

# Finding a Suitable Spouse for an Heir of God

Genesis 24:1-67

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## Introduction:

Today, as we continue our sermon series in Genesis, we come to chapter 24.

- Last week in chapter 23 which was about bereavement, I reminded you how Abraham is set forth in the scripture as a model of a man of faith.
- This week we come to another very common situation of life as God's people; that of seeing our children (and ourselves) settled into a godly marriage.

Finding a suitable spouse is, in fact, a matter of extreme importance for us as God's people.

- Our entire life is to be lived for Jesus Christ, and marriage is something that definitely ought to be done for His glory.
  - Both parents and children ought to work together at finding someone that will enable a son or a daughter to advance His kingdom.
- For Abraham, this was a matter of extreme importance because Isaac was the sole heir through which the Messiah was to come.
  - There was a sense in which Isaac *must* marry, and it was very important that his marriage would be compatible with the bringing forth of a godly seed.
  - We see in our text today that Abraham and his household take this to heart.
    - God's promises were bound up in Isaac having a godly offspring.
- But should we not also take this matter to heart in our households?
  - We are not destined to bring forth the Messiah—He has already come—
    - but has God not called us to advance His kingdom, and if we marry, ought we not to seek a spouse that will be a help and not a hindrance to us in this?
- It is easy to get the wrong focus in looking for a spouse, but what matters more than to marry someone that will help you to serve the Lord and be fruitful for Him?
  - Whether He blesses you with children or not, godliness ought to be your aim!
  - And if you set out with this aim, you can be sure that the Lord will be with you to guide you and bless you.
    - If our goal is to do whatever is before us for Him, we can be certain that He will be with us all the way.

Please give me your attention now as I read Genesis 24 to you.

- Remember that this is the very Word of God, so listen with godly fear and attention.

**Genesis 24:1-67: Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. <sup>2</sup> So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh, <sup>3</sup> and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth,**

**that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; <sup>4</sup> but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac." <sup>5</sup> And the servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which**

you came?" <sup>6</sup> But Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there. <sup>7</sup> The LORD God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. <sup>8</sup> And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there." <sup>9</sup> So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter. <sup>10</sup> Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, for all his master's goods *were in his hand*. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. <sup>11</sup> And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw *water*. <sup>12</sup> Then he said, "O LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. <sup>13</sup> Behold, *here* I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. <sup>14</sup> Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink' —*let her be the one* You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master." <sup>15</sup> And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. <sup>16</sup> Now the young woman *was* very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up. <sup>17</sup> And the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher." <sup>18</sup> So she said, "Drink, my lord." Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink. <sup>19</sup> And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw *water* for your camels also, until they have finished

drinking." <sup>20</sup> Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels. <sup>21</sup> And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not. <sup>22</sup> So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten *shekels* of gold, <sup>23</sup> and said, "Whose daughter *are* you? Tell me, please, is there room *in* your father's house for us to lodge?" <sup>24</sup> So she said to him, "I *am* the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah's son, whom she bore to Nahor." <sup>25</sup> Moreover she said to him, "We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge." <sup>26</sup> Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the LORD. <sup>27</sup> And he said, "Blessed *be* the LORD God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren." <sup>28</sup> So the young woman ran and told her mother's household these things. <sup>29</sup> Now Rebekah had a brother whose name *was* Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well. <sup>30</sup> So it came to pass, when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying, "Thus the man spoke to me," that he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at the well. <sup>31</sup> And he said, "Come in, O blessed of the LORD! Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels." <sup>32</sup> Then the man came to the house. And he unloaded the camels, and provided straw and feed for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who *were* with him. <sup>33</sup> *Food* was set before him to eat, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told about my errand." And he said, "Speak on." <sup>34</sup> So he said, "I *am* Abraham's servant.<sup>35</sup> The LORD has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. <sup>36</sup> And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was

