

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

DAY ONE

Read Genesis 24:1-9

NOTE: Abraham knew that God's three-fold covenant was to continue through the descendants of Isaac (Gen 21:1). He was therefore determined to find a bride for Isaac from among his own people, the descendants of Shem. The elderly and probably frail Abraham sent as his emissary his senior servant, his steward who was the chief administrator of his household, back to Mesopotamia. One can't help but wonder if this is the same trusted servant that Abraham wanted to make his heir (Gen 15:3). Tradition identifies him as Eliezer of Damascus, but it is significant that this key figure in the narrative is never named. This man was given the title by the Church fathers "The Unnamed Servant." *Agape*

1. As we begin the longest chapter in the Book of Genesis, it has been three years after the death of Sarah. Abraham was about 140 years and blessed "in all things" (verse 1). He decided to help bring about his promised future descendants on behalf of his son who would have been about forty years old (see [Genesis 18:19](#)). In your own words, what did he ask of his servant in verses 2-4.

NOTE: The loins or thighs represent the locus of man's procreative powers (Job 40:16). Putting the hand under the thigh is an oath gesture signifying that the swearing party invokes a curse of sterility upon himself should he fail to uphold his pledge (Deut 33:11). Here the oath makes Abraham's last living request binding on his servant should he die before Isaac is married. *Ignatius Study Bible*

2. In seeking to clarify the details of the commitment, how did the servant reply to Abraham (verse 5)?

3. In addition to securing a wife for Isaac from his homeland, Abraham emphasized a second requirement in the servant's search in verses 6 and 8. Isaac must not be taken back to the land from where Abraham was called (Mesopotamia). Why do you think this was so important to him?

4. In verse 7 Abraham stated that the LORD would send an angel to help guide the servant to find Isaac a wife. If the woman was not willing to follow the servant, he would be freed from his oath (verse 8). Do you think Abraham was suggesting that it would be acceptable for the servant to return without a wife for his son under these conditions? Explain your answer.

5. In verse 9 the servant agreed to the master's request and swore his oath to carry out the plan to find a good wife for his son from among people who share the traditions of his family. What are the advantages of shared traditions to marriage and family life?

6. CONNECTION: In today's lesson we read that, as Abraham contemplated his remaining years of life, he acted upon a plan inspired by God's promises to find a wife for his son. Sometimes we also need to take a leap of faith trusting in God for his guidance and protection to confront a problem or start something new. Like the journey for Abraham's servant, God directs us forward, not back. Too often regrets and grudges hold us in familiar places from which we cannot grow while God keeps directing us ahead. Can you share how, in your life or character, God has called you to embrace something new?

Read and record Psalm 40:3. As you begin this lesson, write a prayer praising God for the new people, ideas, blessings or challenges that keep your faith alive.

DAY TWO

Read Genesis 24:10-21

7. Today we read that the servant departed for the city of Nahor taking gifts from his master on ten camels. When they arrived in the evening, the servant made the camels kneel down by a well where all the women drew water (verses 10-11). Summarize the prayer of the servant to the LORD, the God of his master, Abraham (verses 12-14).

NOTE: The author did not describe the lengthy journey the servant would have had to make to reach Haran with ten camels, but it was about 500 miles from Canaan to Haran and would have taken about a month. The city of Haran was located in the region of upper Mesopotamia where Abraham's family lived (see Genesis 11:31). See map for reference.

8. In his prayer, the servant was asking God for a "favorable sign" (*NABRE*). If you have ever prayed for a sign, do you think this was the best way to discern God's will?

9. The servant trusted God and "before he had finished speaking" his prayer was answered. He saw Rebekah coming out with her water jar on her shoulder (verse 15). Describe what you learn about her in verse 16.

THINK: Have you ever had a prayer answered before you even finished expressing it to the Lord? See Isaiah 65:24, "while they are still speaking, I will hear."

10. In ancient times, wells were meeting places but also held symbolic meaning in Scripture. Look up and record one of the following verses that refer to significant meetings that have occurred at wells.

Exodus 2:15-16

John 4:6-7

11. The servant ran to meet Rebekah and requested a sip of water. When she finished giving him a drink, she offered to draw water for his camels also. As she worked the servant gazed at her "in silence" to learn if she was the woman he was seeking (verses 17-21.) What qualities in a woman and wife do you think he was searching for?

NOTE: Verse 20 describes how Rebekah quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran back and forth from the well to draw water for all 10 camels. A thirsty camel drinks about 10-20 gallons and she might have carried about a 3 gallon jar.

