

Choosing A Marriage Partner (1)

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Date: 19 October 2014

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn together now to Genesis chapter 24. The first passage we read in Genesis 24 verses 1 to 14. We're still following through our studies of Abraham's life and it's come to another important stage in his life as we come to chapter 24 of Genesis. It's very significant as we'll see later on towards the end of our study today that this account of how Abraham gave instructions to his servant regarding finding a wife for his son Isaac, how that follows on immediately from the chapter we looked at last time which records for us the death of Isaac's mother, Sarah. And it's like that in life anyway, isn't it? Because in a sense that's a picture of life where you move from one set of circumstances to another, where you move maybe one day from something that makes you sad to another day where you have something that gladdens your heart. One day we're at a funeral, next day we're possibly at a marriage. That's how life is. That's how providence is. That's how God patterns our days in this world for us in his own wisdom. And I'm sure all the ladies present especially like a good love story. And this is a really beautiful story. It's told in such a way that really just draws you into what's happening. Just imagine coming to this chapter in Genesis and just imagine as far as you can that you've never read it before. That you've just taken it up and never read this chapter before. And if you're in that situation, as you read the chapter for the very first time, imagining that it's the very first time, it's put in such a way that really instantly draws your mind into what's being said. And as you're drawn into it, so you're taken up with this wonderful story of Rebekah coming to be the wife of Isaac and how Abraham, through his servant, set about finding this suitable wife for

Isaac, his son. There are some very interesting characters actually in the story. We're not going to really go into them except just refer to them in passing. The servant himself, for example, he's not named. He could be the Eliezer that's mentioned in previous chapters. In any case, he's one of the chief servants. He's a senior servant in the household of Abraham. And he's given this task. He's given these instructions. And he is himself a character, though there isn't that much about him. But as you read the chapter, his character really comes across to you as someone who has so many attractive qualities about him and about the way he goes about his business. But this is another test for Abraham.

You'll remember that we've been seeing every stage of his life through these chapters as they recorded for us. God is giving him a set of circumstances where his faith, where his faithfulness, where his commitment, where his obedience to God is being tested. And we've seen all the way through that that also is one of the reasons we find this in the Bible, because it projects to us this set of circumstances that are so like our own in the circumstances of life, where our life is tested, where our relationship to God is tested, where our faith is tested, where our commitment to Christ is tested, where our leaving things in the wise hands of God is tested. And again, here's another test for Abraham. And the test for Abraham here, of course, now is he knows that his life is coming to its end. It's not that far from the end of his life. And he knows that, although he's still got quite a few years to run, but he needs to find a wife for Isaac, because Isaac is his successor, not just in the family, but in the covenant relationship that he has with God. The promise of God to Abraham, that he would be the test of a line of successors that would have promises of God, blessings from God, that through him eventually all the earth and the peoples of the world were going to be blessed. That needs to be kept by Abraham intact. He needs to pass that on to Isaac. And in order to do that, Isaac needs to be very careful about who he takes for a wife. It's not just any woman that will do. And it's not so much about what she looks like, it's going to be what kind of character she has. What sort of person will she be?

She has to fit into God's dealings with Abraham and now with Isaac's successor in a way that will be absolutely committed to keeping the conditions, the promises, the stipulations of God. That's the situation. And that's why he sets about things in the way that he does. Now, that's going to take us into, this is one great chapter in many ways, but one of the things that does come across to us, and very, very significantly for our particular day, for our particular generation, for the circumstances that surround us in this life, for the pressures that we are under to conform to the world and to the worries of the world. Some of the things that will come across from the chapter have to do with ethical and moral issues. What is marriage? What kind of lifestyle should the people of God actually have before and into and after marriage? Because as you very well know, all of that today is being assaulted by different ideologies and thoughts that are contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

And we're here to actually take the teaching of Scripture, the teaching that God has given us, and apply it to all the situations in life, whether we are married or single or about to be married, whatever it might be. These principles, these things that God has specified, these specifications, these principles for our moral and ethical standing and relationship with God, they're all important, they're all significant, especially in today's society. And for our young people especially, not just for them, but for our young people especially, it's so, so crucial that we ground ourselves in the teaching of the Bible when you face temptations to just be like the world.

