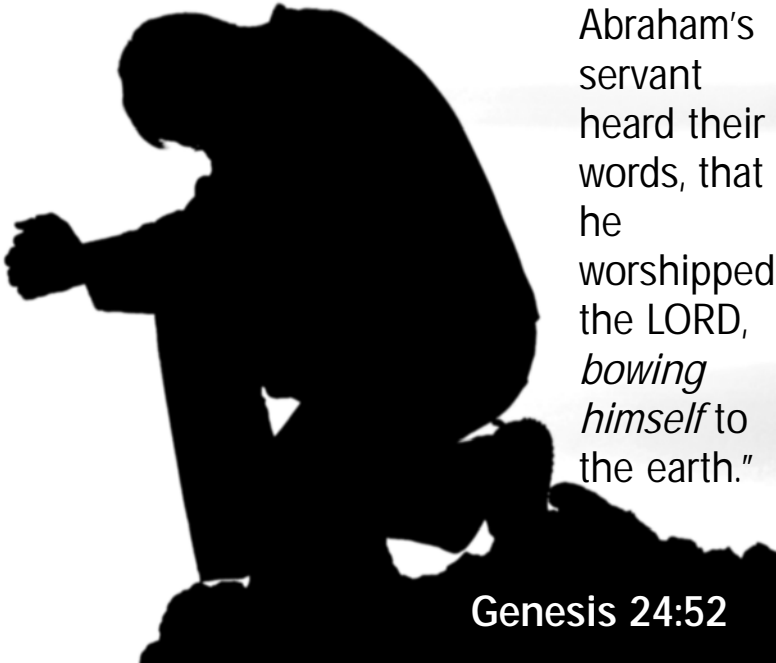




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## Sowing the Word

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When Abraham's servant heard their words, that he worshipped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth."

Genesis 24:52

**Genesis 23-24**

**March 18th, 2009**

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So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped *them* to understand the reading.

(Nehemiah 8:8)

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**Helpful Study Resource:**

*Explore the Book* by J. Sidlow Baxter

**Commentary:**

The commentary used with permission throughout  
this booklet is:

**With the Word Bible Commentary**

**by Warren W. Wiersbe.**

ISBN 0-8407-9108-9

# Outline

## Genesis Outline

- I. Creation (1-2)
- II. The Fall of Mankind (3)
- III. Early History of Mankind – First Thousand Years (4-5)
- IV. Noah and the Flood (6-10)
- V. Tower of Babel (11)
- VI. Abraham (12-25:18)
- VII. Isaac (25:19-27)
- VIII. Jacob (28-36)
- IX. Joseph (37-50)

## Detailed Outline For This Week

### VI. Abraham 12-25

- A. Abram's Call, Journey & Egypt (12)
- B. Abram Splits From Lot (13)
- C. Abram Rescues Lot – Meets Melchizedek (14)
- D. Abram Encouraged By God, Covenant Reaffirmed (15)
- E. Abram and Hagar (16)
- F. Abraham! Circumcision, Sarah! Isaac! (17)
- G. Abraham – The Friend of God (18)
- H. Sodom and Gomorrah (19)
- I. Abraham in Gerar (20)
- J. Isaac Is Born! (21)
- K. Abraham's Great Sacrifice (22)

### **L. Abraham Buries Sarah (23)**

- Abraham's Tears (23:1-2): He weeps for Sarah, who died at age 127.
- Abraham's Testimony (23:3-4): He describes himself as a stranger and sojourner in Canaan - seeks a cave to bury Sarah in
- Abraham's Transaction (23:5-20)
  - \* Abraham seeks a burial place (v.3-4)
  - \* Abraham picks a place (v.5-9)
  - \* Abraham insists on paying for the place (v.10-13)
  - \* Abraham pays full price for the field (v.14-16)
  - \* Abraham buries Sarah (v.17-20) Abraham (24)

### **M. Abraham Seeks a Wife For Isaac (24)**

- The Plan (24:1-4): Abraham instructs his servant (probably Eliezer) to find a wife for Isaac from Abraham's native land of Mesopotamia.

