



The Sermon

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Genesis 24:1-67

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"Principles for Finding a Mate in God's Will"

TRANSCRIPT

If you have your Bibles I invite you to turn to Genesis chapter 24. We have an incredible passage this morning, very exciting, and I've entitled it "Principles for Finding a Mate in God's Will. Principles for Finding a Mate in God's Will."

Now I want a little housekeeping. Steve Lawson is here today and he isn't preaching, and the reason is - don't tell anybody this - is the elders are exercising their authority to protect him, because the message today is 67 verses, and we know 67 verses could send him into cardiac arrest.

Did you hear about the country Baptist preacher? He preached this text, and he said, "I'm going to go all the way through it, every verse, several hours." And so afterwards, the people were filing out and nobody was saying a word. He was standing up front; people had their heads down, and they were filing out. And finally, a sweet guy said, "Pastor, your sermon reminded me of the peace and love of God." And he said, "Oh, thank you," and he grabbed his hand. And he said, "The peace of God because it passed all understanding, and the love of God because it endured forever."

Well, James Montgomery Boice said, "This narrative should be preached all in one sermon," so that's what we're going to do. And so I want to open it and I want to read it right now; and let's just be patient, it's only going to take a few more minutes; and we'll pray that the Lord will give us a lot of good information and grace, and He will help us to grow in favor and strength as we live this life. So, let's look in verse 1.

"Now Abraham was old, he advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed him in every way. And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who was in charge of all that he owned, 'Please place your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac.' And the servant said to him, 'Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?' And Abraham said to him, 'Beware that you do not take my son back there! The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, "To your descendants I will give this land," He will send His angel ahead of you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this my oath; only do not take my son back there.' And so the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and he swore to him concerning the matter.

"And then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and he went out with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand; and so he set out and he went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water, and it was evening, the time when women go out to draw water. And he said, "Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water; and may it be that the young woman to whom I say, "Please let down your jar so that I may drink," and who answers, "Drink, and I will water your camels also" – may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I'll know You have shown lovingkindness to my master.'

"And it came about before he had finished speaking that, behold, Rebekah who was born of Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder. And the young woman was very beautiful, a virgin, no man had had relations with her; and she went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up. And then the servant ran to meet her, and he said, 'Please let me drink a little water from your jar.' And she said, 'Drink, my Lord'; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink. And now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, 'I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking.' And so she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all the camels. And meanwhile, the man was

taking a close look at her in silence, to know whether the Lord had made his journey successful or not.

"And when the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold, and he said, 'Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to stay overnight at your father's house?' And she said to him, 'I am the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah's son, whom she bore to Nahor.' Again she said to him, 'We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to stay the night.' And then the man bowed low and worshiped the Lord, and he said, 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned His kindness and His trustworthiness toward my master; as for me, the Lord has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brother.'"

Verse 28, "And then the young woman ran and told her mother's household about these things. And now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran outside to the man at the spring. And when he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, 'This is what the man said to me,' he went to the man; and behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring. And he said, 'Come in, blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside since I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels?'"

"And so the man entered the house. And then Laban unloaded the camels, and he gave straw and feed to the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. But when food was set before him to eat, he said, 'I will not eat until I have stated my business.'" And so here, Abraham's servant wants Rebekah's family to know the entire story, and he wants him to hear what he knows, how God has led him here, how Abraham has sent him here, because he knows when he tells them that story that it'll give him a reaction and he'll be able to tell where they're coming from. And so he repeats this entire story before he eats to her family - and we're going to skip that part. And he starts in verse 34 and he ends it in verse 48.

So I want you to jump down after he's told them this same story, and let's finish reading in verse 49. "So after he said this, he said, 'Now if you're going to deal kindly and truthfully with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me now so that I may turn to the right or left. And then Laban and Bethuel replied, 'The matter comes from the Lord.'" In other words, they've heard this story and they acknowledge God's providence; this has come from the

Lord. "And then they say, 'We cannot speak to you good or bad.' – in other words, they have no choice in the matter, this is clearly from the Lord; verse 51 – 'Here is Rebekah before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken.' And when Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed down himself to the ground before the Lord."

