

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
May 11, 2014
Hebrews 11:20-22
“Passing It Down”

Memory Verse

“All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.” Hebrews 11:13, NIV

The Big Idea:

Sermon Topic: *Learning to Trust Jesus: Part 3 – Examples of the Faith: Isaac, Jacob & Joseph*

Sunday School Scripture: Hebrews 11:20-22

Sunday School Title: “Passing It Down”

ESS: In faith, the Old Testament patriarchs passed down God’s promises to their children.

REVIEW: Last week, we studied the faith Abraham exhibited at different points in his life. (Review the important events we discussed in Abraham’s life. See Hebrews 11:8-19 for help. Also, review what we learned from Abraham’s faith. (ANSWERS: *Abraham’s life – God’s call to move, God’s promise to give them a son, God’s call to sacrifice Isaac; Lessons Learned – obey despite the unknowns; believe God; trust in God’s provision; trust in God’s reward.*)

This week we continue studying Hebrews chapter 11 and learning from various characters in this “**Faith Hall of Fame**”. Today’s lesson focuses on the faith of Abraham’s descendants: Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. If there was just one characteristic that one of your parents could pass down to you, which trait would you choose? If you had to choose one thing you wanted to pass down to your children one day, what would it be? This week, we’ll look at what these men chose to pass down to their children.

READ Hebrews 11:20-22

PART I: BACKGROUND OF THE PATRIARCHS

These three verses in Hebrews 11 mention three important men from the Old Testament: Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. The stories of these men’s lives can be found in Genesis chapters 12-50. Before we can study Hebrews 11:20-22, we need to first remind ourselves of these men’s backstories. So here’s a QUICK summary of some important pieces of their lives. (*By the way, these chapters in Genesis are extremely interesting. Definitely read it for yourselves when you have some time. And the outline below is brief – it leaves a lot out.*)

We begin with Isaac. Isaac was the promised son of Abraham (whom we discussed last week). Before his death, Abraham passed on God’s covenant to his son, Isaac.

ISAAC

- **HIS TWIN SONS** - At 60 years old, after dealing with infertility for 20 years, God gives Isaac and his wife Rebekah twin sons, Esau and Jacob.
- **GOD’S PROPHECY** - God tells Rebekah these boys will never get along, will live separate lives, and the older will serve the younger. Though Jacob is younger, he will be the chosen one to inherit the covenant.
- **FATHER’S BLESSING** - God’s prophecy comes true. Esau barter his birthright away to Jacob in exchange for a quick meal. Jacob later tricks his father Isaac into blessing him. Because Isaac is old, blind and deceived, he blesses Jacob (the youngest) instead of Esau (the oldest). In Isaac’s blessing, Jacob acquires both the birthright of the older son and the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant. Esau is left with very little regarding the inheritance, but he is left with a great deal of anger, frustration and bitterness to the point of planning his brother’s murder.

JACOB

- **HIS DEPARTURE** - In order to flee from his brother Esau's anger, Jacob leaves. Upon his Mom's suggestion, he goes back to Rebekah's family to find a Godly wife. One night along the way, he encounters God through a dream. In this dream, God, makes the same covenantal promises to him that He had made to Abraham and Isaac (and the same one Isaac, Jacob's father, passed on to Jacob). Jacob believes.
- **HIS FAMILY** - When Jacob reaches Uncle Laban's house, he works hard and marries two of Laban's daughters: Leah and Rachel. As Jacob works, God blesses him immensely with flocks and children.
- **GOD'S PRESENCE** - Jacob has a big family and lots of flocks when God comes again and says it's time to leave Laban's land and return to Canaan. While Laban is out of town, in the middle of the night, Jacob packs up and everybody leaves and sneaks out of town. Laban catches up but (thanks to a warning from God), Laban doesn't harm Jacob. They part peacefully. Jacob now begins to anticipate meeting his brother Esau. One night, God comes to Jacob in a vision or dream. Jacob wrestles with and clings to God. God gives him a significant name change. He is no longer Jacob; he is Israel, God's man. Newly named Israel re-enters the promised land and meets his brother peacefully. After a challenging time raising his 12 children (11 boys, 1 girl), Jacob/Israel's wife Rachel dies in birthing his 12th son Benjamin.
- **FATHER'S BLESSING** - As Jacob nears the end of his days, he calls Joseph and two of Joseph's sons to come to him. He passes on the Abrahamic covenant to Joseph and to Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob/Israel assures them that God will keep his word and will indeed make them into a mighty nation and give them the promised land.

JOSEPH

- **HIS YOUTH** - Everyone knew Joseph was his father's favorite. He got special treatment and wore special clothes. His brothers hated him. They capture him and sell him into slavery. Joseph spends his next 13-14 years in Egypt, progressing from a slave to a servant in Potiphar's house, then back to jail, and then back to a leadership position under Pharaoh himself.
- **HIS PROMOTION** - Joseph's still in prison, God enables him to help the baker, the butler and eventually Pharaoh by interpreting their dreams. Giving glory to God, Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dream and is promoted to head the Department of Agriculture to oversee the coming famine. While working in Egypt, Joseph marries and has 2 sons.
- **HIS FAMILY** - Meanwhile, in Canaan, the famine spreads, but the rumor is that there is food in Egypt. So Jacob sends 10 of his sons to get food, but Benjamin, now favored son, stays home. After two difficult trips to Egypt, Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers. Then his entire family, even his father, comes to live with him in Egypt.
- **FATHER'S BLESSING** - While in Egypt, Joseph's father Jacob/Israel neared death. Jacob/Israel blessed Joseph and Josephs' 2 sons, passing on God's covenant to Abraham to them. At the end of his own days, Joseph called his family together and reminded them of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Joseph assured his brothers and sons that God would keep his promises and would provide for them. Joseph also made his family promise that, after his own death, they would move his bones from Egypt into Canaan, the land God would give them.

