

TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

Talk Genesis 24:10-28: Abraham Sends His Servant to Find a Wife for Isaac

Lesson 52

"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. 11 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. 12 Then he said, "O LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. 13 Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. 14 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."

15 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. 16 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. 17 And the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher."

18 So she said, "Drink, my lord." Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink. 19 And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking." 20 Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. 21 And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

22 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, 23 and said, "Whose daughter are you? Tell me, please, is there room in your father's house for us to lodge?"

24 So she said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah's son, whom she bore to Nahor." 25 Moreover she said to him, "We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge."

26 Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the LORD. 27 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." 28 So the young woman ran and told her mother's household these things."

Background Notes

In Genesis 24:10 we read that Abraham's servant took 10 camels and took with him "all kinds of good things from his master" (NIV). Why so much? Those camel loads not only contained gifts, but they also were evidence of the wealth of Abraham and his son and heir, Isaac. The servant traveled to Mesopotamia to the town where Nahor lived. This was

the area of Haran, in northern Mesopotamia at the top of the Fertile Crescent, where Abraham's relatives had settled.

The servant didn't have to wait too long. As soon as he arrived in the area and prayed for success, Rebekah appeared on the scene! This reminds us of Isaiah 65:24, doesn't it? *"It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear."*

Rebekah offered to water all ten thirty camels. That was no small job, since thirsty camels drink a lot of water! After Rebekah watered the camels, the servant gave her a gift. *"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"(v22).*

This was a sizable gift, but it was just a small token of the wealth of Abraham and his son and heir, Isaac. The nose ring mentioned here, by the way, would be a cultural article of jewelry, which Assyrians wore then (and some Middle Eastern peoples still wear today).

Let's move to our doctrinal or teaching points from this portion of Genesis 24. We have three doctrinal points from this section, and they all have to do with God's guidance. This chapter certainly has something to say about how God guides his people to accomplish His will.

Doctrinal Points

1. God guides the believer through specific prayers.

Abraham's servant made a specific prayer in verse 14: *"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."* God answered that prayer and guided the servant to Rebekah.

The question that always arises here is about "setting out a fleece." "Setting out a fleece" refers to Judges 6:36-40, where Gideon put out a fleece (sheep's wool) and asked God to give him specific direction by a sign, using the wool. Was Abraham's servant "putting out a fleece"? Is it a good idea to set out fleeces? The answer to both questions is "No!" Now I'm not saying it's *wrong* to set out a fleece. Gideon did it, and God answered him. But when we read the account of Gideon, we see that Gideon's fleece was not a sign of a *strong* faith. No, it was a sign of a *weak* faith. In our walk of faith, we should walk by strong faith -- not by fleeces!

I don't believe Abraham's servant's request here was a "fleece." It was a specific prayer request, no doubt, but I don't see it as a fleece. You see, setting out a fleece is asking God to do something miraculous on *your terms*. For example, if you were to pray "Lord, make it rain at 3 o'clock tomorrow afternoon if I am to take that job offer," that kind of request of God is putting out a fleece. However, if you ask God to confirm your decisions on *His terms*, that's not putting out a fleece.

The servant planned to go to the well area, choose a young woman and ask her if she would give him a drink. He asked God to confirm his choice of young woman in a most

logical way. He was looking good wife for Isaac -- a woman who had a servant's heart, a woman who was kind to a stranger, and a woman who was willing and able to do a good day's work. He asked God to show him that kind of woman as a bride for Isaac.

It is not the kind of prayer request I would make today, and I don't suggest that you single men make that same request -- but these days you don't need a wife that is willing and able to water ten camels! Do you see the point I'm trying to make here? To ask God to lead you to a wife (or you single women, to lead you to a husband) who has a servant's heart, and to ask God to clearly show you that he or she is willing to take on responsibility and work hard without complaining -- that's not wrong, and it's not unbiblical. That's not "putting out a fleece."

God answered the servant's specific prayer request and confirmed His will by guiding the servant to Rebekah. Rebekah proved that she was kind and had a servant's heart, and was willing to work hard. And Rebekah was beautiful, too -- and the servant hadn't prayed about that! That's like a little bonus that God sent along! God guides the believer through specific prayers.

2. God guides the believer through specific circumstances.

Notice that in this whole operation there are no miracles -- but there are special circumstances. It was not by chance that Rebekah was the first woman to arrive on the scene. And it wasn't by chance (as we'll see later in the chapter) that her family was willing to let her be married to someone they didn't know, which would have been very unusual in the culture of that day. And it wasn't by chance (as we'll see later in the chapter) that Rebekah herself said that she would go to marry a man that she had never met, or even seen. These were certainly special circumstance. God was working behind the scenes to bring about these special circumstances.

God guides us through special circumstances. God can open doors and close doors. Yes, we must be careful about making decisions based only on circumstances, because we can easily be misled if we depend *only* on circumstances. But when special circumstances line up with your specific prayer request, than you are on safer ground.

Recently we sold our home of twenty-one years. Since our children are all now married, we decided to downsize. Our specific prayer request is that if this home sale was God's will, then the house would sell without us losing any time in our schedule of ministry. As you know, preparing and selling a house can take a lot of time, and we didn't want to lose time in our work for the Lord. Notice that in our prayer request we didn't "put out a fleece." We didn't ask, "Lord, if we are supposed to sell this house, make the tree out front drop over tomorrow," or something like that. That would have been a fleece, right? We asked the Lord to confirm our decision to move in the most logical way.

Well, the Lord confirmed our decision with some special circumstances. We actually sold the house over the phone during a fifteen-minute break between two lectures in a seminar I was giving -- on decision-making, of all things! An offer came through to me by phone, we accepted the offer, the papers were faxed over, we signed and faxed them back, and the house was sold. It was almost like the Lord was saying to us, "Just watch Me! You won't have to miss a beat in the ministry." And He sold it at a good price as well -- that was a bonus!

God guides the believer through special circumstances.

3. God guides the believer through scriptural conditions.

Notice what the servant said in verse 27, *"As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren."* No wonder the servant was successful! He was "walking in the way of obedience" to his master. He was meeting "scriptural conditions" for guidance.

God leads people who are walking in the will of God. Don't expect God to lead you and guide you if you are not willing to follow Him and obey His Word. Do you want God's guidance in your life? You can have it! Are you meeting scriptural conditions? If you are, you too will be able to say, *"As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me."*

Proverbs 3:5-6, that well-known Scripture, says, *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."*

God guides the believer through scriptural conditions.

Practical Application

Let's remember to thank the Lord for His guidance.

Look at the response of Abraham's servant: *"Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the LORD.⁷ And he said, "Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master"(v26-27).* The servant thanked the Lord and worshiped Him for providing guidance.

Do you remember to thank the Lord for guidance in your life of faith? Have you ever thanked God for guiding you to your husband or wife? Have you ever thanked the Lord for guiding you to your job, and also for the way He worked it out and brought you to that job? Have you ever thanked the Lord for guiding you to your church? Or do we just take these blessings for granted, as if they happen by chance? Let's remember to thank the Lord for His guidance.