Now let's finish, verse 53, "And the servant brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and he gave them to Rebekah; and he also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. And then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night. And when they got up in the morning, he said, 'Send me away to my master.' But her brother and her mother said, 'Let the young woman stay with us a few days, say ten; afterward she may go.' However, he said to them, 'Do not delay me, since the Lord has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master.' And he said, 'We will call the girl and ask her.' And then they called Rebekah and she said, 'I will go with this man. I will go.' And so they sent away their sister Rebekah, her nurse, with Abraham's servant and his men, and they blessed Rebekah and said to her, 'May you, our sister, become thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them.' And then Rebekah got up with her female attendants, and they mounted the camels and they followed the man. And so the servant took Rebekah and departed.

"And now Isaac had come from a journey from Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field that evening; and he raised his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming. And Rebekah raised her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel, and she said to the servant, 'Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?' And the servant said, 'He is my master.' And then she took her veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. And then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

What a great story. How many people do we have here this morning that are single? Let me see your hands. A lot of single people. How many people do we have here this morning that maybe aren't single, but know single people that are looking for a mate? Even more. This study is going to give us some great godly principles for finding a mate.

And I can tell you this: this study is even applicable to those of us who are looking for God's will. As I studied this message this week, and we're pondering and considering and praying about what the Lord wants us to do with these facilities, I realized that these principles are vital for me to use to try to find God's will. So these are real jewels, and I hope we'll pay attention the next few minutes, because I think it will really help us in a lot of different ways.

We all know that the most important decision in our lives is what we'll do with Jesus Christ. Will we accepting or will we rejecting Him? And there may be people here that haven't made that decision, but the second most important decision that you will ever make in your life without a doubt is who you will marry, who will be your life partner.

I know it's hard if you're single. I remember when I was single, wondering and waiting, "Was the Lord going to bring me my mate?" And so, it's hard, it's hard. But do you know what's worse than being single? What's worse than being single is being married to the wrong person. And so we want to look today again and see what God's principles are in finding a mate.

I divided - Steve, you'll like this - I divided this huge chapter up into four different divisions, and so I'm going to tell you where we're going to be going on this. Number One, verses 1-9, "Wholehearted devotion. Wholehearted devotion." Number Two, we're going to look at, "Faithful action, faithful activity." Number Three, "Wise discretion," verses 28-53. And lastly, we're going to look at, "Biblical meditation," verses 54-67.

Now while this chapter is extremely practical, it's also theological; and before we get into the text - this has really bothered me, I needed to do this - we have got to frame, we've got to frame this passage in biblical theology, we've got to understand how this all works in God's mind. And so we're going to have a little mini theological lesson just for a couple of minutes, because it's vitally important that we understand how God is working also in these 67 verses.

There are two great theological principles that are running through this chapter, and they are, number one, God's sovereignty; and number two, man's responsibility. You may have heard those two great principles. They're like two rails that go along a train track and they guide the wheels

of the train. You have God's sovereignty and you have man's responsibility; they are parallel truths that will guide our lives, and are guiding our lives. Never, never need to forget these. And so we've got to use these and remember these as we frame not only this story, but as you look at your life and understand your life. So I want I want to give you a couple of examples, you don't have to turn there. If you if you want to, you can. But I want us to look at Numbers 33:50-53, and I'll read it to you.

"The Lord spoke to Moses, and He said, 'Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, "When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from you. You shall destroy all their idolatrous sculptures, destroy all their cast metal images, and eliminate all their high places; and you shall take possession of the land and live in it; for I have given it to you. I have given it to you.'"" It's already past tense. It's already past tense.

So what he's saying is - listen to this: "I want you to fight, I want you to war, I want you to strategize, I want you to battle for the land I have given to you. It's already been done." So God has ordained the end. He has said, "I have given you the land," but He has also ordained the means, and that is personal responsibility to do something. And that is what they had to do. So we see these two great truths, right? We see God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Now that's hard to understand. We can't get our brains around that, our brains don't go that high, we stop at Floor 10. But this is true.