- The Problem (24:5–6): Even if Eliezer cannot find a willing bride there, he is not to take Isaac there to live.
- The Promises (24:7–9):
  - \* God's promise to Abraham (24:7–8): Abraham remembers the Lord's promise concerning the land of Canaan.
  - \* The servant's promise to Abraham (24:9): He will do exactly as Abraham has instructed.
- The Preparation (24:10): The servant loads ten camels with gifts and departs.
- The Prayer (24:11–21):
  - \* The request (24:11–14): The servant asks the Lord to cause the woman chosen as Isaac's bride to volunteer to provide water for him and his camels.
  - \* The result (24:15–21): Even as the servant is praying, Rebekah appears upon the scene and fulfills the sign.
- The Presents (24:22–33):
  - \* Rebekah and the servant (24:22–28): The servant gives Rebekah some gold jewelry.
  - \* Laban and the servant (24:29–33): Rebekah's brother invites the servant into his home.
- The Proposal (24:34–58):
  - \* The overview by the servant (24:34–48)
  - \* The servant's conversation with Abraham (24:34–41): The servant recounts to Laban the mission Abraham has given to him.
  - \* The servant's conversation with God (24:42–44): The servant recounts how God has answered his prayer.
  - \* The servant's conversation with Rebekah (24:45–48): The servant recounts his initial meeting with Rebekah.
  - \* The offer by the servant (24:49–56): He gives Rebekah more costly jewelry and clothing and invites her to accompany him back to Canaan to marry Isaac.
- The Persuasion (24:57–60): "Are you willing to go with this man?"
  - \* And [Rebekah] replied, "Yes, I will go."
- The Pilgrimage (24:61): Abraham's servant, Rebekah, and her servants leave Mesopotamia for Canaan.
- The Presentation (24:62–67):
  - \* Isaac is walking through a field when he meets his new bride.
  - \* They marry and provide each other with love and comfort.

# Notes for Booklet

## Chapter 23 Highlights and Helps, by Pastor Jim

### It is OK to mourn

Abraham mourned for Sarah when she died. It is not unbiblical for Christians to be mournful when our loved ones die. Abraham gives us a good picture of this. Paul explains it this way in 1 Thessalonians 4:13:

*But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.*

The Christian sorrows when fellow Christians die...but it is not like the world, it should not be, because we have a solid hope of seeing each other again.

### A Pilgrim and a Grave

There is a wonderful and accurate picture of the Christian life in Abraham in this chapter. He declares that he is a pilgrim, one who is in a foreign territory, and has no property of his own. In a powerful spiritual way, this is true of every Christian. We are in a world that we don't belong to. All Abraham ever ends up owning, property-wise, is a grave. It is a powerful picture for us today.

### Dealing With the World

We are pilgrims. We live in a world that we do not belong to. Yet, we do have to deal with this world. Abraham gives us some fascinating pictures of how we do that in this chapter.

- No attitude of superiority
- No begging
- Not expecting or taking favors – pays his full way, full price

### Machpelah

- Machpelah means *portion* in Hebrew. It pictures for us that this is our portion in this world. (Hebrews 11:13-16)
  - \* *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.* (1 Timothy 6:7)
- It is interesting to consider who all end up being buried in this very tomb:
  - \* Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah & Joseph
- It is interesting to note, when the land is finally obtained in the book of Joshua, Caleb obtains this land.
- It is interesting to note, that it is in this location that David begins his reign.

## Chapter 24 Highlights and Helps, by Pastor Jim

### Love the answer to prayer in v.15

*And it happened, before he had finished speaking....(Gen 24:15)*

- We see a delight and expediency of God answering prayer here
- (Daniel 9:23) ""At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision:""
- (Isaiah 65:24) ""It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear."

### Love the words of v.27

*As for me, being on the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren." (Genesis 24:27)*

- Is a picture that as we pursue God, pursue His plan – He guides us
- We need to be "in motion", in pursuit for this guidance. Like a rudder that guides a boat – it does not work if the boat is not moving. So, for us, to sit still spiritually is often bad. But as we pursue what God has for us – He guides us.

