

Is your Marriage Ordained from Heaven?

Scripture Passage: Genesis 24:17-21

17 Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.

19 He blessed him and said,

"Blessed be Abram of God Most High,

1) Possessor of heaven and earth;

20 And blessed be ^[e]God Most High,

Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

He gave him a tenth of all.

21 The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself."

Last time I spoke about something that no one likes to talk about: the death of our loved one, but today I am bringing a topic which you all like, marriage! The best part of preaching the Word chapter by chapter is that, you don't dictate what subject to preach. God assigns those topics for you and you never become tired of God's assigned topics! The process of getting married according to Scriptures may sound bizarre for most Westerners, but it works for many! It may work for two important reasons for Christians: God's will in one's marriage, and their steadfast commitment to each other before and during the wedding!

These are two important points to remember for anyone who wants to get married!

My University of Baltimore experience. Warning! I was not a Christian at that time, but I thought more like a Christian. I could not connect with any Western girls because their philosophy was entirely different - they seemed to say always, let us test drive each other and then let us think about moving forward. But I was old fashioned. I insisted that a couple should commit themselves to each other first and then proceed! I became a laughing stock when I preached that message, and all the girls ran far away from me very fast! But because of that belief, God saved me from fornication before my marriage!

Then I became a born again Christian and started reading the Bible. I did not find any passage for dating without a commitment to each other. The Gospel story told me exactly how our relationship ought to be. We believe in Christ first and take the step of commitment toward baptism. Then we get to know the Lord better through the fellowship of the Spirit and His saints.

There is no limit to knowing our partner. I am married to my wife, Viola for 32 years, and yet we surprise each other with our attitudes! We all change over time. Personal preferences and choices change rapidly in one's life". There is no guarantee that the person you marry now will be the same five years from now. So the will of God and commitment in marriage have to be the pillars of one's marriage. If the couple realizes that God brought them together, then they will have peace of mind and everything else becomes secondary. If two believers surrender themselves totally to the Lord, and if they do not live for themselves, then there should be no issue about what I want and what I don't want.

Here's a beautiful story about the will of God in young people's life. Please read the entire chapter of Genesis 24 but I am going to share only the important points from this precious chapter.

Gen. 24:1-4.

- 1. Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in every way.*
- 2. Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Please place your hand under my thigh,*
- 3. 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,*
- 4. but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac."*

The Lord had blessed Abraham. The Lord will bless those who trust in Him!

Abraham called his senior manager of his business and gave him a peculiar mission of finding a girl for Isaac.

We must have a faithful, wise steward who can seek and find the right person whom God intends. That person has to be a real man of prayer seeking the will of God in this matter. There are many times Viola and I have brought some marriage proposals as faithful servants of God! But those proposals were thrown out because the person does not have the right skin color, or profession, or right nationality or wealth! Seeking God's will above everything is the most important aspect in life, and using God's servants to confirm such process is crucial.

Abraham was totally opposed to Canaanite women. You do not even want to think about marrying someone who wants to switch his or her fiancé every summer! New Testament clearly says that we should not be yoked with unbelievers.

Abraham instructs his servant to go to his country Ur, and take a girl for Isaac. But there is a sticky issue here. God had told Abraham to leave his relatives behind. Why is he going back again? Is He not the same God who provided him a ram for sacrifice? Could He not have provided a girl from somewhere else, or even better, make that girl come to Abraham's land? The only answer I could come up with was Rebecca was God's only choice!

Genesis 4:5-8

5. 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?"

6. Then Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there!"

7. The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there.

8. 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."

The servant (Eleazer) asks a critical question, and it gives us a glimpse of women's rights in those days! What if the woman is not willing to come to our land? Should we take Isaac back to Ur?

Abraham gives a definitive no answer! It is because of the calling for his whole family and the future descendants. They were promised that Canaan land will come to them and Abraham clung to God's promise. There is no room for such compromise! Note that the servant had to make a vow to find a girl for Isaac. But if the girl refuses to come, then Eleazer is released from that vow. See how important a vow is! It is better not to make a vow at all! But if we make a vow, we must keep it. That's why a wedding vow is very important! We must honor and keep it and only time it may be broken is in the case of adultery or ongoing physical abuse.

Genesis 24: 9, 10

9. So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

10. Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.

What kind of strange ancient practice was that? According to some scholars, the servant was to touch the circumcised part and remember God's covenant with Abraham and become an instrument in multiplying Abraham's descendants. God tells us to do the very same thing and wants us to make a vow through baptism and wants us to be instruments of multiplying Christ's descendant!

Another interpretation could be that Abraham offered the most vulnerable part of the body in the hands of his servant to let the servant know that he trusts him with the most delicate, sensitive matter of his life, the marriage of his only son in the hands of his faithful servant. What a compliment when people trust you! But be careful what you promise!

Abraham sent the servant with a promise: He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there! Abraham read God's will accurately! That is what faith is. Faith is the substance of things we hoped for, evidence of things not seen. The servant departed and left with ten camels and lot of expensive gifts. In Middle Eastern culture the dowry is given to the bride and her family.

