

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
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DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 17

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Chapter 24

INTRODUCTION

This is the longest chapter in the book of Genesis. It deals with one very important phase of our lives - marriage. The marriage of a couple can go two ways. It can be filled with blessedness or it can be filled with bitterness. The divinely inspired account of Abraham instructing his servant to find a wife for Isaac provides some significant guidelines in the matter of marriage. Young people and Christian parents would do well to study it carefully.

Outline

A. Abraham Commissioned His Servant to Find a Wife for Isaac (24:1-8).

1. The life of Abraham.
 - a. *Abraham lived to a ripe old age (1a).*
 - b. *The LORD had blessed him in all things (1b).*

2. Abraham entrusted his chief servant to find a wife for Isaac (2-4).
 - a. *Abraham made his servant swear that he would be faithful in carrying out his mission (2-3)*
 - b. *Abraham spelt out his instructions (4).*
3. The servant feared that the prospective woman might not agree (5).
4. Abraham's further instructions (6-8).
 - a. *The servant must not take Isaac back to the land where he came from (6).*
 - b. *Abraham declared that the LORD God would bless his mission (7).*
 - c. *If his mission were not successful, Abraham repeated his first injunction that he should not take Isaac back to his country of origin (8).*

B. Abraham's Faithful Servant Carried Out His Commission (24:9-14).

1. Abraham's servant swore to the task (9).
2. The servant prepared gifts for the bride and her family (10).
3. The servant arrived at a well and prayed to the LORD (11-14).
 - a. *He went to the well at the opportune time (11).*
 - b. *He prayed specifically so that he would be sure of the Lord's choice (12-14).*

C. Abraham's Servant Met Rebekah (24:15-27).

1. Rebekah came to the well (15-16).

- a. *She was the grandniece of Abraham (15).*
 - b. *She was very beautiful (16a).*
 - c. *She was a virgin and unmarried (16b).*
 - d. *She came to the well to fetch water (16c).*
2. Abraham's servant approached her (17-20).
 - a. *The servant asked for a drink (17).*
 - b. *Rebekah gave him a drink and watered his camels (18-20).*
 3. Abraham's servant wanted to make sure that she was the LORD's choice (21-27).
 - a. *He proceeded to make sure (21).*
 - b. *He showed his appreciation with generous gifts (22).*
 - c. *He asked for her personal identity (23).*
 - d. *Rebekah replied that she was the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor and that there was room for his board and lodging (24-25).*
 - e. *He worshipped the LORD and acknowledged the LORD's continuing kindness and faithfulness to his master Abraham (26-27).*

D. Abraham's Servant Met Laban (24:28-53).

1. Rebekah hurried to tell her family (28-29).
2. Laban extended his hospitality to Abraham's servant (30-33a).
3. Abraham's servant refused refreshment until he had discharged his responsibility and duty (33b-53).

- a. *The servant formally introduced himself (33b-34).*
- b. *He introduced his master Abraham and his son (35-36).*
- c. *He revealed the purpose of his mission (37-41).*
- d. *He reported the circumstances leading to his meeting with Rebekah (42-47).*
- e. *He acknowledged the LORD's leading and requested a decision from Laban (48-49).*
- f. *Laban agreed to give Rebekah away (50-51).*
- g. *Abraham's servant was overjoyed and gave gifts to Rebekah and her family (52-53).*

E. Rebekah's Family and Abraham's Servant were Concerned About Rebekah's Departure (24:54-60).

1. Abraham's servant requested leave to take Rebekah away (54).
2. Laban and Rebekah's mother suggested that he stayed for another ten days (55).
3. Abraham's servant wanted to report to his master without delay (56).
4. Laban and Rebekah's mother let Rebekah make the decision (57).
5. Rebekah decided to go immediately (58).
6. They gave their blessings to Rebekah (59-60).

F. The Meeting of Isaac and Rebekah (24:61-67).

1. Rebekah together with her maids went with Abraham's servant (61).

2. Isaac was meditating in the field (62-63).
3. Rebekah approached Isaac in the proper manner (64-65).
4. The servant reported everything to Isaac (66).
5. Isaac married Rebekah (67).

The Commission

Abraham was now 140 years¹ old. He knew that it was time for Isaac to take a wife. He gave specific instructions to his trusted chief servant to find a wife for Isaac. The divine plan that his descendants would come from Isaac was accompanied by the responsibility and actions of man.

