



Guidance Needed

God directs the steps of those who seek Him.

GENESIS 24:12-20,24-27

For many people, planning is an everyday part of life. We also realize that life often doesn't go as planned. It is then that we need to remember the words of Solomon, "A person's heart plans his way, but the LORD determines his steps" (Prov. 16:9). While we do not know what each new day holds, we can be sure that God directs the steps of those who seek Him. Abraham's servant experienced this truth in Genesis 24.

- How is there comfort in knowing that God directs the steps of those who seek Him?

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

GENESIS 24:1–25:18

Genesis 24 begins with the statement, “Abraham was now old, getting on in years.” It addresses the concern of what’s going to happen concerning all the covenant promises God made to Abraham after he is gone.

Abraham’s son, Isaac, was forty years old and still did not have a wife. In our day, this is not so unusual. In their culture, however, it was highly remarkable as people typically married when they were still teenagers. The text is silent regarding the reason why Abraham waited so long to seek out a wife for Isaac. Whatever his reasons, the situation now posed another suspenseful situation concerning the covenant promises God made to Abraham. God promised Abraham that He would make him the father of many nations (Gen. 17:5), but should Isaac fail to marry and produce offspring of his own, it would all come to nothing.

Therefore, Abraham sent his trusted servant on a mission to find Isaac a wife. Abraham required his servant to make a solemn oath to find Isaac a wife from among their relatives. The servant had doubts that a woman would be willing to leave her family and return with him to Canaan, but Abraham was confident that the Lord would ensure success in his mission. Abraham had learned to trust “The LORD Will Provide” (22:14). When the servant arrived at the city of Nahor, he met Rebekah, negotiated with her family the marriage arrangements between her and Isaac, and returned with her to the land of Canaan.

Genesis 25:1-11 brings the story of the life of Abraham to a close. He died at the age of 175, thirty-seven years after the death of Sarah. When Abraham died, Ishmael returned, and he and Isaac buried their father where Sarah was buried in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre (23:1-20).

 **As you read Genesis 24:12-20,24-27, reflect on how God directs the steps of those who seek Him.**

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

A REQUEST (GEN. 24:12-14)

¹² “**LORD, God of my master Abraham,**” he prayed, “**make this happen for me today, and show kindness to my master Abraham.** ¹³ **I am standing here at the spring where the daughters of the men of the town are coming out to draw water.** ¹⁴ **Let the girl to whom I say, ‘Please lower your water jug so that I may drink,’ and who responds, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels also’ — let her be the one you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.’**”

VERSE 12

When Abraham commissioned his servant to go to the town of Nahor in the region of Aram-naharaim [AY ram-nay huh RAY im], the servant took with him ten of his master’s camels along with other fine goods (v. 10). The journey would have taken the servant nearly a month to make.

In the evening upon his arrival to the town, the servant decided to go to the well outside of town and have his camels kneel down beside it (v. 11). It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word “to kneel” sounds almost exactly like the Hebrew word meaning “to bless,” seemingly anticipating the blessing that was to come. The cool of the evening was when the women from town came out to the well to draw water for their families. Therefore, the servant could water his camels and at the same time locate himself in a place where a potential bride for Isaac possibly could be found.

At this point the servant began to pray for the success of the mission. By addressing the Lord as **God of my master**, the servant was accentuating God’s covenant with Abraham. This mission was tied to the covenant promises God had made to Abraham through Isaac. Also, the Hebrew word translated **kindness** is *hesed*, the word that is most closely associated with God’s faithful, loving-kindness toward those with whom He has established a covenant. The servant was asking God to continue demonstrating His faithfulness to the covenant He had made with Abraham by providentially orchestrating everything that needed to happen.