[6 : 56] To just distance yourself from the morality of the Bible and just listen to the so-called morality of the world. Well, two things today. Just first of all, look at Abraham's instruction of his servant, and then secondly, the servant's successful mission, which will break off at verse 14 and carry on, God willing, in another study. First of all, Abraham's instruction, and there are two things there that you find in the instruction he goes to his servant. That's verses 1 to 9 especially.

First of all, he specifies the marriage of Isaac must be within the covenant, within the things that God has specified for Abraham and his descendants. That's the first thing.

Second thing, that the residence of Isaac and his new wife must be within the covenant land, must be within Canaan, must be within this land that God has specified for them as an inheritance.

Why is that important? Why are both points important? Well, the marriage has to be within the covenant. Notice what he says in verse 3. Put your hand under my thigh. That was just a practice at the time, a custom, where somebody was taking an oath or taking on himself to fulfill our promise.

That you may make you swear by the law of the God of heaven and earth, that you will not take a wife or my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell. Now, Abraham's concern, as we said, is for God's plan, for God's purpose, for God's specifications for him and his descendants to be kept, to be carried through. And what he's saying is that the Canaanites that surround him in the land that he now dwells in are not suitable people to provide wives for a son because they're pagans.

[8 : 54] They don't believe in the God of Abraham and of Isaac. They have their own idols. And the idols that they worship in their own way, you can see all the way through the Bible how frequently God mentions and indeed denounces the practices of the Canaanites as they go about their religious rituals and worship.

Because the Canaanites, in their form of worship, had, well, just to put it mildly, they had a whole series of deviations sexually, morally, from what you would say was decency and good lifestyles.

That's why God denounced them, among other things, because their practice was such a debauched and gross practice compared to what ought to be the case and certainly compared to what God expected of his people.

And so I said to them, you are not to them, you are not to your wife. For my son from the daughters of the Trinites, they're completely unsuitable. They're the very opposite in their thinking, in the way that they learn, in the worship of their idols, in the debauched practices they are involved in.

You will not take away from them. They are a people who do not fit into God's covenant, will, and lifestyle for his people. And that's something that's consistent throughout God's instruction to his people.

[10 : 26] We read in Deuteronomy chapter 7, you find there, as we read, verses 3 to 4, especially where the people were about to enter the promised land of Canaan, having gone back to Egypt, been all this time in Egypt, and then travelled through the wilderness.

There they are ready to go into the land, to inhabit the land, to take over the land finally and settle there. Just as Abraham and his family had done hundreds of years before.

And God is saying to them, you shall not intermarry with them. You will not take up their idols or their practices, because they will draw your hearts away from the Lord your God.

And then you go to the likes of 1 Kings chapter 11, where you have an account of Solomon in his, the final part of his reign.

It's a very sad chapter. Solomon, this great king, this glorious king, this king, after his father David, had extended the empire of David even further and taken over so much land.

[11 : 34] And then they have established the people as, the people of Israel as they people in the world at the time, in that part of the world. And there he is, a sad figure.

His heart has been drawn away from God. He's become unfaithful to God. Why has he become unfaithful to God? What has led to that? Because he took wives from all these foreign countries.

Countries out with Israel. Countries of very different culture and practice, especially religiously to Israel. Israel. And they drew his heart away from God.

We're told that he had 700 wives. 300 concubines. Why would anybody want 700 wives?

But it's a serious point. Because the point that the chapter is saying is that you take it into your mind to just put God's wisdom and God's regulations aside.

[12 : 41] Just leave it there. Don't do away with it altogether. Keep it at the back of your mind. But put something additional in its place or along with it in your thinking, in your practice.

That is what Solomon did. And the result of it was that he fell away spiritually. He fell away quickly from obedience and commitment to God.

And then you find in Ezra, many hundreds of years later again, when the people were coming back from a time of captivity in Babylon. 70 years they spent there. They went there because God had punished them for their disobedience through the years of the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah and so on.

Here they are coming back. Here they are resettling around Jerusalem again and establishing God's covenant community there. And yet here's what Ezra finds. This holy man of God who came to set in order the things that religiously needed to be set in order and he found them having intermarried with the locals, having imported into their practices these pagan ideas and married these wives that were outwith the covenant community.

Now that carries on through into the New Testament. And it's important for the people of God that they actually see how this is a thread that runs right through into the New Testament part of the Bible.