### Interesting that this chapter is the longest chapter in Genesis.

- Wedding story - Tells the story of how a man got his wife
- Prophetic story – Pictures how Jesus obtains His bride, the church

### Role of the Father (Abraham for Isaac, God the Father for us) in this process

- Blessed in all things –owns all...has all
- Initiates this seeking
  - \* We never would have sought Him, if He had not sought us
- Sent His chief servant
  - \* Picture for us the Holy Spirit – unnamed servant
- Set the guidelines
  - \* Women must be willing to come out of the world
  - \* Not to take back his son to the world
  - \* Woman must be freely willing
- Sent His camels, His goods – blessings

### Role of the servant (Elizer for Abraham, The Holy Spirit for us) in this process

- Commissioned by the Father
- Took His Master's goods to give

- He prayed for success – Spirit is praying for us
- Initial interchange...
  - \* Servant ran to meet her
  - \* He asked for water – please...just a little
  - \* He wondered...watched, remained silent – to see if prosperous
  - \* Took...but did not give – nose ring, golden bands for arms
  - \* Two questions
    - ◆ One – whose daughter – has to be of the Masters family
    - ◆ Two – can I lodge with you – asking in further
  - \* He gave nose ring, bracelets
  - \* He worshipped – joy in heaven over those who repent
- Second interchange...will she be released
  - \* Invited in
  - \* He provided straw and feed
  - \* He provided water to wash the feet
  - \* He tells of His errand – urgency in
    - ◆ Glorifies His master – tells of His greatness
    - ◆ Tells of His master's Son
    - ◆ Tells of stipulations
    - ◆ Tells of fact...she must be willing to come
  - \* Question – will you deal kindly, truly with my Master
  - \* Reply – is of the Lord – cannot resist
  - \* Surrender her to the servant
  - \* He worshipped again – great joy in heaven – total surrender
  - \* Gifts for Rebekah Gold, silver, clothing
  - \* Gifts for family
- Third interchange – desire to go
  - \* Immediately desires to journey to master...to son
  - \* Family – desire to delay...few days, ten
  - \* Servant appeals not to hinder...God has prospered...send her on
  - \* It is Rebekah's choice – we must choose to follow...freewill
  - \* Rebekah says she will go
- Servant leads Rebekah to the Son
- Servant instructed her – showed her Son
- Servant told Master of all

### Rebekah's role in this

- Normal life...fetching water
- Purity – beautiful, a virgin
- Humble - Responded to the request for a drink

- Responded to request for lodging and invited in
- Accepted gifts
- Ran to house and told all that happened
- Choice to go is put before her...she goes
- She follows servant
- She asks servant about Son
- She dismounted, covered with veil
- She became Son's wife

The first time we see Isaac, after his experience on Mount Moriah, is when he went out to meet Rebekah. The first time we will see the Savior, after His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, is when He returns to claim His chosen bride (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). Isaac's meeting with Rebekah is one of tender beauty. Without ever having seen her before, he married her, loved her, and unlike other patriarchs, he had no other wife besides her.

## Q & A With Pastor Phil

### **What does Genesis 24 teach us about walking in the will of God?**

Genesis 24 is a fascinating chapter. In this chapter Abraham directs his unnamed servant to find a wife for his son, Isaac. It is very rich in its depth. On the one hand, we are given a beautiful symbolic picture of how the Holy Spirit (the unnamed servant) brings a gentile bride to Christ. There is also a very powerful practical application and that will be the emphasis of this article.

For many Christians, wondering what the will of God is for our lives is a constant question. In many ways it is good to wrestle through much of this. Unfortunately, too many believers never seem to discover the things that God has for them. There are many reasons we fall short. Thankfully, God is not trying to impair our ability to walk in His will. The opposite is true. God desires that we would have an understanding and walk in His will.

### **Don't Expect a Roadmap of the Future**

Perhaps one of the reasons for our failures is that we are looking for the wrong thing. We often pray to know what the will of God is for our lives. In doing so, we may expect God to answer with a detailed roadmap that provides perfect clarity for life's journey. We want to know the specifics well ahead of time. This is not how God guides. Our life is a walk of faith. We don't know what a day will bring forth. We don't know our length of days upon this earth. God doesn't provide us with an all encompassing perspective into the future. Instead He meets us and gives us what we need to take the next step. Our life is one of constant waiting and depending upon God. There are times when this is frustrating as our flesh prefers to charge ahead in our own strength. As we submit to the Lord, there is a true beauty that emerges as we learn to trust and obey.

