

THE MAKING OF A GOOD MARRIAGE GENESIS 24

Genesis 24 is the longest chapter in the whole book of Genesis. It is of special interest that the longest chapter is devoted to the making of a marriage between Isaac and Rebekah. We might have thought the longest chapter would deal with creation or the Covenant or the judgement of God upon the ancient world, not so. God in putting our Bible together thought that the marriage of the son of Abraham was of such significance that it could take up the longest section of the whole book.

There are lessons to be learned from the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. While the experience is colored by the culture and practices of that day, it contains some very basic things about a good marriage.

They are worthy of our consideration whether we are married or where we might be contemplating marriage. From this lengthy chapter let us draw three significant lessons for our spiritual edification.

I. THE MAKING OF A GOOD MARRIAGE INVOLVES SECURING FAMILY SUPPORT.

The most obvious difference in what happens in Genesis 24 in the marriage of this couple and what happens when a couple is married in our day is the role that the two families played in the marriage. Abraham is 140 years old, a widower. His son Isaac is 40 years old and still single. Evidently Isaac experienced an extended period of grief after the death of his beloved mother, Sarah. According to the custom of the day it was Abraham who took the initiative for finding a

wife for his son. He commissions his most trusted servant to take the journey to the land from whence he had come and to find a wife for Isaac among his people there. He specifically did not want Isaac to marry one of the Canaanite women. The Canaanites were considered by Abraham to be under the curse of God and their culture was very corrupt. Abraham knew the influence that a wife can have on her husband so he did not want Isaac married to a woman who would be leading his heart away from God.

This trusted servant made the long trip back to the country from which Abraham had come. God sent an angel before him to guide his way and to direct his steps. Under the direction of God he found Rebekah at the well. It is interesting that this trusted servant looked for a potential wife in a place like this. He did not go to some place of pleasure, but rather to a place of industry. He looked for someone who had a readiness to work.

When the Lord had made clear to the servant that Rebekah was His chosen one for Isaac, then the servant sought the support and approval of her family. She could not leave home and be wed to this young man whom she had never seen unless her family was willing for her to go and would pronounce upon her a blessing. It was a moving moment after the conversation between the servant and the family of Rebekah when she mounted a camel and started with the servant to meet her new husband. As she left her home her family pronounced upon her a special blessing.

We can learn something from this experience that is revealed through out the scriptures – if you are going to make a good marriage, it will be extremely helpful to have the support of your family. Family attitude is an important ingredient in the making of a good marriage. Across the

years I have seen many couples ignore this part of marriage to their own hurt. When parents refuse to give their blessing, this could be the sign of trouble to come.

II. THE MAKING OF A GOOD MARRIAGE INVOLVES SEEKING DIVINE GUIDANCE.

The role that God played in this marriage is also significant. It is true that God carried out His work through the family of Isaac and the family of Rebekah but He Himself was directly involved in the making of this marriage.

Probably the thing that bothers us most about this Biblical marriage was the absence of any involvement of the couple themselves in the selection. It probably bothers us that a third party selected a bride for Isaac. It probably bothers us that Rebekah was asked to commit herself to marry a man she had never seen. We value very much our own initiative in the making of a marriage. However, it is worth noting that the success of marriages where the two being married had little to do in selecting each other are just as successful, if not more so, than those where we ourselves make the selection.

However the primary thing in the making of a good marriage is not what the couple want, nor even what the parents wants but what God wants. Abraham wanted for his son what God wanted. The servant of Abraham wanted for Abraham's son in marriage what God wanted. This caused Abraham's servant to very humbly and reverently approach the Lord God in prayer. It is one of the most beautiful and specific prayers found in all of scripture. It is a prayer for divine guidance.

We can be confident that there would be days in marriage of Isaac and Rebekah when things did not go well. This is true in every marriage but the two of them had one blessed encouragement when those times of testing came. They had the assurance that God Himself had providently arranged their marriage. This was one of the things that would hold them in the midst of the storms that come against a marriage.

Every couple should go into marriage with this blessing. They should be able to confidently say that God has brought them together and that God is pleased with what they are doing. Whenever you have God's choice you have the best choice.

I reflect back on the forty years of marriage that Alice and I have had together. This has been one of the things that have blessed us. Both of us have had an unshakable conviction that our marriage was in the will of God. It is true that I chose her and she chose me but it also true that God brought us together. Circumstances of our meeting and the things that surrounded our relationship in those earliest days made it obvious to both of us that our marriage was the will of God.

This does not mean that God sent us a telegram from heaven saying, "D. L. Lowrie, you should seek to marry Alice Reynolds." Rather it means that as we prayerfully sought the will of God, God providentially arranged the bringing of our lives together. Every marriage can know that same kind of conviction.

III. THE MAKING OF A GOOD MARRIAGE INVOLVES SEALING IT WITH PERSONAL COMMITMENT.

In this inspired marriage account the message is rather simple. We do not find any formal or civil ceremony being performed. Rather we find two people, who knew very little about each other making a commitment to each other.

It is a beautiful part of the account to listen to the servant of Abraham to make his case for Isaac, the son of his master with Rebekah. When he had brought forth some evidences of the material prosperity of Abraham and thus of Isaac and had shared a witness about God's direction of his steps, he asked the privilege of being sent back to his master with Rebekah. The family called the young woman in and asked her the question, "Will you go with this man?" Her response was immediate. She said, "I will go." So with the blessing of her family upon her Rebekah made her commitment. The historian reports it like this, "Then Rebekah got ready and mounted their camels and went back with the man so the servant took Rebekah and left."

The meeting of the two is an interesting part of this historical account. After the long travel back toward the tents of Abraham, the servant and his entourage arrived late in the evening. Isaac was out walking through the fields meditating. He may well have been meditating on his upcoming marriage to the bride that the servant would bring. He saw the camel train in the distance. Rebekah and the servant saw Isaac in the distance. Isaac recognized that this was probably Abraham's servant bringing his new bride. The servant recognized Isaac and told Rebekah, "This is the son of my master." She stopped her camel and got off the camel and placed a veil up over her face. The servant of Abraham had the joy and the privilege of introducing the two. In the process of doing this he shared with Isaac about the leadership of God on his trip. The record is rather simple when it reads, "Isaac brought her into the tent of his

mother, Sarah, and he married Rebekah.” The married of the two was a blessing to both. Moses writes, “So she became his wife and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”

I cannot help but comment that Isaac and Rebekah did not have a trial run before they made the commitment. Their commitment was made on the day that they were introduced to each other. Their commitment was an act of faith in the providence of God. They committed themselves to each other irrevocably and God was pleased with their commitment to each other. God blessed the union of this couple in a way that continues to bless the world.

One of the disturbing trends in our day is the half- hearted commitment that is made to marriage. You can’t make a good marriage out of a halfhearted commitment. It has to be a commitment to be faithful to each other what ever life may bring.

So, from this lengthy story of the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah we can learn some basic ingredients for a good marriage. If you are interested in making a good marriage, you seek the support of your family. You seek the mind and the will of God and you seal it with a firm and unshakable commitment to each other. In doing this you will find for yourselves a good marriage that will bless you, your children, your grandchildren and generations to come.

