

GENESIS 24–27

Introduction

This portion of the *Witnessing Christ from the Old Testament* study covers Genesis chapters 24–27 and the account of Isaac, Rebekah, and the beginning of the saga between Jacob and Esau.

[You can find the LDS outline of study and resources here.](#)

LDS Study Focus

The LDS study guide focuses on the theme:

God’s covenant with Abraham included the promise that through Abraham and his posterity “shall all the families of the earth be blessed” ([Abraham 2:11](#)). That’s not a promise that could be fulfilled in one generation: in many ways, the Bible is the story of God’s ongoing fulfillment of His promise. And He began by renewing the covenant with the family of Isaac and Rebekah. Through their experiences, we learn something about being part of the covenant. Their examples teach us about kindness, patience, and trust in God’s promised blessings. And we learn that it’s well worth giving up any worldly “pottage” ([Genesis 25:30](#)) in order to secure God’s blessings for ourselves and our children for generations to come.

As with Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, and Jacob are set up as examples of “kindness, patience, and trust in God’s promises.” However, this message gets a bit dicey upon examining their interactions with Abimelech and one another. According to the LDS resources, the family is not corrupt. The biblical text is just incomplete. As might be expected, there is also a tremendous emphasis on the importance of marriage and finding a forever spouse.

Biblical Focus

In Genesis 24–27, the narrative moves from the life of Abraham to the lives of the successive patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob. When it comes to their character and adherence to God’s commands, they are no less disappointing than Abraham. God chooses his people based on his love for them. The only thing these patriarchs contributed to their salvation was the sin that made it necessary. Again and again, they chose the wrong thing to do over the right. Yet, God did not abandon them. He blessed them, and he blessed all nations through them.

GENESIS 24

A wife for Isaac, an answered prayer, and willingness to follow where the LORD would lead

Sarah had died, and Isaac was already forty years old. It was time for him to get married! But, Isaac was the bearer of the promise—not just any wife would do. She would need to be a believer, and there weren't many of those around. So Abraham sent his servant back to his family with precise instructions. He was not to choose a Canaanite wife, nor should Isaac be sent away from the promised land.

Abraham's servant was bold and specific in how he wanted God to answer his prayer for finding Isaac a wife. Most Christians today are not taught to be this specific with God. We usually say, "Your will be done," and leave it at that. Abraham's servant was able to make such a confident request because he already knew God's will regarding the lineage of the promised seed.

Incredibly, God answered the servant's prayer immediately. Sometimes, God makes people wait years for answers (such as Abraham's wait for the birth of the promised son). But, on other occasions, God doesn't even wait for one to finish praying before answering.

Rebecca's willingness to leave behind her family, culture, and land was similar to her uncle Abraham's decades before. Her character here is noteworthy; however, as we will see in the following chapters, she was not always so trusting in God and his promises. Like the others in her family, she will sin and lead others to sin. The chapter closes with Rebekah becoming Isaac's wife, then "he loved her." The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah began first with commitment, *then* love followed.

The LDS study materials use this account to highlight the importance of marriage in God's eternal plan of happiness and follow the example of faithful servants of God. This chapter provides a unique opportunity to talk about the blessing of marriage and why God established this earthly institution.

Indeed, if we read Genesis 24, looking for models of human faithfulness to emulate, we can find them in Abraham's servant and Rebekah. However, the more significant point of Genesis chapter 24 is that God is working to provide a wife for Isaac, who will continue to carry out God's plan to bless Abraham and all nations of the earth through him.

Conversation Starters:

- **Why do you think Rebekah was willing to leave her family and her home to marry a man she had never met?**
- **Why did God give us the blessing of marriage?**
- **God's relationship to the church is described as a marriage. What do these verses teach us about God's love for us?**

Sharing Personally:

In Genesis 24, Abraham's servant is bold when he prays to God for a wife for Isaac. He was confident before God because he knew it was part of God's plan and the promise. I, too, can be bold before God when I pray about any of his promises to me. When I say prayers like, "God be with me." "God forgive me." "God, take me to heaven to live you because of Jesus." I can be confident that the answer will be a resounding, "YES!"

