

Isaac Marries Rebekah

Genesis 24

This passage is a not what we think of as a how-to guide to dating and marriage! While many things have changed over 4000 years, the principles remain the same. This is the longest patriarchal story in Genesis, and it's packed with wisdom, especially for us who have inherited a destructive dating culture that took shape in the last century. Here are four principles for courtship and marriage.

Dating is for Dads

Abraham is really old and really successful, so for him to give this so much attention is a huge deal (v1). The oldest servant is probably Eliezer of Damascus, but regardless he is Abraham's right hand man who takes a very intimate oath not to take a bride for Isaac from the Canaanites (vv2-4). The point is not that Isaac can't make his own decisions; the point is that Abraham knows God promised to be God to him and his descendants in the land, and he wants to make sure those descendants worship Him (vv6-7; 17:7). The principle is that fathers should be involved for help, wisdom, and accountability, and if a father is not willing or able, then a mother, friend, or some wise person should be. Isaac and Rebekah honor their parents and welcome the involvement (vv58, 66).

Dating is for Marriage to a Christian

Isaac is forty, not fourteen, and the match that Abraham is so eager to make is with a woman who fears the Lord. The goal of dating is to find the right person to marry. There's nothing geographically wrong with women in Canaan, only the god(s) they worshipped. To be married to one would divide the household. Paul tells believers not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14), and to marry only "in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39). The servant goes to a place to meet the right woman, but there was no pressure (v11, 8). Rebekah is a long way away, but his prayers are answered—she is wonderful (vv18-21). When people are wise and content, courtship is a lot of fun.

We are Helpless

It's easy to be proud and think we are full of wisdom in relationships and therefore can control the outcome, but we can't: "Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord" (Prov. 19:14). Abraham is applying wisdom based on God's promises, but he plans on following the Lord even if he doesn't succeed (vv7-8). This is another way of saying Isaac's marriage is not his idol. God says nothing in this story but is mentioned seventeen times, and the servant heroically relies on Him—praying, watching, worshiping, and talking about what He has done (vv12-15, 21, 26, 34-49). The sovereignty and providence of God are beautifully displayed.

Physical Intimacy is for Marriage

Isaac and Rebekah became one flesh in sexual union (v67). Moses also says "and he loved her." Isaac isn't falling in love, or *only* falling in love; he is making a decision to love her for the rest of his life. Physical, relational, and emotional oneness is embraced for a lifetime. Everything else is a cheap knock off. This beautiful covenant of marriage is a picture of Christ's relationship to the Church (Eph. 5:31-32). Just as Isaac, Jacob and Moses found women at the well, so Jesus met the Samaritan woman who would be confronted about and forgiven for all her sins (Jn. 4). This is what God is doing in the Church, the descendants of Abraham in the earth. We should view efforts to devalue and redefine marriage as futile because we've seen the new heavens and new earth, the "holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). We can trust like Abraham, pray like the servant, give and follow like Rebekah, and love like Isaac because Jesus is the Church's savior, suitor and husband.

NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

Today's Passage: Genesis 24:1-9

Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh, 3 and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; 4 but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac." 5 And the servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?" 6 But Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there. 7 The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. 8 And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there." 9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

1. What did Abraham make his servant swear to do (verses 1-4)?
2. Swearing is big deal and not something we should do easily or often. It's making a promise before God that you will do something. Why didn't Abraham want Isaac to marry a woman from Canaan?
3. Fill in the blanks. Abraham married _____. Isaac married _____. Jacob married _____. Marriage is ultimately a picture of marriage between Jesus Christ and the _____.
4. Draw a picture of Isaac and Rebekah seeing each other for the first time. Remember Rebekah has a veil on!

Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:

But you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac —Genesis 24:4