[14 : 08] Which means that God has kept it in place all the way through to our particular day to day. Because in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 39, Paul is giving an instruction there to people who are widows whose husbands have died.

They are free from that commitment. He says, to marry again, only let them marry in the Lord. In other words, if you are a Christian, God is saying, this is my pattern for you in terms of relationship.

I have to say at this point that there is absolutely nothing wrong with being single. Indeed, Paul commends singleness as something that gives a lot more time and able to give a lot more commitment than married people do to the things of God, to the things of serving God.

Like Paul himself. But what he is saying is, when that's not possible, when there needs to be the relationship of marriage in place, then the Lord's people are to marry in the Lord.

And that really means, whatever it means, however far you take that, it certainly means that a person who belongs to the church of God, who commits their lives to the Christian way of life, they don't marry atheists.

[15 : 36] They don't marry humanists. They don't marry people from another religion contrary to the religion of Christ. You don't marry a Muslim or a Buddhist. Whatever tolerance we may have for the entrustance of other religions, and that tolerance is important.

We're not a people who persecute other people just because they think differently or act differently or worship differently to ourselves. But the fact of the matter is, God has given his people, God has given his church specific regulations, and in his Western he has laid down covenant stipulations.

And one of them is, for his people, they marry in the Lord. They marry in the Lord in the sense of not marrying out with the covenant people, the covenant community, the church of God.

Now, we may think that's very old-fashioned. We may think that that's something that really ought to be left behind in the days of the Old Testament or even the New Testament.

But it really comes down to this. Do we accept this Bible as God's word for us or not? And if we do, then it's God's word for every generation.

[16 : 52] It's not happened to us to say, yes, but that was written so many hundreds of years ago. It doesn't matter when it was written. It was written by God through human agencies, and because it is, as we believe, the word of God, we're not free to adjust it in terms of the changes that may come into human thinking and human practice.

What he's telling us is, here are stipulations that marriage is within the covenant. Isaac must take a wife from within the covenant people. And as we'll see, that's what he found when he went back to Abraham's native land in the city of Nahod, the door of the cold days, that area.

So that's the first thing. Secondly, there's residence within the covenant land. Because the seventh year said, very understandably, but what if this wife or this prospective wife, what if this woman does not actually agree to follow me back to this land?

Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came? And Abraham was vehement and very strong about not taking her wife from the Canaanites.

He's equally so, if not more so, when it comes to answering the servant's question. Where he says to him, say to it that you do not take my son back there.

[18 : 12] In fact, twice he mentions that. He mentions that God has specified things to him about this land of Canaan that he was now in, that that was the land he was giving him. If the woman is not willing to follow you while you're free from my oath, then you must not take back my son there.

Why is that? After all, Abraham is saying to him, go back to my native country, 500 miles away, in Mesopotamia, because there is no wife suitable from the Canaanites, go back to my native land and take a wife from there.

Why then would he specify that Isaac himself was not to be taken back there to settle there? Well, that gets to do with the covenant promise of God.

You see, this land that Abraham is now in is joined to him by God's promise. And he has to settle in this land of Canaan, having left Ur of the Chaldees.

Now, there's a picture there for you of what God does in the life of his people spiritually. He takes you out of one way of life into another. He takes you out of being tied to a particular lifestyle, to a particular destiny, and he brings you into a new one.

[19 : 28] He takes you out of your lostness, he puts you into the way of life. He takes you out of darkness, he puts you into light. He takes you out of a relationship where you're tied to the world, and to worldliness, and he takes you into a relationship where you're tied to Christ, and to godliness, and to the inheritance spiritually that you're tied to in heaven.

That's what it's representative of. And the relation, the letter to the Hebrews, we've mentioned this a few times in the studies of Abraham, in Hebrews chapter 11 and at verse 15.

You find, talking about these people, Abraham, Sarah, they make it clear, speaking this way, that they are seeking a homeland. And if they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return.

But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

Now that's really saying to us that Abraham here, giving instructions to a servant, who was saying, don't take my son back to Mesopotamia.

[20 : 41] Because what God did was take me out of there, so that I would settle in a covenant land, in an inheritance that he had prepared for me. And so for Isaac to go back and settle in Mesopotamia would be just like a Christian, if you like, going back from what God had placed them in, in their relationship to Christ, to take them back and to settle back into the ways of worldliness.

