

# When Your *Path* Intersects God's *Providence*

## Genesis 24

### INTRODUCTION: Meaning of life in less than 5 minutes, from John Maxwell...

*On the first day, God created the cow.*

*God said, "You must go to the field with the farmer all day long and suffer under the sun, have calves and give milk to support the farmer. I will give you a life span of sixty years." The cow said, "That's a kind of tough life you want me to live for sixty years. Let me do it for twenty years and I'll give back the other forty." And God agreed.*

*On the second day, God created the monkey. God said, "Entertain people, do monkey tricks, make them laugh. I'll give you a twenty-year life span." Monkey said, "How boring, monkey tricks for twenty years? I don't think so. Cow gave you back forty, but I'll give back ten, okay?" Once again, God agreed.*

*On the third day, God created the dog. God said, "Sit all day by the door of your house and bark at anyone who comes in or walks past. I will give you a life span of twenty years." The dog said, "That's too long to be barking. Give me ten years and I'll give back the other ten." So God agreed (sigh).*

*On the fourth day, God created man. God said, "Eat, sleep, play, have sex, enjoy. Do nothing, just enjoy, enjoy. I'll give you twenty years." Man said, "What? Only twenty years? No way, man. Tell you what, I'll take my twenty, and the forty cow gave back, the ten monkey gave back, and the ten dog gave back. That makes eighty, okay?" Okay," said God. "You've got a deal."*

*So that is why for the first twenty years we eat, sleep, play, have sex, enjoy, and do nothing; for the next forty years we slave in the sun to support our family; for the next ten years we do monkey tricks to entertain our grandchildren; and for the last ten years we sit in front of the house and bark at everybody that goes pass!*

*Well, life is about seasons, and every season brings a measure of change! But no season of life is more exciting and, at times, scarier than the season of moving from singleness to marriage. But God doesn't leave you without instruction.*

**CONTEXT:** There is a principle of biblical study called the **principle of proportion** - that is to say that the amount of space that the text gives to any particular topic indicates the significance of that topic in the library of theological thought. **Genesis 24** is the longest chapter in the book of Genesis, and what is it about? It's all about ***finding a bride for Isaac***. If we apply the principle of proportion to this book, we would determine that the marriage relationship is massively important to God.

### Consider -

- The bible begins with a wedding - Adam and Eve.
- The bible ends with a wedding - the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.
- The first miracle Jesus ever performed was at a wedding.

***Marriage is a living parable of the Gospel - The husband laying his life down for the bride he loves.***

For all of those reasons, the **marriage of Isaac** is important - but beyond all of that. Isaac's marriage is directly tied to the ultimate COVENANT plan and promises of God. ***So the Holy Spirit slows down here...and invites us to lean in closer.***

Three years have passed since the death of Sarah. At this point, Isaac is 40 and Abraham is 140. Abraham knew that if his life's work was to endure, Isaac had to have a child. And for Isaac to have a child, he needed a wife. But Isaac was like a lot of young men in this generation; he wasn't actively pursuing a wife, so Dad got involved. Now keep in mind this is before Dating Apps, this is before Hinge, Tinder, this is before FarmersOnly.com....Back in Bible times, your 140 dad gets to pick your spouse.

**JOKE:** Young people think about the oldest person you know? We have a few in this church who are approaching Abraham's age... How would you like a 140-year-old man to choose your mate? ***You are thinking Ariana Grande, He's more into Angela Lansbury!*** So Isaac's faith will be challenged here as well!

**TEXT: Genesis 24:1–9 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years. And the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. <sup>2</sup> And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh,

Now this servant is likely **Eleazar of Damascus**, whose name we learned earlier in the narrative. Abraham says to Eleazar - "Put your hand under my thigh, Now, I don't want to get too specific here for the sake of our younger listeners. But in Hebrew, it is a euphemism. Abraham isn't talking about his thigh.... He's talking about the male reproductive organ. This is the most serious Oath a person could take in that culture. Eliazar was basically taking the legacy of Abraham into his hand.

<sup>3</sup> that I may make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, <sup>4</sup> but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

***That brings us to the first word I want to give you - the word...***

## **1. Foster the Right Perspective**

Abraham's perspective was that he wanted Isaac to marry someone who had taken the same step of faith that everyone in his family had taken. Elizar raises the obvious question...

<sup>5</sup> The servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?"

Now, that is a practical issue that Eliazar needs to be prepared for. She may not wish to participate. What is Plan B - if she doesn't want to come with me?

<sup>6</sup> Abraham said to him, "See to it that you do not take my son back there."

