

Freedom Way M.B.C.
Bible Study Lesson #635
Date _____

**Pursuing God's Will the Right Way
(Isaac and Rebekah, Part 1 of 2)**

Biblical Passage: Genesis 24:1-4, 10-27

Supporting Passages: Genesis 24:5-9, 42-67;
Genesis 2:19-25; Ephesians 5:25-33

Memory Verses: Genesis 24:26-27

Biblical Truth: God faithfully answered Abraham's servant's prayer in order to provide a godly wife for Isaac, the son of the promise.

Context: Isaac and Rebekah's marriage is an important snapshot of a divine encounter with God. God's promise to Abraham rested on Abraham's son, Isaac. God guided Eliezer, Abraham's servant, to the specific spouse of God's choice for Isaac. In this moment in history, God guaranteed the fulfillment of the promises He made to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant.

INVESTIGATION

When Isaac was 40 years old, around the year 2026 B.C., Abraham determined to find him a wife. Rather than allow Isaac to marry among the godless people of Canaan, Abraham sent his servant back to his homeland near Haran to find Isaac a wife. Abraham had migrated from Haran nearly 65 years earlier. The servant journeyed about 450 miles to the northeast and arrived in the area where Abraham's brother, Nahor, resided. Though God was not visibly seen or audibly heard in the passage, He clearly directed the events, providing Rebekah as Isaac's wife.

Finding a wife or husband may seem simple in today's world. But in Isaac's world of 2026 B.C. it was a different matter. Not only were the marriage customs of the ancient Middle East much more complex than today's, but an additional factor complicated the situation: Isaac was the son of God's promise to Abraham. This meant Isaac stood in a special spiritual relationship to God, and after his marriage his

wife would share in that relationship. Consequently, it was especially important that she worship and follow God. Finding a wife for Isaac had exceptional spiritual significance.

IMPORTANCE

This passage of Scripture shows that People are God's Treasure through the plan God had for Isaac's life. Isaac was the son of God's promise to Abraham, so not just any wife would do; Isaac would father the future nation of Israel, so he needed a woman who displayed righteous, servant-minded character. Abraham sent his servant back to his homeland to find such a woman, and God intimately ordered every step. Those who fear God should have their closest partnerships with people who share the same heart for God.

Abraham's servant prayed for a specific way to know the woman God had chosen for Isaac. He asked God to show him the one by her heart of service. Rebekah fulfilled the servant's prayer by offering to water his camels. And in response, the servant prayed, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master" (Gen. 24:27). Because People are God's Treasure, God will never abandon His kindness and faithfulness.

Through Abraham's faith and his servant's prayer, God brought Rebekah to Isaac. God revealed His passion for every facet of His promise and His desire to show His power when His people pray for His direction. Knowing God treasures every detail of people's lives is essential for faith. As you study the way God directed Rebekah to Isaac, you will realize God's ability to fulfill His promises and your personal need to pray to Him with trust.

This passage also touches on other key truths: God Is and The Future is in God's Hands.

INTERPRETATION

Genesis 24:1 Abraham's son, Isaac, was the son God promised to Abraham and Sarah as the fulfillment of His promises. Isaac was almost 40 years old (Gen. 25:20). Abraham, then 140 years old, was in the sunset of his life. The elderly

patriarch suffered some of the infirmities of old age. The final words of verse 1, "and the LORD had blessed him in every way," refer to Abraham's wealth. This phrase suggests the great man of faith felt it necessary to give attention to other aspects of God's program of promise.

In keeping with the Abrahamic covenant, God richly blessed him. Abraham had already demonstrated his faith in God's promises by buying a piece of property (Gen. 23) in the land God had promised to him. It was now time to look to the future of the promised blessings through Isaac. The son of the promise had to have a godly wife to carry forward the promise of Abraham's descendants becoming a great and large nation (Gen. 12:2; 15:4).

Genesis 24:2–4 Abraham called for Eliezer, his chief steward (Gen. 15:2). This man had complete management and supervision of Abraham's household. Abraham required this trusted servant to swear a solemn, ceremonial oath. Putting the hand under the thigh and swearing by the Lord placed the individual under a solemn and earnest obligation. This oath is an ancient one, found only in Genesis 24:2 and 49:29. If the oath were not carried out, the children of the person to whom the oath was broken would avenge the unfaithfulness (Ross, 1985).

The oath stipulated he would find a wife for Isaac in Abraham's native land in northwest Mesopotamia. This is a region of the Middle East 450 miles from Canaan where Abraham lived.

The oath had specific and clear terms. First, Isaac must not marry a Canaanite girl from the local region. The Canaanites, among whom Abraham lived, were pagans. They worshiped the gods and goddesses of the Canaanite culture: Baal, Asherah, Anath, and Astarte. To marry a Canaanite would corrupt the line of God's promise. Abraham desired to keep his family spiritually sound and healthy. He wished to protect his spiritual heritage from contamination by the Canaanite paganism surrounding him. It was important to him that Isaac and his bride be united in a common faith in God. Abraham saw purity of spiritual life as a major concern. God gave instruction throughout the Old and the New

Testaments for believers to marry believers (Deut. 7:3–4; I Kings 11:4; Ezra 9; I Cor. 7:39).