The solemnity and seriousness of the mission was marked by the servant taking an oath by placing his hand under Abraham's thigh. The meaning of placing his hand under the thigh is not clear. The oath was taken in the Name of the LORD God, the Creator of heaven and earth, which meant that if he did not comply with the specific instructions given, he would be under the judgement and curse of God².

Abraham's instruction was twofold: 1) the woman must not be a Canaanite, but must be from his country and kindred; 2) should she refuse to accept the proposal, the servant must not bring Isaac to Mesopotamia.

¹ Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. Isaac married Rebekah at the age of 40 (25:20). Abraham lived another 35 years after the marriage of Isaac before he died at the age of 175 (25:7).

² There are passages that mentioned that children are come from the thigh of their fathers: Jacob's children is said to come "out of his loins" (46:26, Exodus 1:5). Hence, the implied symbolism is that if the servant should deviate in carrying out what he had been told, it would bring about the curse of sterility for the offender or even the extinction of his offspring (Speiser, 178).

How impossible it must have seemed to expect his servant to find the right woman and then to be able to persuade her to leave home and venture on a long journey of six hundred miles to marry a man she did not know. Yet Abraham was convinced that this was what God intended and He would therefore bring it to pass. Abraham assured his servant that the LORD God would prosper his mission (7). Abraham's insistence that Isaac's wife be from his own kindred was a wise decision. Taking a wife from among the Canaanites would affect the godly line of God's covenant plan. An important principle is given. A child of God must marry another child of God. The good sense of this principle is evidently clear. A person's actions are affected by his religious beliefs and conviction. If a prospective partnership does not have similar convictions, it will be followed by frequent arguments and quarrels unless one party is willing to give in to the other. More often than not, the Christian is the one who capitulates. So, the **first principle is: Marry someone who shares the same faith and convictions.** Christians must marry Christians. It is non-negotiable, period.

Decisive Actions

The servant took the oath. He wasted no time in his preparations to leave for Mesopotamia. He took ten camels and much "goods," which were literally jewellery and luxuries. He set out for the city of Nahor, which was about 400 miles north. The gifts were meant for the bride to be, and for the parents of the bride. They are tangible proofs of Isaac's ability to support a wife and of the serious, responsible nature of the proposal. The **second principle is: Be prepared to show a certain amount of generosity and**

appreciation. Of course, this should be within reason. Observe how Abraham's servant used the gifts wisely and appropriately.

On arriving at Nahor, the servant moved to a position of advantage -- he exercised human responsibility. He stopped at a well where the women folks came out to draw water. He made his camels kneel down. Then he prayed specifically and expectantly (45). His prayer was for Abraham's sake. He asked for God's general blessing on the mission. He asked in specific detail for practical, sensible yet simple signs. He asked the LORD to lead him to the right girl. The girl must be kind, considerate, hardworking, possess some measure of initiative and willing to do more than what was asked for³. His prayer was answered even before he had finished praying. **The third principle is: Prayer and the part played by the petitioner.** Trust the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding and the LORD will direct your path (Proverbs 3:5,6). Prayer does not dispense with our responsibility and action. In fact it should spur us to act by faith and perform what we can and ought to do. Then, we should exercise patience and wait upon the LORD.

The Meeting

Before he could finish his prayer, the LORD providentially brought Rebekah, the grandniece of Abraham, to the well. She was beautiful. She was a 'virgin' and she had gone to the well to

³ It is reported that a camel can drink 20 gallons of water after a long hot journey. And assuming that Rebekah's pitcher was about a gallon, she would have to draw and walk no less than two hundred times to the water trough to give the camels drink!

fetch water⁴. She must have been the first one there.

Abraham's servant, who had prayed for the LORD'S leading, was sensitive enough to see the hand of the LORD working. He saw Rebekah approaching the well and quickly seized the opportunity to ask her for a drink (17). He was astonished that his prayer and petitions were answered to the very letter. Still not satisfied with the circumstantial evidences, he proceeded to inquire about her family. She answered that she was the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor. Abraham's servant was now convinced that Rebekah was the LORD'S choice. He bowed down, worshipped and blessed the LORD. He declared, *I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren* (27b). This testimony of the servant leaves no doubt that he was led and guided by the LORD. So, **the fourth principle is: To discern carefully that it is the LORD's choice.** While sometimes circumstantial evidence might seem favourable, it is necessary to double-check that the prospective partner's profession of faith in Christ is genuine and true. Does the person really have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ?