old; and to him he has given all that he has.  
<sup>37</sup> Now my master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; <sup>38</sup> but you shall go to my father's house and to my family, and take a wife for my son.' <sup>39</sup> And I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.' <sup>40</sup> But he said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my family and from my father's house. <sup>41</sup> You will be clear from this oath when you arrive among my family; for if they will not give *her* to you, then you will be released from my oath.' <sup>42</sup> And this day I came to the well and said, 'O LORD God of my master Abraham, if You will now prosper the way in which I go, <sup>43</sup> behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass that when the virgin comes out to draw *water*, and I say to her, "Please give me a little water from your pitcher to drink," <sup>44</sup> and she says to me, "Drink, and I will draw for your camels also," —*let her be* the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son.' <sup>45</sup> But before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah, coming out with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down to the well and drew *water*. And I said to her, 'Please let me drink.' <sup>46</sup> And she made haste and let her pitcher down from her *shoulder*, and said, 'Drink, and I will give your camels a drink also.' So I drank, and she gave the camels a drink also. <sup>47</sup> Then I asked her, and said, 'Whose daughter *are* you?' And she said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the nose ring on her nose and the bracelets on her wrists. <sup>48</sup> And I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the way of truth to take the daughter of my master's brother for his son. <sup>49</sup> Now if you 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.'" <sup>50</sup> Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The thing comes from the LORD; we

cannot speak to you either bad or good. <sup>51</sup> Here *is* Rebekah before you; take *her* and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as the LORD has spoken." <sup>52</sup> And it came to pass, when Abraham's servant heard their words, that he worshiped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth. <sup>53</sup> Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave *them* to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. <sup>54</sup> And he and the men who *were* with him ate and drank and stayed all night. Then they arose in the morning, and he said, "Send me away to my master." <sup>55</sup> But her brother and her mother said, "Let the young woman stay with us *a few* days, at least ten; after that she may go." <sup>56</sup> And he said to them, "Do not hinder me, since the LORD has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master." <sup>57</sup> So they said, "We will call the young woman and ask her personally." <sup>58</sup> Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go." <sup>59</sup> So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. <sup>60</sup> And they blessed Rebekah and said to her: "Our sister, *may you become the mother of* thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them." <sup>61</sup> Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and they rode on the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed. <sup>62</sup> Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he dwelt in the South. <sup>63</sup> And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels *were* coming. <sup>64</sup> Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel; <sup>65</sup> for she had said to the servant, "Who *is* this man walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It *is* my master." So she took a veil and covered herself. <sup>66</sup> And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. <sup>67</sup> Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's *death*.

May the LORD bless the reading of His holy and infallible Word.

**I. You can see here a firm resolve on the part of Abraham and his household to find a spouse for the glory of God and for the advancement of His kingdom.**

- Abraham is getting very old, and Isaac is already 40—Sarah has died, and Abraham is very concerned to see that Isaac finds a suitable wife.
  - He knows how detrimental it will be to Isaac and the future kingdom if care is not exercised in this matter.
  - And so he calls his chief servant—his right hand man—and charges him to go and find a wife for Isaac,
    - binding him with a solemn oath to follow his instructions.

A. Abraham clearly sets forth two firm rules by which the servant is to proceed.

1. First, that Isaac is under no circumstances to take a wife from the Canaanites.
  - a. God had sent Abraham to live among these people, so it might have been seen as natural for Isaac to find a nice Canaanite girl to marry...
    - But Abraham had been told that the Canaanites were accursed and would be destroyed by his offspring for their wickedness and idolatry.
    - Abraham did not want to mingle his offspring with these people.
  - b. For us, there is essentially the same rule, namely, as the Apostle Paul puts it, that we are to marry only in the Lord.
    - In other words, every household must lay it down as a principle that the children of that household will only marry a faithful Christian spouse.
      - Those who don't do this bring great sorrow on themselves—they have a divided household—and very often their children rebel.
        - This is seen again and again in Israel where kings took unbelieving wives and the result was unbelieving children.
        - And besides, how can you possibly walk together when your core allegiance is not the same?
      - This is such a serious matter that it calls into question your relationship with Christ if you marry someone who is not a Christian...
        - It is something, in fact, that calls for your excommunication from the church of Jesus Christ!
        - It is a direct violation of our Lord's commandment, and it is not just a slip, but a major decision of life with permanent consequences!
- So that is the first thing that Abraham insists upon.
2. Second, he insists that Isaac must not be removed from the Promised Land to marry.
  - a. Abraham had been expressly called by the LORD to come to this land, and was called to a life of wandering and of dwelling in tents.
    - He had been told that this land would not be given to his offspring for over 400 years, but still God wanted him and his offspring to reside here until they were taken to Egypt.