Abraham knew that his entire life of walking with and trusting God could be undone by one bad marriage. No, she has to believe that God spoke to me and told me to come here and receive my reward. ***There is no plan B.***

**LISTEN:** The Bible really does give you remarkable liberty when it comes to who you can marry. It doesn't matter what color their hair, their skin, it doesn't matter the kind of music they enjoy, or the car they drive - but you have absolutely no right to marry someone who has not believed God the way you have believed God.

The NT says it this way - be NOT unequally yoked together with an unbeliever.

**ILLUSTRATION:** That phrase has reference to two animals harnessed with a yoke and pulling a plow - if one of the animals was a 2 TON bull and the other is a 500lb donkey.... What's going to happen? The plow will not be able to progress in a straight line. That's where so many families are right now.

The Prophet Amos said it this way - how can two walk together, less they be agreed?

There are some things that you need agreement

Why? Because if that deepest core issue is not in common, over time, it will not matter what is in common.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Do you know one of the saddest things in the world I see week to week? Is a woman on the edge of her seat, taking notes, and a deadbeat husband trying to stay awake. Why? She married someone who doesn't believe like her. Give him long enough and he will undo all of the good God has done in her life.

Abraham says - God forbid you take my son back there....

<sup>7</sup> The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your offspring I will give this land,' **he will send his angel before you**, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.

What do you imagine Angels are doing today? Smoting demonic strongholds? I'm sure - but have you considered that they are also working on your behalf to bring you to an intersection with your future mate?

<sup>8</sup> But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine; only you must not take my son back there.” <sup>9</sup> So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning this matter.

- Abraham Looks Beyond the Moment to the Mission
- He’s not just looking for a daughter-in-law, he’s looking for a nation of people.
- He’s not looking for a piece of property in Canaan, he’s looking for a city whose builder and maker is GOD.
- He’s not just looking for grandkids; ultimately, he’s looking for his own Messiah, his own Savior.

When it comes to marriage, don’t fall into the trap of short-term thinking.

Don’t just look for chemistry, look for covenant compatibility

**ILLUSTRATION:** I had a young man years ago come to me and tell me he wanted to marry a young lady in our church. I asked him why - and he said, “Well, look at her - she’s hot!” I said, “Yes, and so is hell”. Attraction is important, don’t get me wrong, but over the long haul, it will not last. Typically, they look as good as they are ever going to look on their wedding day... It’s downhill from there. That high school quarterback who gives you butterflies will plump like a weenie on a grill.

Everything about this narrative tells us that the choice of Rebecca wasn’t MOSTLY about Rebecca. It was about where this story would ultimately come to an end.

*The first word is perspective... the second word is...*

## **2. Walk the Proper Path**

Eliazar put himself on a path that was likely to intersect with the young lady God had chosen for Isaac.

### **Genesis 24:10–11 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor. <sup>11</sup> And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water.

Now, if it were your job to find a suitable mate for Isaac, and you had to find a faith-filled young lady who was willing to follow God the way Abraham had followed, where would you go? Remember - this is a day before local churches, before synagogues, Eleazar goes to a well.

It would have been the lady's job to draw water for her family. He knows most of the local girls will have to come here.

***Life requires initiative*** - fortune favors the bold. Sometimes Christian singles can wrap cowardice in a veil of faith. They say, “Well, I’m just trusting God to bring the right person at the right time”. Good -but get up and go to where the right people hang out!

Now what some do is even worse than that - they go to where the Devil’s crowd hangs out and say, “I just can’t meet a good Christian”... not there you can’t.

Put yourself in the Pathway of Potential. Show God that you mean business and trust Him for the results.

<sup>12</sup> And he said, “O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. <sup>13</sup> Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. <sup>14</sup> Let the young woman to whom I shall say, ‘Please let down your jar that I may drink,’ and who shall say, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels’—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master.

Now stop for a minute and remember - this is descriptive, not prescriptive... You don’t go to the store and say, “Lord, let the gal who orders a diet mt. Dew be the one... “

This is actually quite a request - All he would do is ask for a drink personally... she is to offer to water his camels.... Do you have any idea how much a camel drinks?

**ILLUSTRATION:** A camel typically would drink about **twenty-five gallons of water**, and an ancient water **jar held about three gallons** of water. This means that the girl would volunteer to make between **eighty to one hundred descents** into the well. As to the amount of time she would give to this, a camel takes about **ten minutes** to drink its full amount of water. It would take **nearly two sweaty hours!**

If God would answer this prayer, it would reveal that this young lady is selfless, servant-hearted, a very hard worker, and kind. Look what happens...

It’s tragic when believers confuse laziness for trust. “I’m just waiting on God,” they say — but they’re waiting in the wrong places. Get in the environments where faith flourishes. Abraham’s servant went where godly women would be. That’s initiative married to trust.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Guys, where are you most likely to connect with someone serious about their faith? Sadler Ranch?

