

Isaac and Rebekah

Principles of courtship from the Bible

Genesis 24:1 Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

- Abraham, an aged man that God had blessed in all things. Old and wise, mature, careful, instructed by the Lord, someone who it would be well for us to take counsel from.

Genesis 24:2 And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:

- To his oldest, wisest servant, one who was closest to him, even in his house, one that had the greatest amount of responsibility, ruling over all that Abraham had, to one honored and trusted, was this most solemn instruction given: “Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh.” Abraham gave him a responsibility of great importance.

Genesis 24:3 And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:

- Abraham was a man that knew the God of creation. He instructed his servant to swear, or make a solemn oath, to “the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth.” By these words he was making a very serious request. He wanted his servant to know that what he was about to ask him was serious. He did not want, by any means, in any fashion, his son to marry someone that was a heathen.

Genesis 24:4 But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

- Abraham wanted someone who was associated with the same background, the same upbringing, one who had the same morals, knew the same God, and was familiar with his Godly lifestyle, as was his son. This would save a lot of trouble in the future for the young man Isaac (the only begotten son of promise, Hebrews 11:17... hmmm). If he were to commit to someone who did not worship the same God, what turmoil there would be in the home. What if they had differences in conviction regarding the upbringing of their children, abortion, education, discipline, money management, worship, recreation, associations, business dealings, sexuality, dress, or family matters? The less differences there are to begin with the better the relationship could be. Many say that opposites attract, but that does not always mean that God brought them together. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Genesis 24:5 And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

- The servant was wise in asking questions. We ought to take his example in asking as many questions to ourselves and to as many others as possible, so that our own minds will be clear for what the highest ideal is for the future.

Genesis 24:6 And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.

- Can you hear the solemnity in the voice of Abraham? Under no circumstances would it be aloud for the servant to take a heathen woman for his son.

Genesis 24:7 The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

- The father of the future groom, a man of God with the ability to look back and remember the ways that God had led him, one having a personal experience with the God of creation, recalled the promises of his heavenly Father; "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Abraham understood that it was to his seed, not to the Canaanites seed that this land would be given. The relationship that his son was about to get into was not allowed to change the design that God had for his son's life. While being willing to trust God through the ministration of His holy angel, and because of what was said and done in his personal past experiences, Abraham was able to look to the future with that same amount of faith; "He shall send His angel before thee..." Notice, the parent of Isaac had great trust and dependence upon providence in finding a mate for his child.

Genesis 24:8 And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again.

- Abraham did not put God in a box. He did not say that it must be a certain way, period. He made it clear that if there was not willing submission on the part of the future bride then the whole thing was off, the servant would be free from the oath and another path would be sought out. But, the servant was not aloud to take a heathen wife for his son; that was final.

Genesis 24:9 And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.

- Consecrating himself to the will of his master the servant was solemnly committed to this challenge of co-working with providence.

Genesis 24:10 ¶ And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.

- Notice that the servant took ten camels. Why so many? Did they need that much food to get there and back? Did they need that much water? Probably not. This was most likely a dowry.

You see, the father of the bride-to-be would need to see clearly that this man, asking his daughter's hand for his master's son, had the ability to provide for her future. If the son had no means by which to provide for the daughter, he may not be mentally nor physically prepared to take care of someone more than himself. Before God performed the marriage in the Garden of Eden, God gave to Adam a job... see Genesis 2:15, 21-22. (Also, it says that "all the goods of his master were in his hand..." does that sound like another scenario we've heard of before? More about that at the end of the study.)

Genesis 24:11 And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.

- At a time when women would come out to draw water, and in the place where they would draw, notice what he did; he and all that were with him relaxed. The servant did not, I repeat, did not actively search the cities for the one that "God had chosen." He was patient, mature, willing to watch God's hand move in that very serious decision.

Genesis 24:12 And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

- "And he said, 'O Lord God...'" That means it was prayer time. It is wise to "set yourself, stand ye still" and watch God move in times like this. While waiting it would behoove us to follow the example of the faithful servant and "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Notice carefully what was said in the prayer, "Send me good speed." He did not ask that God would prosper his search as he introduced himself to every beautiful woman he would meet. He was asking that God would send to him someone of His liking.

Genesis 24:13 Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water:

- "Behold, I stand here..." He was not actively looking; he was waiting. If we could get this one principle for finding a life partner we would be all the better. The servant was praying that God would send His choice to him. Believe the Bible, it works. Many times the reason why God hasn't sent someone as a life partner is because the one waiting has to continue growing in grace. That waiting time in precious, should be greatly appreciated, and used wisely. Take the servant's example and pray...

Genesis 24:14 And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

- The servant put out a fleece for God. Notice that the servant asked a fleece in prayer. We ought to be prayerful over the fleeces that we ask for. I wouldn't feel right asking in prayer, 'if I should marry her then have her give me a new red Corvette.' Be prayerful, and let the Bible be the judge. The fleece that was set out by the servant was one that would expose the character of the damsel. Would she prove to be industrious, would she care for God's creatures and be kind to strangers? Would she do her requested duties with cheer, be willing

to go the extra mile, and would she do it without complaining, all in answer to this one fleece? These were good quality traits to look for in a bride to be. Consider also that this would be “she that Thou hast appointed.” God has someone picked out for all of us, and we do not even have to search the world to find him or her, God will lead us together! Use the waiting time wisely...