First the servant sought the Lord to help him.

Genesis 24: 11-14

11. He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water.

12. He said, "O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham.

13. Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water;

14. now may it be that the girl 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 will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master."

The servant was smart. He had known the God of Abraham through Abraham. He sought God first before he started his 800-mile journey. Listen to his prayer carefully.

His success was his master's success. A selfless prayer which sought sincerely for his master's success. Can we be faithful to our bosses like that in our job?

Then he asked for a peculiar confirmation from God. Vs. 14. *now may it be that the girl 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.'*

Dear all, I want you to pray to see the will of God in your relationship first before you try to know the other person! Look for confirmations of His will every step of the way!

Genesis 24: 15-19

15. Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder.

16. The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, and no man had had relations with her; and she went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up.

17. Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar."

18. She said, "Drink, my lord"; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink.

19. Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking."

Before Eliezer finished his prayer, God answered that prayer! When we honor God through everything like Abraham and pray according to God's will, things will happen very fast!

Note! She was not engaged in wild dating with many guys before marriage! The girl was a virgin! Living in purity is always glorified in God's Word!

Genesis 24: 21

21. Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the LORD had made his journey successful or not.

Even though, things happened as he prayed still he had to make sure that this is from the Lord!

Genesis 24:22-24

22. 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,

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

24. She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor."

Bingo! Here was the second confirmation!

The servant offered another lovely thanksgiving prayer! Let us not forget to thank the Lord!

Genesis 24: 26, 27

26. Then the man bowed low and worshiped the LORD.

27. He said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brothers."

The servant was invited to Rebekah's house. But he refused to eat!

Genesis 24: 33

33. But when food was set before him to eat, he said, "I will not eat until I have told my business." And he said, "Speak on."

Basically, the servant told them all about Abraham, his life, and his mission and how he found Rebecca.

Laban's answer was very profound!

Genesis 24: 50

50. Then Laban and Bethuel replied, "The matter comes from the LORD; so we cannot speak to you bad or good.

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."

Yes, indeed! The matter of our marriage comes from the Lord! Do you see it in your life? Have you seen His confirmation or have you overlooked them?

Genesis 24: 52

52. When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the LORD.

Real prayer is bowing down, prostrating before the Lord with a humble heart! The servant was not ashamed about prostrating and worshipping His Lord before strangers. If we confess our faith in our Lord before all people, He will honor us!

The brother of the bride and the father allowed Rebekah to go with the servant to be married to Isaac. But Laban wanted Rebekah to stay little longer. But the servant wanted her to travel the next day. So they asked Rebekah's choice. Rebekah was happy to leave her familiar settings and relatives and was willing to go to a strange land and a new family. She did this by faith after seeing those confirmations from the Lord! This is what marriage is all about. We trust in the Lord and move forward with blind faith! You cannot figure out all your future relationship now itself.

Now as Rebekah came near where Isaac lived, they saw Isaac walking!

Genesis 24: 62-67

62. Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev.

63. Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming.

64. Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel.

65. She said to the servant, "Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?" And the servant said, "He is my master." Then she took her veil and covered herself.

66. The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.

67. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

My dear brothers and sisters, I want you to see something crucial from this passage, and this is what every one of us must do, morning, evening, and at all times -

- ✓ Meditate on the Lord!
- ✓ Meditation is a prayer of thanksgivings!
- ✓ Meditation is a prayer of intercession for others.
- ✓ Meditation is an examination of ourselves and confession of our sins.
- ✓ Meditation is pondering over the meanings of the Word of God.
- ✓ Meditation is abiding in the Spirit!
- ✓ Meditation is listening to the voice of the Lord!

- ✓ Meditation is an active exercise.

Meditation is not thinking about nothing as the Hinduism suggests.

Meditation is not a breathing exercise as yoga recommends.

Meditation is not going into a vacuum to find yourself!

Meditation is not chanting some repetitive mantras!

Rebekah quickly covered herself with a veil. So Isaac did not see her until he took her into his tent. This reminds us of Leah's story. Jacob did not know whom he was marrying and ended up marrying the eldest sister.

I do not want you to go that far! I would like you to behold your girl and be attracted to her living soul. I won't stop you from holding her hand. I won't stop you from hugging her affectionately. But do not go beyond. Stop right there! Find God's will in this matter first. Then commit yourself to engagement, then marry, and then take her to your tent.

The Scripture ends with a beautiful sentence. Isaac loved her very much. This story is only a prelude to Christ's divine love for His church. The church must leave its worldly ways as Rebecca did and come to Him and submit and surrender, and He will love us, and nurture us eternally and this is a promise!

The servant in this story teaches us some valuable lessons about our work ethics!

- ✓ We must be faithful to our boss!
- ✓ We must put our heart into any mission our boss gives us.
- ✓ And we must finish it through the help of God!

Conclusion

- Seek the will of God first before marriage!
- Seek a faithful friend or mediator to facilitate.
- Seek the parents' approval and their blessing.
- Rejoice with your partner as a gift from heaven!
- Yes, indeed true Christian marriages are predestined in heaven already!