The Proposal

Rebekah ran back to her parents' house where her brother, Laban, seemed to have rulership over the

⁴ The Hebrew word for virgin is *betulah*. The word may mean "virgin" and also a virgin who is betrothed to a man (Deuteronomy 22:23). Hence, the qualifying phrase in verse 16 that "neither had any man known her." The other word for "virgin" used in Isaiah 7:14 is *almah*. There is not question that *almah* refers to a young girl who is a virgin. There is no need for any qualifying statement. Matthew 1:23 comments on Isaiah 7:14. Observe that in verse 43, when the servant rehearsed the events to Laban, he referred to Rebekah as "the virgin, *almah*."

household. When he heard the story, he warmly welcomed the servant and set food before him. But Abraham's servant refused any food until he had discharged his mission. Work before enjoyment. He told Rebekah's family about God's leading and at each development, he made reference to the LORD:

- *the LORD hath blessed my master greatly (35);*
- *The LORD before whom I walk will send His angel (40);*
- *LORD God of my master Abraham, if now Thou do prosper my way which I go (42);*
- *let the same be the woman whom the LORD hath appointed out for my master's son (44);*
- *and I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son (48).*

His aim is to let them know that all the happenings were the LORD'S doing and that Rebekah was His choice. As Laban listened, he acknowledged God's guiding hand. He agreed to give Rebekah away to the master of the servant (50-51). Accordingly, the servant gave gifts to Laban, Rebekah and her mother. **Principle number five: When one is sure that it is the LORD'S choice, one should make known one's intention and speak with the parents or guardian of the**

girl. The reason for this is quite obvious. Having found the girl one must be serious about one's intention and let it be known.

The Commitment

Having accomplished his mission, the next important thing for the servant to do was to return home as soon as possible, and report the good news to his master. The decision to leave so soon was a test of Rebekah's faith. She must immediately leave her home, friends and travel six hundred miles with a man she had just met in order to be married to another man she has never met and live with him thence in a strange land. However God gave her reasonable evidence for her faith -- the servant's story, God's circumstantial answer, proof of gifts, and the serious demeanour of the servant himself. Rebekah's decision involved both risk and definite action. She must act immediately. Her faith was truly in the promises of God. She wanted to be caught up with the people of God.

Rebekah's brother and mother wanted to delay her departure but when the servant insisted, they let Rebekah decide. Rebekah replied that she would go as requested by Abraham's servant. They therefore gave their blessings.

The sixth principle is: To have a strong commitment to form a family unit and fulfil the will for which the LORD has brought them together.

The Consummation

When the entourage returned to Beersheba, Isaac was meditating in the field. This showed his gentle, quiet and reserved nature. Rebekah saw him and when told that he was her husband to be, she came down from her camel and pulled the veil over her face. This is an acknowledgement of her femininity and

her submission to him who was going to be her husband.

The servant reported to Isaac everything that had happened. God had met Isaac's need and sent Rebekah who became a comfort to him after the death of his mother. Isaac brought Rebekah to his mother Sarah's tent, symbolising that Rebekah was the new matriarch. They were married. Isaac loved her and he was comforted. **The seventh principle is: The wife should take her proper place of being submissive to her husband who in turn must love his wife.** If this last principle is kept there will be less tension and trouble in the home.

END

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**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

**MONDAY: Genesis 24:1-8;
2 Corinthians 6:14-18.**

**TUESDAY: Genesis 24:9-14;
Philippians 4:6; James 5:12-20.**

**WEDNESDAY: Genesis 24:15-27;
1 Peter 3:1-7.**

**THURSDAY: Genesis 24:28-53;
Psalm 37:3-7, 23-26.**

**FRIDAY: Genesis 24:54-67; Proverbs
31:10-31.**

Discussion Questions

1. What was Abraham's concern regarding the choice of a wife for Isaac?

2. Do you think that it is a good idea for parents to have the same concerns

and to help their children choose their life partners?

3. What does the prayer of Abraham's servant indicate about the qualities he was seeking for the woman that would be his master's wife?

4. What specific things did the servant ask of God? Should we also be specific in our request?

5. Why did the servant take ten camels and a lot of "goods" with him?

6. Infer the character qualities of Rebekah from verses 15-25.

7. What does the servant's prayer in verses 26 and 27 tell us about his relationship with God?

8. What are your thoughts about Laban?

9. Why did the servant tell the events all over again?

10. Why was the servant in a hurry to return to his master?

11. What do you think of Rebekah's decision to go with the servant?
