

For Better or For Worse Lesson 3 3Q 2007

Isaac and Rebekah: Rearing Rivals

Thoughts about the title? Do you think that children are inherently rivals? That they are genetically programmed to be rivals?

In the case of Jacob and Esau do you think there was something in their culture or rearing that resonated with the infection of selfishness that cultivated the rivalry? What?

Where does rivalry originate? In selfishness? A desire to promote self to get ahead, and where did this desire originate? In Lucifer who became jealous of Christ and began to promote himself and “compete” with Christ – what did Lucifer compete with Christ over or about or for? For the affection, attention, admiration, loyalty, love, devotion, worship of the intelligent beings in the universe.

What do siblings compete over, primarily? The love, affection, approval, admiration of the parents? Where does such a rivalry come from? Do parents have to teach their children to compete for attention?

Once Adam and Eve infected themselves with sin all humans, being their offspring, are born infected with selfishness. Thus babies are born into the world egocentric or self-centered. And what is the emotion that drives this self-centered approach? Fear – fear of not being loved, not being valued, not being cared for, not getting one’s just rewards etc.

How do we respond to this fear? By competing, bettering ourselves in an attempt to surpass others, defeat others, destroy others?

How do we as parents, teachers, church members, society foster selfishness in our children? What about grading on a curve? What about competitive sports? What about games like monopoly? Or even Bible games in which there is a winner and loser? Activities that focus on rewarding self-promotion and devaluing altruism?

What about how we bestow praise or criticism? Can such be done in ways that fosters competition? Do parents sometimes have favorites? Why might this be? Is it possible a parent who is a mathematician has one child who loves mathematics and therefore they just have more in common – would that mean such a parent would love his other children less? But could that natural affinity be interpreted as preference? How might the other children feel?

How can parents guard against actions which lend to a child feeling less valuable than another or that the parent loves the other child more?

What is the only power that can overcome the infection of fear and selfishness? Love, and what practical steps can we take to instill love and assist God in eradicating selfishness in ourselves, our children and families?

What problems do you see in how Isaac and Rebekah handled things, what did they do well and what could they have done better?

SUNDAY

The arrangement – what do you think about arranged marriages? Good idea or bad idea? Arranged marriages have less divorce rates than non arranged marriages – any thoughts about that?

Read EGW quote from Friday and consider her words in context of arranged marriage – any thoughts?

How many people would have been willing for their parents to select their marriage partner? Why or why not? What would have been the motive for resisting this? Fear? Fear of getting stuck with someone you didn't like? In other words, distrust of your parents ability to select a truly compatible partner?

As a parent how comfortable would you be in selecting a mate for your child? What would be the basis of your decision? Would you not do everything in your power to select someone who would bring genuine happiness to your child? What methods would you use in this selection process? How are the methods you would use different from the methods your child might use? Can we teach our children to use our methods or follow our example in decision making – examining the evidence of a person's qualifications to be a marriage partner rather than just how a person makes one feel?

Read question one – thoughts? Would it be important to you that your child marry someone of the same religion? Is there more than being a member of the same church? What else? Having the same picture of God?

What is the problem or risk when we marry someone with different beliefs about God? We actually practice in our lives the principles we believe God practices, by beholding we become changed, and this can lead to great arguments, tension and conflict in a marriage and person's can feel torn between loyalty to spouse and loyalty to God.

Read bottom bluegreen section – thoughts? What does it mean to leave everything in God’s hands? Should you pray every day for healthy teeth and then leave it in God’s hands or should you help out the process? Should you pray for good grades on your exams and leave it in God’s hands on how you do or would study and preparation have an impact? Would it be a lack of faith to pray and prepare?

What about when searching for a marriage partner – should we leave it completely in God’s hands? Does God want us to pray and then wait for Him to tell us what to do? Parents, how would you feel about children, who as they grew up, every day called you on the phone and said, “what do you want me to do today, you tell me and I’ll do it. What clothes should I wear, what should I have for breakfast, should I go to work today or not?” Would you want your children to act like this? Do you think God is working to get everyone of us to come to the point we stop thinking for ourselves, stop choosing for ourselves and merely sit in “faith” and wait for Him to tell us what to do?

What is the last fruit of the Spirit? Self control! Self governance, when the HS has His way we are healed and set free to govern ourselves back in harmony with God and His methods!

How did Abraham leave it in God’s hands? Did Abraham pray and then sit back and wait? Or did Abraham take action? Did Abraham make plans and implement those plans? Or did he wait for someone to knock on the door and say “I had a dream that I am to marry your son”?

In Teacher’s Quarterly page 31 it states, “In Isaac’s day the cure for infertility was a concubine. Isaac goes to the Lord instead of another woman. How does this show the power of prayer?”

Thoughts? Today, if someone is infertile and they go to an infertility clinic is this showing a lack of faith? Should such couples pray and just wait? Is it against God’s will to go to infertility specialists? What about donor eggs or sperm?

What are the implications? Is the ability to have a child somehow different than any other physical ability or capacity we have? Is there something mystical or magical or supernatural in reproduction? Is our fertility under our governance or when copulation and fertilization occur is this God acting to create new life? Is infertility a curse from God a result of personal sin or just another physical ailment or defect of our fallen human bodies? Can and does God sometimes heal physical illness? Is curing infertility different? Does God currently heal all

physical illness? If physical illness is not healed does that mean a person didn't have faith? If fertility is not healed does that mean a person didn't have faith?

If someone is sick should we pray for their health and healing? Absolutely, should we avoid going to the doctor and taking medications and applying what science has revealed brings health? Is there any difference when it comes to fertility?

MONDAY

Read middle dark section "At the birth..."

GE 25:23 The LORD said to her,
 "Two nations are in your womb,
 and two peoples from within you will be separated;
 one people will be stronger than the other,
 and the older will serve the younger."

What does this mean? Does this mean God was going to cause this to happen or that God knew the future and merely predicted what He knew was going to happen? Did God love Jacob and not love Esau? Or did Jacob love God and Esau didn't love God? Was God unwilling to work with and through Esau or was Esau unwilling to work with God?

Read bottom green section – thoughts? What is it that Christ offers us? Friendship with Him, healing, restoration, recreation of heart and mind. And how do we sell it? By exchanging the truth about God for a lie (Romans 1).

In TQ page 33 it states:

"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it."
 Ps 127:1. With that in mind, let us raise two questions: What contributes to a happy marriage? What causes unhappy homes?

Thoughts? Would happy homes need people who have the truth about God working in their hearts and minds? God's methods and principles? Would the principles of truth, love and freedom lived and applied bring happy homes whereas selfishness, deceit and control would do what?

Does this necessarily mean that all Christian homes are happy or all agnostic homes are unhappy? Why or why not?

TUESDAY

Read last paragraph “The Lord has just...” thoughts? Where does faith come from? Evidence? Have you ever wondered why God hasn’t sent an angel to your bed to speak with you like Daniel? Imagine that tonight as you are praying an angel appears to you with a message that you are to sell your home and move to China as a missionary? What would you do?

How would you know that the angel was one of God’s angels or one of Satan’s? Didn’t an angel appear to Christ claiming to be from God? Didn’t Paul warn of angel’s of light coming with a false gospel?

Isn’t Satan going to one day appear again as an angel of light and with a message, should we believe every angel with a message?

THURSDAY

Read first two paragraphs – thoughts? Was the problem that these women were foreigners or that these women didn’t love God and His methods? What about Rahab and Ruth –was there a problem bringing them in? Why not?

Is it a guarantee that marrying someone of the same faith will result in a good marriage? Fidelity to the Lord? When Adam and Eve got married were they of the same faith? Did that mean Eve never led Adam astray?

Marrying someone of the same faith and even someone who loves the Lord isn’t a guarantee that your spouse will stay loyal – but marrying someone who doesn’t love the Lord is a guarantee of conflict, tension and turmoil and opening yourself up to constant spiritual attack.

FRIDAY

Questions 1,2 and 3 read and discuss.