

Choosing the Right Person to Marry

Preached by: Matthew S. Black Text: Genesis 24

Date: June 18, 2011, 5pm Series: Genesis

OUTLINE

Introduction: In Genesis 24 we have the courtship and marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, one of the great love stories of the Bible.

History of Courtship and Dating

Courtship was originally done under the watchful eyes of parents. The couple was never alone, but was with the parents. Courtship was a long, formal process in the girl's house, ***under the leadership and direction of her mom and dad.*** And the woman's family controlled the entire courtship process.

- 1900s – Ladies' Home Journal – *fashion/morals contradict home and Bible*
- 1920s – Moving outside the Home with Entertainment, and Restaurants
- 1930s – Automobiles go Mass Market – *and kids farther away from parents sight*
- 1940s – World War II, Rosie the Riveter
- 1950s – Rock and Roll
- 1960s – Feminist Movement, Equal Rights, women treated like men
- 1970s – The Pill and Abortion
- The Present – Total Cultural Meltdown

Statistics

Cohabitation

- In 1970, 36 % of Americans were unmarried.
- In 1980—39% unmarried.
- In 1990—41%.
- In 2000—44%.
- Less and less people are getting married, why? Because they can live together, sleep together and they get some of the benefits of marriage without any of the obligations.
- Today as well there are over **86 million single adults.**
- In the 1950s, 80 % of all Americans were married – 1950.
- Today, 50 % are married. People aren't getting married, and those who do get married aren't staying married.

More Single Parent Homes, mostly single mothers

- So now 1/3rd of all children today are born to an unmarried women.
- 40% of children tonight go to bed without a father.
- 40% of all children today will live with a parent and that parent's live in boyfriend or girlfriend, and it's all really confusing.

Dating

Why is dating WRONG? It's privately overseen by the couple. No mother, father, pastor – nobody involved. The goal is totally undefined and often times it moves rapidly into a loss of

purity and a broken heart. **You spend lots of money, lots of time, lots of energy, lots of emotion.**

Courtship

Courtship, here's what it is. It's publically overseen by family and friends. You have **accountability**. You have **visibility**. You have **responsibility**. You have a **goal**: Marriage. Let us consider at 15 principles for marriage taken out of Genesis 24.

1. God created marriage, and it is therefore good! (Gen. 2:18; Heb. 13:4).
2. A Christian should NEVER be romantically connected to a non-Christian.
 - 1 Corinthians 7:39 tells us that we are “free to be married to whom [we] wish...[but] only in the Lord.”
 - 2 Corinthians 6:14, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?”
3. Men who want to pursue courtship should go where godly women are.
4. Marriage is for responsible men, not for boys.
5. The man takes the initiative and pursues a wife.
6. The man must court the lady through the father (1 Cor. 7:36).
7. If there is no father, the mother or a godly couple takes the place of protection for the young lady.
8. A man should pursue a woman who will make a godly wife and mother (Pro. 31:30).
9. A man should not pursue more than one woman at a time.
10. There should be no intimate contact between the couple until marriage, and then there should be lots of it. (1 Thess. 4:4-7, 2 Timothy 2:22, Genesis 39:9)
11. A woman should not pursue a husband, but pursue the Lord.
12. A woman's character should be observed from a distance before the man initiates.
13. God is sovereign, but we must also be faithful in obeying Him!
14. The man must choose the woman he loves, and then love the woman he chooses. Eph. 5
15. Pray for your future mate because God answers prayer.

Conclusion: Follow the Scriptures, not the world, in your pursuit of the right mate!

MANUSCRIPT

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Introduction: Let's first talk about the history of dating, courtship, and marriage. In Genesis 24 we have the courtship and marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. Aside from Solomon's Song, it is one of the greatest love stories of the Bible.¹

History of Courtship and Dating

At the turn in the century, in the early 1900s, if you wanted to get married, this is how it would work. Mom and dad would have a front room on their house called a parlor. In the parlor would be some nice sitting arrangements and perhaps a piano.