- What do you think prompted Abraham's servant to pray?
How likely is it that he learned from watching Abraham pray?
Why is this significant?
-
-

- Where do you need God's direction in your life? Will you pause right now and ask God to direct you?
-
-

VERSES 13-14

Stating to the Lord that he was standing *at the spring where the daughters of the men of the town are coming out to draw water*, the servant was doing more than merely informing God of his location—as if God needed this information. What the servant was saying was, “God, I have done everything that is humanly possible to do in this situation, but I realize that everything I am trying to accomplish here depends entirely upon you.” While doing all he knew to do, he trusted God to act and work out His perfect will.

Trusting in God's direction to accomplish his mission of finding the right woman for Isaac to marry, the servant continued his prayer, asking God to show him which woman was the right one with a sign of hospitality and service. It was to be a test of character. When he asked a girl to give him a drink and she responded by giving him a drink and also volunteering to water his camels, then the servant asked that she be the one that the Lord had chosen to be Isaac's wife.

The first sign was to be confirmed by a more unlikely second one. Within a fifteen-minute time frame, a camel can drink thirty gallons of water. Multiplying this by the ten camels that the servant brought with him, that would mean she would have had to haul approximately three hundred gallons of water, which weighs altogether about 2,500 pounds, in order to water all of the undoubtedly thirsty camels. The girl who would volunteer to show this kindness to the servant would certainly be a virtuous young woman. The servant did not ask God for an extraordinary, remarkable miracle as a sign. Instead, he sought the Lord's guidance within what was an ordinary situation in their day.

○ Why might we hesitate to ask God for a sign to show His direction?

BIBLE SKILL: Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.

Abraham's servant needed God's guidance to find a wife for Isaac. He apparently had learned from Abraham's example that he could find that needed guidance through prayer. Read Luke 22:41-42 and 2 Corinthians 12:6-9. What are some attitudes, characteristics, or behaviors that can hinder our prayers? Read James 4:2-3 and Matthew 5:23-24. Identify a situation in which you prayed for God's guidance. How did God answer your prayers? Did you find it difficult to recognize the answer? How did you express praise for His response?

THE ANSWER (GEN. 24:15-20)

¹⁵ Before he had finished speaking, there was Rebekah — daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor — coming with a jug on her shoulder. ¹⁶ Now the girl was very beautiful, a virgin — no man had been intimate with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up. ¹⁷ Then the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me have a little water from your jug." ¹⁸ She replied, "Drink, my lord." She quickly lowered her jug to her hand and gave him a drink. ¹⁹ When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I'll also draw water for your camels until they have had enough to drink." ²⁰ She quickly emptied her jug into the trough and hurried to the well again to draw water. She drew water for all his camels.

VERSE 15

Before the servant had even finished praying, God was setting into motion the answer to his prayer. This is reminiscent of God's words to Israel through Isaiah: "Even before they call, I will answer; while they are still speaking, I will hear" (Isa. 65:24). God is more ready to hear our prayers than we are ready to pray. Also, before continuing with a description of what transpired as Rebekah approached **with a jug on her shoulder**, Moses explained who Rebekah was in relationship to Abraham's family. Rebekah's grandfather, **•Nahor**, was Abraham's brother. Rebekah was part of Abraham's family and met his criterion for a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24:4).

VERSES 16-17

Rebekah's attractiveness as a wife for Isaac was enhanced by the fact that she was **a virgin**. Whoever would become Isaac's wife would be an essential part of God's covenant promises that had been made to Abraham and were going to be passed down to Isaac and on down to his offspring. This marriage concerned God's promise to use Abraham and his offspring to be a blessing to every nation, which would someday culminate in the birth of Jesus.

After providing his audience with the essential information contained in verses 15-16a, Moses resumed his description of what happened as Rebekah went down to the spring to fill up her jug and came up. The fact that she **went down to the spring . . . and came up** implies that there was a distance between the spring and the location of the servants' camels. Also, that the servant **ran to meet her** to ask her for a drink after she had filled her jug seems to indicate that there was a significant distance from the well to the camels. This certainly added to the difficulty of the second test that Abraham's servant had devised for her.

