

Love & RESPECT

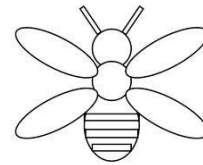
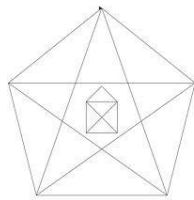
RECALL

Discuss Your Experience:

Sunday's message focused on the husband's responsibility to show and communicate his love for his wife. Guys, what would your wife say is her favorite way for you to communicate your love for her?

Icebreaker:

Seat one couple back-to-back. Give one a drawing of a shape, and give the other person a clipboard with a piece of blank paper and pencil. The person with the drawing must describe the shape while the other person tries to draw it on the blank piece of paper. The person drawing is not allowed to speak. Once completed, compare the original shape with the drawing. Was the describer's communication effective? Was the message received correctly? Have the couple reverse roles and try again with a new shape.



Introduction:

This week's study covers the biblical marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. Their story begins in Genesis 24. Here is a summary of their romantic beginning.

God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation. God kept His promise by giving Abraham a son named Isaac. When Isaac was 40, Abraham decided it was time for Isaac to marry. He sent his oldest servant to find a God-fearing wife for Isaac. The servant left Hebron and traveled over 500 miles to Abraham's native land. He stopped at a well just outside the city of Nahor. He prayed, asking God to show him whom to choose. Before the servant had finished his prayer, Nahor's beautiful granddaughter Rebekah came out with a jug on her shoulder. She filled the jug, and the servant ran to meet her. When he asked for a drink, Rebekah also offered to water his camels. The scenario unfolded exactly in order, just as the servant had prayed. The servant immediately bowed and worshiped God for answering his prayer. After receiving permission from Rebekah's brother, Abraham's servant took Rebekah back home to Isaac. Genesis 24:67 says that on arrival "Isaac brought Rebekah into the tent of his (deceased) mother Sarah, and took Rebekah to be his wife. Isaac loved her, and he was comforted after his mother's death."

Even though this union was a match made in heaven, it did not mean it was "happily ever after". Let's take a deeper look into scripture, allowing it to reveal the couple's failures and mistakes so we can guard against experiencing similar consequences in our own marriages.

REVEAL

Pray For Guidance: Take a few moments and ask God to help you understand, grasp and apply the spiritual truths of this week's selected Bible passage(s).

Genesis 25:20-28(HCSB)

20 Isaac was 40 years old when he took as his wife Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and sister of Laban the Aramean. 21 Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The Lord heard his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. 22 But the children inside her struggled with each other, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. 23 And the Lord said to her: Two nations are in your womb; two people will come from you and be separated. One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger. 24 When her time came to give birth, there were indeed twins in her womb. 25 The first one came out red-looking, covered with hair like a fur coat, and they named him Esau. 26 After this, his brother came out grasping Esau's heel with his hand. So he was named Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when they were born. 27 When the boys grew up, Esau became an expert hunter, an outdoorsman but Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home. 28 Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. 29 Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field exhausted. 30 He said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, because I'm exhausted." That is why he was also named Edom. 31 Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." 32 "Look," said Esau, "I'm about to die, so what good is a birthright to me?" 33 Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to Jacob and sold his birthright to him. 34 Then Jacob gave bread and lentil stew to Esau; he ate, drank, got up, and went away. So Esau despised his birthright.

Genesis 26:1-10

There was another famine in the land in addition to the one that had occurred in Abraham's time. And Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, at Gerar. 2 The Lord appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt. Live in the land that I tell you about; 3 stay in this land as a foreigner, and I will be with you and bless you. For I will give all these lands to you and your offspring, and I will confirm the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. 4 I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky, I will give your offspring all these lands, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed[a] by your offspring, 5 because Abraham listened to My voice and kept My mandate, My commands, My statutes, and My instructions." 6 So Isaac settled in Gerar. 7 When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," for he was afraid to say "my wife," thinking, "The men of the place will kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is a beautiful woman." 8 When Isaac had been there for some time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from the window and was surprised to see[b] Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. 9 Abimelech sent for Isaac and said, "So she is really your wife! How could you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac answered him, "Because I thought I might die on account of her." 10 Then Abimelech said, "What is this you've done to us? One of the people could easily have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us." 11 So Abimelech warned all the people with these words: "Whoever harms this man or his wife will certainly die."

REFLECT

Understand the Context:

As a group, use your study Bibles or online resources to answer the following questions about the selected passage as you can. Keep in mind, these questions are intended as a guide; you may not be able to find all the answers or have time to address each one in the group.

- 1) Who? Who wrote the book of Genesis?
- 2) What? What is a birthright? What is the meaning of Jacob's name? What is the meaning of Edom?
- 3) When? When was this book written? What approximate time period did the story of Isaac and Rebekah take place?
- 4) Where? Where did God tell Isaac not to go?
- 5) Why? Why does this story play an important role in the history of the Hebrew nation?

RECOGNIZE

Know the Truth(s):

Keeping in mind the context of the selected passage (see Reflect), read the Scripture as a group and carefully take note of the truth(s) and/or promises God provides. Look for God's promises, plans, provisions, & purposes. What did it mean? What does it mean? What meaning is unclear?