Genesis 24:15 And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder.

- Before he was done with his prayer God had answered (Isaiah 65:24). God sent to him the lady of His choice. God is often working invisibly and in silence. Don’t be hasty, as God’s purposes know no haste, nor delay.

Genesis 24:16 And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

- God did not do Isaac wrong for trusting his Godly father to find him a spouse! On the contrary, “the damsel was very fair!” She was a very moral woman, she had not known a man out of wedlock, keeping herself pure by her own choices and her parent’s upbringing. This was and is a beautiful picture of what a person can be if they are morally upright. God wishes to keep us all pure before we are married for the sake of keeping our bodies pure, our consciences, and the records in heaven (Ephesians 5:3). I have not seen the pitcher (singular) that she carried, but it probably was not much bigger than four to five gallons. She also was seen going “down to the well” so that means she would have to “come up.” That may not have been an easy task, but we do not read of any complaining from that woman of God. It is also important to note that we ought to have someone that is “very fair” in our eyes as our future spouse. Being attracted to one another is important, because we will be with that person from the day of marriage onward. Many times people take the physical traits of their mother or father, and if you can see them, you may be able to see what your future spouse will look like in many years (and yes, that matters).

Genesis 24:17 And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher.

- The servant, caught up in the moment, “ran to meet her.” He was moved by the Spirit in answer to prayer to ask this young lady the question.

Genesis 24:18 And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

- She greeted him in a kindly fashion and “she hastened” to fulfill his requests. Good qualities. This young lady was looking good thus far inwardly and outwardly.

Genesis 24:19 And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

- “She said, I will draw water for thy camels also...” This was just as the servant had prayed in vs. 14! Notice, “Until they have done drinking.” I have never personally watered a camel, but I am quite sure that “her pitcher” was not enough to fill them all just by topping it off one time.

Genesis 24:20 And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.

- “She hastened... and ran again... and drew for all his camels.” This was a woman that was willing to go the extra mile for one that she did not even know. She had a missionary spirit. She knew the principle that if you “have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40).

Genesis 24:21 And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

- The servant was still displaying patience. He knew not if the Lord had made his journey prosperous because he did not yet know if this woman was of Abraham’s “country, and... kindred” (Vs. 4). This is teaching us that we cannot assume anything about God’s providence and will. We must see the totality of a situation before we can rest in the fact that God is leading us. What if she would have stopped half way through watering and said, “Most of the camels have had some water, but there are too many of them, could you get the rest of the water for them to drink?” Would this have been the answer to the servant’s prayer in verse 14? No. Let us be careful not to haste into any situation.

Genesis 24:22 And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold;

- The servant, very thankful for the service of the damsel, paid her with “a golden earring... and two bracelets.” This was not a wedding ring; this was payment for work faithfully done. (Isaiah later tells us to take off the bracelets and nose jewels, which the earring here may be referring to. See Genesis 24:47, it was an earring upon her face. (Notice Isaiah 3:18-24.) Genesis 24:22 is a description of what happened, not a prescription of what should happen.

Genesis 24:23 And said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father’s house for us to lodge in?

- The big question, “Whose daughter art thou?” What if she would have said that she was of the descendants of Canaan? The servant’s direction would have turned. This man would have prayed again that God would send him a different damsel.

Genesis 24:24 And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor. ²⁵ She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in. ²⁶ And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD. ²⁷ And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master’s brethren.

- When he saw her willingness to house a stranger and his prayer being answered, the faithful servant bowed in reverence to the God of Abraham thanking Him for His providence.

Genesis 24:28 And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house these things.

- Very important... if there are Godly parents in your household, they should be involved in your potential marital relationship. Rebekah ran straight to her mother and told her all things that had happened. This was a good testimony to the servant, he saw how she treated her family. You can know a lot about a person by this one thing; this is how the person will most likely treat their spouse and children. In this case her parents were involved, in other modern cases it could be the church family, a spiritual person, or a pastor if there are no spiritual leaders in the blood-family.

Genesis 24:29 ¶ And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well. ³⁰ And it came to pass, when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well. ³¹ And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.

- Rebekah was so excited that she told her brother as well about all things that had transpired. If you have family that desires your best they should be involved. When a couple tries to keep something like a relationship with another secret it is likely because there is conviction that others may not think that it is the best idea, which means that it probably isn't. If one does not have Godly parents to give them instruction, then best it would be for them to seek out Godly counselors like a good Christian friend or pastor. Someone should be able to see with you the providence of God else it may not be as apparent as you think. It is good to get an outside perspective on something like courtship, seeing how easy it is for a person's feelings and emotions to get involved, making it that much harder for your mind to be sound and balanced. Finally, the brother saw the ability of this man to take care of his sister, heard the story of the providence of God, and was convinced.