The servant's running to meet Rebekah is significant because it not only speaks to the distance between the two of them but also to the servant's excitement of seeing her just as he was finishing his prayer. The person who truly trusts God to answer prayer is eager to see how God will do so.

VERSES 18-20

When Abraham's servant ran over to Rebekah and asked her for a little water from her jug (v. 17), she graciously replied in the affirmative and quickly lowered the heavy load of water she shouldered in order to give him a drink. Even though it was not convenient, Rebekah was quick to

show kindness to this stranger. This kindness was just one of the ways God was answering the servant's prayer (v. 12).

The line, **when she had finished giving him a drink**, draws out the suspense to see if she really was the one the servant was searching for. Unprompted, Rebekah offered to water the servant's ten camels, and right away **she quickly** emptied the water she had fetched for her own family in the trough. She **hurried** back to the well to draw more water for all ten camels, which was no easy task. The servant watched her in silence as he contemplated what God was doing (v. 21). This is another response of people who trust God to answer prayer. When they witness God answering their prayers, they acknowledge it and give Him all the credit for doing so.

 **How do God's answers to our prayers strengthen our faith?**

PRAISE OFFERED (GEN. 24:24-27)

²⁴ **She answered him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.”** ²⁵ **She also said to him, “We have plenty of straw and feed and a place to spend the night.”** ²⁶ **Then the man knelt low, worshiped the LORD,** ²⁷ **and said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not withheld his kindness and faithfulness from my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master’s relatives.”**

VERSES 24-25

When the camels had their fill, the servant was eager to return Rebekah's kindness with gifts of gold jewelry. He gave her a ring that weighed a half shekel and bracelets that together weighed ten shekels, matching the number of camels she had watered. While it would have been obvious to Rebekah that the servant had wealth given his ten camels, she could not have anticipated his generosity to her. After that, he asked her who her parents were and if there possibly was a room in her father's house for him to spend the night (vv. 22-23).

First, she replied precisely with the information Moses had already supplied his readers in verse 15 that her father was **•Bethuel**, the son of **•Milcah** and **Nahor**. Nowhere is there indication that she had yet given her name to the man. Also, it was unknown to her, but Nahor being her

grandfather was significant since he was Abraham's brother. In fact, Rebekah was a descendant of both of Abraham's brothers, certainly indicating she indeed was Abraham's relative. Next, she told the man that there was **plenty of straw and feed** for his camels and **a place** for him **to spend the night**.

There is no greater indicator of our dependence on God than our prayer lives.

VERSES 26-27

The most notable actions of the servant were the first thing he did when he got to the well and the last thing he did before departing from it. He prayed. When he first arrived at the well, the servant asked the Lord to show covenant kindness to his master, Abraham (v. 12). Now before leaving the well to meet Rebekah's family, the servant **knelt low** and **worshiped** the Lord, demonstrating how grateful he was to the Lord for answering the servant's prayer. Once again, God demonstrated that He would continue to be faithful in keeping His covenant promises to Abraham. What's more, the servant praised the Lord for leading him on his journey to his master's relatives. There is no greater indicator of our dependence on God than our prayer lives. And when we pray, God demonstrates that He is truly dependable to answer our prayers.

 **How is an answered prayer a demonstration of God's faithfulness?**

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Father*

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. (See Matthew 6:25-34; 7:11.)

APPLY THE TEXT

- + Believers should approach God when seeking direction.
- + Believers can see God’s answers to prayer when sensitive to His work.
- + Believers can praise God for His faithful provision and direction.

○ **As a group, discuss reasons why believers should approach God when seeking direction. Why is it helpful to ask other believers to join us as we do so? Why is it good to share with others God’s answers to our prayers?**

○ **What does a life characterized by the worship of the Lord communicate to Him and others? What are tangible ways you can praise God for His faithful provision and direction?**

○ **Memorize Genesis 24:26.**

Prayer Needs
