

A Wife for Isaac Part 2

Love, romance and marriage from a Biblical perspective

Text: Gen. 24:18-67

Introduction:

- Concerning this chapter, Henry Morris writes, “Genesis 24 is the longest chapter in the Book of Genesis, and it tells a story that has charmed and enthralled readers for generation after generation. Entire books have been written around this one chapter.”
- 1. There are two main strands of thought that run through this passage of Scripture:
 - Principles for Marriage.
 - Pictures of the Messiah.
- 2. In this message, we will focus on the theme of marriage in a biblical love story that has captivated the hearts and imaginations of millions down through the centuries. These principles are more important than ever as we face a society where marriage, home and the family have largely been shipwrecked on the rocks of lust, immorality, perversion, adultery and divorce.
- 3. We will briefly review what we covered in Part 1 and then continue on with a study of the rest of the chapter.

I. THE PARENTAL DESIRE FOR A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 1-9)

Abraham had recently heard about the family of his brother Nahor and that Nahor had a young granddaughter named Rebekah (Gen. 22:20, 23). It is possible Abraham had heard about her qualities and had hopes she might be Isaac's future wife.

II. THE PRAYER FOR A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 10-15; 26-27)

III. THE PROFILE OF A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 16-25)

Rebekah appears on the scene and demonstrates the qualities of an ideal wife. In fact, these qualities can really apply to male or female. They are a reminder of the kind of character traits that are important in a marriage. Rebekah's qualities are also a challenge to us in the area of service for the Lord. There are at least **6 qualities** we can identify. Rebekah was:

A. Charming (Vs. 16a)

1. Rebekah was a very beautiful lady – “very fair to look upon”. Beauty is not evil in and of itself. Beauty is created by God and is one of the features of many aspects of His creation. The world and the devil use the natural endowment of feminine beauty in a corrupt way and evil way but it has its proper place within the marriage union and is a part of what God uses to draw a couple together.
2. Warning: Do not make this your only criteria when choosing a spouse! Beauty is only skin deep and you need to be most concerned to marry a spouse who possesses inner, spiritual beauty

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(See Prov. 31:30; 1. Peter 3:4-5). No doubt the beauty of Rebekah's personality shone through, affecting her outward demeanour and attractiveness.

B. Chaste (Vs. 16b)

1. There is a double statement of Rebekah's purity.
 - a. She was "a virgin".
 - b. No man had "known here".
2. Your virginity as a single person is a precious thing. Don't let the world and the devil rob you of your purity! Treasure and guard it and give it as a gift to the spouse God gives you on your wedding day.

C. Courteous (Vs. 17-18a)

1. Rebekah responded to the servant's request in a respectful and tactful manner. She responded with the words "Drink, **my lord**". She used a respectful title for this venerable, aged servant of Abraham. What a contrast to the loud, brassy, sassy women of today!
2. There are some who suggest the Bible knows nothing of titles of respect but not so! It is a good practice to use respectful titles for those in positions of authority or those who are our seniors.

D. Charactered (Vs. 18b-21)

Rebekah was an active, diligent woman with initiative and a zest for life. We find Rebekah moving in haste ("she hastened" Vs. 20) and running (Vs. 20, 28). Her character is highlighted in the fact that she was:

1. A Servant-hearted Woman (Vs. 18)

- a. Rebekah was faithful to her duties. The first picture we get of her is walking to the well with a waterpot on her shoulder and then going down into the well, drawing water and then coming back up (Vs. 15-16). Her early arrival at the well before the other maidens says something of her character. Drawing water was a regular household chore in those days as it still is in many places even today. Little did she know that day as she went faithfully about her normal duties that her life was about to be swept up in the plan of God and moved in an exciting direction. F. B. Meyer writes, "Elastic in step, modest in manner, pure in heart, amiable and generous, with a very fair face, as the sacred story tells us – how little did she imagine that the wheel of God's providence was soon to catch her out of her quiet home, and whirl her into the mighty outer world that lay beyond the horizon of desert sand."
- b. Rebekah was willing to serve others with enthusiasm – "she **hasted**, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink". She served with diligence, excellence and passion. There was a spring in her step and a sparkle in her eyes.
- c. This is an essential quality for a good marriage. Both husband and wife will need to invest time and effort into the marriage. Marriage and home life is a wonderful blessing, a little taste of heaven on earth but it requires hard work. Laziness in either spouse causes problems in a marriage.
- d. John Butler writes,

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“A selfish husband is the kind who will seldom take his wife out for a nice outing but will not hesitate to leave her at home struggling with the care of the children while he goes out and has a good time with the boys going to ball games, playing golf, fishing, hunting or pursuing some other pleasure. A selfish wife is the kind who insists on having her own way in everything, demands that they see her relatives frequently but will not give equal time to his relatives, and spends nearly all her husband’s hard-earned money on herself, caring not that she leaves very little for him.”

