

Genesis Ch24v1-27, 61-67 - The Wedding Planner

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[0 : 00] Chapter 24. Last week we were in chapter 23. We were at a funeral.

Today we're at a wedding. It's the longest chapter in Genesis, in case you ever have a question like that.

And it's all about Isaac meeting Rebecca. But what can we learn? Well, let's read God's Word.

We're not going to read all the chapter. We're going to go as far as verse 28, and then we'll pick up the end of the account. So let's start in chapter 24, verse 1.

Abraham was now very old, and the Lord had blessed him in every way. He said to the senior servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, put your hand under my thigh.

[1 : 08] It was a symbol, a sign of making an oath or a promise. He says, I want 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'm a living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.

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?

Make sure that you do not take my son back there, Abraham said. The Lord, the God of heaven, who bought 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. 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. So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.

[2 : 35] Then the servant left, taking with him ten of the master's camels, loaded with all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharim and made his way to the town of Nahor.

He made the camels kneel down the well outside the town. It was towards evening, the time that the women go out to draw water.

Then he prayed, Lord God of my master Abraham, make me successful 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 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 that you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.

[3 : 45] Before he had finished praying, Rebecca came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor.

The woman was very beautiful, a virgin. No man had ever slept with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar, came up again.

The servant hurried to meet her and said, please give me a little water from your jar. Drink, my lord, she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink.

After she had given him a drink, she said, I'll draw water for your camels too until they have had enough to drink. 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.

Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful. When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a becca and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels.

[5 : 04] Then he asked, whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night? She answered him, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, born to Nahor.

And she added, we have plenty of straw and fodder as well as room for you to spend the night. Then the man bowed down and worshipped the Lord saying, praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness to and his faithfulness to my master.

As for me, the Lord has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives. The young woman ran and told her mother's household about these things.

Now, for much of the remainder of the chapter, that whole account is repeated as Rebecca's brother, Laban, wants to know all about what's happened.

And the servant goes through all the different things that had happened. And so we pick it up in verse 61. By now, everyone's come to the conclusion that Isaac and Rebecca should get married.

[6 : 26] It's a good idea. Verse 61. Then Rebecca and her attendants got ready and mounted the camels and went back with the man.

So the servant took Rebecca and left. Now Isaac had come from Be'er-Lahai, Roy, for he was living in the Negev. He went out to the field one evening to meditate, and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching.

Rebecca also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel 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. Then the servant told Isaac all he had done. Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebecca.

So she became his wife, and he loved her. And Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. Well, let's pray.

[7 : 39] Father, thank you for the privilege of being able to hear a story like this about real people, a real time, a long time ago, but yet a story that was written down and recorded so that we can be blessed today.

And Father, that is our prayer, that as we look at your word together, as we hear your voice, that we will be blessed.

and we will come to know something of your great plan of redemption, your blessings to this world.

So teach us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Well, at last, some romance. A beautiful love story of a young man who finds the wife of his dreams. It's a script ready for the movie makers of Hollywood, isn't it?

[9 : 04] Now, all this romance can get us thinking about weddings and funerals, or weddings and marriages, rather. In fact, last week, as we looked at Sarah, we thought about planning for our own funeral.

And this week, well, it all seems to be about planning for our wedding. So what does this chapter have to teach us about finding our true spouse?

Well, here's my three top tips for finding the right spouse. First of all, look for a Christian. Isn't that what Isaac had to do?

Find the right kind of person. Not from the Canaanites. They were pagans. They didn't follow God. But go find the right kind of person. Find someone with the right character.

Wasn't Rebecca a fine woman? Not only was she beautiful, but what a servant she was. going beyond and above duty, watering 10 camels.

[10 : 11] Somebody's worked out that taking the average size of a container to drop your water down into the well to water 10 camels would have taken 80 to 100 trips back and forth to the well.

What character? And then find somebody who's committed. I mean, Rebecca was committed, wasn't she? She was ready to leave her family and go to Isaac's home.

We don't want to have someone who's running back to mummy every time they're in trouble. They're to leave and be committed. So there you have it. Find your right spouse, a Christian character and committed.

Sermon over. Let's pray. And we'll sing our last song. Well, maybe it's about finding our right spouse.

But let's be not too quick to jump to that conclusion. Because I don't think this is about finding your perfect partner. Rather, this is actually all about God's faithfulness to us.

[11 : 20] In fact, this marriage story tells us of the greatest marriage we can all experience, the marriage of God to his people. But more of that in a little while.

Let's get back to the story itself. Four things we're going to look at this morning. A marriage full of promise, a marriage designed in heaven, a marriage overflowing with blessing, and a marriage filled with purpose.

So first of all, a marriage full of promise. Now before we get stuck into the detail, we need to pull back with the camera lens and remember the big story of Genesis.