*The first word is Perspective, the Second word is Path, the third word is...*

### **3. Trust the Power of Providence**

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

**The Bible teaches that God works in a couple of different ways.**

- His **seen** hand of **Miracle**. This is when God lifts the curtain and lets you get a glimpse of his power, his glory.
- His **unseen** hand of **Providence**. This is where God causes ***all things*** to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.

**There are three understandings of Providence:**

- **Islam's** view of providence is one of **fatalism**. That is to say that your choices, plans, and decisions amount to nothing. God will do what God will do. So eat, drink, and be merry.
- The **Liberal** view of providence is that of a God who refuses to involve Himself directly in any of man's decisions or plans, and God can only say what will happen based upon his ability to peer into the future. So ***man*** is ultimately Sovereign. Man is the decision maker.
- **The Biblical View is neither.** The Bible teaches that man makes decisions that are incredibly important, and he is accountable to God for the decisions that he makes. However, God is bigger than the decisions of man and able to cause all things to work together to accomplish His ultimate purpose.
- If you believe that your choices do not matter, you will be **passive**
- If you believe that your choices ultimately determine everything, you will be **paralyzed**.

**ILLUSTRATION: Ray Bradbury told a short story called "The Sound of Thunder".**

*You've probably never read the story, but you have seen the storyline depicted in dozens of shows and movies throughout the years. It's the story of an illegal time machine. A man named **Travis**, for a substantial amount of money, will transport people back in time. A man named Echols comes to pay the money to go back in time. Travis tells him, Now, when you get into the past, I want you to realize there is going to be an antigravity medal path. He tells him, No matter what you do, don't get off the path. Well, Echles asks, "Why?". Travis says, "Well, say we accidentally kill a mouse, one mouse by stepping on it. That means all of the future families of the families of that one mouse you have eliminated... a billion possible mice with the stomp of your foot. And what about all the foxes that need those mice to survive? For want of 10 mice, a fox dies, for want of 10 foxes, a lion starves, and eventually, some caveman goes out to hunt for food, but there is no food because you stepped on it. So the caveman starves for having no food, and from his loins would have sprung ten sons, 100 sons, and thus onward, ultimately a billion people unborn are throttled in the womb. Rome never rises on it's 7 hills. Step on a mouse and you crush the pyramids. Washington never crosses the Delaware. There's never a United States. **SO STAY ON THE PATH.***

**Point?** Every single thing in history is interlocked and interlaced. Kind of stresses you out, doesn't it, you? Can you possibly anticipate all the changes?

What if you marry the wrong person - do you see what that does... 1000s of other people must also marry the wrong person because of your decision.

**The Bible teaches – God carries that weight, not you. NOTICE HOW THE PLANS OF MAN AND THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD INTERSECT IN OUR STORY.**

<sup>16</sup> The young woman was very attractive in appearance, a maiden whom no man had known. She went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up. <sup>17</sup> Then the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please give me a little water to drink from your jar." <sup>18</sup> She said, "Drink, my lord." And she quickly let down her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink. <sup>19</sup> When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking." <sup>20</sup> So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw water, and she drew for all his camels.

NOW - most of us would have sealed the deal right there, Eleazar was not so hasty... he watches and considers..

<sup>21</sup> The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the Lord had prospered his journey or not.

Can I say right here - the hasty decision is almost always the wrong one. Watch and keep silent a while. Watch whether he passes by the offering box after church, that will say more about him than whether or not he opens the door for you. Watch him during worship. Watch and pray.

<sup>22</sup> When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half shekel, and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels, <sup>23</sup> and said, "Please tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?" <sup>24</sup> She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." <sup>25</sup> She added, "We have plenty of both straw and fodder, and room to spend the night."

The Bible teaches in Proverbs - IT'S the Glory of God to conceal a matter, it's the glory of a king to seek it out... Do you know what that means? There is a bit of a game of hide and seek going on... God is working behind the scenes, and it is YOUR GLORY to seek out how he is working.

<sup>26</sup> The man bowed his head and worshiped the Lord <sup>27</sup> and said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the Lord has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen." <sup>28</sup> Then the young woman ran and told her mother's

household about these things.

When the servant realizes God's hand, he bows his head and worships. Providence isn't complete until it turns into praise. When you recognize God's fingerprints on your story, thank Him. God's plan is always bigger, often harder, but ultimately better. When your heart aligns with His purposes, even detours become divine directions.

**CONCLUSION/INVITATION:**

I once received a rejection letter from Belmont — the worst day of my life, or so I thought. However, that closed door led me to UNA, where I met my wife and discovered my calling. Looking back, I now see that the rejection was a redirection — one of God's camels leading me toward His purpose.