- e. Parents, are we training our daughters to be home keepers or do we indulge laziness? If your daughter can’t cope with a few duties now, how will she handle married life?
- f. Dr. Bob Jones Sr:

“Young man, have you been going with one of those painted dolls who lets her mother do all the work? Have you been keeping company with a girl who does not get up in time for breakfast, who leaves it to mother to wash the dishes while she spends all her time on looking pretty and pleasing herself? If she one day tells you that she likes you very much and admires you but somehow she simply cannot love you and that she will always be just your good friend; and if you hear soon thereafter that she is engaged to marry another man, don’t you play the fool and go and kill yourself! No, go and buy them a wedding present! And don’t be stingy; make it a thank offering! Then get down on your knees and thank God that He saved you from marrying a parasite who never learned to work, and who could not make a good wife because she was not a good woman.”

2. A Second mile Woman (Vs. 20-22)

- a. Rebekah volunteered to go beyond what was requested. She showed initiative. She would water the camels until they had “done drinking”. That represents a lot of work for 10 thirsty camels!
- b. A thirsty camel can drink up to 200 litres in several minutes! That’s over 44 gallons of water for one camel! If all 10 camels drank around that amount, it means Rebekah hauled somewhere in the order of 2,000 litres of water out of the well or 440 gallons. That is the equivalent of 100 2 litre bottles of milk per camel. Or to put it another way, that would be the equivalent of the volume of liquid it takes to fill 533 cans of coke. That’s around 5,333 cans worth for the 10 camels! Let’s be generous and say Rebekah’s waterpot could hold 10 litres. That would represent 200 trips to the well!
- c. Rebekah clearly had the gift of serving. Servants have a wonderful way of discerning the needs and taking the initiative.
- d. Rebekah’s example challenges us to think about whether we serve the Lord with all our might. Is our mindset to do the minimum for the Lord or are we prepared to work hard and go beyond the call of duty in our service for the King of kings? Do we run to do God’s will or drag our feet?
- e. Matthew 5:41 “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, **go with him twain.**”

E. **Caring (Vs. 22-25)**

Rebekah’s care and compassion is highlighted in:

- 1. Her concern for the camels (Vs. 19).
- 2. Her openness to showing hospitality to the visitors (Vs. 22-25)

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F. Conscientious (Vs. 28)

1. No sooner was Rebekah aware of the man's purpose, she went home to her household and informed them. If you feel you can't tell your parents about a prospective or ongoing relationship with a member of the opposite sex, you can be sure something is wrong! Never trust a decision you don't want your mum or dad to know about.
2. It appears Rebekah had a good relationship with her mother and father. Another desirable quality in a prospective wife!

IV. THE PROPOSAL FOR A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 26-61)

There are two main components to the proposal that was made:

A. The Proposal Presented (Vs. 26-49)

These verses record the dealings of Abraham's servant with Rebekah's family as he seeks to win her for Isaac.

1. The Servant's Thanksgiving (Vs. 26-27)

The servant had acted by faith in the God of Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 24:12). He believed the **promise** of God and trusted the **providence** of God to direct him (Vs. 27). Now he gives thanks. Observe...

- a. The posture of his praise (Vs. 26). The servant demonstrates worshipful reverence to God for the answer to his prayer. Do we respond to answered prayer with worship and thanksgiving or do we forget to even thank God for answered prayer? Note that bowing down is the true posture of the worshipper.
- b. The point of his praise (Vs. 27). He thanks God for showing mercy to Abraham in this matter and for leading him in the way. This is an important reminder on how God leads us. As we are faithful to walk the path he has chosen for us, he leads, guides and directs. But you must first be "in the way". Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Prov. 16:3 "Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established."

