

Week 3

Isaac & Rebekah: Chase God First (Gen 24:1-4)

We're in the third week of a series called "*Chasing Love*" and in this series we're learning how to navigate **Singleness, Dating, Relationships & Sex in a Confused Culture**.



Have you ever noticed that love songs and breakup songs are always at the top of the charts? It's because deep within us, we ALL want to *love* and *be loved*. And often times we're so fearful of missing out on this type of relationship, we just lower our standards and jump in when we're really not ready.

So, how do we know *who* to date, *how* to date, and *when* to date? The truth is, the Bible doesn't say anything about dating because dating is a relatively modern invention – only going back the last 70 or 80 years. That's not to say that dating is necessarily bad – in the Bible they mainly had arranged marriages which also had it's own issues if handled the wrong way. But, people in the Bible didn't date as we know it...

- Adam didn't notice Eve on Tinder and meet up with her in the Garden.
- Joseph didn't notice Mary, then start stalking her on social media and liking her posts.

In fact, dating in our culture is a little weird – it's more like selling a used car than anything...

- You **hide everything** that will hurt the sell and advertise whatever will close the deal. We do this face to face with people at school, but social media took this to an entirely new level.
- You make sure to take the used car for a **test drive**. This is fine when buying a used car, but we've brought that same mentality into the dating world. Our "test drive" is experimenting with sex to see if we're compatible.

In fact, the stats on the hookup culture are scary. One study shows that 77.7% of college females admitted to 'hooking up.' For guys, it's 84.2%. (Matt Chandler, *Mingling of Souls*, 52).

But the Bible gives us a MUCH better way to approach relationships. You see, even though the Bible doesn't say anything about "dating" – it has a LOT to say about evaluating a person carefully to see if they are someone you would want to be in a relationship with (and ultimately marry). For example...

Proverbs 25:24 "It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife."

Do you think that's written for a married man? No, a married guy would say, "Thanks a lot, that would have been some great information BEFORE I married her!" No, this verse is written for a single man evaluating what kind of woman he should marry *before* he enters a relationship with her!



Guys: is the girl that you are interested in combative – always arguing with her parents, teachers, friends, coaches? Does she have an attitude toward people of authority? If so, then how do you think she's going to respond long-term when you ask her to follow your leadership as the head of your household? Do you really want to live with that for the rest of your life?

And ladies, just four verses later, Proverbs helps you evaluate a guy that you may be interested in...

Proverbs 25:28 "A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls."



Girls: does that cute guy you're interested in have a temper – no self-control with his mouth & temper? Or does he lack self-control when it comes to his eyes and his hands? Does he lack self-control with YOU? Would you want to marry a guy that leaves his mind, eyes, and heart completely unprotected like a city without walls, which means that he'll ultimately leave *you* and your marriage unprotected!

These verses (and many others in the Bible) are telling you that you should *seriously* evaluate a person before you ever let your heart get attached to them. And this type of evaluation leads us to two critical questions:

- 1) **What qualities should I look for?** (This is the *who* question)
- 2) **What process should I go through to find that right person?** (This is the *how* question)

So, to answer these questions, I don't want to give you a lot of information. Instead, I'd rather show you a real-life couple in the Bible who did it the right way – Isaac and Rebekah.

And though their process looks a bit different than our approach today, Their love story gives us some principles that can be applied to our modern context. So, over the next several weeks, we're going to look carefully at their relationship, which will help you as you prayerfully consider: WHO, HOW, and WHEN should I date.

Genesis 24:1–4 *“Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years. And the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. ² 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, ³ 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, ⁴ but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”*

Chapter 24 tells the story of how Abraham was going to find a wife for his son Isaac. You see, God had given Abraham the promise that all nations would be blessed through his offspring (Isaac). But Abraham was approaching the end of his life and Isaac had no wife.

So, Abraham felt the urgency of helping his son find a wife (which was their custom), but Abraham also knew how important this decision would be. Not only would this be the woman that Isaac would spend the rest of his life with, but the Jewish nation, the Messiah, and God's Word would ultimately come through the line of Isaac. So, this decision was HUGE.

In fact, it's such an important decision, Abraham does two things...

- 1) He enlists his oldest, wisest, and most trusted servant to help him.
- 2) He makes this servant take an oath before God that he will carefully obey his *exact* instructions when choosing a wife for Isaac.



What is this showing us? It's showing us that God cares, and wants to be intimately involved in the decision of WHO you will date/marry. This should encourage you because God cares about your love life. BUT it also shows you that God is *very* serious about *who*, *how*, and *when* you enter into a relationship with someone!