GENESIS 25

The death of Abraham, the birth of Esau and Jacob, and the sale of the birthright

Genesis 25 opens with the death of Abraham. Now the account moves on from Abraham to the son of the promise, Isaac. The transfer of the story to Isaac began with another closed womb. Isaac and Rebekah had to wait twenty years for a child!

Again, God made his control and involvement apparent when Rebekah *finally* became pregnant. God's promise was again fulfilled, on his terms, and in his timing. He continued to reveal his trustworthy and true character. It had taken most of a lifetime for that message to sink into Abraham's head and heart. How long would it take to set in with Isaac and Jacob?

The conflict between Rebekah's twin sons, Jacob and Esau, began even before birth as they wrestled inside the womb. God explained this with a prophecy that ultimately pointed to his unmerited love. Before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad, God chose Jacob, the younger, to be the bearer of the promise.

Culture dictated that the *oldest* male in the family was entitled to be the head of the clan and receive a double share of the inheritance. Family favoritism intensified the contention between the twins. Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob. Favoritism was a poison that would strain and destroy these family relationships for years to come.

The Jacob and Esau saga moves quickly from the twin's birth to their adult years, with Esau selling his birthright to his brother for a bowl of stew. This story paints these two men in a less than favorable light. What kind of man doesn't share a bowl of stew with his starving brother? What kind of man sells his birthright for a bowl of lentils? Neither Jacob nor Esau showed themselves to be exceptional in character. And so, God's prophecy came true as Esau despised his birthright, which included the promise to be a part of the messianic line. You can learn more about God's reaction to Esau in [Hebrews 12:15–17](#).

Mormons are regularly encouraged to "[choose the right](#)" to exercise their agency and make wise choices. It is one of the essential underpinnings for Mormonism's works-righteousness. This story provides an opportunity to explore further the fact that we are not a people who naturally choose the right, but rather the opposite.

Conversation Starters:

- **What did God teach Sarah and Rebekah by making them wait many years to give birth to the promised children?**
- **Why is it important to know that God chose Jacob *before* he was born? What does this teach us about his love?**
- **Does God show favoritism? (see Galatians 3:28)**
- **Neither Jacob nor Esau chose the right. What does this teach us about the birthright? What does this teach us about God?**

Sharing Personally:

When I read Genesis 25 about the manipulative sale of Esau's birthright to Jacob, I see that I too connive and manipulate those around me to get what I have already been promised. I crave riches, relationships, and significance. I forget that God has already given me all of those blessings by adopting me as his child and making me an heir of all the best he has to offer. I will fully enjoy this treasure when I am in heaven with him, but I can be confident and content even now.

GENESIS 26

Genesis 26 can be summarized simply as “like father, like son.” God came to Isaac and renewed his covenant and promises like he did with his father, Abraham. God then told Isaac to stay in the land, that he would be with him and bless him, and that he would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Also, like his father, Abraham, Isaac lied about his wife to Abimelech to protect himself, saying, “She is my sister.” Isaac acted in fear rather than in faith like his father before him. But, God continued to remain faithful to him.

After Isaac resolved things with Abimelech regarding his wife, he became “too powerful” to remain near Abimelech in Gerar. He moved on and dug in quick succession three different wells because of disagreements with Abimelech’s men. Next, he went to Beersheba. There the LORD appeared to him again and once more renewed the promise. Isaac built an altar, called on the name of the LORD, and set his men to work digging an additional well. Eventually, Abimelech saw how Isaac was blessed and made a sworn agreement with him, and the two lived in peace.

The LDS resources connect the wells to Jesus, “the living water.” Their conversation starters are:

- How are you digging spiritual wells in your life? How is the Savior like living water to you?
- Note that the Philistines had “stopped” the wells (see [Genesis 26:18](#)). Is there anything in your life stopping your wells of living water?