Let me give you another example. Who wrote the Bible? Who wrote the Bible? Anybody, the 66 books of the Bible? I can't hear you. I got a hand right back here. God wrote the Bible. It tells us in 2 Timothy 3 that the Scripture is breathed out, that the Scripture is inspired by God. But on the other hand, He used men to labor and toil. Moses wrote this book, but it was God-breathed. Now how does that work? It's God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. It's God ordaining the end and God ordaining the means.

Now let me give you one more example. In Ephesians - you're all familiar with this verse - Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand," - God prepared beforehand, that's His sovereignty - "so that we should walk in them." That's our responsibility.

So I want you to think about this. If God uses you to evangelize someone, and they come to Christ, it was re prepared by God before you were ever born to do that. If you disciple someone, or pray for someone, or even take someone a meal that's in need in Christian love, that was prepared by God before you were even saved. Our brains cannot reconcile how this works, it's impossible; but we have to believe it, because God teaches that. It runs through every chapter in this Bible, and it runs through your life and my life. Man's responsibility, God's sovereignty.

And there are mysteries in the Bible. We've got to recognize they go beyond our capabilities to square them in our minds. Many of us have problems with this. Most of us should have problems with this, and rightfully so. But what's a problem for us is not a problem for God. This is truth. This is truth. And a god who is completely understood is not God at all. We will never ever, ever be able to understand the mind of God, because He is God.

And so often we get out of balance in these; and it's just vitally important that we understand these two great truths, because we tend to, on one hand, to think, "If God wants me to have a mate, then He's just going to airdrop him or her right next to me over in Herb's when I'm sitting at my table. I don't need to do anything." And then on the other hand we quit trusting God. We stress, we panic, we worry, we question, we rationalize, we take things into our own hands, and we ignore His principles and our responsibilities, and we try to force something; and clearly, that's not in God's will, and we can make a tragic mistake. So we need to keep these two truths in proper balance.

Now let me finish off by giving you an example. If I were to tie a pulley to this beam and wrap a rope around both sides of that pulley, one would be God's sovereignty, and the other would be man's responsibility. And if I were just to pull on one side of that rope, it wouldn't hold me up; if I were to pull on both of them, it would hold me up. And so in our lives, it's vitally important to remember this; and as we go through this story, that we have to pull on both ropes at the same time in our lives. God is sovereign, and yet we have responsibility.

And why is that so important? Why is that important? Why am I bringing that up? Because in the middle of the perplexities and the difficulties of life there is not a greater comfort to know that God is sovereign, and that He is

working through us to accomplish all His goals. And we're going to see this principle in neon lights, these two great truths as in the chapter this morning.

Listen, God is not going to leave Isaac without a wife, then all His promises are washed down the drain. That's impossible. That's never going to happen. But we have 67 verses, very detailed, and a lot of work, and a lot of energy, and a lot of time that was put into this. Man's responsibility. So are you all getting that with me? Let's frame this story in God's sovereignty and understand the theology in these two great truths that run through all of our lives, all right.

So we're going to go to the first point, we're there, and we're going to spend a little more on the first, a little more time on the first point, and then we'll scoot through. Number One: "Wholehearted devotion." If we miss this, if we miss this, then the others don't matter. This is critical. And we see from the very beginning that Abraham and his servant are completely, wholeheartedly devoted to the will of God. They want His way, they want His will and not their will.

And we look in verse 1. Verse 1, "And the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." Now, we've been studying Abraham. Abraham's been through a lot of difficulties, Abraham's been through a lot of pain, but the Bible says, "He has blessed him in all things." Now that's amazing. Our culture seems to think that if you don't have difficulties, you're not blessed. But Abraham was blessed. And not only that, you remember Abraham lapsed into sin, he made mistakes, he failed; and yet the Bible says that, "God blessed him in all things." That's amazing, and that's amazing.