- God's promise to be God to Abraham and his seed was tied to the land.
    - God would establish them in this land and it was to this land that the Messiah would come.
    - So Isaac was by no means to leave for the sake of marriage.
  - This meant that the woman must be willing to come from her land and her people and join Isaac in following God's call.
    - She would have to leave her homeland and her family and be content with a life of wandering in a strange and sometimes hostile land.
      - No woman would want to do that unless the Lord was in it and she had an eye upon the blessing that God had promised.
- b. There is a parallel for us in this as well...
- namely, that a woman must be willing to submit to her husband in attending a faithful church and in serving Christ with Him.
  - The Promised Land was the place where God had promised to reveal Himself to His people,
    - And for us today, a faithful church is the place where God has promised to reveal Himself through the means of grace.
    - A true church can be identified by its faithful preaching of God's word, its proper administration of the sacraments, and its careful exercise of church discipline.
      - If these marks are not present in a suitor's church, a young woman should reject his proposal unless he is willing to change,
      - And if, on the other hand, a young woman's church is missing these marks, a young man should not propose to her unless she is willing to follow him.
    - His house should be so much about the Lord that it is really nothing less than an invitation to come and follow Christ with him.
- So those are the two firm rules that Abraham lays down for Isaac.
3. It is clear that Abraham's whole household was united in this purpose.
- a. Abraham leads the way as the head of his home.
- He is the one who insisted upon these rules and who made his servant swear to maintain them in seeking a wife for Isaac.
  - So fathers are responsible to rule their household for the glory of God.
    - This matter of finding a spouse is not to be left up to our children
  - Parental involvement has been given a bad name in our day—it is always presented as oppressive and selfish,
    - and often it has been that way...
      - but for the Christian household it can be the very opposite—it can be a father engaging himself and his years of wisdom in helping his son or daughter to make one of the most important decisions of their life.
    - I remember my daughter Elizabeth giving me a big hug when we were responding to various suitors and telling me how she loved me and how glad she was that she did not have to do this alone.

- b. Isaac is obviously in full agreement with his father in this matter as well.
  - He was already forty years old, and he had not gone after any of the daughters of Canaan as unfaithful Esau will do in the next generation.
  - He had patiently waited, and we see him fully submitting to his father in taking his wife from among his father's people.
  - Children of the covenant, you will get more help from your parents if you let them know that you want their help than if you resist them and make them have to fight with you.
  - You only bring harm to yourself if you resist them and are left on your own to make this all important decision.
- c. You can see that the servant is also fully in accord with the household of Abraham that he is a part of—as a servant!
  - He is one of the most godly examples we find in the scriptures!
    - He is such a trusted agent that both Abraham and Isaac are happy to entrust him with the responsibility to go and find a wife for Isaac.
  - And we see that from the outset, he shows himself to be quite worthy of their trust!
    - First, in that he is careful in taking the oath, and refuses to bind himself to a matter that is uncertain—
      - in verse 5 he asks what he is to do if the woman will not come back with him, and Abraham agrees to release him from the vow if that is the case.
      - So he is very conscientious.
    - Second, we shall see how the servant earnestly, faithfully, wisely, and prayerfully carries out his task.
      - He is so committed to being a blessing to his master that he later refuses to take food until he has settled his business and secured the agreement of Rebekah and her family that she will return with him.
      - We will look more at how he faithfully carries out his task in a moment...

