

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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SURPRISE! SOMETIMES THINGS GO SMOOTHLY

Genesis 24

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Here are the three points to today's message:

- Some things you don't have to pray about.
- The servant knew what his master wanted because he knew his master.
- When all parties are open to God's will, great things happen.

Over the last few months, I've been preaching through Genesis, beginning with the creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, and Abraham. I hope you've been following the sequence. Abraham's story is quite fascinating as we observe a man from his first step of faith. That's what the story is really all about! It's about a man who learned how to understand God and how to obey God. God promised him a son in his and Sarah's old age. And eventually that son came. His name was Isaac.

In my previous message of this series, Sarah died. In today's message, Isaac is now grown up. He is the son of promise. In today's message, I'll share with you how Isaac got his wife, Rebekah.

In order to gain some understanding of this chapter, you'll have to let go of your presuppositions on how people meet and get married. Thousands of years ago, it was done very differently than how we do it here in the old U.S.A. In the story of Isaac and Rebekah we find that Isaac was satisfied with the wife that Abraham's servant found for him, and Rebekah was satisfied with agreeing to marry a man before she even met him. So, as you listen this morning, don't try to figure that out, just accept it as the way it was back then.

SOME THINGS YOU DON'T HAVE TO PRAY ABOUT

Making such a statement will no doubt send up the caution flag to those who know the verses “pray without ceasing” and “bring all your requests to God” but don’t change the channel just yet. Some things we don’t have to pray about because we’ve already prayed and God has already spoken.

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 24:1-9

Abraham was now very old, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. ² He said to the senior servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, “Put your hand under my thigh. ³ I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, ⁴ but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.”

⁵ The servant asked him, “What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?”

⁶ “Make sure that you do not take my son back there,” Abraham said. ⁷ “The LORD, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father’s household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, ‘To your offspring I will give this land’—he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there. ⁸ If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there.” ⁹ So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.

EXPLANATION: God had already spoken to Abraham on this matter so there was no need praying about it again. When it was time for Isaac to be married, he recalled what God had told him. An angel would prepare the way.

At this point in his life, Abraham’s faith was at an all time high. His son of the covenant was before him, and it was time for him to be married. Abraham didn’t have to pray because he already knew what to do.

Let me be clear. I do not want anyone to think I am disregarding the importance of prayer, but when God has spoken, it’s time to move. Perhaps you think the term

“God has spoken” is too vague and you desire further definition. You may ask, “What do you mean ‘God has spoken?’” I’ve never heard God’s voice in the way that Abraham heard it, but there are times when I know God has spoken. Being a man of prayer and faith led him to these circumstances:

- Abraham knew his future daughter-in-law would not be a Canaanite, because to be so would negatively impact the covenant. A Canaanite wife would only give birth to more Canaanites. God’s promise to Abraham was that his descendants would occupy the land where he was foreigner.
- Abraham wanted a wife for his son from his own home country.
- He had a servant he could trust to go fetch a wife. When you read this chapter, you’ll note the servant took this all very seriously. He wanted to please Abraham, he followed his instructions, and he was thrilled at the outcome because he knew Abraham would be pleased.

Let’s look at it this way. Let’s say that Abraham did not have a divine revelation about where to look for a wife for his son, but he knew what kind of woman he needed and he knew where a woman like that could be found. At this point in Abraham’s life, he had learned to discern the spirit of God to the point that he already knew what God wanted him to do. In other words, he had built up a reservoir of prayer and was tapping into it.

ILLUSTRATION: A few years ago, I was planning a mission trip to South Dakota which included taking food to cut costs. I went to Sunday School classes asking them to donate specific things. In one class, I asked people to bring cans of beans. I’ll never forget the woman who said, “I’ll pray about that.” She was going to pray about whether to donate a 75 cent can of beans? I’ll say more about this in the church newsletter coming out this week, but I’ve learned there are some things you don’t have to pray about. Next -

THE SERVANT KNEW WHAT HIS MASTER WANTED BECAUSE HE KNEW HIS MASTER

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 24:10-21

Then the servant left, taking with him ten of his master’s camels loaded with all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim and made his

way to the town of Nahor. ¹¹ He had the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water.

¹² Then he prayed, “LORD, God of my master Abraham, make me successful today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. ¹³ See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ May it be that when I say to a young woman, ‘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.”

¹⁵ Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milkah, who was the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor. ¹⁶ The woman was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever slept with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.

¹⁷ The servant hurried to meet her and said, “Please give me a little water from your jar.”

¹⁸ “Drink, my lord,” she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink.

¹⁹ After she had given him a drink, she said, “I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have had enough to drink.” ²⁰ So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels. ²¹ Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful.

In other words, he knew what he was looking for!

EXPLANATION: The master was careful to follow Abraham’s instructions because he didn’t want to disappoint him. Again, to understand this passage of scripture, we have to set aside our presuppositions of what it means to be a servant on this level. We tend to think of servants in the way we think of horrible American slavery. And in Bible times, there were slaves who fit that definition we know all too well. In fact, Abraham’s descendants would find themselves as slaves to the Egyptians in the days to come. The image in our mind is that the servant lives under

oppression and wants to be set free. We don't see that relationship between Abraham and his servant. They had high respect for each other.

Abraham respected his servant enough for him to make probably the most important decision in Abraham's life. He knew his servant was *that* trustworthy. The servant respected Abraham so much that he really, really wanted to please him. He knew Abraham trusted him, and he didn't want to let him down. Nor did he want to let Isaac down, nor Rebekah. They would likely live longer than Abraham and the servant would likely work for them.