And I think that our difficulties are blessings, and I think that God uses the lapses of sin in our life to remind us of His grace. Yes, Abraham was blessed in all things, but it was totally – listen – unrelated to what he did, and it was all related to God's blessing and choosing of him. And I believe that because Abraham watched this his whole life, that he knew what God was doing, and he saw so many things played out in his life, that he wanted God's will, because he saw the beauty of God's will, and he saw the grace in God's will, and he knew that if he would continue to give God his entire heart and seek His will, that these blessings would continue to come. And so, that's what we see. He's devoting his entire heart to the Lord. He's



trusting Him with His word. He's seen too much truth in his life to not trust that.

And can you imagine; here's the number one chief servant. And I bet they met every morning and they were together all the time, and this chief servant saw Abraham's faith. He saw how God had worked in Abraham's life, and he heard Abraham teach him about the truths of God. And so his number one servant, his chief servant, is right there with him. He is wholly devoted to the will of God.

Now we're not sure who this servant is. Some people say it was Eliezer, but we're not certain. You know what I like about this? He's a no name. He's a no name. And so many figures in the Bible, the greatest figures are no names. They're no names. But he is what? He is wholly devoted as well. And we should never forget that some of the greatest movements in church history are started by no names. They're not famous, they're not rich, they're sold out to the Lord, they're sold out. They're meek and they're humble, and their entire heart is sold out to the Lord; and that's what God wants, and that's who God uses.

Look at verse 3: "Abraham says, 'Do not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the cursed Canaanites, but go to my country into my kindred.'" You see, if God was going to carry out His promise to Abraham, if God was going to carry out the promise of His seed to Abraham, Isaac needed a godly wife, Isaac needed someone who was like-minded.

Well naturally, his desire was for Isaac to have a wife that would please God, that loved the Lord. So even if it meant going back 500 miles, 500 miles - and some people said, "Well, if they didn't go in a straight line, it could have been 900 miles." So it was a long, long journey. Abraham knew that he could not let Isaac take a wife from the unbelieving Canaanites; that would have been easy.

So the chief ingredient, the chief ingredient for successful marriage is what? It's Christ-centeredness. It's Christ-centeredness. And God's word makes it clear, absolutely clear, that if your marriage does not revolve around the Lord and you're unequally yoked, you will have more problems than you can ever imagine. And so Abraham knows this, and it's very crucial to him that Isaac gets a like-minded wife.

And notice, Abraham continues to show his wholehearted devotion to the Lord. He doesn't want Isaac to even go back to his original homeland. Look at verse 6: "See to it that you do not take my son back there!" Abraham wanted to be faithful to God. God told him to leave his old land. God told Abraham to leave his old land behind and to come to the Promised Land and to stay in the new land, and so he did not want Isaac to leave that promise. He didn't want him to be tempted to go back to a place that God didn't want him to go, and so he refused to allow Isaac to be tempted to go back there. God didn't want him there. In fact, Isaac never left the Promised Land.

So we can find here a lot of lessons, just one: Don't go back to an old way of life where you might be tempted. Don't go back to someone that maybe you liked, but they weren't true believers. Stay looking forward, go forward. And so we find here a man who is desiring to serve the Lord with all his heart, and they're wholeheartedly devoted to follow Him at all cost. And then look: God goes with us when we do that. Look what else Abraham tells his servant – I love this in verse 7: "He will send His angel before you. He will send his angel before you." Abraham knows that there's a supernatural power that is guiding him, and their supernatural power is guiding us, if we trust in Him.

And then the servant asks Abraham a normal realistic question, and he says in verse 8, "What if the woman doesn't follow? What if this plan doesn't work?" They weren't super human. They didn't know for sure, just like we don't know for sure. They were like us; they believed the promises of God, but they didn't know for certain that this was the right plan. They didn't know for certain that this would work out, this trip.

