



February 18/19, 2012  
Genesis 23-24  
“A Wedding Story”  
Pastor Gary Hamrick

In the past few weeks we’ve been looking at the lives of Abraham and Sarah, and their son, Isaac. In Genesis chapter 23, we learn about Sarah’s death at age 127. In Genesis chapter 25, we learn that Abraham dies when he was 175 years old. In chapter 24, one of the last things Abraham does before he dies is to instruct his servant, Eliezer, to find a good wife for his son, Isaac. And even though this is an arranged marriage, as was typical in those days, this is a love story nonetheless, because [Genesis 24:67b](#) says of Rebekah, “*she became his wife, and he loved her...*”

Even though this message is primarily directed to single adults, it still has application for individuals/couples who may have a son or daughter or a friend who need to know what the Bible has to say about marriage and choosing a spouse.

### Commit To Only Dating Or Marrying A Christian

1. Abraham’s first stipulation was that she was not to be a Canaanite.
  - a. Abraham knew how wicked and immoral the people living in Canaan were, so he gave instructions to Eliezer on how to find a wife for Isaac.
  - b. [Leviticus 18](#) includes a list of sins, including, incest, bestiality, homosexuality, and child sacrifice, and [Leviticus 18:27](#) says, “*all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you...*”
  - c. The culture of the Canaanites was filled with gross sexual immorality, fertility cults, worship of nature, and child sacrifice, which is why Abraham was adamant that Isaac was not to marry a Canaanite.
  - d. Abraham’s counsel is good advice for single people today.

i. Worldly, non-Christian people may be good/great co-workers, neighbors, professionals, citizens, acquaintances or semi-friends (as long as you intend to share the good news of Jesus with them), but they never, ever, ever, ever, ever (you get the idea!) make good spouses for Christians!

1. Under no circumstances should a Christian date or marry an unbeliever, because if he or she doesn't share love for the Lord, the Bible, and the church or have a biblical worldview, then he or she should not be a candidate for marriage!
2. Far too many people get married with the idea that they will somehow or another be able to change what they don't like about their spouse, and it's important to recognize that whatever that person is when they are single is what that person will be more of when they are married.
3. "Missionary Dating" is not a biblical principle!
  - a. Yes, there have been Christians who've married an unbeliever who later became a Christian, however, these exceptions should not become the model.
4. Paul warns against this in [2 Corinthians 6:14](#) - *"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?"*
5. Christians should take the Scriptures to heart and be selective *and* particular when it comes to finding a spouse, because marriage is a union of two lives into one, so it's best not to settle for anyone less than God's best.

2. Abraham's second stipulation was that Isaac was not to leave the Promised Land and return to his father's homeland to find a wife.

- a. Isaac was not to relinquish the land that God had provided for him on oath.
  - i. This was part of God's covenant arrangement with Abraham and his descendants through Isaac.
  - ii. Abraham was rightly concerned that if Isaac went back to the land of Babylonia, he might not return, and in so doing, he might settle for living outside of God's will in an effort to find a wife.
- b. Isaac was not to set aside the will of God in desperation to find a wife.
- c. Abraham's conviction was that Isaac should not compromise and step out of the will of God to find a spouse, because he believed it was best for Isaac to stay where he was and let God bring him a wife!

## Keep Yourself In God's Will And Trust Him To Bring A Spouse

3. Abraham's servant, Eliezer, made a 500-mile journey back to Abraham's hometown of Ur to find a wife for Isaac.
  - a. He traveled with an entourage of people and ten camels. ([Genesis 24:10](#))
4. When Eliezer arrived, the first thing he did was pray. ([Genesis 24:12-14](#))
5. Notice that [Genesis 24:15](#) says, "Before he had finished praying..." the Lord answered his prayer!

### Pray

6. Pray specifically.
  - a. [Genesis 24:12-14](#) - *"Then he prayed, 'O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.' "*
7. Keep your list reasonable.
  - a. Sometimes Christians pray with a list of specifics that goes well beyond reason or understanding, i.e. "Lord, I want to catch a trophy bass, that's been cleaned, cooked and ready to eat!"

### Be Physically Attracted

8. Rebekah was physically beautiful.
  - a. [Genesis 24:16a](#) - *"The girl was very beautiful..."*
9. Contrary to what some believe regarding being attracted to a person's inner beauty, it's okay to be physically attracted to someone.
10. It's important to make sure that physical attraction isn't the primary or the only attraction.

