

The Book of Genesis

Lesson 14: Sarah's Death and a Bride for Isaac -- Genesis 23:1-24:67

Sarah dies, and for the first time in the long story of Abraham, we see the great man weep. He has faced famine and war, kings and angels, the long agony of waiting and the terror of Moriah, but here he simply mourns. The woman who left Ur with him, who laughed behind the tent, who held the promised child in her arms, is gone. And what Abraham does next is quietly one of the most moving acts of faith in the Bible: he buys a grave. A field with a cave in it, the only piece of the Promised Land he will ever own, and he buys it to bury his wife in the soil God swore would belong to his children. He plants her, like a seed, in the ground of the promise.

Then the story turns to the future, and to love. Abraham is old, and Isaac, the son of promise, has no wife. So Abraham calls his trusted servant and sends him on a journey, back to the land of his kindred, to find a bride for Isaac, with one firm condition: she must not be a daughter of Canaan, but one of his own people, one who shares the faith. The future of the promise rides on this errand, and the old man entrusts it to God: "The Lord, the God of heaven... will send his angel before you."

What follows is one of the loveliest pictures of providence in all of Scripture. The servant arrives at a well, and he prays a specific, humble prayer: let the right woman be the one who offers water not only to me but to my camels. And before he has even finished praying, Rebekah appears, and does exactly that, drawing water for ten thirsty camels with cheerful, generous energy. The servant watches in silence, wondering whether the Lord has prospered his way, and when he learns who she is, he bows his head and worships. God had gone ahead of him the whole time.

And the chapter ends with two people who have never met being drawn together by the hand of God. Rebekah is asked the question that changes her life, "Will you go with this man?" and she gives the answer of faith: "I will go." She leaves her home and her family for a future she cannot see, to a husband she has never met, trusting the God who is leading. And in a field at evening, Isaac, still grieving his mother, lifts up his eyes and sees the camels coming, and Rebekah lifts up her eyes and sees him, and he loves her, and he is comforted. Read this passage and watch the quiet, faithful hand of God: present in our grief, ahead of us in our decisions, weaving even a love story into His great plan of redemption.

Group Discussion: When Abraham's servant prayed for guidance at the well, God answered before he had even finished praying, and the servant bowed his head and worshiped (24:12-27). What stands out to you about how God guided this whole errand, and where have you seen God's quiet, providential hand at work in your own life?

Personal Reflection: Rebekah was asked, "Will you go with this man?" and she answered simply, "I will go" (24:58), leaving everything familiar to follow where God was leading. Where is God

asking you to say “I will go,” to trust His leading into something new, even when you cannot see the whole path?

Read Genesis 23:1–24:67

Study Questions

1. When Sarah died, Abraham mourned her and then bought the cave of Machpelah to bury her, the only piece of the Promised Land he would ever own (23:1–20). What does this act reveal about how Abraham faced death, still trusting God’s promise even from beside a grave (compare Hebrews 11:13)?
2. How do you face the reality of death, your own mortality and the loss of those you love? How does the believer’s hope change the way we grieve (1 Thessalonians 4:13)?
3. Abraham’s servant prayed a specific, humble prayer for guidance, and God answered it through Rebekah’s arrival and kindness (24:12–21). What does this account teach us about how God guides His people and about bringing our decisions to Him in prayer?
4. How do you seek God’s guidance when facing important decisions? Where do you need to trust God’s providence right now rather than leaning only on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5–6)?
5. Abraham insisted that Isaac not marry a daughter of Canaan but one who shared the family’s faith in the true God (24:3–4). What does this teach us about the importance of spiritual compatibility in marriage and our closest relationships (compare 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 7:39)?
6. How seriously do you weigh shared faith in your closest relationships and, for those considering it, in marriage? Where might you be tempted to let attraction or convenience override spiritual wisdom?
7. When God answered his prayer, the servant “bowed his head and worshiped the Lord” (24:26, 52), and Rebekah, when asked, was ready to go. What do their responses teach us about worship as the natural response to God’s leading, and about readiness to follow Him?
8. Are you willing to go where God leads, even if it means leaving the familiar behind, as Rebekah left her home and family? What holds you back from a wholehearted “I will go”?
9. Throughout this account God’s hand is never loud, yet it is everywhere, guiding the servant, prospering the journey, bringing Rebekah to the well at just the right moment, and advancing the line of promise toward Christ. What does this quiet providence teach us about how God works, and how is it different from mere chance or luck (Romans 8:28)?
10. Look back over the whole passage. Name one specific way God is calling you to trust His providence, to face loss with hope, to choose relationships wisely, and to say “I will go” when He leads.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Hebrews 11:13–16, the patriarchs as strangers and pilgrims seeking a heavenly homeland; Proverbs 3:5–6, trusting the Lord, who makes our paths straight; 1 Corinthians 7:39 and 2 Corinthians 6:14, marrying “in the Lord” and not being unequally yoked; Romans 8:28, God working all things together for good; Psalm 37:23, the steps of a person established by the Lord.