The big story that God has made a promise to renew this broken world and restore our disordered lives. It was a promise of redemption.

And that redemption would come through the family of a man called Abraham. So in Genesis 12, verse 3, we read, and all people or all nations, all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

[12 : 35] A seed of Abraham, a son would come from the line of Abraham who would deliver God's promise. A son who would bring the blessing of redemption to the world.

He would come and save and rescue the peoples of the world from their sin and God's judgment. That was God's great promise.

But at the start of the story, in chapter 24, we're faced with a problem. Look at verse 1. Abraham is now very old.

And as we read on through the story, we realise that Isaac is not yet married. Now that's a big problem. You see, if Isaac doesn't get married, then he has no children.

And no children means no future children. If there's no wedding for Isaac, then the promises all come to a stop. If there's no marriage, then all the blessings of God are going to dry up.

[13 : 43] If Isaac doesn't get a wife, then God's plan of redemption fails. Everything hinges on Isaac finding a wife. You see, this isn't about us searching for our perfect spouse.

No, this is no ordinary marriage. marriage. This is a marriage which is central to God's promises and God fulfilling his promises.

The promise of bringing blessing to the nations through a marriage. marriage. So first, whoops, I missed the first one, a marriage full of promise.

And second, a marriage made in heaven. Now we might know the end of the story that, yes, Isaac and Rebecca do meet and they do get married.

But what's important for us to see is how Isaac and Rebecca got together. In other words, we want to see how God fulfills his promise and accomplishes his plan.

[14 : 50] Now the way marriages happen today is, so I'm told anyway, you get a wedding planner. Someone who organises your day from venues, flowers and photos.

Everything is planned out in detail and yes, you get an enormous bill for it all as well. But when it comes to the wedding day and the celebrations, as all the guests arrive, you might know who the wedding planner is, but it seems that everyone is doing what they're meant to be doing.

It's like everyone has a job. Everything has been designed. There's a plan in operation. Well, God is clearly the wedding planner for Isaac and Rebecca.

Look at the way God works out his plans and his promises. First, Abraham follows God's plan.

Abraham goes about the business of looking for a wife for his son. Maybe different to our cultures today, but that was what they did then. And he calls in his chief servant and gives the command, we're going wife hunting.

[16 : 06] But he's got two conditions. Here's the first condition, verse 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'm living.

But go to my country and to my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac. So make sure you get the right kind of girl.

Second condition, verse 6, make sure that you do not take my son back there. He's not to leave his home here and go set up home there.

She's to come to him. So a wife must be found who's going to keep in God's ways and who is going to come to where Isaac lives.

Now these aren't just personal opinions of Abraham. They're in line with God's promises. Verse 7, Abraham knows God's promise and so Abraham follows God's plan.

[17 : 37] He didn't know everything, he didn't know how it was all going to work out in detail, but with the little bit he had, he sought to obey what God had said. You see, life is not about telling God what my plans are and who my future spouse might look like or what they'll do and asking God for his blessing.

no, it's always about us following and submitting to God's plan. So you say, well what is God's plan? Well we don't have to imagine and think up what is God's plan.

God has clearly revealed his plan to us in scripture and Genesis 24 is part of that big plan and as we'll see as we go through the story, how we can be part of that plan.

In other words, if you want to know what God's plan is for your life, read your Bible. Get on board with what God is doing.

So we follow God's plan. Second, we notice how the servant trusts God's kindness.

[18 : 55] Now the servant has travelled hundreds and hundreds of miles with his ten camels to the family home of Abraham. And he reaches his destination and he pulls into the equivalent of apple green and he gets himself a drink and ready to refuel his camels.

So he's in the right place. This is where he should be. This is Abraham territory. But my goodness me, there's a lot of women here. Who's the right one? How am I going to know which is the right wife?

Well he comes up with an imaginative test, doesn't he? Look at verse 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. And, whoa, look what happens, verse 17.

He spies a woman, she's a beautiful woman, and he goes up to her, verse 17, the servant hurried to meet her and said, please give me a little water from your jar.

[20 : 15] What's she going to do? Drink, my lord, she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink. But what about the camels?

Oh, after she'd given him a drink, she said, I'll draw water for your camels too until they've had enough to drink. Amazing! Everything is working out.

But let's remember, this is not random coincidence. This is the result of faithful dependence. Look at how the servant began his search.

Verse 12. Then he prayed, Lord, God of my master Abraham, make me successful today and show kindness to my master Abraham.

There's his prayer, show kindness. Now, kindness is much more than just generosity. It means God's faithful covenant love.

[21 : 19] love that is steadfastly loyal to his promises. So, as he prays, the servant is asking God to be faithful to his covenant, that God would fulfil his promises.