TRANS> But you see that Abraham's household is committed to finding a spouse for Isaac who will advance the purposes of God in bringing His promised kingdom.

- But there is something else exemplary in this matter that clearly pertains to every household in seeking a godly spouse for their offspring!

B. There is a firm trust in the Lord to give them success.

1. Abraham expresses his confidence that God will provide!

- a. When the servant asks Abraham what he is to do if he cannot find a woman who is willing to leave her home to come to Canaan,
  - Abraham indulges him, as we just saw, and releases him from the oath...
  - But at the same time Abraham beautifully confesses his firm assurance that God will provide!
    - Here is the man who in that same faith was willing to offer his son as a burnt offering when God commanded it, believing that God was able to raise him up, and who received the promise that God would provide!

- b. Look at his beautiful confession of faith in verse 7: **The LORD God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land,’ He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.**
    - Abraham was very sure that as God had called him to Canaan and had also promised him offspring through Isaac, that God would provide a suitable wife for Isaac!
    - He adds in verse 8 that under no circumstances may the rules he has put down be violated...**And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there.**
      - But he is quite sure that she will be willing to come.
2. When your goal is not marriage for its own sake, but marriage for the glory of God and for His kingdom, you can be sure of the Lord’s help!
- Your trust will be seen in leaving the matter in God’s hands and in refusing to compromise, even if you have to wait a long time—
    - And I might add, even if you *never* find a suitable spouse for yourself or for your son or daughter!
  - Abraham knew that it was absolutely God’s will for Isaac to marry, but you do not know if that is the case for your son or daughter.
    - Leaving the matter in God’s hands means not only waiting for the right kind of person, but also leaving it to God if you are to marry at all.
      - You cannot know for certain if that is God’s will or not...
    - But what you can know is that the LORD will definitely bless you if your commitment is not just marriage—but to honour Him in marriage.
      - The answer to your prayers will not necessarily be that you find a spouse, but that whether you do or don’t, you have been able to honour Him and to advance His kingdom!
      - You can only be sure of His help when you seek His kingdom first and refuse to compromise.

TRANS> Well now let’s look (as I told you we would) at how the servant faithfully carries out the task of finding a wife for Isaac.

- He is an excellent example of how a household should proceed in this matter...so...

## **II. See how the matter of finding a wife for Isaac is faithfully pursued by labour, prayer, and prudence.**

A. First see how labour is expended to find someone suitable.

1. The servant is sent on a journey to find a wife for Isaac
  - a. It was a huge undertaking.
    - He had to travel a great distance at great expense.
    - He took ten camels with him along with a company of other servants.
      - The camel train served two purposes—to carry gifts that a wealthy suitor was expected to give the young woman’s family, and to provide transportation for the woman and her servants on the return trip.

- So you see that it was no little task to go to a far away land to find a wife!
  - This was done because of the commitment of Abraham's house to the LORD.
- b. And we have already seen how diligent and earnest the servant is all the way through the whole process!
  - He is committed to God, to God's covenant, to his master Abraham and to his master's son...
    - And therefore he faithfully takes the journey and applies his whole being to the task before him.
- 2. We need to see in this that trusting the LORD does not mean sitting around and waiting passively.
  - a. Young people ought to prepare themselves all through life for marriage, learning the skills that are appropriate,
    - learning to be diligent, faithful in serving others, submissive to authorities, self-controlled, responsible, and wise at following God's word—and just learning to get along!
    - Men need to equip themselves to provide for their families and women need to learn domestic skills that will be a blessing in the home.
  - b. And then once you have prepared yourself, you will need to get out there and look for a suitable spouse.
    - There are many ways to do this—spending time with other families that have young people, going to conferences where you can meet others, letting people know that you are looking, using the internet...
- The point is that it is no lack of faith to go to take such action!
  - In fact, those who trust God the most are those who are most diligent in taking necessary action.
    - Abraham sends the servant and the servant goes because they trust God, not because they don't!
- B. But labour must be coupled with prayer!
  - 1. It is practical atheism to pursue a spouse without fervent prayer!
    - This is not something you want to do without God's help!
      - As we have seen, it is a very important decision that will affect both your happiness and your holiness for years to come.
    - If you as a parent or as the one who is seeking marriage are not faithfully praying about this matter,
      - It shows that your priorities for marriage or relationships are not right!
      - It shows that while you are interested in finding a spouse, you are not interested—not much interested at least—in God's kingdom.
        - You need to repent and start praying about this matter *now*.
  - 2. You have to greatly admire Abraham's servant in this regard!
    - He prays at every step along the way!
      - You have to love his obvious familiarity with the LORD as he just lifts up his prayers very naturally as you see in verse 12...