2. The Servant's Testimony (Vs. 28-49)

Having been invited by Rebekah's brother into the home for the night, the servant presents his case to Rebekah and the family with the aim of winning Rebekah for Isaac. Imagine what must have been going through Rebekah's mind as she heard all of this! He tells of:

- a. God's Goodness to his Master Abraham (Vs. 33-41)
How the servant loved to speak of his master! Abraham was blessed with:
 - i. Material provisions (Vs. 35-36). The servant could testify of God's blessings upon Abraham and his son Isaac. He notes that this included material provisions. Isaac would inherit Abraham's wealth and would therefore be in a good position to sustain Rebekah as his wife. The jewellery given to Rebekah were tokens of Isaac's ability to care for her material needs (Vs. 22). There is a

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practical lesson here for young men who desire to be married. While you do not have to be wealthy by the world's standards, you do need to prepare financially before marriage so you can cover the costs associated with sustaining a wife and starting a family. Illustration: Grandma W – We started married life in two rented rooms and were happy!

- ii. Spiritual perception (Vs. 37-40). Rebekah and her family would get a sense of the spiritual tone of Abraham's family from the servants recounting of Abraham's instructions concerning what sort of wife was to be sought for Isaac. While we should not expect perfection, the spirituality of a potential spouse should be of paramount importance to us. First and foremost, Isaac was a man who was blessed spiritually.
- b. God's Guidance of Abraham's Servant (Vs. 42-49)
The servant went on to testify of how God had Divinely and Providentially guided him in his mission. Being able to clearly demonstrate the Lord's leading in the matter would add further weight to the proposal. The servant recounts:
 - i. The prayer he prayed (Vs. 42-44). This account is an important reminder of the central role prayer plays in finding a life's partner. It also reminds us of the truth that God is a prayer hearing and a prayer answering God when our request is in His will. The servant wanted God's choice for Isaac – "let the same be the woman whom **the LORD hath appointed** out for my master's son" (Vs. 44). When our hearts are earnest to truly know God's will, God will be faithful to direct us.
 - ii. The answer he received (Vs. 45-49). The answer was **speedy** – "And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth". The answer was **specific** – it was according to what Abraham desired (she was of his kindred) and what the servant had prayed.

B. The Proposal Accepted (Vs. 50-61)

1. The Acceptance by Rebekah's family (Vs. 50-53)

- a. Both Rebekah's father Bethuel and brother Laban recognised God's leading in the situation and give consent – "**the thing proceedeth from the LORD**"; "let her be thy master's son's wife, **as the LORD hath spoken.**"
 - i. Parents need to be sensitive and open to the Lord's leading in relation a prospective spouse for their son or daughter. When God is at work, bringing a couple together, it will be evident and wise parents will be yielded to releasing their son or daughter to the will of God.
 - ii. Prospective husbands need to be able to demonstrate to a girl's parents the leading of God and be work with the parents to secure the girl's hand in marriage.

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- b. Celebration follows with the giving of gifts to Rebekah, Laban and her mother.
2. The Acceptance by Rebekah herself (Vs. 52-61)
 - a. Abraham's servant, having achieved the purpose of his journey is urgent to return to his master. Rebekah's mother and brother desired to keep Rebekah there for another 10 days but the servant appeals to be released immediately for the return journey. There is a time to wait but when God's will is made plain, we need to act without delay. **This is especially important in relation to the salvation invitation (2 Cor. 6:2)!** Charles Spurgeon, preaching on this text, said to his London congregation, "Ten days did not seem too long; but they might have been ten days too late. One day does not seem much; but one day more may be one day too late, and one day too late is to be too late forever; yea, one minute too late is an eternity too late!"
 - b. Note: While there is no hard and fast rule as to the length of an engagement, the Christian view is generally that shorter engagements are preferable. There was no lengthy engagement period for Isaac and Rebekah. Having found God's will for each other, their marriage proceeded without delay. One of God's purposes for marriage is to avoid sexual immorality – "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." (1 Cor. 7:2).
 - c. Rebekah is called and she is asked "Wilt thou go with this man?" to which she replied "I will go". True Christian marriage is not a forced thing but a union that is voluntarily entered into. Though in the culture of the East, parental decisions were often binding on couples, yet Rebekah's parents wisely enquired as to her feelings in the matter. True love must be voluntary!
 - d. Rebekah is sent away with "her nurse" whom we later learn was named 'Deborah' (Gen. 35:8).
 - i. James Freeman in his book *Bible Manners and Customs* explains the role of a nurse in Bible times, "In an Eastern family the nurse is a very important personage. She is esteemed almost as a parent; and, accompanying the bride to her new home, there remains with her. She becomes the adviser, the assistant, and the friend of the bride. To the nurse, as to a mother, the bride will confide her greatest secrets. Thus, Rebekah took with her on her long journey to her future home the nurse who had cared for her since childhood, so that, besides the female servants she took with her, (Vs. 61), she might have one intimate familiar friend among strangers."
 - ii. There are some parents that have the mindset that they and they alone should have input into their children's lives. That was not the view of the saints of old and it is not wrong for a mother to enlist the help of another godly, trusted sister in her home and family as needed. There is nothing wrong with a church providing a "nursery"

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ministry for mothers for a couple of hours so they can hear God's Word undistracted.