We must always trust the promises of God, but – listen – we can't presume on them. Too many Christians think God's will is a formula: "I do this, this, and this, and this pops out." Or maybe even it's a name it and claim it. Or maybe God's just a genie in the bottle, and what I think and what I want and what I wish will just come out. That's not the case.

And we need to realize, like Abraham realized, that our plans and our desires may not line up with the will of God right when we want it to. And Abraham realized that. He said in verse 8, "The girl may say no; and if she says no, and it doesn't come together, then you're to leave." It didn't mean

that Abraham had wrong motives, it's just been wrong timing, and he was willing to accept that.

And the problem is you may say you want God's will, but deep down you're not willing to accept it unless it agrees with your timing and your desire. I've seen young people neglect obedience, live according to the flesh, and only want God's will when it squares up with what they want and their fleshly desires. And when we look for a mate who just says they're a Christian, for example, but they don't live it; if they just are a person who says, "Yes, I'm a Christian," and they check the box, but they don't live it, that is trouble.

How many times have you said to yourself - I can remember saying this: "There isn't anyone who's sold out for the Lord. I can't find anybody that loves the Lord; there's no one for me. And if I do find someone, they're not my type." And so you tell yourself, "Well, I'm probably going to have to settle. I'm going to have to settle for someone less committed, and I'm just going to have to hope it works out."

Listen, it would have been a lot easier for Isaac to take a Canaanite woman. And I'm sure there were a lot of girls standing around saying, "Man, I'd love to have Isaac as a husband." But Isaac needed someone, and Abraham knew he needed someone to share his commitment to the Lord, and so it's vitally important to Abraham that he has his servant make an oath that he will do this.

"And so this servant places his hand" - in verse 9 - "under the thigh" - near the seat of the origin of life, an ancient way of making promises - "and Abraham believed that the choice of the bride for Isaac was more important than life itself." That's the oath that he took; that's how critical it was for Abraham that Isaac didn't make a mistake in this area. As someone once said, "Marry someone that loves the Lord more than they love you." That's a great way to think about it. You have to come to the point and you have to say this: "I want what the Lord wants more than myself. I want what He wants, not what I want." We can't pick and choose when we follow the Lord, we have to be willing to say, "If anything comes between me and You, Lord, take it away."

I can remember John Calvin's signet, the way he signed. Have you ever seen that? He's got his hand and he's holding his heart, and he's saying, "Lord, here is my heart. I give you my whole heart. I want what You want." And so that's what we see here. We see Abraham and his servant with an overriding devotion, a longing and an ambition to please God; and that's where God wants you, and that's where God wants me.

Second chronicles 16:9 – I love this verse: "For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support" – listen – "those whose heart is completely His." And God shows His power and His strength through men and women totally devoted to Him. And so, that's our first point.

Now let's go to the second point: "Faithful action," verse 10, "Then the servant took ten of his master's camels," – ten camels? This wasn't a backpack and a jug of water, it was a ten-car limousine motorcade from wealthy Uncle Abraham. Took a lot of time. Brought gifts to give to the potential bride; and it had to be impressive. And there's really no information on this journey, there's really not. Say, it was 500 miles.

Well, we know that takes a lot of work and a lot of effort. But the first detail we see is the timing, and look in verse 11, "And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of the water" – listen to this – "at the time of the evening," – there it is – "the time when women go out to draw water," because the servant knew the time to expect the women to come out. He made the effort to find out the right time. And timing is critical. Timing is critical. It's a critical part of God's providential workings.

I think back in my life and I think of all the timing, all the timing of things that had to be involved. Matter of fact, when I was on the search, I called this girl named Amy, and she was on spring break from Baylor. And it just so happened that when I called her, she was home, and she was only home because they were in Florida; and a thunderstorm came up, and she came home early. So God is providential in timing, and He is here, too; and He's faithful.

But what we see also is this servant is faithfully active. He's not sitting on his hands; he's traveling, he's laboring, he's grinding, he's working, and he's

praying. Look at verse 12: "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success." There's a lot of energy, there's a lot of work going on; there's prayer. I love what George Müller used to say: "Pray and work, work and pray. Pray some more, and work some more." We need to be faithfully active, and we need to work.