We can almost imagine him praying as the women are at the well. Lord, I need to find a woman here and I haven't got a clue who the right one is, but I trust that as I choose, you will be faithful to your covenant.

May the one I choose be according to your promise. Show this kindness. Amen. And he opens his eyes and he follows through.

And so when he finds a woman who passes the test, look how he prays. Verse 26. Then the man bowed down and worshipped the Lord, saying, praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master.

As for me, the Lord has led me on a journey to the house of my master's relatives. The Lord has been faithful to his covenant promises.

[22 : 42] partners. You see, the principle here is not come up with an imaginative test to find out who your future partner will be. So for a modern day application, let's swap camels for cars.

So you drive to the nearest petrol station with your prospective partner and they don't know that you fancy them and all the rest of it and you say, I need some petrol.

And they respond, oh, let me buy it and guess what, I'll fill up your whole tank. Ah, there's your answer, I found the right person. No, that's madness, we can't do that.

This is all about trusting God's kindness. Live your life in the knowledge that God's promises are best for you.

Rather than decide what we think is right, we trust what God says is right. We read his revealed will in his word and we entrust ourselves to a God who is steadfastly committed to working out his promises to us.

[23 : 55] Promises that are always good for us. So we follow God's plan and we trust God's kindness. love. And then we meet Laban, the brother who accepts God's will.

Laban is like the big protective brother. Rebecca has returned home and she's got a pile of jewellery in her bags. Well, where did they come from?

Oh, I met this guy, a servant, and he's looking for a wife and I think this might be it. I haven't met him yet but it seems pretty good. So he's wanting to check out who this guy is and well, is this going to be a good match for my sister?

And he agrees and arranges to take the servant back to his house because he wants to know the story. Verse 33. Then food was set before the servant but he said, I'm not going to eat until I've told you what I have to say.

Well, then tell us, said Laban, tell us the story. And the servant then recounts the whole course of events. He tells them all about Abraham sending him off to get a wife for his son Isaac, how she must be from his family, how she must leave that land and go to be with Isaac, all according to God's promise.

[25 : 23] He explained how he prayed, how he sought God's help, how he trusted in God's kindness, leaning upon God's promises. And he describes the events at the well, the little test that he had, how he asked for a drink for the woman, and how she was to offer water for the camels.

And guess what, Laban? She did everything that we required. Now, what would big brother Laban think of such a story?

Well, we're told, verse 50, Laban, that's the brother, and Bethuel, the father he was in listening to, answered, this is from the Lord.

We can say nothing to you one way or another. Who else could be in it? Here is Rebecca, take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has directed.

There's no debate. They can clearly see God's hand in all of this. They submit themselves to God's will, they accept God's will, when they consider God's promises to Abraham, when they think about the servant's prayer and his dependence on God's kindness and his covenant faithfulness, the circumstances at the well, well, put it all together, it makes perfect sense.

[26 : 56] The God of heaven and earth is in all of this. This is a plan they can follow. You see, God doesn't do coincidences or chance happenings.

This is not a random event. No, God is directing the whole show. Isn't that what we see here? God has made a promise and God has a plan to fulfil that promise.

Abraham may send his servant, the servant may set a test, but this is God's plan. This is from the Lord. This has all come about, end of verse 51, as the Lord has directed.

You see, God is the wedding planner. This is a wedding made in heaven. love all■■rrr, amen.

Now, it's a random event in the Lord's age and Almighty, everything we experience is all under God's sovereign will.

[28 : 11] In fact, this story is teaching us that God is so intricately involved with this world. He's so invested in our lives that he is working out his plan of salvation for you.

His purpose for you is that you would know God's blessing. His plan is that you would experience the ultimate marriage, a marriage relationship with God.

Are you sure? Absolutely. Let's see. So third, a wedding overflowing with blessing.

The wedding may be planned. Laban and the servant and Bethuel think this is good and they give the thumbs up. Well, what about Rebecca?

I mean, doesn't she have a say in all of this? After all, she's getting married to Isaac. What does she think? Well, there's been a bit of discussion about things and verse 57, they said, I know.

[29 : 21] Let's call the young woman and ask her about it. Good thinking. Verse 58. So they call Rebecca and ask her, will you go with this man?

Now, she doesn't go, oh, what colour are his eyes? What kind of job has he got? Has he got money? No, nothing like that. I will go, she said.

She's heard the story. She's heard the story. God's promises to Abraham. God's kindness to the servant. She's heard her brother's response.

It all makes sense. This is the Lord's will. This is of the Lord. You see, Rebecca isn't just committing herself in marriage to Isaac.

That's part of the story. But the big story in all of this is, Rebecca trusting God's promises and kindness. By saying, I will go, Rebecca is entrusting herself, not just to her new husband, but to God.

