

Genesis 24 The Servant and the Maiden

After Sarah's death, Abraham decided that he needed to get a wife for Isaac. What was Abraham's prime motivation? He was afraid of Isaac marrying a Canaanite woman.

Why was Isaac marrying a Canaanite such a major concern? It would desecrate their lineage/covenant. If Isaac had an unbelieving wife there would be little chance of having godly children. It was a racial, religious, and cultural purity issue. With the start of this fledgling Jewish nation, purity was foundational. Isaac, the heir of the promise, must be kept from any ungodly alliance.

Why didn't Abraham trust Isaac to find his own mate? After all, Isaac was 40 years old. It was a responsibility issue to Abraham—not just for Isaac but for the future of the nation of Israel. (Genesis 18:19)

What were the stipulations given to the servant?

- The wife must not be a Canaanite (verse 3)
- The woman was to come from Abraham's home country and from among his relatives (verse 4)
- Isaac must not, under any circumstances, be taken back to where he had come from (verse 6)
- These requirements promote separation while preventing isolation.

Why couldn't Isaac return to Abraham's home country? That was not the Promised Land. This was the land given to Abraham through a covenant. The Promised Land was to be Isaac's new home.

What message is Abraham sending to Isaac and his family/people? Spiritual purity and oneness is important in this family and in this nation.

Application: Are there and any purity parallels for today? "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14).

The man Abraham chose for the mission was not merely one of the servants but the chief servant in charge of everything Abraham had. How would you describe the servant? The devotion of this servant to his master and to his master's God is one of the highlights of the chapter. His piety, prayer life, and practical wisdom set a high standard for the believer in any age. This servant of Abraham was marked by his eager obedience and his attention to the instructions given him. He diligently pursued his task with wisdom and devotion.

This servant is a model for every Christian, for servanthood is one of the fundamental characteristics of Christian service: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all" (Mark 10:43b-44).

Application: Do you see yourself as a servant? What are some practical ways we can be servants at work, in your family, in your neighborhood, etc?

Abraham had obviously given this man great authority, for he was in control of all he possessed (verse 2). In this task he was also given a great deal of freedom to use his own discretion in finding a godly wife.

Here was a man who had learned to trust in the Lord with all his heart and not to lean on his own understanding. He had acknowledged the Lord, and God had directed his steps accordingly (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Application: Imagine for a moment that you had been given the commission of Abraham's servant. How would you possibly go about finding an acceptable wife for Isaac? What an awesome task this must have been! It must have appeared to be like finding a needle in a haystack. The servant discerned the will of God through prayer and wisdom.

What kind of woman was the chief servant looking for? He was looking for character among the women at the spring. He didn't go for beauty, wealth, etc. Humbly the servant prayed for guidance, but wisely he proposed a plan which would test the character of the women he would encounter.

What does this encounter at the well say about Rebekah's character? Since each camel could drink twenty-five gallons it tested Rebekah's kindness, hospitality, industry, and willingness to help a stranger. She had a strong work ethic.

Application: In the mate selection process, character is vital.

Before the servant had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder (verse 15). Did you catch that? While the servant is praying the answer is already on the way. **What does that tell you about God?** He honors the heart's desire of the servant. The servant's will is perfectly aligned with God's. This is classic God! He is so gracious and faithful that He often answers prayer before we pray or as we're praying. He does this to demonstrate His power. He is eager to answer our prayers.

Why did the servant refuse to eat until the deal was completed? There was a sense of urgency/priority. He considered his master's business more important than his pleasure. His pleasure took a back seat to his master's desires. The servant is a great example for us.

Application: Prayer is no substitute for action. This servant prayed and worked at the same time, for he knew that prayer does not make work unnecessary, but makes it effective.

How did Rebekah respond to the servant's request that she return with him to marry Isaac? In spite of the fact that this meant leaving home in what was no doubt to be a permanent parting, traveling across a great desert with someone she had met only the day before and then marrying a man she had never even seen, Rebekah responds, "I will go" (Genesis 24:58). Recognizing that she was seeing the sovereign hand of God in action, she is prepared to go immediately. She trusted and complied.

What does her response say about Rebekah's character? Rebekah demonstrated her faith in Abraham's God by decisively choosing to leave her family to marry Isaac. She had probably never been away from home in her entire life, but if God was sending her away, she wanted to respond to His leading immediately.

How did Laban and Bethuel respond? Initially (verse 50-51) they responded with compliance—recognizing that God was at work. Their second response (verse 55) was hesitation and self-interest. They consulted and deferred to Rebekah (verse 57-59).

Application: We should respond immediately and not begrudgingly when God indicates new directions for us, too. If we delay our obedience, little will be accomplished. Ten days will turn into ten months and then ten years, and the time for service will be gone.

Rebekah dismounted her camel and covered her face out of respect for her intended husband (verses 64-65). Her respect was evident.

The question is: How will Isaac and Rebekah respond to each other? Will it be love at first sight or will there be utter disappointment? They didn't know each other. There was no courtship period. How could Isaac love her so fast? Isaac knew that God had selected the best possible mate for him. To love is a choice we make, an act of the will. Do you notice that love came last, not first, in this chapter? Love came after marriage, not before it. This is the first reference to marital love in the Bible.

How many other wives did Isaac have? None. Unlike Abraham, Solomon, David, etc. He was a one-woman man.

Application: If you want to find a godly spouse you should look where Christians are. Furthermore, if you want a godly spouse you need to be the kind of person a godly spouse will be looking for. Rebekah was that kind of person.

Bottom Line: What has God been teaching you through the story of Abraham's life and his relationship with God?
