# **Genesis 24, The Beginning of Hope in the Promises of God: A Life of Abraham,** Preached by Michael Gunn @ Harambee Church on April 20th, 2008

**Intro**
Last week we took a look at the death of Sarah, and this week we see how God remains faithful to his covenant in spite of the fact that the matriarch of the covenant is dead. We will see how God operates in the midst of human efforts to faithfully sustain the covenant, and how God's will stamped all over human affairs.

**From the Head…**
We Should Know that God is Present in Our Everyday Decisions (**Genesis 24:1-9**)
In the beginning God created Adam and Eve and told them to be "*Fruitful and Multiply*" (**Genesis 1: 28**). Moses told Israel "*Love the Lord God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your migh*t" and then to "*Teach them diligently to your children*" (**Deuteronomy 6:4, 7**). Paul reminds us to bring our children up in the "*Discipline and instruction of the Lord*" (**Ephesians 6:4**). Kingdom movements are facilitated by one generation making sure that the next generation carries on the mission. It is clear throughout scripture that the burden of this task is on the back of the parents, especially the fathers. That same verse in Ephesians 6:4 reminds fathers not to "provoke" their children, which is done by not bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Caring about the future of our children is basic to kingdom life here on earth.

Abraham understood his part in this, and took a large role in finding a proper wife for his son Isaac. This kind of role is frowned upon by a culture that has become fragmented, foundationless, and narcissistic. The thought of someone else beside yourself choosing your spouse is crazy. After all you know what's best for yourself. Well maybe a 50% divorce rate says otherwise. This takes trust on the part of Isaac as well as Abraham and his servant. The larger question is; are we trusting God for key issues in our life? Do we consult God when it comes to decisions such as whom we are going to spend our lives with?

You can imagine the servant's consternation (While taking this oath), and the responsibility he felt after taking such an oath. What if no one would come with him (**Genesis 24:5**)? We so often get bent out of shape when we are trying to make a decision that can affect us for a long time. Abraham's trust was related to 2 things. The covenant promises God had made, and his trust in God's character that was built throughout the years walking with Him. It is interesting to note that he still had to take precautions while trusting God for this since God had made the covenant promise to make him a great nation. Abraham had to trust that his servant would make good decisions, and that he would not take his son back to settle in the land that God called him out of (**Genesis 24:6-8**). Abraham was now old (v.1), and he finally began to rest on this promise. He knew God would sovereignly work through his servant (**Genesis 24:7**). This is Abraham's story that he now understands, and will retell for generations.

What we do see in this passage is a divinely sovereign God acting providentially in concert with men of faith who are trusting God with key issues in their lives. This passage is about trust and covenant faithfulness. God providentially acting through the faithful, trusting acts of His people.

We Can Be Confident That God Will Lead In Our Faithful Choices (**Genesis 24:10-27**)
This section gives us an incredible look at the workings of God's providence in the lives of His people. There is an interesting word play at the beginning of this section, which connects it with the first section. In verse eleven the author gives us a weird detail regarding the servant's command for his camel's to kneel down. The word used for "kneel down" (Barak) is homonym of "Berak," which used for the word "To bless" in verse one. This is a linguistic device connecting the two sections, and reminding the reader that the arrival at that well was part of the divine blessing. There really are no coincidences in this world. God is connected to the world He created. In **verses 10-14** he prays to God for help showing that his faith is in the proper place, but he defaults to a pagan methodology to find God's will in this situation. He (The servant) uses what I call the "Magic Eight Ball" methodology. There are at least two other places in scripture that we see this type of ruse (**Judges 6:36-40; 1 Samuel 6:7-12**).[1] Information like this should not be taken as a "How to discover God's will passage." This passage, like every other passage in scripture needs to be seen in God's larger redemptive story and how it ultimately connects us to Christ, His Messiah. This passage is about God's faithful, providential care of His people acting in concert with the covenant that God has made with us. This passage is missional in that it gives us insight into the passing on of the covenant promises to our own children, so that they too would pursue God's kingdom in a godly fashion. We need to take caution here not to see this as a methodology to find God's will. God reveals much of what he wants of us within the pages of His word, and when we are struck with hard decisions regarding choices in life, we need to take caution on how to proceed. In practically every incident we see men who have little or no theological