And of the kind of life they had before, they were converted and brought to know the Lord. That is essentially what it's saying to us. And that's what's behind this residence within the covenant land, as well as taking away from the covenant community.

Now if you go into the New Testament, that's precisely what you find. When God changes your life, when God actually places you in that relationship with himself, when he cuts your ties with the world, you no longer live for that, but you're now looking forward.

You don't look back to where you came from spiritually and morally, you're looking forward to where you're destined for. And when you go to the likes of Paul's testimony in Philippians 3, how does he put it there?

He says, well, I don't think I have yet attained to the things for which Christ took hold of my life. But, he says, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press towards the mark, towards the prize of this higher calling of God and Christ Jesus, towards heaven, towards perfection.

[22 : 23] What is he saying to us? He's saying, for adjoining all those things that are behind. It doesn't mean that he's forgotten about them completely, but he's forgotten them in the sense that he's no longer living in that direction.

His yearning is now forwards, not backwards to where you had been before he knew Christ. His yearning is forwards towards the things that belong to heaven, to being with Christ eventually.

Same in 2 Corinthians 5, the first few verses there, where he talks about the prospect of resurrection and the prospect of being in that final state of resurrection.

That is to say, we are groaning towards that. It's not a groaning of complaint. It's the kind of inward groaning you get yourself when you really have something you're looking forward to, something that you're yearning for, something that you're longing to be fulfilled in your experience, something that really excites you, something that really fills you with a sense of anticipation.

You have a lot of things like that in your life ordinarily, don't you? You have a lot of things in your providence as your life goes on that you really are anticipating something that you've set ahead of yourself that's really going to be an exciting development in your life.

[23 : 43] And there's this in you that really yawns toward it. There's this inward groaning. There's a lot of compulsion that's taking you on towards that. Well, he says that's what it is to be a Christian.

That's what it is to know the Lord as your Savior. Your direction is constantly heavenwards, forwards, not backwards.

And this is what he's saying here with regard to Isaac. You're not going to take Isaac backwards. You're not going to take him as if I had never left Mesopotamia.

Because you see the description he's saying of God. There is the Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred. And he spoke to me and swore to me, to your offspring, I will give this land.

See, that's the background to it. And because of that, Isaac must not go back from the place that God has specified is to be his inheritance.

[24 : 43] And that's really pretty much in line with what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew chapter 6, verses 19 to 21.

Where he's talking there about the material things of this world. And how easily it is to be dominated by and governed by those material things and to make them out of priority.

And Jesus, encountering that, said, Where's your own heart today?

Where's your treasure? What is your heart set on? Is it something more than this world can give you? Is it something more than and above this present life?

Is your heart set in heaven? Is your treasure there? Is Jesus your treasure? Is the Lord your riches? Because when he is, that's where your heart is.

[26 : 09] That's what the direction of your life is. There's the great question that comes from this passage to us today then. Abraham's instruction brings us to the point of asking ourselves, Where's my heart?

What's the most important thing in life for me? What am I living for? What's my life dominated by? What's my lifestyle about? What's it focused on?

Where does it get its impetus from? Secondly, the seven's successful mission. Now just briefly, you notice first of all this careful preparation.

Then next time we're going to go into his negotiation with Rebecca's family, which led to her coming back with him to be the wife of Isaac. Well, there's a beautiful character, as we said.

The servant here in Beshten, he took, having taken the oath of his master, took ten camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master, and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.

[27 : 11] That could be the name of the city, or perhaps it's the city associated with Abraham's brother, who was called Nahor. In any case, that's where he went. Now he's a beautiful character. He's a man of God.

He's a man of wisdom. He's a man of faith. He's a man with humility as one of his chief characteristics. He's not afraid to bow himself in the presence of God, even though there are people looking on.

And you can see all that and follow that out for yourselves all the way through. Now, he wasn't told by Abraham how to go about his task. Abraham just said, Go and take a wife for Isaac from my people.

And then he has to set about his task himself. That's how life is as well. The Bible gives us certain principles, but God doesn't always tell you the detail as to how you are to work them out, or how you are to apply them.

So here he is. He's applying, as he sees it, he's applying the instruction that Abraham gave to him. And the thing that he especially does is turn to prayer.