1) Isaac and Rebecca's relationship started out like a fairy tale, but somewhere along the way the marriage began to sour. Maybe 20 years of infertility strained their relationship. Maybe the stark contrast of Rebekah's outgoing, adventurous personality against Isaac's reserved, meditative, momma's-boy nature developed into an irritation that caused withdrawal and isolation. We really don't know what happened, but we begin to see glimpses of dysfunction when Rebecca cries out to the Lord and He answers her in 25:23. It's interesting that after receiving the message from God, we have no record indicating that Rebekah ever shared this important prophecy with Isaac about their two sons' futures. What could be some reasons Rebekah wouldn't share the information God gave? Discuss which sex has the most difficulty mastering the art of listening? Why? What problems arise when spouses withhold information from each other? Why is it important for husbands and wives to keep the lines of communication open?

2) Genesis 25:28 says "Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob". In addition to the marriage difficulties they've already experienced, they are further divided by their differing affections for their children. It is interesting that Isaac (being the mild, reflective type) has chosen the son most unlike himself while Rebecca chooses the one most like her husband. Not only is this type of parental favoritism unhealthy for the children, it is even more damaging to the marriage. What consequences do couples face when they place a higher priority on their children than on their marriage? Discuss some interests or activities you and your spouse enjoy or have enjoyed without the children. Why is it important to cultivate interests together as a couple, outside the lives of your children?

3) Isaac is blessed with a face-to-face encounter with the Lord in Genesis 26:2. God promises Isaac that He will multiply Isaac's descendants like the stars of the sky, provide land and that all the earth will be blessed by Isaac's offspring. Immediately after hearing God's promises straight from the source, we find Isaac cowering before the men of Gerar in verse 7. In that culture, Isaac might have had to provide a wife for someone's harem in order to enjoy certain privileges among the Philistines. If the man who owned the harem asked for Rebekah, Isaac might be killed if he refused. Ask the women in your group if it would endear respect for their husbands if, faced with a similar dilemma, their husbands followed Isaac's example. Ask the men in your group what Isaac should have done. How can husbands earn respect from their wives in our culture? What are some examples of how men lose respect in marriages today?

4) Despite the many dysfunctional characteristics of this marriage, we see a glimmer of redeeming hope in Genesis 26:8 when "Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from the window and was surprised to see Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. Abimelech sent for Isaac and said, "So she is really your wife! How could you say, 'She is my sister'?" Isaac answered him, "Because I thought I might die on account of her." It was obvious to the king that the two were husband and wife. Reading between the lines of the passage, it would be safe to assume that Isaac and Rebekah's physical relationship was still intact. How important is the aspect of physical touch within the marriage relationship? Discuss the benefits in marriage when husbands publicly admire and esteem their wives' beauty and value.

RESPOND

Take Action:

You've now prayed asking God to Reveal Himself and help you understand the selected passage; you've Reflected on the context in which the passage was written; you've Recognized God's timeless truths; and now you must Respond. To help determine your response, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1) According to the New Testament, being head of your wife does not mean being her master, but her servant. Christ is our model for this type of leadership. Jesus did not just talk about serving; He demonstrated it when He washed His disciples' feet in John 13:1-17. Christ, the head of the Church, "Assumed the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men." (Philippians 2:7). One of the best ways to serve your wife is to understand her needs and try to meet them. Ask husbands in the group if they are able to list their wives' top three needs today, then allow wives time to respond to their husbands' answers.

2) Another way to serve your wife is to provide for her. This provision first involves assuming responsibility for meeting the material needs of the family. 1Timothy 5:8 tells us, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever." However, providing is not just limited to the financial and material. Are you providing spiritual leadership for your wife? What are some examples of spiritual provision in the home?

3) 1 Corinthians 12:7 declares that each believer in Christ has at least one spiritual gift to be used to help build up the Church; using our spiritual gifts in the Body of Christ also provides fulfillment, worth and belonging. As husbands it should be a high priority to help and encourage wives in performing their spiritual gifts. Have the husbands discuss their wives' spiritual gifts. What are some practical ways husbands can help and support their wives in this area?

4) Your unconditional acceptance of your wife is not based on her performance, but on her worth as God's gift to you. If you want to love your wife unconditionally, always be sure her emotional tank is full. One of the best ways to do that is to affirm her constantly. Let her know verbally that you value her, respect her, and love her. Discuss as a group some creative ideas for husbands to express love for their wives beyond just saying "I love you."

(5) Optional Lesson Conclusion: If appropriate, select some soft music to play and allow the couples in your group to spend some moments on their own sharing and praying for their marriages. If there are singles in your group, encourage them to gather and have a time of prayer focused on the marriages in their group.
Suggested song: "More than Words" by Extreme

This Week:

Your assignment is to continue to read Genesis 27. In this reading you will discover more lies and deception in this marriage which leads to painful consequences for the whole family. Apply the five (5) spiritual learning steps (Recall, Reveal, Reflect, Recognize and Respond).