- **Gen 24:12-14: Then he said, “O LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. <sup>13</sup> Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. <sup>14</sup> Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, ‘Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink’ —let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.”**
  - Isn't that just great?
    - And then when God answers, this godly man very naturally breaks out in praise and thanksgiving...just right there on the spot!
      - **Look at verse 26 & 27: Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the LORD. And he said, “Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master’s brethren.”**
    - This is the pattern of his life—prayer for help and then prayers of thanksgiving—unlike the nine lepers that Jesus healed who did not return to give thanks.
- C. And note that in addition to labour and prayer, this man also exercises prudence or wisdom.
1. There is this whole matter of the test that he sets up that we just read about—the test to see if the young woman will offer to water his camels...
    - What a brilliant idea!
      - The woman that would marry his master must be a woman who was a gracious willing servant!
      - And any woman that would not only share her water with a travel weary servant, but would offer to get water for his camels would be such a woman!
        - Camels can drink as much a 25 or 30 gallons of water each, and there were ten of them—that’s 250 or 300 gallons!
        - The standard size for the water jugs they used was about three gallons (which is about 25 pounds of water), so we are looking at as many as 100 trips back and forth from the well to the water trough!
    - No wonder Abraham and Isaac were confident in sending this servant!
      - They knew that he would know what he was doing in finding the right woman—and she was beautiful too!
  2. Prudence needs to be exercised in finding a suitable spouse!
    - There are many things you can do to help you discover a person’s character.
      - a. One of the first things I ask any young man who calls to inquire about my daughters is that I might speak with his pastor and have permission to ask anything I want.
        - I remember one time when I had spent a long time interviewing a young man who emailed me the next day to tell me that his pastor would probably tell me some things he had left out.
        - I asked him what those things were and then had no need to call his pastor.

- b. It is also very wise to observe how the person you are interested in treats his or her parents...
  - Young man, look at how the girl you are interested in treats her father.
    - She may not treat you the same way now, but when you get married you can be pretty sure that it will be the same...
  - And young woman, look at how the guy you are interested in treats his mother—and fathers, you take note of that too!
    - No matter how attentive he may be now, you can be sure that in time he will treat you in the same way.
  - Whatever a person’s character is in their home or their work place will be what it is in their marital home—do not be deceived.
    - Your character, whether it is good or bad, always goes with you.
- The point is, you need all the wisdom you can get in order to make a wise decision about a potential spouse.
  - Again, it is no wonder that Abraham and Isaac were willing to entrust this servant with this great task!
    - Committed diligence, honest prayer, and practical wisdom were his attributes, and that is just what you need in seeking a faithful spouse!