11. **Proverbs 31:30** – “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”

### Be Morally Attracted

12. Rebekah was morally pure. (**Genesis 24:16**)
- a. Purity
    - i. Rebekah was a virgin and God highlights her moral character.
      1. **Genesis 24:16** – She was “... a virgin; no man had ever lain with her.”
13. Rebekah was humble.
- a. Rebekah fulfilled two specific requests from Eliezer’s prayer: The girl would offer him a drink of water, and she would offer to water his camels.
    - i. This was a big deal, considering a camel can drink between 20 and 40 gallons of water are one time, and a conservative estimate would indicate that she carried more than 200 gallons of water!
  - b. She volunteered to serve a complete stranger, which demonstrated her servant’s heart of humility.
14. Rebekah was modest.
- a. **Genesis 24:65** tells us that when she saw Isaac, whom she had never met, she asked who he was, and then she took her veil and covered herself.
    - i. Typically in biblical times a woman would not cover her face, however, she would use a veil or a scarf to cover her hair as a sign of modesty.<sup>1</sup>
  - b. Eliezer went to her home and explained everything to Rebekah’s family, including Abraham’s instructions about finding a wife for Isaac.
  - c. When he told them how he had prayed specifically, they realized this must be the Lord’s doing, so they agreed to let her go with Eliezer.
  - d. They asked Eliezer if he would wait ten days before he took her to Isaac, but he answered, “*I must not be detained,*” because he knew this was God’s perfect will for Isaac and Rebekah.
  - e. When she was asked about going with Eliezer, she said, “*I will go,*” which is remarkable, considering she’s going on a 500-mile trip with a man she’d just met the day before, to marry a man she’s never met! (**Genesis 24:58**)
  - f. Rebekah goes with Eliezer by faith in God.
    - i. Marriage is a journey of faith, and faith is about trust, commitment, perseverance, prayer, and waiting on God.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0008\\_0\\_08618.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0008_0_08618.html)

- ii. Her faith was in charge of her feelings; it wasn't the other way around.
- iii. Marriage is not just about choosing to marry the one you love; it's also choosing to love the one you marry, because there will be times in every marriage when you won't "feel" very happy about your marriage, but that's when you need to walk by faith and not by sight, for the glory of God.

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Genesis 24:1-27, 50-67](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Review and discuss the statistics Pastor Gary shared from the 2010 U.S. Census.
  - a. For the first time in America's history, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, married couples make up less than half of the households in the U.S.
  - b. In the United States, unmarried adults head 51% of all households.<sup>2 3</sup>
  - c. People are waiting longer before getting married or unfortunately, they are deciding to live together as "friends with benefits."
  - d. Since half of all marriages end in divorce, people are more disillusioned with marriage than ever, and they are more cautious about commitment than ever.
  - e. The statistics for divorce are worse when it comes to remarriage.<sup>4</sup>
    - i. Fifty-percent of first marriages end in divorce.
    - ii. Sixty-seven-percent of second marriages end in divorce.
    - iii. Seventy-four-percent of third marriages end in divorce.
4. Review [Leviticus 18](#) and discuss the similarities between our culture and that of the Babylonians.
5. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's comment about the fact that "worldly, non-Christian people may be good/great co-workers, neighbors, professionals, citizens, acquaintances or semi-friends (as long as you intend to share the good news of Jesus with them), but they never, ever, ever, ever, ever make good spouses for Christians!"
6. If you were saved before you got married, did you pray and ask the Lord to bring you a spouse?

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/26/us/26marry.html>

<sup>3</sup> [http://boomersurvive-thriveguide.typepad.com/the\\_survive\\_and\\_thrive\\_bo/2011/06/us-now-has-more-unmarried-households-than-married-what-do-you-think-about-that.html](http://boomersurvive-thriveguide.typepad.com/the_survive_and_thrive_bo/2011/06/us-now-has-more-unmarried-households-than-married-what-do-you-think-about-that.html)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.divorcerate.org/>

7. If you weren't saved when you got married, what characteristics were you looking for in a spouse?
8. Have you been successful at changing certain habits and behaviors in your spouse?
9. No message on this topic would be complete without spending time to read and discuss [2 Corinthians 6:14](#).
  - a. Share examples of times in your life when you or someone you know were involved in an "unequally yoked" situation.
  - b. What were the consequences short-term or long-term?
10. Do you think it's difficult or nearly impossible for women to model purity, humility and modesty in our culture?
  - a. What recommendations do you have for teens and women that would help them dress in a modern and modest way?
  - b. Do you think the only answer to this question is to advise women "go Amish" or "Little House on the Prairie?"
11. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's observation that "never-married people are disillusioned, previously married people are hurt, and married people are hanging on for dear life."
12. What are some examples of times when the Lord specifically answered one of your prayers?
13. If the people in your group are not married, close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: choose not to compromise and accept less than God's best in a spouse; understand God's calling for every Believer to only date or marry a Christian; hold on to their virginity <sup>5</sup> as a cherished virtue and an incredible gift they can give to their spouse on their wedding night.

If the people in your group are married, close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: remember that marriage is not just about choosing to marry the one you love, it's also choosing to love the one you marry.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).

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<sup>5</sup> Be sensitive to the fact that some people in your group may have been sexually active. Encourage them to know that God redeems, and although the Lord can't restore their virginity, they can choose to live a life of purity going forward, so they can offer the purity of a new life in Christ. ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#))