Second, Eliezer must find a wife for Isaac among Abraham's relatives. Abraham knew the possibilities of a bride for Isaac existed among his family (Gen. 22:20–24), who had received some revelation from the true God and some understanding of Him. Apparently Abraham had also spiritually influenced some in his family because they knew of God. At a minimum they felt favorably inclined toward worshiping God (vv. 31, 50). It appears Abraham's spiritual life had a significant impact on the distant members of his family.

Third, under no circumstances must Isaac go back to Abraham's old country. Isaac would remain as a permanent resident in the land God promised Abraham and his descendants through Isaac (v. 8). Residing in the land showed an act of faith in God's promise.

If the girl selected by the servant refused to make the long journey back to Canaan, Abraham would release Eliezer from his oath.

Notice that Abraham had Eliezer swear by "the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth" (v. 3), emphasizing the sovereignty of the Lord in this undertaking. The workings of God's unseen sovereign hand surrounded the human activity in these events. Finding a wife for Isaac did not solely depend on mere human activity. Both Abraham and Eliezer relied upon the Lord's omnipotence and omnipresence to guide them in this crucial matter. This guidance was not some supernatural display, but rather the dependable supervision and direction of the Lord in the routine and ordinary activities of life.

Genesis 24:10–11 The servant set out on his 450-mile journey with 10 camels, loaded with provisions and valuables. The mention of camels indicates something of Abraham's wealth. Only the wealthy would have so many camels. The caravan had as its destination Mesopotamia, or Aram Naharaim, the land between the Euphrates and Chaboras Rivers. Abraham's relatives lived in the city of Haran.

Genesis 24:12–14 The servant planned and undertook responsible action, but he did not take

the initiative in the search. Nor did he attempt to manipulate the circumstances. He simply prayed, and in his prayer he placed everything in the hands of the Lord, depending upon the Lord to make clear who the bride of Isaac would be. Here lies the secret of his success: dependence upon the Lord.

He asked the Lord to indicate the girl of His choice by her compliance with his request for water from the town spring. The spring was actually a large hole in the earth with steps leading down to the water. The water flowed from an underground spring. At ground level stood a water trough for animals. In order to water the camels Rebekah had to carry up many jars of water.

Genesis 24:15–25 Without hesitation, Rebekah volunteered to do it even though the servant had only asked her for water for himself.

The servant put the girl to a very skillful test. Rebekah demonstrated her readiness to help, kindness of heart, and recognition of others' needs. The servant imposed a condition that Westerners may not fully appreciate. Camels are notorious for their ability to absorb water, so the servant's prayer was not for a simple favor. The favor he prayed for would require considerable effort on the girl's part. A girl who passed this test would definitely act differently than ordinary young women. The servant's prayer requested for an unusual evidence of God's providential power.

The servant combined good planning with fervent prayer. Such is the action of genuine faith in the Lord. Faith does not neglect the reasoning process, nor does the brain operate without dependence upon God. God approves of good thinking and trust in Him.

God's answer went far beyond Eliezer's request. Eliezer could not know that the girl fitting his prayer request would come directly from Abraham's family. He could not know that in addition to all her excellent qualities of character, she would look beautiful. She was Rebekah, the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, making her Isaac's second cousin.

Genesis 24:26–27 Eliezer responded to God's faithful provision with worship and praise. He acknowledged God's kindness and faithfulness to Abraham.

IMPLICATIONS

God had a plan for Isaac's life. The promise God gave Abraham would depend on the children born to Isaac, so God in His sovereignty brought Rebekah to Isaac through Abraham's servant. When Abraham's servant asked Rebekah for some water from her jar, her response showed her desire to serve others. A heart of service is not something that happens once; it is something God develops in us over time. By her service she showed her character.

This lesson is especially meaningful to college students and single adults who desire to get married. Prayer and dependence upon the Lord are essential for every believer. God has called you to bring your needs to Him, for He is your Provider. At many points in the story we can clearly see the providential hand of God at work. When you acknowledge His provision and express your needs to Him, He receives glory when He answers. In the servant's case God answered promptly—before he even finished his prayer. But sometimes the answer comes much later, as in Abraham's life. God's answers come in His timing, whether they seem fast or slow to us. Consider how your prayers acknowledge your dependence on God. Be mindful of ways to encourage your small group to trust God's timing, helping them realize it often looks different than what they might want.

This passage also has special implications for empty nest parents. As children leave home to begin homes of their own, it is essential that parents trust and pray for God's provision for their child's husband or wife. If you teach parents with children of marrying age, challenge them with these truths.