- e. A blessing is pronounced upon Rebekah, wishing her a very fruitful marriage (Vs. 60). It would be hard to imagine such a blessing at a wedding today in a society that has become so anti-children!

V. THE PARTNERING TOGETHER WITH A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 62-67)

The entourage arrives in Canaan and Isaac comes into view. We have noted the ideal qualities of a godly wife. We now note the essential qualities of a prospective husband.

A. The Character of the Man (Vs. 63)

Isaac was:

1. A Thinking Man (Vs. 63)

- a. We find Isaac going out "to mediate in the field at the eventide". On a basic level, we learn that Isaac was a thinker.
- b. The word 'meditate' here means "to muse" (Strong's). Isaac was a man who gave time to carefully think about things. Wiersbe notes, "Genesis 24:63 suggests that Isaac was a quiet, meditative man who pondered the things of the Lord in solitude (Ps. 1:2). She was a more active type so there would be a good balance in their home." It seems that very often God puts opposites together so that they might complement each other.
- c. Clear, rational thinking is an important quality for a man to have if he is going to be a good leader of his wife, home and family. In a day when "prolonged adolescence" is such a big problem amongst young men, it is vitally important that they learn maturity and how to exercise their minds in a godly fashion.
- d. Psalm 19:14 "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."
- e. John Butler wisely noted, "**Faults in small letters before marriage come out in capital letters after marriage.**"

2. A Worshipping Man (Vs. 63)

- a. Meditation implies a worshipful state of mind in the Bible. In fact, as you trace the word through the Bible it is almost always used of meditation upon God, His Word, His Ways and His Work (e.g., Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2; 63:6; 119:115, 23, 48, 78, 148; 143:5).
- b. It appears this was an established habit/routine in Isaac's life. He was a devotional man. A man who walked with God.
- c. Ladies, the spiritual character of a prospective husband is of utmost importance. No man is perfect but you need to make sure he is a man who has a genuine walk with God and exercises his mind on the things of God before you marry him. Does he have the potential to be a good spiritual leader for you as a wife? Is he a saved, growing, Bible loving, church attending, serving Christian? Remember, you marry the man as he is now, not what you hope you are going to make him after

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marrying him! You need to make sure he is heading in the right direction before you even start a friendship.

3. A Loving Man (Vs. 67)

- a. The Bible notes that Isaac “loved” Rebekah as his wife. There was genuine love in this marriage. Love is a two-way street between husband (Eph. 5:25) and wife (Titus 2:4) but it is so important that husbands take the lead and be channels of Christ’s love to their wives. Eph. 5:25 “Husbands, **love your wives**, even as Christ also **loved the church**, and gave himself for it;”
- b. It should also be noted that Isaac evidently had a good relationship with his mother. He was “comforted after his mother’s death”. This was good preparation for marriage. We are not suggesting the model where a full-grown man stays tied to his mother’s apron strings even after he is married but we are saying it is healthy if a young man has a good relationship with his mother as it will help prepare him for marriage. The same can be said of a young lady’s relationship with her father. If you don’t have a godly parent who can fulfill that role, trust God to fill in the gap and learn to develop wholesome, appropriate relationships with members of the opposite sex in your local church.

B. **The Consummation of the Marriage (Vs. 67)**

1. The key elements of biblical marriage could be summarized in four words:
 - a. Christian (2. Cor. 6:14).
 - b. Ceremony (Compare Gen. 2:24 & Matt. 19:4).
 - c. Covenant (Mal. 2:14).
 - d. Consummation (Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:5-6, Eph. 5:31).
2. Note: If you did not follow God’s criteria for marriage, God’s mercy, grace and forgiveness is available to you. If you are married to an unbeliever, pray for your spouse’s salvation.

Conclusion:

1. Are you committed to purity as a single person?
2. What is our approach to service as believers? Do we emulate Rebekah’s example?
3. Ladies, what godly ideals are you aiming for in your life? Men, what godly qualities are you building in your life?