12. CONNECTION: In today's lesson the trusted servant prays devoutly to the God of his master, Abraham, placing before him the plan to discover a worthy young woman to be Isaac's wife. This plan revealed the servant's wisdom and cleverness and that Abraham was right to trust in his judgment. More importantly, it shows his humility and trust in God especially as he waited in the end for the Lord's answer. In our lives, it is a good thing to plan carefully for all contingencies, but then we should commit all our plans to God and rely on his guidance and power. In the midst of hectic planning, how do you find the time you need to hear the LORD's answer? Record some thoughts to share with your group.

Psalm 37:7 says, "Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him." Spend some quiet time with the LORD today, listening.

DAY THREE

Read Genesis 24:22-33

13. Today's lesson begins after the servant's time of silence during which Rebekah found favor with the LORD. When the camels finished drinking, the servant gave her gifts and arranged to meet her family (verses 22-23). Then the servant bowed his head and worshiped God. From verses 26-27, record a phrase that suggests to you that the servant's faith was sincere and not just a reflection of his master's faith.

NOTE: Gold nose rings and bracelets were popular jewelry with women of this time. A normal wage for a laborer was about 10 shekels a year so a gift worth 10 and a half shekels was extremely generous. A shekel weighed approximately ½ ounce.

14. Rebekah ran to tell her mother's household what happened, and her brother, Laban, ran out to meet the servant (verses 28-29). When he noticed the expensive jewelry on his sister and saw the servant standing with the elaborate caravan, what did he immediately say and do (verses 30- 31)?

NOTE: Nahor was Abraham's brother, making Bethuel Abraham's nephew. Thus, Rebekah was the grandniece of Abraham (see Genesis 22:23).

15. The servant came into the house. List the generous actions performed by Laban in verse 32.

16. Are you surprised by some of the actions of Rebekah and her family members upon meeting a stranger? Consider what might be some of the thoughts and motivations of the characters at this point in the story and record some notes below.

Rebekah

Laban

17. In verse 33 as the meal was set before the man, he made the surprising announcement that he would not eat until he had told of his errand and the family agreed. Why do you think that was?

18. CONNECTION: Throughout this story, the man Abraham chose to find a wife for his son demonstrated the traits of a good and faithful servant. He prayed for guidance and devised a strategy leaving room for God to operate. Then he waited and watched for God's will to be revealed. When he was convinced he knew God's choice, he worshiped the LORD. Have you ever approached a task with this kind of dedication, careful planning and dependence on God? Can you think of a challenge you might face that requires you to handle it with care, diligence and faith? Like the servant, how can prayer and God lead you through the journey ahead?

Read James 1:5-6. Write a prayer today asking God's grace to guide you as he did this faithful servant.

DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 24:34-41

19. Today we read that the man discussed his errand with Rebekah's family before the meal began. He informed them that he was Abraham's servant and that his master was blessed with great wealth (verses 34-35). He has used the term "my master" frequently in this chapter. What does this tell you about the servant and his relationship with Abraham?

20. The servant continued to discuss additional information about his master and his household. In verse 36 he mentioned that Sarah bore Abraham a son when she was quite old. What important fact did he reveal in the last part of that verse?

21. In verses 37-41, the servant continued to relate to the family of Rebekah exactly what happened in his search for Isaac's wife. Why do you think he felt it was necessary to relate all the specific details to them?

22. Explain what specific detail in the servant's story may have been the most persuasive to Rebekah's family. Consider the list below or suggest another.

God controlled the mission.

Abraham was rich and Isaac was his heir.

Canaanite women were rejected.

He was freed of his oath if they refused his offer and he need not plead with them.

23. The servant of Abraham sought diligently to perform his mission for his master. Look up one the following verses and record a reference to the important role of a servant.

Job 2:3

Matthew 25:23

John 12:26

24. CONNECTION: Today the servant described his mission to Rebekah's family to gain permission for her to become the wife of his master's son. With God's guidance he found the right woman, but now he must convince her family that returning with him is the right thing to do. As he told his story, he spoke openly of God and his goodness relating how closely God had been involved in the selection. Often we do the opposite, afraid that we will be misunderstood, rejected or seen as too religious. How can we be more open about how God works in our lives? What are some ways you have successfully shared with others on social media?

Read and record 2 Timothy 1:7. Write a prayer today requesting that God grant you the grace to be courageous and a living sign for others with your faith.