[1] While God appears to allow this usage in Deuteronomy 33:8 (He tells the Levites to use the Urim and Thummim, though He still doesn't indicate this is normative), it still doesn't appear normative, and a good way to discern God's will.

knowledge/maturity, and who have very limited revelation from God. Is it wrong to use this type of methodology to discern God's will? The problem lays with the fact that mechanisms like this put us in control, and God has to take a back seat to the mechanism. Once it's set up, the mechanism takes control, and God is forced into its answer. We do not "Control" God in any way. This is true in healing, miracles, etc. These are done for God's will, in His timing.

In spite of this, God blesses the faithful heart of His servant, and answers his prayer; leading him to Rebekah. And then what we see in **verse 27** is the servant bowing in worship and prayer for God's living and providential leading in this matter. How thankful are you for the every day provisions God blesses you with? Are you caught up in a materialism that demands more than what you have? Or do you make regular use of gratitude towards God for His providential care in your circumstances.

We Must Be Diligent to Complete the Work That the Lord Has Given Us to Do (**Genesis 24:28-60**)
It was the servant's responsibility to secure the "Betrothal" of Rebekah for Isaac before he could enjoy any of the hospitality of Laban and his family. In verses 33-49 gives us a detailed account of this reality, and the purpose of his journey. This servant was a small part of a big picture; much how many of us are now scripted into God's story. He didn't have all the answers, nor did he know exactly what to do; he was just faithful to the task that he had before God. Similar to the parable of the talents (**Matthew 25:14-30**), we are responsible for the tasks and mission that God has set before us.

In verses 34-48 he reiterates his story, and emphasizes the blessing on Abraham (v. 35), Isaac's inheritance (v. 36), the oath to find a wife not from the Canaanites (v. 37), the provision of the angel (v. 40), his prayer at the well (vv. 42-44), and the identification of Rebekah and his subsequent praise of Yahweh (v. 48). When the servant finished he implored them to let Rebekah go with him (v. 49), and after they relented (vv. 50-51), he once again bowed to the Lord to give thanks (v. 52).

However even though they were compelled to let her go by his testimony a new tension arose as they put a condition of remaining there with them for a while, but when they asked Rebekah what she wanted to do, she decided to go with the servant. They blessed Rebekah, and sent her off with her nurse.

We Can Be Assured That What God Begins, He Will Complete (**Genesis 24:61-67**)
In these final few verses we see that God has faithfully delivered a wife to Isaac. This was no doubt through the faithfulness and effort of Abraham's servant, but it was God that guided so much of the circumstances. And it is God who makes sure that His covenant with His people continues through Isaac the new master (v.65) and the new matriarch (v. 67).

What is interesting is how Rebekah veiled herself when she was going to meet her new husband. This was probably a custom, and one that still is seen in many parts of the Middle East today. But as we know from 1 Peter 3, godly women of old were more interested in attracting men with their godliness rather than with the promise of sensual pleasure, which is quite fleeting with time and age.

**…to the Heart**
What are you struggling with in regards to God's will, ad your life? Do you believe Him for your spouse, your job, and your sustenance? Do you believe that God is providentially working in the midst of your circumstances? Men are you properly pursuing your sisters in Christ? Women are you making yourself attractive in order to attract godly men? Are we all relying on a close encounter with God's Spirit through His word and prayer, or are we relying on our feelings, emption and manipulations of God for our own use? Are we trusting that God loves us, and is acting on our behalf on a regular basis? Are we giving God gratitude for what He does regularly in your lives?

**Books for further study:** *Genesis,* Walter Brueggemann, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Genesis*, Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis,* Bruce Waltke, The Word Biblical Commentary: *Genesis*, Gordon J. Wenham, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis*, John H. Walton, *Creation and Blessing*, Allen P. Ross

**Next Weeks Verses: Genesis 25**

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