And Abraham's also still aware of the angel. Look in verse 14: "Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels,' let her be the one." And before he finished speaking, Rebekah comes out with her water jar. It's amazing timing, isn't it? Not a day before, not a week before, not a month before, not a week after; but right then Rebekah comes out. Amazing.

Well, the servant continues. He does all he knows to do, and he's active. Verse 17, "And the servant runs to meet her, and he asks the loaded question," - here it is please - 'Please give me a little water to drink from your jar.' And she said, 'Drink, my Lord.' And she quickly let her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink." And so it seems his prayers are answered. But he continues being faithful and actively pursuing. He's still not sure, and he now gives her gifts: the gold ring and the bracelets, because he's trying to influence her, make the offer.

And then he asked about her family, and he says, "Can I go visit them? Can we continue this? I'm still not sure." So here's what I want to take away from this. If you want God's guidance, if you want God's guidance, you have to be diligent, you have to be faithfully active. Abraham's servant didn't just sit in his tent and pray, he didn't go hang out at a bar, wild parties, and look there either; he went where he could find the type of wife that Isaac needed.

And if you're looking for a mate, you need to put yourself in positions to meet godly men and women. You need to go to church, go to Bible studies, attend Christian conferences with other believers. Listen to someone godly who wants to introduce you to someone. Go on mission trips. Go to Christian events. You need to put yourself in situations where there can be legitimate opportunities to meet someone who is like-minded and be faithfully active. That's our second principle.

Now let's go to the third one: "Wise discretion," verse 28. The servant was being faithfully active, he thinks seemed favorable, but he still needed God's wisdom. The circumstances seem to be lining up, but he wasn't sure. After all, it was the custom for women to bring water out to camels. It seemed that she was the right woman, but he still needed more proof. He wanted to be sure, so he uses wisdom, he uses wise discretion. And I'm going to give you four points, four ways that you can use wise discretion. You'll want to jot these down.

Number One: "You need to seek the counsel of your parents and listen to them." I know you don't like to hear that. Look at verse 28: "Rebekah ran and told her mother's household about these things." She wanted to know what they thought. And after a night at the family home with Abraham's servant, she gets permission and blessing to go back. And you have to know that Isaac is also listening to his dad, and he's wanting to know what dad thinks, and he's following what his dad is saying. And I know we don't have arranged marriages here, but it's imperative that you receive the counsel and blessing from your parents – listen – even if they're not believers. You need to listen to what they say, because they know you. Parents know their children. These are principles that we need to use.

Look, Number Two: "You need to look not only for a professing believer, but one who lives what they believe." When the servant asked Rebekah for a drink, she gave him a drink, and all also offered to water ten camels. Now listen to this. There's not a lazy bone in her body. If you know anything about camels, they held 25 gallons of water. If they were completely empty, she's talking about hauling 250 gallons in her little – typically, her little bucket or jar was 3 gallons. So we're talking 70-80 trips, maybe 3-4 hours that she says, "Hey, I'm happy to water your camels." Now that tells the servant volumes about Rebekah's character: she's not allergic to work. And if she was going to be Isaac's wife, the mother of a great nation, she needed to have a strong work ethic.

But not only that, it shows how selfless, courteous, gracious, and generous she was. We could refer to her as a Proverbs 31 woman. This has always stuck in my mind. Truett Cathy, the owner of Chick-fil-A, used to tell a story, that he never saw his mother sleep because she was always the first one up and the last one to bed. So Rebekah and her work ethic and her graciousness and her selflessness just jumped off the page at the servant.

Number Three: "You can't find the mate you're looking for if you're not being the person that you need to be." Rebekah was where she needed to be doing what she was supposed to be doing. She responded with a servant's heart - listen - to someone she didn't even know. She had no idea it would change the course of her life.