Genesis 24:32 And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him.

- It is clear in the previous verse that the man did not come into the house of the family until he was invited. We should not force our ways into situations, hoping that God will work out the details. Patience is a very good quality in the forming of relationships.

Genesis 24:33 And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on.

- The situation was so serious for the servant that he would not eat until he had relayed the message that was on his heart. He was so excited about the providence of God that he would rather speak than eat.

Genesis 24:34 And he said, I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵ And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses. ³⁶ And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath. ³⁷ And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: ³⁸ But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son. ³⁹ And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me. ⁴⁰ And he said unto me, The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house: ⁴¹ Then shalt thou be clear from this my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give not thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath. ⁴² And I came this day unto the well, and said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go: ⁴³ Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink; ⁴⁴ And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom the LORD hath appointed out for my master's son. ⁴⁵ And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew water: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee. ⁴⁶ And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also. ⁴⁷ And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the earring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands. ⁴⁸ 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.

- The servant rehearsed all of what he had seen in the providence of God; it was in the ears of the entire family. The whole family, on both sides should be involved if God is their foundation; if not, as was stated earlier, seek some spiritual person to give you Christian counsel.

Genesis 24:49 And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.

- He meant business. Either this relationship would go forward, or it would not. There should be no half-hearted relationships even started. If God is not leading, get out! But if He is, prayerfully go forward with principle and determination to find and follow God's will.

Genesis 24:50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good.

- When God is leading others will see it. If He is not they will see that as well. There is safety in a multitude of counsel (Proverbs 24:6).

Genesis 24:51 Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken.

- When God is seen in the relationship the parents need only to submit to His leading. They should have a faith in God that He will give them the ability to see Him working.

Genesis 24:52 And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth.

- The servant still knew his place, even at this time—in prayer.

Genesis 24:53 And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things. ⁵⁴ ¶ And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master. ⁵⁵ And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go. ⁵⁶ And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master. ⁵⁷ And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth. ⁵⁸ And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.

- The final decision should not be for the parents. They have a major role, but they are to allow their children to have a mind of their own in deciding the future for themselves, as long as God's providences are evident. Parents, pray all you can before it is too late.

Genesis 24:59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. ⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them. ⁶¹ And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

- The family sent Rebekah away with both physical and spiritual blessings. When God leads, he will take care of your needs and will also attend you with blessings from your family. Remember, these are godly parents that were sought after for counsel. If you are not blessed with godly parents, then by all means, seek the same type of counsel from an older person that knows the ways of God and that knows you well.

Genesis 24:62 ¶ And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi [*meaning, the well of the living one*]; for he dwelt in the south country. ⁶³ And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming.

- Notice carefully this point, Isaac was not actively pursuing a mate for himself. He was out having evening devotions! He went out to “meditate” in nature (Psalm 1:1-3). He was blessed. Young men, a good Christian lady will not be looking for guys that are cool, they are looking for spiritual giants. Young men too often spend their time trying to impress ladies with all of their worldly hype and accomplishments, yet fail miserably in building their character which will be to their spouse, by far, the greatest blessing. This man wanted to be a powerful spiritual leader; again, this is what godly women are looking for. Divine revelation tells us that we ought to be diligent in prayer about the relationships that we find ourselves in. God must lead. His hand must be seen working by all involved. The Lord wishes to give us

blessings far beyond what we can imagine. If we would trust in Him, even in something as delicate as the relationship of your life, He will bless you with comfort, as He did with Isaac and Rebekah.

Genesis 24:64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. ⁶⁵ For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself.

- Take heed to the simplicity in the preparation of this wedding... A-men.

Genesis 24:66 And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.

- Isaac now had to be informed as to what the Lord had been doing. He was fully aware in this verse of the providence that had been leading the servant to his bride. His decision was to be the final word in this matter, he had to see what everyone else saw or there would be no marriage. Having learned all of God's works, he was satisfied. He knew the Master's working because he had been spending so much time with Him. You may ask, "How will I know which person is for me?" The answer is found in knowing the God of Abraham. If you know Him personally, when He makes a move, you will know.

Genesis 24:67 And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

- As they rode off into the sunset on camelback, the story ends so beautifully. This will be the continuing experience of those that are willing to seek God's counsel in finding a spouse for their lives. There will be love and comfort for all those that are willing to do the Master's will. May each of us have the blessings that Isaac and Rebekah were praying for and experienced.

This story is more than what appears on the surface. God illustrated an example of His own will and desire for His people. Abraham represented the Father, the Ancient of Days. Isaac represented the Son, the servant represented the ministry of the Holy Spirit, while Rebekah represented the church.

Our Heavenly Father has **sent forth** His Spirit (Galatians 4:6, Hebrews 1:14) to prepare a virgin daughter for His Son. As the Spirit representative went out to meet the daughter, he brought her home to the Son. There will be a beautiful wedding that will last for all eternity. Jesus is coming soon for His bride, will you be ready for that glorious event?