The servant had a grave responsibility. He wanted to please the boss. He did not want to make a mistake and thereby cause grief for the master.

ILLUSTRATION: In today's military, we all have what's called the GTC, or the Government Travel Card. It's a Visa credit card. It's basically a way to move money and, in theory at least, it has saved the government millions of dollars because massive pay and accounting offices have been completely eliminated. When I am authorized to use the GTC to reserve a flight, or pay for a room or rental car, essentially I am the one moving the money. Then when I upload my receipts and the numbers, I am doing the bookkeeping. It's frustrating, yes, and no one likes the GTC.

What's very clear, though, are the rules surrounding the use of the GTC. I won't be taking my family out to lunch on it today. You see, I don't want to disappoint my commander. He's counting on all his staff to be responsible. But every now and then, you find someone who has a problem. I've heard horror stories. One person bought a houseful of furniture on the GTC. Another had his own money moving scheme that worked for several months until... well, those kinds of things only work temporarily until a people get in over their head.

I know what my commander wants, because I know my commander.

APPLICATION: Let's kick that up a notch. Do you know what God wants? If you know God, then you know what God wants. How do you know what God wants?

Well, learning in the Bible is a good way to know what he wants. Following the lives of people like Abraham is a good way to learn and know what God wants. Following the life and teachings of Jesus and the disciples are good ways to know. Ignoring the teaching of Jesus is a good way to NOT know what God wants. Ignoring the teaching of the Bible is a good way to NOT know what God wants.

The heart of every young woman in this day was to be swept into a family that could care for her. The heart of every mother and father of this day was that their daughter would go to a man who had something to offer. Having something to offer was a sign of preparedness, and a sign the new young wife would not have to suffer.

Let's review:

- Some things you don't have to pray about (because you've already prayed).
- The servant knew what his master wanted because he knew his master.

And next -

WHEN ALL PARTIES ARE OPEN TO GOD'S WILL, GREAT THINGS HAPPEN!

Psalm 37:4 says, *"Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart."*

All four of the characters in today's message had done just that: Abraham, Isaac, the servant, and Rebekah. There was no sign of rebellion in any of them. This story is ripe with good news all through it.

- Abraham wanted to please God.
- Isaac wanted to please God and his dad.
- The servant wanted to please Abraham and Isaac.
- Rebekah wanted to please God.
- Rebekah's family wanted to please God.

Let's take a peek inside Rebekah's world. The scripture tells us the servant and his entourage were invited to Rebekah's home. They gave expensive gifts and were

shown great hospitality. The servant repeated Abraham's instructions word-for-word and told why he chose Rebekah.

Let's look at the first family business meeting recording in scripture.

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 24:54-61

When they got up the next morning, he [the servant] said, "Send me on my way to my master."

⁵⁵ But her brother and her mother replied, "Let the young woman remain with us ten days or so; then you may go."

⁵⁶ But he said to them, "Do not detain me, now that the LORD has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master."

⁵⁷ Then they said, "Let's call the young woman and ask her about it." ⁵⁸ So they called Rebekah and asked her, "Will you go with this man?"

"I will go," she said.

⁵⁹ So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham's servant and his men. ⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the cities of their enemies."

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her attendants got ready and mounted the camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

EXPLANATION: I want to point out how Rebekah's family asked for her input. This is huge! Her opinion was valued. This is huge! They gave her the option to leave then or to wait ten days! In those ancient days, for a woman to have such input into her own future shows you the kind of wonderful and healthy family she had. They trusted her judgement, because they knew her, and they knew she'd make a good decision.

The formula for success was right there...everyone had the same state of mind. Everyone was looking out for the best interests of others. No one was looking out for himself or herself.

- Abraham could have fallen back on lying like he had done before.
- Isaac could have said, “Thanks Dad, I’ll find my own wife.”
- The servant could have chosen several options. He could have taken the camels and property of Abraham and just headed in another direction, never to be seen again.
- Rebekah could have been the type that was unsatisfied with any offer, no matter how good.

But none of these things happened. I want to point out the high trust level of everyone in the story. Abraham, Isaac, and the servant had built a rapport of trust over a long period of time.

ILLUSTRATION: When we started on our senior adult housing project, we believed the market study would tell us whether there was anything to it. I asked people to pray. Well, we were all quite surprised when we got it. We started moving forward, and we got to a point where we learned a lot had to be done to see if we could even do it. We prayed and decided to go ahead. The whole approval process from the city of Nashville went so smoothly and took such a short period of time that we all were surprised. I’ve even stood up here and half-jokingly said I was a bit disappointed because I was looking for a good fight.

APPLICATION: Why are we surprised things go smoothly if God is in it and God’s people are unified? Somewhere along the way, we’ve taken on the idea that as Christians, every single thing is going to be a difficult, character-building challenge. This church has been faithful. We’ve weathered storms, and the Lord is just taking us to the next adventure.

You know we would demean prayer if we said, “Hey let’s stop and re-pray all this to make sure the Lord is in it.”

What I gain from this message is how smooth things went when all parties wanted to please God first, and each other second.

How does this story end?

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 24:63-67

[Isaac] *went out to the field one evening to meditate, and as he looked up, he saw*

camels approaching. ⁶⁴ Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel ⁶⁵ and asked the servant, “Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?”

“He is my master,” the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself.

⁶⁶ Then the servant told Isaac all he had done. ⁶⁷ Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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