

## REFLECTION GUIDE

### GENESIS 26:1-35 | WALKING WITH GOD IN THE AGE OF AMAZON

#### KEY TERMS

**Famine** - Famine was a common occurrence in the ancient Near East where much of the land was difficult to cultivate and modern technology to grow, store, and transport food was not yet invented. Abraham experienced a famine during his life (Gen 12) and famine would be instrumental in Israel's history (see Gen 41-47).

**Gerar** - Gerar was a Philistine town in what is now south-central Israel. The land was much less fertile than in Egypt where Isaac presumably was headed when the famine struck (vv. 1-5).

**Wells** - Wells were extremely important in the ancient world as a primary source of water for drinking, cleaning, and cooking in inland areas. Digging a well was hard work and there was no guarantee digging one would lead to water, which is likely why the Israelites saw the provision of water through wells as blessing from God (see Numbers 21:16-18).

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Isaac's name means "to laugh" and thus when the writer says that Abimelech saw Isaac laughing with Rebekah (v. 8) the phrase is a play on words that reads "Isaac was isaacing." The cultural context here leads the reader to see this as a romantic scene between the couple.

#### BACKGROUND

Following the birth of Esau and Jacob and the story of Esau selling his birthright to Jacob, the story now shifts back to Isaac and we learn *there was a famine in the land* (v. 1). This was a serious problem as famine meant the potential for death and death for Isaac and his sons would end the promise God made to Abraham (see Gen 17). In response to the famine, Isaac and his family set out on a journey stopping in Gerar while apparently on their way to fertile Egypt. While in Gerar, God speaks to Isaac and reaffirms the covenant made to Abraham while also telling Isaac to stay in dry Gerar instead of proceeding to fertile Egypt (vv. 2-5). Isaac trusts God and stays in Gerar (v. 6). However, after trusting God and remaining in Gerar, Isaac makes the same mistake his father Abraham made in Gerar and lies to the men of the city, telling them that Rebekah is his sister, not his wife (v. 7). Just like Abraham, Isaac's lie is found out (v. 8). This leads to distrust between Isaac and Abimelech, the king of the Philistines. While in Gerar, Isaac and his family work the land and reap a *hundredfold* harvest—which would have been extremely unexpected in this difficult land—and Isaac grows rich, ultimately leading Abimelech to force him out of Gerar (v. 12-16). Outside of Gerar, Isaac's family—and God's promise to Abraham by extension—faces significant threat, both from the Philistines and from a lack of water, but God again provides for them (vv. 17-33). The chapter ends on an ominous note, however, as Esau marries Hittite wives—Judith and Basemath—which Abraham warned against (see Gen 24:1-9).

#### GOING DEEPER

Read Hebrews 11. Reflecting on the stories about Isaac in Genesis 26, what do you think Hebrews 11:1 means? What does it look like for you to live *by faith*? How is this a daily struggle?

## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

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#### **LEARNING THE WORD**

1. Read Genesis 26:1-15. What observations can you make about Isaac?
2. What challenge(s) are Isaac and his family facing in this section? How is God's provision unexpected?
3. Reread verse 12. Why does God bless Isaac? Do you think he was deserving of blessing? Why or why not?
4. Read Genesis 26:16-35. What are some of the repeating themes we see throughout the stories in chapter 26?

#### **LIVING THE WORD**

5. How have you seen our "Amazon Age"—where everything is made quick and easy for us to obtain—affect your spiritual life?
6. How has God grown your faith through unexpected or unpleasant circumstances in your life?
7. What hard things are you experiencing right now that you wish would just go away? What does it look like to bring those things before the Lord?
8. In what ways are you tempted to try and "buy" deeper life with God? What does it look like for you personally to rest in God's grace?