DAY FIVE

Read Genesis 24:42-53

25. Today we continue to read how the servant recounted for Rebekah's family all the events of the day, including his prayer to the LORD, so they might see for themselves how God led him to her (verses 42-44). Why does the author repeat the whole story? See the Commentary, page 51, for your answer or suggest another.

26. The servant continued to tell the family his story in verses 45-46. Observe the difference in the sequence of events in verse 47 compared with verses 22-23 as the servant retold the story. Why do you think the servant might have made this little change?

27. The servant concluded his story by telling Rebekah's family how he bowed his head and worshiped the LORD of his master who had led him by the right way to their daughter, a kinswoman, for his master's son (verse 48). In your own words, what did he ask the family of Rebekah in verse 49?

28. When the servant finished his recital, the betrothal took place in verses 50-51. Grateful at finally succeeding at his mission, the servant first bowed to the ground in prayer (verse 52). What did he do next according to verse 53?

NOTE: When an agreement of marriage had been made, it was customary for the bridegroom (or his servant) to give the family of the bride gifts as a dowry to demonstrate his financial ability to provide for the bride.

29. How amazing that Laban and Bethuel trusted and believed the servant. Why do you suppose they were so willing to allow Rebekah to leave her homeland and travel to a distant land with this stranger?

30. **CONNECTION:** In every aspect of this story, we have seen the man's reverence, devotion, humility and sincerity to "his master's God" and the power that resulted from it. Do you exhibit this kind of devotion in your everyday life in everything that you do? Consider how an attitude of drawing on God's power in all that you do, no matter how small, might change you. What can you do to be more mindful of his presence?

Read and record 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Try to spend your day today reminded of the servant and set aside frequent times to pray, praise, rejoice and give thanks to God.

DAY SIX
Read Genesis 24:54-67

31. Our final lesson this week begins after consent for Rebekah to become Isaac's wife has been secured from her family. The servant and his men spent the night enjoying the hospitality of Laban. The next morning, the servant asked to leave, but her brother and mother objected to his request (verses 54-56). What might have been their reasons in requesting a delay?

32. In verses 57-58, her family suggested they consult Rebekah about this matter and she agreed to go. What does this story tell you about Rebekah that makes you think she will be a good wife for Isaac?

THINK: Rebekah gave her consent, decisively stating that she would go immediately with Abraham's servant. The destiny of the "promised seed" was expressed in the maiden's "yes," just as the destiny of the "promised seed" will be fulfilled in another maiden's "yes" when Mary of Nazareth said to the angel Gabriel: *let it happen to me as you have said* (Lk 1:38). *Agape*

33. Rebekah's family sent her away with her nurse, accompanied by Abraham's servant and his men (verse 59). Record the words of the blessing they bestowed on her as she departed by completing verse 60 below.

May you, our sister,

may your offspring

NOTE: The family members ask Rebekah's consent to the arrangement. This is a necessary step in ancient Near Eastern societies, because the betrothal involves two special circumstances: the marriage is arranged by her brother rather than her father, and it will take her away from her homeland. The fact that her nurse accompanies her suggests that Rebekah is still quite young at the time of the betrothal. *Collegeville*

34. Verse 61 described the journey Rebekah and her servants made as she retraced the journey of her great uncle, Abraham. We learn in verse 62 that Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi and was settled in Negeb. Briefly describe what Isaac and Rebekah were doing when they first caught sight of each other from verses 63-65.

NOTE: When Isaac approaches and is identified, Rebekah, who has dismounted from the camel, covers herself with her veil as part of the ceremony of marriage. Isaac takes her to his tent, to his mother, for the marriage. *Scullion*

35. The story ends with the faithful servant telling Isaac all the things that he did on his behalf (verse 66). Then Isaac took Rebekah as his wife (verse 67). Although this was an arranged marriage, what factors suggest to you that love would continue to grow between these two people?

36. CONNECTION: Today we read that as Isaac went out for an evening walk in the field, he looked up and “saw camels coming.” The approaching caravan held the beautiful woman he would love and the servant who would, no doubt, tell him that the God of his father had done great things in bringing this about. This is the same wondrous God who also works marvelous, unbelievable things in our lives too. Can you share a recent story when your heavenly Father has done a great thing for you or someone you know?

Read and record Mark 10:27. Begin your prayer today with praise for God who seeks to fill our lives with joy and wonder.

Read pages 51-52 in *The Book of Genesis* by Lawrence DiPaolo, Jr, Ph. D. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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