Listen, if you're ignoring God, if you're ignoring the Lord and you're living for yourself and if you're disobedient, you're not going to find the right person because they're not going to be attracted to you. You can't be living selfish wayward life and expect a committed believer to be interested in you. I can remember Amy. She loved the Lord. It was so attractive to me. She loved the Lord more than anything, and I loved that about her. It was most important to her, and that attracted me.

Number Four: "Love is not the basis for marriage, commitment is, commitment is." The best marriages are not based on feeling and emotions. It just kills me when people say, "I followed my heart." Sure, love is important; sure, it's real; sure, it shouldn't be minimized. But we read in verse 67 - listen to this: "Isaac married Rebekah, and then he loved her, and then he loved her." His commitment to Rebekah, the commitment came first, and then he loved her. And true love comes from a commitment that is above your emotions and above your feelings. I can assure you, there are many times when Amy doesn't feel like loving me; probably yesterday. But she's committed. What a blessing.

So you need to use wise discretion. Observe your potential mate in many settings. Watch how they live. Listen to what they say. Observe their reactions. Watch how they treat others. Watch how they treat their parents. Notice how they respond when they're asked to do something. And we can only use wise discretion when we're in God's word. Galatians 2:20 says, "Battle the flesh and live in the spirit."

And then we need the last point because of that: "Biblical meditation." We've already seen in verse 12 that the servant was praying. I love this. You have to think he was praying all the way, all the way. You have to know Abraham was praying every day. And now look at verse 63: "Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening." I love that. Probably been several months, maybe longer. And can you imagine what Isaac's thinking? "Is there going to be somebody for me or not? Lord, what are You doing here?" And I love that.

And Isaac is communing with God; and everybody's communing with God. And there's no doubt that Rebekah was praying for God to bring her the right one. And all these actions involve and reveal that they were in communion with the Lord. They walked with Him, they were in fellowship with Him, they communed with Him, they pondered and lingered over His word. That's biblical meditation. That's biblical meditation.

Not only did God orchestrate the circumstances, but He moved in the hearts of everybody involved. And you know what? That is best done when we are in close fellowship with Him, walking with Him, meditating on the word, reading it, memorizing it, visualizing it, personalizing it, letting the word of God flow through us. And that sets us up for the right decisions. Now we all desire a checklist, and we all want to know what God's will is. But there's not an exact checklist. There's no specific formula. It's just, "Trust in the Lord," Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, don't lean on your own understanding, and He will guide your paths."

Let me end by saying this: there is not a perfect situation, because we're imperfect. And I want you to remember, we're all sinners, we're all saved by grace. I can't believe when I looked back when I dated Amy all the mistakes I made. There's no reason she should have married me. I wish I could have taken it back. So we can't be perfect. But it's not perfection, it's direction; and these are principles that I want us to commit to follow.

Now let me close with this. I changed the name to protect the innocent. But I met with Tom several months ago. And Tom grew up in a Christian family, and Tom attended high school not far from this church, and he went to A&M and he graduated in 2014. After graduation he took a job here in Dallas with a large multi-national company, and he loved his job, and he was successful at his job, and they loved him. But while he was there he had a continuing desire to maybe be a missionary. It always stuck with him when he'd gone to China in middle school. And three years ago his employer said, "You know what? We'll allow you to take a three-month leave of absence and go to Southeast Asia and witness to the Muslims."

And so Tom did that; and when he got back, he felt like God was calling him to bring the gospel to Muslims, and even a deeper passion. But he didn't know for sure, and he wanted God's will. It's amazing; he applied



these principles. He wanted God's will. He continued to work hard. He used God's wisdom, and he immersed himself in the word. All these principles.

And he said, "I had two prayers. Number one, 'God confirm that you want me to go be a missionary; and number two, 'Give me a wife that wants to do the same thing.'" That's impossible. How's that going to work? I mean, he needed a wife that loved the Lord. He needed a wife that had a desire to witness to the Muslims. He needed a wife that would leave and go on the other side of the world; obviously, a hard worker; naturally, someone who flipped his switch, who he was attracted to, right? And the other thing: he's got to find somebody that'll marry an Aggie. Sorry, Mark.