[30 : 33] By saying yes to all of this, Rebecca isn't just sharing in Isaac's wealth, she is sharing in the promised blessings of God. Remember, it's through Isaac that the blessings are going to come.

So Rebecca's yes to the marriage is Rebecca saying yes to God. I will go. It's an act of faith.

She doesn't know the future, but she has God's promise and God's blessing and she's going to leave behind her life, her family, and step out and entrust herself to the God of redemption and blessing.

But it's not just Rebecca who gets blessed. And it's not just Rebecca who gets called to share in the blessing.

God's plan of salvation, remember, is that all the nations would be blessed. That all people would get to share in what God has to give.

[31 : 39] And as we read through Scripture, we see God's heart for the nations. And the big theme, the big picture we see of this is God as the husband pursuing us, his people, as his bride.

Listen to what God says. You might remember these words from Hosea. You can follow on the screen. This is what God says.

In that day, declares the Lord, you will call me my husband. You will no longer call me my master. I will betroth you to me forever.

I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness and you will acknowledge the Lord.

I will show my love to the one I called, not my loved one. I will say to those called, not my people, you are my people.

[32 : 48] And they will say, you are my God. You see, this is God's plan. This is God's love for the world, his love for the nation.

God has accomplished his plan and he has done that in love by sending the person of his son, Jesus. And he's demonstrated this love and compassion by giving his life for us, by taking our sin, the curse of judgment on himself, so that we might enjoy the wealth of his blessing.

God's plan to bless the nations, which means we are blessed.

You want to know how much God loves you? How much God is committed to you? He's saying, look at my faithful promises. Look at what I've accomplished.

Look at the cross. Even though you've rejected me and turned your back on me, and wandered away, I have come to win you back so that you might be one with me, that we might be married.

[34 : 07] This is God's plan. He is pursuing the nations in love. To those not yet belonging to me, he says, I will be your faithful, loyal husband and I'm not going to fail you, but I'm going to bless you.

God, who is kind and compassionate, stands before each one of us today and is asking for our hand in marriage.

And like Rebecca, we are called to step out in faith and say, I will go. So fourth, a marriage filled with purpose.

You see, when we say yes to God, when we say, I will go, I will follow you, we're committing ourselves to serving God's great purposes.

You see, the way in which God is going to bring blessing to the nations is through his people, through people like you and I. So, two things for us to think about as we finish.

[35 : 27] This means that your life has purpose. God is now calling you to share his story of redemption, to declare the good news of God's ultimate marriage.

Like Abraham, we are to follow God's plan. Like the servant, we are to trust in God's kindness, that he will be faithful to his promises.

And we can step out with confidence and assurance, knowing that God is directing all things. He is the planner of our life. He is the planner of every situation.

Because there are no coincidences. Think about your own life. It is all according to his design and purpose. Where you live and the people next door to you is not an accident.

The people you meet each day when you are out walking the dogs or when you go to work is not random. The family that you have been born into is not by chance.

[36 : 34] You might be the only Christian in each of those contexts. It may be difficult. But remember, God has you where you are meant to be so that you can be a conduit of God's blessing to those around you.

This is God's purpose for your life. Bringing the blessing of God to the nations. That's the big plan. It really doesn't matter what college you go to or what job you take up.

It's whatever you're doing, see that the purpose of your life in that context is to bring the blessing of God to the nations. And also it means if you are married or you plan on being married that your marriage has a purpose.

This might not be an account about how to find your future spouse but it does reveal to us something of the purpose of marriage. Look, when Isaac and Rebecca got married, they weren't just committing themselves to one another, they were serving the grand big purposes of God.

You see, marriage isn't about satisfying your need or fulfilling your desire and if that's your view of marriage, you're heading for a train wreck. God's design for marriage is that we partner together to serve the greater and bigger purposes of God.

[38 : 08] It's not about me and my spouse or me and my children hiving away and doing our own thing. It's about husband and wife partnering together in God's mission.

Now maybe some of us need to remember that and recommit to that. Somehow in the busyness of life, the pressure to take on more into our lives or invest more into the lives of our kids running here, there and everywhere, means that we've lost sight of what marriage is all about.

Whatever our status here today, whether we're married or unmarried, whether we would love a husband or a wife, let's just take the bigger step back and remember that God is the wedding planner who is working out his plan of redemption through us.

So trust God's kindness. Follow God's plan. The Lord is directing your life so we can go with confidence and assurance, being a conduit of God's blessing to all we meet.

Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for this marriage account of Isaac and Rebecca.

[40 : 04] thank you for the way in which it points us to the ultimate marriage with you, Father God.

We pray that we would take from this all that we need that we might become the people you call us to be. Help us to live our life trusting you, following your revealed plan in Scripture and walking confidently as you direct every one of our steps.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.