### **III. And now I want you to see how the LORD blesses those who seek to do things for His kingdom**

- A. First, that the LORD guides the servant to the right person in His providence.
  - 1. In this case God brings him to her all at once.
    - a. What a great story—as soon as the servant gets to Haran, he prays, as we have seen, and even while he is yet speaking Rebekah comes to the well!
      - Right away, he sees that she is very suitable for his master
        - 1) She is beautiful—yes, the servant takes note of that...
        - 2) She is a virgin—yes, she was a chaste woman—the servant takes note of that:
          - Verse 16 says: **Now the young woman was very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up.**
        - 3) She proves to be very gracious and kind to strangers—as we saw, he tested her to see if she would draw water for his camels...
          - Look at what happens again in v. 17-20: **And the servant ran to meet her and said, “Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher.”** <sup>18</sup> **So she said, “Drink, my lord.” Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink.** <sup>19</sup> **And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, “I will draw *water* for your camels also, until they have finished drinking.”** <sup>20</sup> **Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels.**
            - Notice how she not only does it, but runs to do it!
          - The servant is spellbound—wouldn’t you be?
            - Verse 21: **And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.**

- 4) And when he checks, he learns that she is indeed the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor.
  - After giving her some precious gifts, for helping him, he finds this out and receives an offer of hospitality.
    - What an amazing display of God's providence!
    - It is God who brings things together in this way—that is what we mean when we talk about providence.
- b. But I can assure you that it does not always happen this easily!
  - This is a special case.
    - Remember that Isaac is already 40 years old,
    - The servant has made a long journey,
    - The field is very narrow because the servant must find a girl who is willing to leave her home at the call of God the way Abraham did...and she must be from among Abraham's relations.
  - I think one reason that God answered the servant's prayer so decisively and so obviously was for the sake of this young woman and her family.
    - This young woman and her family knew that Abraham had been called by God and had left years before to obey God's call...
      - There were no doubt many stories about him around their table...
      - Rebekah probably had a kind of awe and admiration for this mysterious great uncle of hers.
    - And now she and her family needed to see clearly that God was calling her to go and be a part of what God was doing in Abraham's family.
2. So the application is not that if you trust God and truly look to honour Him in your selection of a spouse, things will happen immediately.
  - It is rather that if you seek to honour Him in the process of finding a spouse, He will work everything out that needs to be worked out so that you will be able to honour Him.
    - You don't know what He will do,
      - He may lead you to someone that will be killed in a car accident before you even get married...
        - but you can be sure that He will be with you all the way if you seek Him first...
      - If you set out with the goal to honour Him and rely on His grace not just to find a spouse, but to honour Him, you will honour Him!

TRANS> But now there is some tension in the story...

- Everything has fallen beautifully into place...but will the woman's family be willing to let her go?

B. We see next that the LORD moves Rebekah and her family to let her go

1. Her parents see the hand of the LORD and have no wish to stand in His way.
  - Rebekah runs home to tell them and her brother Laban runs back to meet the man and to extend hospitality to him...
  - We see that in verses 28-32...

- The servant, eager to find out what they will say, breaks the customary practice of eating first and then doing business and insists on getting straight to the point...
    - He lays out what Isaac has to offer Rebekah in verses 34-36: **“I am Abraham’s servant. The LORD has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has. Now my master made me swear, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; but you shall go to my father’s house and to my family, and take a wife for my son.’ ”**
    - Next, he proceeds to retell the whole story of how he had prayed and how the LORD had immediately brought Rebekah to him and how she had done exactly as he had asked in his prayer.
      - He does this because Rebekah and her family need to see the hand of God in this situation.
      - Essentially, she is being called to leave her home as Abraham had been called to do...
        - She is being called to participate in the blessing of his household.
        - That is really what any young man offers to a woman when he asks her to be his wife...
          - “God has called me to be His servant, and He has blessed me with His salvation, and I want you to join me in seeking His kingdom.”
    - The servant basically says, “take it or leave it; accept my offer, or I shall be on my way...for I have come on this business alone.”
      - In verse 49 he says: **“Now if you 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.”**
2. Rebekah’s household sees that hand of God in all this.
- a. Verse 50-51: **Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, “The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you either bad or good. <sup>51</sup> Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your master’s son’s wife, as the LORD has spoken.”**
    - They recognise that this is the call of God for Rebekah and so ought not to be resisted! And they were right!
    - Once again, the godly servant immediately worships the LORD and then provides the customary gifts expected from a wealthy suitor.
  - b. This was an extraordinary call because Rebekah was being asked to go out, as Abraham had, to a place that she did not know with a man she did not know—though she knew all about him and that God had blessed him...
    - We should not expect to have the extraordinary working of providence that was needed in this situation...
      - but we *should* expect God to open the way for us by the regular working of His providence.