And right out of the gate, Isaac's story shows us two big ideas that we need to focus on when we're trying to find the right person...

1. Focus on running your race rather than finding a relationship.

Let me explain. Chapter 24 is all about Isaac finding a wife but when we read the first four verses, who is missing from the scene? *Isaac!* So, even though God has motivated Abraham and his servant to begin discussing Isaac's future wife, Isaac is nowhere to be found. Why? Because Isaac's main focus wasn't on finding a wife; his focus was on pursuing God and living the life that God had called him to live!

You see, Isaac trusted that God would sovereignly use the input of his parents, other trusted believers, and the normal course of life to bring the right person at the right time. He understood that his job was to focus on God, *not* on finding someone to be with. He was seeking hard after God and trusting the Lord to bring the right person, at the right time, in the right way!



So what does this look like for you today?

Well, imagine your life as a race that you're running. As a single person you're running hard after God. Devoted to Him. Using your time, talents, resources, and influence to serve Him and make Him known.

As you're chasing after God, there will be all sorts of people (saved and unsaved) running their own paths all around you. Some will cross your path right in front of you and they may even be cute, but they're running in a totally different direction, pursuing things other than God.

So you tell yourself, *"Hey, they're cute, they seem cool, but I'm not going to attach myself to them. Their life is going one way and my life is going in another, and that's not a good combination. They will pull me away from God."*

This kind of evaluation is going to mean that you'll let a lot of cute, witty, charming people run right by you because they're not pursuing Christ and the things of God.

But when you're chasing after Christ – eventually you're going to look up and see people chasing after God with you. As you're running along with those people, you'll begin to notice someone who is running at the same

pace as you, in the same *direction* as you, and pursuing the same *purpose* as you – JESUS! And as this happens, you'll eventually find someone to run with for the rest of your life.

This is exactly what Paul was telling young Timothy...

2 Timothy 2:22 "So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

You see, Isaac wasn't pursuing a wife who would give him meaning and purpose; he had already found meaning and purpose in his relationship with God. But as we'll see over the next few weeks, God was going to use Isaac's dad, along with other circumstances, to ultimately connect Isaac with a woman that lived over 500 miles away!

But Isaac teaches us another big idea that is vitally important...

2. Focus on being the right person rather than finding the right person.

You see, we're often so focused on *finding* the right person that we don't give much attention to *being* the right person. But, Isaac was focused on being the kind of man that a godly woman would want to be with. After all, why should he hold someone to a standard that he wasn't willing to live up to himself?

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How do we know that Isaac had that kind of character and relationship with God? Well remember, just two chapters earlier, we see the famous scene where Isaac literally lays himself on the altar, proving that he trusts God's plan for his life...

Genesis 22:1–14 "After these things God tested Abraham... ² He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."³ So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose

and went to the place of which God had told him...⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together.⁷ And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"⁸ Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.⁹ When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."¹² He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"...

Isaac was a healthy and strong young man at this time. He could have easily resisted his elderly father, but Isaac had learned simple obedience from his dad, and Isaac trusted the instructions that the Lord had given his dad. So, Isaac *willingly* laid down on the alter and did not flinch when his dad was about to plunge the knife into his chest. But God was just testing Abraham (and Isaac), and both passed the test!

In fact, Isaac's obedience was a foreshadowing of Jesus Himself...

- **Jesus and Isaac both were the "one and only son" loved by their father.**
- **Both of them were being sacrificed on the same mountain** (called Mt. Moriah in the Old Testament, called Mt. Calvary in the New Testament)
- **Both carried the wood to the place of their sacrifice.**
- **Both were submissive to the will of their father.**
- **In both cases, a resurrection was prophesied** (Abraham told his servants, "We will *both* go up on the mountain and we will *both* come back to you." Jesus said, "I will rise on the third day.")

- **They both willingly laid down on the wood.** (In John 10:18 Jesus said no one took His life from Him, He willingly laid it down and then took it back up again).
- **In both cases, the Lord Himself provided the sacrifice** (the ram, Jesus – the Lamb of God).
- **Both ultimately survived the sacrifice.**

Isaac wasn't focused on *finding* the right person; he was focused on *being* the right person! God was developing Isaac's character so he would be ready for a relationship with Rebekah that would ultimately bring about the Son of God, the Word of God, and the people of God!

And that is the model for us as well when it comes to finding the right person...

- Focus on running your *race*, rather than finding a *relationship*.
- And focus on *being* the right person rather than *finding* the right person!

Small Groups