

Abraham Sends His Servant to Find a Wife for Isaac

Genesis 24:10-28

Genesis 24:10-28 – *“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

Genesis 24:10 says that Abraham’s servant took ten camels and “*all kinds of good things from his master.*” 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 the area of Haran, in northern Mesopotamia at the top of the Fertile Crescent, where Abraham’s relatives had settled after leaving Ur.

The servant didn't have to wait 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 was willing to give the servant a drink, and then she offered to water all ten thirsty camels! That was no small job, because 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 Isaac. The nose ring was a cultural article of jewelry, worn by Assyrians then (and in some Middle Eastern cultures today).

Our three doctrinal points are about God's guidance. This chapter has a lot to say about how God guides his people to accomplish His will.

Doctrinal Points

1. God guides believers 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 often arises here is about "setting out a fleece." "Setting out a fleece" refers to Judges 6:36-40, where Gideon put out a fleece of sheep's wool, and asked God to give him specific direction, using the wool as a sign. In Genesis 24, was Abraham's servant "putting out a fleece"? Is it a good idea to set out fleeces? The answer is "No." Now I'm not saying it's *wrong* to set out a fleece. Gideon did it, and God answered him. But asking for a "fleece" was a sign of weak faith. Asking for a fleece is not a sign of a *strong* faith. In our walk of faith, we should walk by strong faith in God to lead us - and not depend on fleeces!

I don't believe Abraham's servant's request was a "fleece." We "set out a fleece" when we ask God to do something miraculous **on our 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" – asking 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.

Abraham's servant planned to go to the well area, choose a young woman, and ask her if she would give him a drink. He was looking for a good wife for Isaac - a woman who had a servant's heart, who was kind to a stranger, and who was

willing and able to do a good day's work. He asked God to show him a high-quality woman as a bride for Isaac. He asked God to confirm his choice of young woman in a most logical way.

I don't suggest that you single men make that same request - these days you don't need a wife who's willing and able to water ten camels! But do you see the point I'm trying to make? Asking God to lead you to a wife (or husband) who has a servant's heart, and asking God to clearly show you the person who is responsible and willing to work hard without complaining – that's not wrong, and it's not unbiblical. And that's **not** "putting out a fleece"!

God answered the servant's specific prayer request, and He 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 was a little bonus that God sent along! God guides believers through specific prayers.

2. God guides believers through specific circumstances.

Notice that in this whole operation there were no miracles - but there were 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. That would have been very unusual in the culture of that day. And it wasn't by chance that Rebekah was willing to leave her home and family, and travel a long distance 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. However, we must be very careful not to make 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 requests, than you are on much safer ground.

Recently we sold the home where we lived for 21 years. Since our children are all now married, we decided to downsize. 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. So our specific prayer request was that if this home sale was God's will, then the house would sell without us losing any time in our schedule of ministry. 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? Rather, we asked the Lord to confirm our decisions about moving in a 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, Margie called me about it, 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 handle this sale! 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, *“As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master’s brethren”* (v27). 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 His will. 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.”*

In all your ways, acknowledge Him – and then God **will** 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. 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). Abraham’s 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 - for the way He worked it out and brought you 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 happened by chance?

Let’s remember to thank the Lord for His guidance!