PART II: LEASONS LEARNED FROM THE PATRIARCHS

1. They Weren't PERFECT

If you study the lives of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, you will see that these men weren't perfect. But the one thing they did have was faith. They screwed up, fell short, and sinned. But each time they returned to God and believed His Word. Throughout their lives, each of them held firm to God's promises. And we see through the book of

Hebrews that their faith pleased God. This should be an encouragement for us. We aren't perfect. And we mess up often. But we can use each mistake or set-back as a new opportunity to strengthen our faith and grow closer to God. And through the blood of Jesus, our sins are removed from us. God doesn't focus on our failures or screw-ups. He focuses on our faith!

If you were mentioned years later like these Old Testament heroes are mentioned in the book of Hebrews, what would you be commended for? Would you be an example of faith? What events in your life would be talked about as evidence of your faith in God?

2. They Passed Down a **LEGACY** of Faith

From Abraham to Isaac, from Isaac to Jacob, and from Jacob to Joseph, each of these men passed down the blessing of God's promise to their sons. This was their legacy of faith. Though none of these men actually saw God's promises come true in their lifetime, they still believed God. Hebrews 11:13 says these men were still living by faith when they died. "They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance." None of these men actually lived to see the promise of a special land and a new nation come true. But they still passed down God's promises to their children because they knew that in God's timing, God's Word would be fulfilled. In fact, their faith was so strong that Jacob and Joseph both asked for their bones to be carried and ultimately buried in the Promised Land. They were that certain their children would see God's promises fulfilled.

What do you want to pass down to your children? Are there certain promises from God's Word that you want them to remember and have faith in? How will you intentionally build this legacy of faith to pass on?

3. They **DIED** with Faith

All three of these men mentioned in Hebrews 11:20-22, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, are highlighted because of the faith they exhibited on their death beds. In their last days, each of these men made it a point to call together their family and pass on God's promise. One of their highest priorities during their final days on Earth was to make sure their children held strong to their faith in God. And the same faith that had helped them endure their daily lives on Earth also gave them confidence in their death. Death can be scary for some. But for the Christian, death is the beginning of an eternity of reward and relationship with our Creator and Savior. These men's lives and deaths were a testimony to others of unwavering faith in a God they couldn't see, and of complete confidence in the fulfillment of God's promises in the future.

We often talk about how our lives need to reflect Christ, but do we ever consider how our attitude towards death reflects Christ? How can our faith and attitude in dealing with death be a testimony to others? Can you recall an instance in which someone handled death in a way that glorified God? How did this impact you?

CONCLUSION: In faith, the Old Testament patriarchs passed down God's promises to their children.

APPLY: Legacy building happens whether you're putting effort into it or not. What kind of legacy do you want to pass down? After you're dead and gone, what do you want to be remembered for? What do you want your children to have learned from you? What practical steps do you need to take to start building a legacy of FAITH today?

STUDY NOTES:

(These are for your personal study. This is NOT the lesson.)

Study Guide by David Guzik, 2001. Available online: www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob: Isaac was really in the *flesh*, not in **faith**, when he first intended to bless Jacob and Esau. He wanted to bless Esau with the birthright for carnal reasons (he liked him as a more "manly" man, and he liked the wild game he brought home), instead of blessing Jacob, whom God had chosen.

Yet Isaac came to the place of **faith** when he discovered that he had actually blessed Jacob instead of Esau, Genesis 27:33

says *Isaac trembled exceedingly*. When *Isaac trembled exceedingly*, what was he troubled about? He was troubled because he knew that he had tried to box God in, to defeat God's plan, and that God had beaten him. He realized that he would always be defeated when he tried to resist God's will, even when he didn't like it. And he came to learn that despite his arrogance against God's will, God's will was glorious.

So, where is the **faith** in Isaac's blessing? After Isaac's attempt to thwart the will of God had been destroyed, when he said of Jacob, *and indeed he shall be blessed* (Genesis 27:33). He knew that God had defeated his puny attempt to box God in, and he responded in the faith that says, "O.K. God, You win. Let Isaac be blessed with the birthright, and let Esau be blessed after him in his own way."

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph: Jacob led a pretty carnal life. Yet, his faith could also look beyond death- and he blessed each of his sons.

By faith Joseph: Joseph **made mention of the departure of the children of Israel** in Genesis 50:24, when he said: *God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob*. He knew God's promise was true!

Gave instructions concerning his bones: When Joseph died, he was never buried. His coffin laid above ground for the 400 or so years until it was taken back to Canaan. It was a silent witness all those years that Israel *was* going back to the Promised Land, just as God had said. All during that time, when a child of Israel saw Joseph's coffin and asked what it was there for, and why it was not buried, they could be answered, "Because the great man Joseph did not want to be buried in Egypt, but in the Promised Land God will one day lead us to."