

A Bride for Isaac Genesis 24

If you are new or visiting; *a special warm welcome to you.*
We trust you enjoy your time with us.

Today we will be having communion. If it is your practice to participate in this we welcome you to join with us in celebrating the Lord's Supper. If this is not your custom or if you are unsure of what to do please just pass the emblems (bread and wine) to the person next to you.

This delightful story of the quest of Abraham's servant for a bride for Isaac has many insights and applications for us today. Do you believe that "marriages are made in heaven"? Is there someone specially chosen by God for you? This chapter gives weight to the idea but we need to see the principles extending beyond the "life partner" quest to many other aspects of decisions we make.

Last week, we reviewed 2 tests of faith the Abraham faced.

1. A Test of Obedience Ch 22 – God told him to do something that seemed out of character -to offer Isaac his only son as a sacrifice on an altar. Abraham obeyed but was stopped at the critical moment. Even though the request did not make sense, he obeyed and his faith grew as a result. For us, we need to obey God's word, revealed in the Bible if our faith is to grow, even though it may not make sense and be against the cultural norms.

2. A Test of Trust Ch 23 – The death of Sarah was a sudden and sad situation for Abraham as he mourned for her and prepared to bury her. When unexpected circumstances occur in our lives, we naturally will grieve and may, like Job, question God's goodness. Events over which we have no control may test our faith but they are part of human experience. Do we still trust God when facing such a test?

3. A Test of Wisdom Ch 24 – When we face situations where we do have a choice, we need to make good decisions. How do you go about making critical decisions in your life? Where do we turn for wisdom? Proverbs reminds us the "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 9:10). Many of us have made bad decisions leading to regrettable consequences. Just because we are Christians does not negate the principle that "Whatever a man sows, that shall he reap" (Gal 6:7). We need God's wisdom if we are to make good decisions and live a full and enjoyable life. Although this chapter deals with a specific issue, the principles can equally apply to any decisions we make.

This long chapter can be subdivided into a number of sections

The Mission – v1-9 The death of Isaac's mother focused attention on the need for a bride for Isaac. Some issues were clear to Abraham. First, she should not come from Canaanite culture. Secondly, Isaac was not to leave this promised land. These were clearly established principles born from the wisdom of years of experience of Isaac's father. Furthermore, he believed that God's angel would go before to prepare the young woman God had chosen for Isaac.

The Mediator – v10-14 Abraham's trusted servant was given the serious task of choosing a bride. Imagine the responsibility! How would you feel? He made good preparation for the journey and travelled 600km back to Nahor arriving one evening. And then he prayed. He did not depend on his own wisdom but sought God's help as he faced a very difficult decision. He asks for a sign that will identify the one chosen. Can we ask God for such guidance?

The Maiden – v15-27 When Rebekah was approached by a strange man who asked for a drink, she obliged. But she then took the initiative to offer a drink to the camels as well, not realizing what the man was looking for. She demonstrated a natural kindness beyond her obligations. The servant bowed in worship before God and gave her gifts and asked about lodgings.

The Meeting – v28-49 The servant retells the story of his master Abraham, explaining the task he has been given to find a bride for the promised son from the people of this area. He then goes over the details of all that happened at the well particularly including his acknowledgement of God as the reason for his being there.

The Moment – v50-61 Eventually, there is a moment of decision. For Rebekah, it is also a test of faith. She with the family have listened to the servant's story and they acknowledge God's hand in it. "Will you go with this man?" She needs to make a very important decision. She has seen the evidence of her potential husband's status and heard of God's hand in his life and she has the support of her family. And so she replies "I will go."

The Marriage – v62-66 Rebekah travels back to a new home in a foreign land.

Imagine what she spoke about to the servant along the way. What is he like? What will the new home be like? And what was Isaac's response to meeting his bride? He loved her.

There are 3 applications of this story for us

1. A picture of God's search for the bride for Christ

These "picture" stories from the Old Testament are often called "types" and are like the parables Jesus told. Abraham (the Father) is looking for a bride (the church) for his son (Jesus) so sends the trusted servant (the Holy Spirit) to look for her. We must be careful not to read some elements of the story into the picture. For example, it is not our good deeds that get us selected for the Bible tells us we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. But now we are journeying to our new home. One of the Holy Spirit's functions is to reveal Christ to us as we travel home. And we anticipate the joy of meeting the one who loved us unto death.

2. An example for young people looking for a life partner

Do you believe that God has someone special for you? Does God really send angels before to prepare someone? Or is that only for the "Abrahams" of this world? In one sense, it is only for "Abrahams", meaning men and women of faith. That is why cultivating faith in God is so important for young people. Jesus one said to a man, "According to your faith be it done to you". If you trust God in this important decision to bring the one he is preparing for you, he will do it. If you do think you can do it on your own, and that you can ask God to bless what you decide, then don't blame God for the consequences. This does not mean that you will have a perfect marriage, but you will be confident that while you remain dependent on him, it will be for his honour and glory. Other important principles in this passage are taking the advice of others, looking for kindness in the partner and the importance of keeping your purity in courtship. Do you pray "Lord, keep the one you are keeping for me"?

3. Principles for making important decisions

What principles about making important decisions have you learnt from this passage?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Lessons for today

Is God testing my faith by watching what I do and where I go for guidance in my difficult decisions?
How do I stand up to God's test of wisdom today?