- If we seek His kingdom first, He will bring things about so that we meet someone suitable if it is His will for us to marry.
- c. Interestingly, the next morning Laban and his mother ask the servant if Rebekah could stay for ten days...
- The servant wisely says no—
    - **v. 56: “Do not hinder me, since the LORD has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master.”**
  - He could probably tell that if he gave in to this request, they would (as people in those days often did) keep on requesting more time.
    - Jacob, later, lacking the wisdom of this servant, ends up spending 21 years at Haran!
  - Perhaps it could be said that once the will of the Lord is known, there is little need to delay things...
    - It was time for them to get on with serving the LORD.
    - The servant did not want to keep his master waiting unnecessarily...but most of all: this was God’s call...
  - The family asks Rebekah and she agrees to go ahead and leave.
    - They say (v. 58), **“Will you go with this man?” and she says, “I will go”**
    - Jesus Himself warns us about delaying when His call is clear, and this was not just marriage, but a call of God for this woman to leave all for the sake of the kingdom of God.
- C. So the outcome is that the LORD brings this couple together to establish a house for the advancement of His kingdom.
1. This was Isaac’s and now Rebekah’s desire, and the LORD does not withhold it from them.
    - a. We have already read about how the servant brings her back and how as they approach, they find Isaac out in the field...
      - Rebekah inquires and learns that it is him and veils herself to show that she is betrothed to him now...
        - And servant tells the wonderful story to Isaac—you know he must have loved this—he was so committed to his master and so excited about what God had done!
        - And how Isaac must have delighted to hear of the whole matter!
    - b. And you see how we are told that they make a wonderful home together.
      - Verse 67 sums it up beautifully for us: **Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.**
        - Now we know that there is conflict in this home later on because of sin, but nevertheless, it is a home built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ—and as it says, **Isaac loved Rebekah.**
        - She proves to be a woman of strong faith who is a true help to her husband even when he exhibits weakness later on.

- What a blessing she is destined to be to him for the kingdom of Jesus Christ!
- c. If Isaac had only wanted a woman, there were plenty of them in Canaan, but he wanted a woman who would be committed to the LORD with him.
- God had given him a precious calling, just as He has you if you are a believer, and that is what matters most.
  - And the same with Rebekah.
    - If she had only wanted a man, she was a beautiful woman and there many to choose from,
      - but here was an opportunity for her go in pursuit of the city whose builder and maker is God, just as her great uncle Abraham had done.
      - If that had not been her desire, she would never have been willing to go with this man.
2. And I want to emphasise again that this is also true for you.
- If it is God's glory and kingdom that is your first priority, then you will seek no spouse but one that will help you to pursue that priority!
    - And I want to assure you that you can trust God to arrange His providence so that you meet someone suitable.
  - If God's kingdom is not your first priority—if you just want to marry and God's kingdom comes second or doesn't matter at all to you,
    - Then all I can say is that you need to repent!
    - How could the kingdom of Jesus Christ not matter to you?
      - Do you know what kind of Saviour He is?
        - The one who went to the cross to redeem us from Hell?
        - The one who gives us everlasting life in communion with God?
        - Do you have any idea how important and how precious this is?
      - Are you discouraged about following Him—does it seem too hard?
        - No no! You must not think that way! If you come to Him in your weakness, He will help you.
        - He has grace for us, not because we are strong but because we are weak.
          - Come to Him and you will see.