[28 : 14] There he is. He's reached Mesopotamia. And he comes to this well outside of the city of Nahor. And he makes the camels kneel down there. That's him. He's reached his destination.

But the camels need to be refreshed. And so does he himself. What does he do? He turns to prayer. If you're entering into a relationship, or thinking of a relationship, of how many entered into a relationship, whether it's marriage or whatever it is, you cannot actually enter it, or continue within it successfully, without prayer.

This is something that so frequently comes across to us from the scriptures. The place that prayer must have in our experience and in our practice. Here's a man who's going to look for a wife for Isaac.

A very important event in the continuing life of his master Abraham. A significant point in the history of the family. What does he do?

How does he set a banquet? He prays to God. For direction. For guidance. And I have prayed with God for success in this venture. How much are we bringing our relationships before God in prayer?

[29 : 30] How much are we daily coming to God and asking him, Lord, bless me today in my relationship with my wife, with my fiancé, with my prospective wife. Bless me in my relationship with my husband.

Bless me in my relationship with my children, with my grandchildren. Bless me in my relationship with other members of my family, with my neighbors. Bless me and make this to be a success.

Make it work out in a way, Lord, that will be to your glory, to my advantage, but to your glory as well. That's what he's really saying to us. Put it before the Lord in prayer.

Now, he made some specifications here. He's saying, if this happens, if this woman, if a woman comes out to whom I say, give me water to drink, and if she then says, well, drink, and I will also water your camels, let that be the one.

That doesn't mean that when we come to God, if we're setting about the task of choosing a wife or choosing a husband, and we're going to somewhere where perhaps there are prospective candidates there, maybe it's a fellowship, maybe it's something, you're not necessarily going to say to God, well, Lord, if I see a man with jet black hair and nice brown eyes and wearing a nice suit and polished shoes, and if he drives a nice car, let that be the one.

[30 : 53] Okay, remember this man didn't have a Bible. You have a Bible. You have scripture to guide your thoughts. This man didn't. So he put before the Lord a set of circumstances which he prayed over and asked the Lord to use for his guidance.

And you have the Bible, and I have the Bible to guide our thoughts, to instruct our thoughts, to lead us in a certain direction when we're looking for guidance in life. It doesn't come like a flash out of the air.

It's there as you read the scripture, and the better you know your Bible, the more prepared you are to face all the different stages of life that we go through. You have the guidance of God's own word.

Well, he's saying here, let this be the one. But there are two things that arise from that. First of all, in verse 12, you notice what he's saying there, the end of verse 12. Grant me success and show steadfast love to my master Abraham.

Now he's using covenant language there. Steadfast love. My master Abraham. What it means is that praying does not set aside God's covenant regulations.

[32 : 04] In other words, when you pray about something, you don't leave scripture behind. You don't leave the specifications of scripture behind. You need to have prayer, and I need to have prayer, guided by the Holy Spirit and guided by scripture.

Because that's what the Holy Spirit uses. And when they come to pray, we need to pray, not specifying what our own preferences would be, what our own wisdom might tell us.

But we take the principles and the teaching of scripture, and we come to the Lord and say, Lord, in accordance with these, help me to reach an understanding.

Help me to reach a conclusion about this important matter for me. That's what he's really saying. Praying doesn't set aside God's specifications, God's covenant regulations.

In other words, he couldn't forget about the stipulations within the covenant that Abraham had set. That had to be taken with him into his prayer to God.

[33 : 07] And of course he's saying, to my master Abraham here. Now, why does he say, to my master Abraham, grant success to my master. Grant me success, and show steadfast love to my master Abraham.

He doesn't say to Isaac. He's looking for a life for Isaac. But he's praying, show steadfast love, Lord, to my master Abraham. See, it's Abraham that's still very much at the center, on the forefront of the picture.

But it does tell you something about the servant. He's a member of Abraham's household. Go back to chapter 17. Go back to chapter 17. And when circumcision was set by God as a mark of God's covenant for Abraham and his family, you read that the whole of his household was circumcised with him, which would include this man.

In other words, he bore the mark of belonging to Abraham's household, to that community of faith. And because he bore the mark of Abraham's household, the cause of Abraham's household was his cause.

The cause of his master was his cause. What he was doing here, he was doing for his master's cause, not pleasing himself. When you bear the mark of baptism, you bear the mark of belonging to God's church in the world.