This water connection provides a unique opportunity to talk to Mormons about our spiritual thirst and the soul satiation that can come only from the living water of God.

In contrast to what historically happened in this chapter, the LDS resources focus on the making and keeping of covenants, stating, “Abraham and Sarah’s legacy of covenant-keeping would need to be passed down to Isaac, Jacob, and other faithful women and men among their posterity.”

LDS members reading Genesis 26 will undoubtedly highlight verse 5, which makes it sound as if all of these promises were made and kept to Abraham and now Isaac because of Abraham’s obedience. However, this verse does not need to worry us when we understand that Abraham’s living faith resulted in him obeying God’s commands, including the order to sacrifice Isaac, which likely came to the former sacrifice’s mind now. Again, it is good to remember that Genesis 15 comes before Genesis 22. Abraham was declared righteous by faith first, and then he followed God’s command to sacrifice Isaac.

Conversation starters:

- **Why did Isaac lie about his wife, saying, “She is my sister?” What does this account in Genesis 26 show us about Isaac?**
- **In what ways are you spiritually thirsty? What does it mean that Jesus is the living water? How does God provide living water?**

Sharing Personally:

When I read about Isaac's lie to Abimelech concerning his wife's identity in Genesis 26, I think, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Like father, like son." Both Abraham and Isaac failed to trust in the promises of God and devised a plan that broke the commandments.

Like my ancestors before me, I, too, fail to trust in the providence of God and take matters into my own hands. I, too, break his commandments. How easy it is for me to tell small lies, cheat in small ways, and steal just a bit because I fear what will happen if I don't. However, just like he has been with believers of the past, God is always trustworthy, forgiving, and faithful to me. Like with Isaac, God doesn't just provide me with wells of physical water, but he provides me with the living water of his Word, and the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ.

Additional Resources:

For a deeper dive into the difference between LDS and biblical covenants, see [Witnessing Christ from the Liahona: On the Covenant Path](#) on TILM.org.

GENESIS 27

Jacob steals the blessing (with Rebekah's help)

Again, in Genesis 27, all four characters lack noble “godly” character. Isaac knew that God wanted the blessing to be given to Jacob. Esau had already sworn before God to give the birthright to Jacob. Jacob and Rebekah also knew what God had promised. Yet, instead of trusting God to work out the situation, Rebecca and Jacob plotted to deceive their family members, father, husband, brother, and son, to take the blessing. Who does this sort of thing? We do. Yes, we all do.

This section makes LDS members who want to follow the example of faithful biblical characters uncomfortable. The LDS *Come Follow Me* resource says,

We don't know the reasons behind the approach Rebekah and Jacob used to obtain a blessing for Jacob. It is helpful to remember that the Old Testament, as we now have it is incomplete (see [Moses 1:23, 41](#)). There may be information missing from the original records that would explain what might seem troubling to us.

Don't let up on the fact that this was sinful outright lying. Jacob and his mother conspired to deceive.

Conversation Starters:

- **Why do you think Jacob and Rebekah did what they did rather than trusting in God to provide what he had promised?**

Sharing Personally:

In Genesis 27, Jacob wore his brother's clothes so that his father Isaac would believe he was Esau. Then, because he was wearing what belonged to his brother and stood there in his place, he received his brother's rightful blessing.

Ironically, believers do the same when they stand before Heavenly Father.

On Judgment Day, those trusting in Jesus's perfect work will come before God wearing the robe of our brother, Jesus. However, this robe does not need to be stolen or earned. It is given to us freely in love. When God sees it wrapped around us, he will declare us as worthy and righteous as his son, Jesus. Heavenly Father will bestow upon us all the blessings that Jesus deserves, including everlasting life with him!

We want to hear from you:

What questions and comments for witnessing do you have about Genesis 24-27? We would love to hear from you. Please email us or share in the comments section below.

Are you formerly LDS? We would love to read your insights into how you **would have** understood these chapters and what you have come to appreciate or see differently about them now. Please email us or share in the comments section below.