Meanwhile, Mary was wholeheartedly committed to the Lord, and she grew up in a Christian home. And she went to a different high school not far from this church, and she graduated in 2015, and she moved back to Dallas. And she wanted to be a veterinarian, and so she applied for vet school; and for some reason in several schools, she couldn't get in, and the application process was messed up, and she was disappointed she couldn't get into vet school. And so she went to her parents and she said, "You know, I might want to be a missionary. Will you pray with me? Will you pray with me that God will put me where He wants me to be?"

Not long after that, there was an opening for a year-long position in a rural town in South America for a missionary, and she took it, a year-long. And she moved in with a host family in this little small village of 200, and she lived on a dirt floor with no air-conditioning; obviously, no heat; and she said spiders as big as your hand. It took an hour every day to do laundry in a tire, and she said the most frustrating thing was when it blew off the clothesline into the pigpen and you had to do it again. She got really good at plucking chickens and ducks for dinner, and milking cows, and making cheese. And she taught high school math and science, and disciplined school girls.

Well, she came back to Dallas after that year and she was really convicted that maybe the Lord wanted her to be a missionary. And so she moved in with some friends, and she entered grad school, and she met two Muslim girls in her neighborhood, and she started teaching them and discipling them; and the Lord kept bringing Muslim friends across her path, so much so that she thought, "Maybe, maybe I need to minister to the Muslims."

Then she got a call one day from her Christian high school, saying, "Will you come substitute teach here?" and she said, "No, I don't want to do that." And then she reconsidered, and she went there; and it's there that she became friends with a teacher. And guess who she was? She was Tom's sister-in-law. And so they met.

You remember Tom's prayer? Remember his prayer, "Lord, confirm You want me to go, and bring me a wife"? Mary loved the Lord more than him. She was someone who had a unique desire to witness to Muslims. She is someone willing to leave her family and move to the other side of the world. And obviously, she was a hard worker, plucking chickens and ducks, and milking cows, and making cheese. And naturally, she flipped his switch. And guess what else? She was a graduate of Texas A&M. Tom's seemingly impossible prayers were answered. They were married a year later, and they left March 2nd on a one-way ticket to Southeast Asia to give their lives to witness to the Muslims.

God is at work, and we've got to trust Him. And if you're single and you're listening this morning, listen, these principles will help guide you in finding a mate, in the Lord's will and in His timing. We can't practice them perfectly. But He still guides us, and we are responsible – listen – to apply these the best we can. It's our responsibility to hang on to that side of the rope, and it's also our responsibility to hang on to God's sovereignty in our lives, because He will never let you down.

It's been well said, "The mystery of God's sovereignty is that His everlasting love is being worked out in all the happenings of history for His glory and for our joy." And we need to be confident, and you need to be confident, that God is with you, and He is guiding you, and He will never leave you, and He will uphold you and never keep any good thing from you if you are His child and He is your Lord, because what is impossible with us is possible with God.

Now the bad news. If you don't know Christ, none of this works out for you. The wrath of God abides on you. It's a divine sentence of condemnation because of your sin, and nothing in this temporal world will work out good for you, it's just not going to happen. His wrath is continuing to build up on you, and it will turn out bad, so much so, that when you die you will be cast into eternal punishment, into darkness, into endless suffering and separation from God, if you're without Christ.

So I beg you this morning, that if you don't know Him, come to Him. Turn your life to Jesus Christ, and let Him ordain it, and orchestrate it, and lead you into all good things for your life, because that's what the Bible teaches. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we thank You. We thank You for this long chapter. We thank You for what it teaches us. We thank You, Father, for the fact that You are bringing about all Your plans and all Your purposes perfectly in all of our lives. Father, we need to trust You. We need to be faithful, we need to be faithfully active; and at the same time as we're faithfully active, help us to trust You, to use our wisdom, to be wholeheartedly devoted to You, and to let Your light shine through us, in Jesus' name. Amen.