gerar." The last time we saw a famine in Genesis was with Abraham in chapter 12. The first verse points this out and this passage kind of reminds us of the shortcomings Abraham had while he was in Egypt. Maybe this is why God was quick to encourage Isaac not to go that way because he knows the Isaac is susceptible to the same weaknesses that his father had. Also, we see how God passes down the promise from Abraham to Isaac and officially tells Isaac that he will confirm the oath to him personally. God give Isaac the same three-point promise that he gave Abraham, he would have numerous decedents (even though his wife was barren), will give them the promised land, and all nations will be blessed through him – this is the Messianic promise.

All of this was bestowed upon Isaac, not because of anything he did, but because of Abraham's obedience. This is purely God's grace, because the blessing Isaac received had nothing to do with his actions. However, this wasn't the only thing that Abraham passed down to Isaac, he will give him other things as well.

And so, Isaac begins his life in obedience to God as he stays in Gerar and builds his life there. It seems for the moment Isaac in living in the center of God's will doing what God asked. However, even though he was in the center of God's, we find through this next section, he can be tempted and fall into sin. Take a look at what I mean in verse 7, "When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," because he was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful."" Here was Isaac living in that area and all of a sudden, he is overcome with fear as some men begin to ask him about his wife not knowing that he was married to her. Isaac panics and calls Rebekah his sister. Now, this was a bit of an exaggeration, but was really a lie because Isaac married his uncle's daughter which really made her his cousin. What I find interesting is that the "godly man Isaac" was ok with lying while these unbelieving pagans were against it. This brings up the question, "Why do non-Christians seem able to live according to their beliefs and yet Christians seem ok with going against their beliefs?" It's because non-believers are living according to their desires but Christians are trying to following God's direction, which is foreign to their sinful nature. It's always must easier to follow our sinful desires than to follow God's way. So, when we struggle, like Isaac, we appear as hypocrites.

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So, what was the issue here? Rebekah was very beautiful (26:7). Sometimes, even beauty can be a curse. Fortunately, I don't have this problem. This kind of re-enforces what the Bible tells us that "Men look at the outward appearance, while God look at our hearts." (1 Sam. 16:7) Also, for some reason, Isaac and Abraham didn't trust God to protect them from the Philistines, while on the other hand they trusted him for so many other things. This just seemed to be a weakness on their part that both of them fell prey to. This may happen to you or me, where we can be rock solid in our life of faith in so many areas and yet have one area that is a constant chronic problem that we can't overcome. St. Paul had a similar issue. We don't know what his issue was, but Paul described it as a thorn in his flesh. Three times he pleaded with God to take it away told him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Instead of complaining about it, Paul's response was this, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor 12:8-10) Paul had such a mature view of his difficult situation, which amazes me, and something we all can benefit from.

Isaac's plan seemed to be working but the more you lie, or the longer they go on, eventually they are discovered. "When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelek king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. **9** So Abimelek summoned Isaac and said, "She is really your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac answered him, "Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her."**10** Then Abimelek said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us." **11** So Abimelek gave orders to all the people: "Anyone who harms this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."" Isaac had to live with his lie and his fear for a long time. But eventually the Philistines found out, because Isaac was fondling his wife in public and the king noticed.

After this, Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the Lord blessed him. He became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. In retaliation the Philistines began stopping up his wells to the point when Abimelek said to Isaac, "Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us."

"**17** So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar, where he settled.**18** Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them. **19** Isaac's servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. **20** But the herders of Gerar quarreled with those of Isaac and said, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they disputed with him. **21** Then they dug another well, but they quarreled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah. **22** He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth, saying, "Now the Lord has given us room and we will flourish in the land.""

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Sometimes when we look at how the sins of the parents get passed on to the children, we don't like it or want it, but unfortunately it happens. Like the old saying, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree." When we this happening it may cause us to fall into despair. I found this web site where people post their feelings or complaints about the different bad habits or traits they inherited from their parents. Some of them are pretty funny, one person inherited her mom's webbed toes (which might be kind of neat especially if you like to swim), and others are more tragic, like inheriting her father's alcoholism. (Sadly this has happening to a childhood friend of mine who is tragically destroying his life with drinking even though he saw it destroy his father.) Exodus 20 tells us that the sins of the parents can infect the children to the third and fourth generations, we call these generational sins. Sins that go on for generations.

So how can we protect ourselves from generational sin? Do you have certain sins that constantly attack you with temptation? If so, you need to be preemptive and prepared for the next time you are under attack. We need to ask God for wisdom and spiritual discernment to help us fight the spiritual battle, because "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Eph 6:12) We need to ask God for protection in the hour of trial and temptation. I heard that St. Augustine was tempted by a woman as soon as he saw her, he literally ran the other way in order to not put himself in that compromising situation. Billy Graham did something similar. He would never let himself be alone with any other woman that was not his wife. Also, we need to ask God to give us the patience to endure. The Bible says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance." (James 1:2-3). Next, we need to confess our weaknesses and sin to God. We need an open line of communication with our heavenly father from whom we draw our strength. And finally, we need to claim victory by faith. 2 Corinthians 2:14 tells us, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere." God is Almighty and we need to trust in him and claim victory in our battle over sin. Don't let sin beat you down, fight back. To often we give in so quickly without a fight. If we can just submit ourselves to God and resist the devil, he will flee from us. (Jam 4:7) For we know that God is faithful and he will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. But when we are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that we can endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

However, we are not perfect and inevitably we will fall into sin because we are sinners. When we fall into these sins, it can be very difficult to get out. And in extreme cases, we may never be able to get out on our own and need help from others. But thank God who sent his Son Jesus to break the chains of our generational sins. Exodus 20 also tells us that God will show love to a thousand generations of those who love shim and keep his commands. The way to break the cycle of generational sin is through the forgiving blood of Jesus. Just as we sung in our hymn this morning, "There is wonder working power in the precious blood of Jesus." So much of what we receive from our parents is learned behavior, but this isn't always the case. For example, Isaac wasn't even alive when his father first fell into sin. And even though Isaac didn't see it, he still fell into the same

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sin. I think Isaac's root problem was fear. Every time he was confronted by closing up a well, he moved on and dug another one. I think this also connects to his fear with losing his wife. And in this passage, we see Isaac's root problem manifesting itself in these different ways. Sometimes we may have difficulty identifying our root sin problem because they can show up is so many different ways. However, God never abandoned Isaac even when he didn't trust God with his deepest fears. Instead, God blessed him abundantly, more than he could have ever imagined. So much so, he had to move away. Also, God helped Isaac to over come his fear problem. Take a look at verse 24. "That night the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham."" God graciously went to Isaac and reassured him of his promise to his father, his faithfulness, power, and promise. It was exactly what Isaac needed at the time. Isaac accepted God's love and he "… built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well."This was his act of faith and his display of love towards God. Thank God, that just as there is generational sin, we have a generational promise that can defeat our sin. Remember the key verse from this passage, v24 that says, "That night the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham."" When we remember this, we can thank God who passed his promise of blessing from Abraham to Isaac and eventually to us if we accept Jesus as our Savior. I pray that God may richly bless you in your struggle against temptation and sin.

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