### **It Begins With Obedience**

In Genesis 24 Abraham has his servant swear that he will take a wife for his son Isaac. In doing so, he is given specific instructions not to take a woman from the Canaanites and not to take Isaac back to his old country. We can understand why Abraham would require this. God would reiterate this command later through Moses that the men of Israel were not to take wives from the Canaanites because they would cause them to stumble and turn to their idols. Abraham previously walked in a similar lifestyle in his

old country and he understands the danger of taking his son back there. Instead, he directs the servant to bring the woman out of those things and to his son. Again, there are powerful pictures in all of this. The point however, is that we will never walk in God's will without obedience. This is the first key and yet many never come to a place of surrender. Today, we are blessed to have the full counsel of God in His Word. If we are to walk in the will of God we must be obedient to the things God has shown us in Scripture. If we walk in disobedience to the commands in His word we not only commit sin, but we rob ourselves of the richness of His perfect will. It isn't only obedience to God's word that helps to provide guidance in our lives. It can also be an earthly authority. In the case of our story in Genesis 24, the servant was obedient to Abraham. It is important to recognize that all authority is from God (Rom 13:1). God may use those in authority over us to direct our steps. Therefore, be cautious not to take their directions lightly. Unless, they directly contradict the commands of scripture we have the responsibility to obey these other authorities in our lives.

### **Don't Force It**

We have the very real ability to take a thought or idea and prematurely assume it to be the will of God. We have such a capacity to deceive ourselves. The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes are powerful motivators. These carnal desires can affect our motives in such a way that we are slow to detect our error. Worse yet is when we become unwilling to yield these desires. How many Christians have found themselves in hot water because they sought to force something to take place? God is able to work without our striving. In verse 5 Abraham's servant asks a very important question: What if the woman isn't willing to follow me to this land? There are always things outside of our control. As servants of God it is not our place to try and take control of a given situation and force a desired outcome. In this case, the servant wasn't to take the woman against her will nor was he to bring Isaac to her. Should the woman be unwilling to follow, the servant would be released from the oath. In a similar way, as we look for the Lord to guide us in His will, we can understand that God is not calling us to manipulate things or force things to happen. If we have to open the door by force, we probably shouldn't walk through it.

### **Take Practical Steps**

When we are seeking direction in our lives we honestly might wish for God to answer in a supernatural way. Certainly there are examples in the Bible

when God provided direction in such a way. Most often, however, God directs steps. In verse 11 Abraham's servant makes his way to a well outside of the city. This is the place where the women of the city will be coming to draw water. He also comes at the time of day when they are most likely to come. There is such practical wisdom in this. The servant knows that he is looking for a wife for Isaac so he goes to the place where he is most likely to find one. As he took practical steps God guided him. The same is true for us. Although there may not seem to be anything supernatural about this, God is working behind the scenes in our lives. When we begin to take practical steps towards the things that God has for us, He is able to meet us in powerful ways. Take for instance the person in need of a job. It does little good to recognize the need for employment if there is no action to bring it to pass. If you want to get a job you must take practical steps toward finding one. The same is true for ministry. If there is something on your heart, begin to take practical steps toward it and see if God blesses them. Action is required. We will never do something for God by doing nothing.

### **Take Prayerful Steps**

Our practical steps are powerless without prayer. In verse 12 Abraham's servant prays and asks that God would grant success. We are usually pretty good at taking practical steps in a matter. We often do those things without really even thinking about them. We more often fall short in prayer. We are more apt to trust in methods than in prayer. This shouldn't be so. It is through prayer that causes our practical steps to move from the natural realm to the supernatural. It opens up endless possibilities because God is unlimited. He is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think (Eph 3:20). In contrast, an absence of prayer leaves us operating in our own strength. We trust in our finite resources instead of God's infinite power. The person without a prayer life will consistently sense a lack of direction and clarity and will be prone to making poor decisions. Meanwhile, the prayerful believer will find his steps directed by God and walking in His will.