[34 : 37] You bear the mark of belonging to that community who acknowledge God as their God, who worship God as their God. His cause is your cause. His name is something that you have approached by your baptism to actually uphold, to represent, to feralize the cause of and the interest of.

That's what it's saying to us as well. He is a man who is conscious of belonging to Abraham's household. So everything he's doing is governed by the fact that that's what he belongs to.

And so it's saying to us, it's such a privilege, but also a responsibility, to belong to God's church in this world.

To belong to the covenant people of God, which means there's a covenant in the gospel. To take it no further than that. And that means that when we are in such a position as you all are today, I'm talking here about whether you're converted or not.

That's another issue. That's another level. But we're talking about belonging to this church visibly that you see, the people of God in this world with whom he has a covenant in the gospel.

[35 : 51] That cause is your cause. You live to uphold that cause. You live to defend that cause. Your place within the church is to have that cause represented wherever you are.

And whenever it's challenged, you rise to its defense. You present its norms and its principles and its stipulations and its requirements.

So there's a promise with an accompanying requirement and a challenge as well. So praying doesn't set aside God's covenant rules.

And the final point is this, that praying, in verse 14, does not set aside what we're calling sanctified intelligence. In other words, our intelligence as it's informed by God through scripture.

Sanctified intelligence or an intelligence that has the guidance of the Holy Spirit given to it. Have you ever thought about why this man chose these things to set before God about which woman would actually be chosen for Isaac?

[37 : 03] Why did he actually say this? Let the woman who says, please, who says, let me give you a drink. I will give you a drink and also for your camels.

Which is what happened when, as it happened later on in the chapter. She said, drink, my lord. And she quickly let down the jar.

When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, I will draw water for your camels also. To leave when he's drinking, verse 19. Why did the servants set these particular stipulations?

What were they about? Is there any reason for them? Well, there is. Drawing water was not an easy task. As you read there, it was a practice in those days for the younger women to go out from the households at evening time.

To draw water from a well outside the city for the needs of the family for the night and for the next morning. It was heavy work. There were big jars, heavy jars. And anything extra to the usual was really placing demands upon them.

[38 : 13] Now, just imagine, not only did Isaac say, did Isaac's servant or Abraham's servant say, give me a drink as well.

He was waiting until she said, well, I'll give a drink to your camels too. We have ten camels. And a camel drinks a lot more than a human being.

Especially after a long journey. So one of these camels would have drunk gallons and gallons and gallons of water. And who knows how many times she would have to go to the well and draw water and give all of these ten camels a drink.

It would have taken her at least an extra hour, possibly even two hours. So what's all that saying to us? Well, this is the wisdom of this man who's guided by his own relationship with God and with Abraham.

Isaac's wife would have to be a woman of extraordinary hospitality. Of extraordinary qualities in kindness to other people.

[39 : 18] So it has to be somebody, let's face it, who would be a successor to Sarah. Because Sarah's now dead. Abraham's just buried her.

As we read in the previous chapter. And it's not just that Isaac needs a wife that's suitable. But Sarah needs a successor. Who will be the chief woman in the household.

Who will have these extraordinary qualities that are required of a woman at the head of God's covenant relationship with a family. And that's what Rebecca turns out to be.

And that's why this servant set these stipulations before God. He knew that he was asking for a woman who was quite different to the ordinary.

A woman of immense strength. Physically, not necessarily, but certainly morally and spiritually. A woman that would show great qualities in how she went about her own life and the life of others.

[40 : 31] A woman who, above all things, would be strong in the Lord and the power of his might. And that's why the vacancy of chapter 23.

The vacancy that came about by Sarah's death. Is now going to be filled by Rebecca. A choice for Isaac.

That suits succession. To Sarah. Who's no longer there. That's what his instruction was about.

As far as Abraham was concerned. That's the servant's successful mission underway. And we'll see next time how God, indeed, heard his prayer. And answered it.

In the provision of this remarkable woman. Rebecca. Who came back with him. To Abraham's household. Let's pray.

[41 : 34] Gracious God, today we give thanks for your word. And we give thanks especially for the way that your word brings to us so much that is instructive.

For our own use and for our own generation. For our own place in society. For our families. For our homes and for our relationships. Blessed to us today, we pray.

Continue with us now, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen.