#1. OPENING DISCUSSION

In the Peanuts comic strip, Linus and Lucy have a younger brother named Rerun. It's probably not the name given him by his parents, but likely reflects Lucy's disappointment at having yet another little brother. But in a broader sense, all children can be seen as "Reruns," mirroring their parents in traits, skills, strengths, weaknesses, interests, and even appearance. In many ways, they are just "chips off the old block."

What do you think? Are we all just "chips of the old block" of our parents? Are we destined to make the same mistakes they did? What does the Bible say about this? We've all heard about "original sin" but does this mean that we are trapped and can never escape or be free from the effects of sin we inherit from our parents?

See Romans 3:9-18, 22-23; 5: 10, 12,18-19; Psalm 51:5

#2. A CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK

Isaac really embodies the saying "a chip off the old block." When we look at the stories in Scripture, especially the events in Genesis, we see that Isaac's life closely mirrors that of his father, Abraham. Both father and son share striking similarities in their strengths and weaknesses.

To understand the comparison better, let's take some time to explore Abraham's character as described in Genesis chapters 12 to 23. What qualities did he possess? What mistakes did he make?

Next, let's turn our attention to Isaac by reading Genesis 25:19-26. Here, we can observe Isaac's experiences and reactions. How do they align with Abraham's? In what ways are they different?

#3. "NOW" KIND OF FAITH

Read Hebrews 11:1-22. "Now faith…" are the words that begin this beautiful chapter; often referred to as the "faith chapter" or "hall of faith." Martin Luther described faith as "*that which does not insist on knowing the reason for God's actions, but always regards God as the greatest goodness and mercy, holding on to it against and beyond all reason, sense and experience, when everything else appears to nothing but wrath and injustice" (AE 43:52).*

How does faith orient you? How does it give you hope not only in God's present providence but also to His future provision—all the good things that God has in store for us in this age and in the age to come? How does understanding ourselves as 'aliens and visitors' in this world shape our perspective on life's challenges and our daily decisions in seeking God's promises?

#4. We trust God. We trust Him for salvation. But it's not always so easy to trust Him with all the day-to-day and week-to-week decisions: How are you going to find a job? How are you going to behave in a particular situation that faces you at work or in a relationship? How are you going to find a spouse? Satan is quick to offer us shortcuts that seem at first much more efficient than faith in God's providence.

In Matthew 6:25, Jesus commands us not to worry about tomorrow or about what we will eat or wear. Why is this so hard for us? How might the first two words of Hebrews 11:1 "*now faith…*" help us to understand the kind of faith Jesus is talking about? What is the key to waiting patiently on the Lord?

#5. Let's dive into Genesis 26:1-34. As we read, keep in mind the same question from before: How do Isaac's actions and responses reflect those of Abraham, and where do they diverge?

#6. The fundamental issue at stake here is a familiar one. Can God be trusted to fulfill his promises and protect Isaac? God had just promised to be with Isaac, giving him offspring, lands, and blessing. So, there should have been no question as to God's commitment to him. The question was whether Isaac had the faith to believe God and let the chips fall where they may, or adopt a strategy of deception to give God a little assistance. But there is a profound irony in all of this if you remember the profound thing God did for Isaac in Genesis 22—He saved Isaac from his father's upraised knife by providing a sacrificial ram. What implications are there in this for us?

How should God's past actions for us influence the way we look at the problems and worries of today?

#7. Consider how Isaac's fear that Rebekah's beauty would endanger his life ultimately led him to act in a way that contradicted God's promise for him to bless all nations through his lineage (see Genesis 26:4). Instead of trusting in God, Isaac allowed his fear of man to take over. When we allow ourselves to be consumed by fear of others, we lose sight of our true strength – that when we are weak, we are strong in the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:10).

As long as Isaac feared God, he had nothing to fear from others. This trust was supposed to free him to serve others and be a blessing to them. Similarly, when we let the fear of man dictate our actions, we may feel small and inadequate and our focus is solely upon "me and my problems and my insufficiencies." We lose sight of who we really are in this world—children of God—and we forget that we have purpose in everything—God's purpose!

However, when we fear God, we can rest in the knowledge that His strength is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). In these moments of vulnerability, we can still serve and uplift those around us, knowing that God's sufficiency empowers us to make a positive impact, even when we feel powerless.

In what ways can we actively shift our focus from the fear of others to a deeper trust in God, especially in situations where we feel vulnerable or intimidated?

SESSION 1 Answer Key:

#1 – The doctrine of original sin is one of the hardest things for many Christians to believe. We are so accustomed to thinking of our faith and our salvation in terms of our choices our actions our efforts (the error of free will). But the bible makes it clear in many ways that when it comes to salvation and any kind of true knowledge or understanding or relationship with God, we are totally blind, dead and enemies of God. We are "chips of the old block" in terms of our inherited propensity for sin and slavery under sin.

But like our parents before us, we all demonstrate our need for Grace. We need a Savior, everyone of us. We see that God's grace and faithfulness extend forever toward sinners.

#2 – Abraham's strengths: He went when God called (Genesis 12). He showed trust in God's provision when he gave Lot the first choice of land and protection in rescuing Lot and the people of Sodom (Genesis 13&14). He believed God's promises (Genesis 15) and God counted that faith as righteousness. In Chapter 17 he circumcises himself at the age of 99. He makes generous portions for the Lord when the Lord visits his tent and later, he boldly prayed for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gnesis 18). He was willing sacrifice Isaac at the request of God, trusting that God would raise Isaac back to life in order to fulfill His promises through Isaac (Genesis 22). Purchases Land in the Promised Land to bury Sarah (Genesis 23).

Abraham's weaknesses: At the first sign of trouble (famine in the Land) Abraham left the Land of Promise and went to Egypt. There he fears that Pharaoh will kill him in order to have Sarai in his haram. So Abram lies and says Sarai is his sister (Genesis 12). He took Hagar, his wife's maidservant, as his concubine and forces her to have a child or him in order to try to bring about God's promise. When that doesn't go well, he sends this pregnant girl out into the wilderness to die (Genesis 16). He laughs at God when God promises that Sarah will have a child even in her old age (Genesis 17). After God promises that within a year, Sarah will give birth (Genesis 18), Abraham goes Gerar and once again pretends Sarah is his sister not his wife. He risks casting doubt on the parentage of Isaac (Genesis 20).

In Genesis 25:19-26, It's beautiful to see Isaac and Rebekah's mutual response to her barrenness was a godly one, unlike Abraham and Sarah. We read of no complaint or impatient spirit coming from either Isaac or Rebekah. Abraham and Sarah waited only about 10 years from the time of God's promise in Genesis 12 before they took matters into their own hands by having Abraham concieve a child with Hagar (Abraham was 75 when God called him and chapter 16 says he was 85 when he took Hagar). Issac, however, knew from God's covenant promises to his father the he *must* have a son for Abraham's descendants to be "like the stars in the heavens." But Issac learned from his father's mistake. He did not take matters into his own hands. Instead, we are told he and Rebekah prayed which was the wisest and most important thing to do. And Issac then waited 20 years (ten years longer than his father). We see that Isaac knew well the answer to this question: **Can God fulfill His promises on His own strength, or does He need a little assistance from us to help Him out?**

#3 -- Lutheran faith emphasizes a profound relationship with God, viewing faith as a gift that fosters trust in His goodness and active involvement in our lives. This faith provides not only hope for present challenges, as believers recognize God's daily care and sustenance, but also confidence in future promises, including the assurance of eternal life through the resurrection of Christ. Such hope brings comfort and strength, guiding individuals through life's trials with the understanding that these experiences are part of God's larger plan.

Additionally, Lutherans view themselves as 'aliens and visitors' in this world, a perspective that highlights our ultimate citizenship in heaven. This awareness transforms how we approach life's difficulties, focusing on what truly matters—our relationship with God and our neighbor. It encourages believers to act with purpose and integrity, reflecting Christ's love as they navigate daily decisions. By living in faith and hope, Lutherans are empowered to cultivate a life of stewardship, prioritizing eternal significance over earthly pursuits and actively demonstrating God's love to those around them.

Everyday Illustration:

Consider a person facing a tough day at work, filled with stress and tension. Instead of allowing frustration and dissatisfaction to cloud their perspective, a Lutheran might pause to pray, seeking God's guidance and acknowledging His presence in the situation. They could then choose to approach their interactions with coworkers more patiently and kindly, embodying Christ's love rather than responding with irritation. This transforms not just their own outlook, but also positively impacts the environment around them, showcasing how hope and faith can influence daily life even amidst challenges.

#4 -- Answers will vary, but the words "now faith" remind us that faith is for *right now.* Our struggle is no different that Abraham's and Isaac's. We are tempted to chart our own course and *hope and pray* that God will approve or follow, but we would be better served to trust Him for daily bread and not stray from His word. We can and should trust that He will not fail us and will always give us everything we need to do what He has called us to do and to be what He has called us to be. This is also what makes examples like Abraham and Isaac such a blessing for us. We see how God was faithful even over the course of a lifetime and for millennia after.

#5 – Unlike Abraham, Issac does resist the urge to go to Egypt to escape the effects of famine. But it doesn't take long in the land of Gerar for Isaac to feel some of the same insecurities of his father and he passes off Rebekah as his sister. It probably seemed not so far-fetched that someone might easily "knock" Isaac off in order to free Rebekah for marriage—just keep in mind the scandal of what happens in 2 Samuel 11! But looking after his own life became more important to Isaac than trusting God to fulfill His promises and protect him.

#6 – God gave His son for us! We never need doubt His love and providence in our lives. This doesn't mean we will always feel healthy, wealthy and wise. Indeed in this sinful world and in our sinful flesh, we will always want for more. But scripture assures us that in every trouble or every fear and in all suffering, our weakness means opportunity for strength in Christ. God uses everything, especially the bad things, as opportunities to turn us ever more away from ourselves and to Jesus. But boy do we resist this!!!

#7 -- Whenever we fear something we are making a prediction about the future that leaves God entirely out of the picture. Whenever we opt to leave out a proclamation of the Gospel from a conversation we are making a prediction ahead of time about what the response will be and we leave out the possibilities of the Holy Spirit. When we fear God we have nothing to fear from anyone else. When we think only of ourselves and fear what others might do to us and when we fear for our own needs, we don't have time and attention to pay to the needs of others and we cannot be a blessing to them. Of course, when we fear God, that doesn't mean nothing bad will happen. Bad things will happen. But what reason have we to freak out when we have a Savior like Jesus?