### **Let God Confirm It**

God is abundantly able to confirm to us when we are doing His will. Remember, God is not trying to obscure His will for our lives; He wants us to fulfill it. As the servant of Abraham prayed, he made a specific request in verse 14 so he would know if the Lord was guiding him. It's here that we could easily be tripped up. Don't confuse this with giving God instructions. Rather, view this as trusting God to provide specific

leading. We cannot dictate how God will work in a specific situation. Nevertheless, in meaningful and tangible ways, God confirms His will to us. God is providentially orchestrating the events of our lives. He goes before us to prepare good works for us to walk in (Eph 2:10). In this chapter, there is no obvious miracle or prophetic word from God. Still it was God's deliberate unfolding of events that brought about the intended result. God confirmed to the servant that He was indeed guiding and directing him. In a similar way, He confirms His will to the person of faith.

### **Worship**

Once it was clear that God led the servant to Rebekah, he immediately bowed down his head and worshiped the Lord. This is a natural outflow of the Christian life. There is an understanding that God specifically guided and that every aspect of this was ordered of the Lord. The true believer knows that every blessing flows down from God (Jas 1:17). Sometimes in moments of doubt we could look at the things the Lord has done in our lives and ascribe them to chance. This is not true. When we understand that God is sovereignly working behind the scenes in our lives it moves us to a greater sense of awe and wonder. True worship becomes one of the greatest indicators that you are walking in the will of God.

# With the Word Bible Commentary

## Genesis 23

***Abraham the mourner.*** Sarah is the only woman named in the Bible whose age is given and burial described. It was the death of a princess, a woman of faith (Heb. 11:11–13; 1 Pet. 3:6). Abraham felt the pain of his loss and openly expressed his grief. Faith is not the enemy of tears, for we sorrow as those who have hope (1 Thess. 4:13–18). Jesus wept (John 11:35) even though He knew He would raise His friend from the dead.

***Abraham the sojourner.*** Ephron did not plan to *give* Abraham a valuable piece of land, but that is how typical Eastern bargaining always begins. The land already belonged to Abraham (15:7), but he could never explain that to his unbelieving neighbors. He was a pilgrim and did not claim any of it for himself.

***Abraham the owner.*** He paid a high price for what became one of the most famous tombs in Bible history, and eventually six people were buried there (49:31–32). Abraham owned only one thing on earth: a grave. Genesis ends with a full tomb, but the gospel story ends with an empty tomb! And because Jesus Christ lives, we who trust in Him never need fear death.

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). With the word Bible commentary (Ge 23:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## With the Word Bible Commentary

### Genesis 24

This is the longest chapter in Genesis, and it focuses on faith, hope, and love.

*The father* (1–9) loved his son and wanted a bride for him. He had faith that God would keep His promise (Gen. 12:2) and provide the bride. Note that the bride could not be an outsider (1 Cor. 7:39). Is this whole event not a picture of the heavenly Father getting a bride for His Son?

*The servant* (10–49) loved his master's son and asked for God's guidance. He knew how to "watch and pray" and discern God's leading. He was not disappointed, for God rewarded his faith. Little did Rebekah realize that a small act of kindness would open up an exciting new life for her. "Make every occasion a great occasion, for you can never tell when someone may be taking your measure for a larger place," advised Marsden. The servant talked about his master and not about himself, and he would not eat until he had given his message (John 4:31–32).

*The bride* (50–60) had nothing to go on but the treasures she saw and the words she heard from the servant. In spite of those who urged her to delay, she made a decision of faith and said, "I will go!" This is an illustration of personal salvation. The Spirit speaks to us about Christ and shows us His treasures, and we trust Christ even though we have never seen Him (1 Peter 1:8).

*The bridegroom* (61–67) was last seen on the mountain with his father (chap. 22), but now he comes to meet his bride at eventide. That is what Jesus Christ will do when He returns for His church. Then we shall see Him and be like Him (1 John 3:1–2).

—Wiersbe, W. W. (1997, c1991). With the word Bible commentary (Ge 22:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.