Courtship was originally done under the watchful eyes of parents. The parents would make a list of potential suitors – a young man of a good reputation in the parents eyes. A man, who was seen as a prospective husband, was permitted by the girl's parents to spend time with her. But the man and woman could not spend time **alone** with each other. Parents took care that there was no physical intimacy between the couple. The man could talk with a woman, listen to her songs and piano playing, and even communicate with her through letters. This was done to ensure that the couple got to know each other before marriage.

The couple was never alone, but was with the parents. The parents would carry on the conversation with the young man. They might ask...

- Do you love the Lord?
- What are your intentions?
- How's your finances?
- They might ask about his schooling or various topics of interest.

The parents would drill this man with questions, and they would have snacks and lots of time to talk and get to know this young man. They might have him over many, many times, and if at the end they feel that he's a fit, then they would allow him to get to know their daughter in their presence.

And this was a long, formal process in the girl's house, **under the leadership and direction of her mother and father.** In other words, the woman's family controlled the entire courtship process.

1900s – Ladies' Home Journal –*fashion/morals contradict the home and the Bible*

But then something happened in the early 1900's. **Women's magazines started coming out.** Ladies Home Journal by 1900 had over a million subscribers. Now rather than young women taking their cue of what is a normal woman from the church or their Bible or their family, or their mom and dad, they begin reading the women's magazines.

¹ This message has been adapted from Mars Hill media. I do not endorse this ministry but am grateful for this particular study.

The magazines have a lot about what is fashionable and feminine but there is not a lot of Bible verses in them. Have you ever looked at these magazines? There is not a lot of Bible. They are quite lawless. They essentially tell you how to break all God's commandments. But for the most part they tell how to live life according to the world's standards with no reference to God.

And so the NEW normal does not come from the Bible or from the family, but from some fashion designer that gets his fashion ideas from prostitutes and pimps. And our ladies and our daughters started reading these magazines. And they begin to think their mother and father are not normal. They are deeply influenced by what the magazine says.

1920s – Moving outside the Home with Entertainment, and Restaurants

In the 1920s what occurs is that the USA moves from being an agricultural society to an urbanized society. So everybody begins moving to the city, working in the city. So now creative culture moves in with them, and suddenly there are lots of entertainment possibilities. There are restaurants, movie theaters, dance halls and concert halls.

Essentially, the young ladies are starting to be taken out of their mom and dad's home to go on dates with boys out in the city. *No longer are they under the protection of father and mother, but they are now to entrust a hormone filled boy to guard the purity of their daughter.*

1930s – Automobiles go Mass Market

Then in the 1930s this really picks up because the automobile hits mass market. A young man buys a car, picks up the young lady, puts her in the car, and gets her away from her parents – particularly her dad – as quickly as possible. This is the genesis of the date. With the automobile, the young lady is taken farther and farther from home with less and less parental involvement. The main thing is that she is now quite far from the protection of father and mother. She is now alone under the dark sky, and she is in trouble. The teenage pregnancy rates start moving up for the first time. This goes on through the 40s and 50s as well.

1940s – World War II, Rosie the Riveter

In the 40s, men go to war, and women go to work. For the first time, mothers are taken out of the home and learn what it is to be independent. This is the beginning of the destruction of the family in America.

1950s – Rock and Roll

With the 50s comes a new musical phenomenon called "Rock and Roll".² Johann Sebastian Bach said, "The end of all music should be the glory of God and the refreshment of the human spirit." Instead, the purpose of this new music was stir up the passions of young men and ladies. In the early 1950's, Cleveland disc jockey Allan

² John MacArthur: "Our music cannot be like the music of the world, because our God is not like their gods. Most of the world's music reflects the world's ways, the world's standards, the world's attitudes, the world's gods. To attempt to use such music to reach the world is to lower the gospel in order to spread the Gospel. If the world hears that our music is not much different from theirs, it will also be inclined to believe that the Christian way of life is not much different from theirs."

Freed, revolutionized the music world. Borrowing a ghetto term for fornication, he coined the a new style of music “rock and roll”. Now young couples were being educated in impurity. When these new songs started being aired on the radio – “Rock Around the Clock,” “Good Rockin’ Tonight,” “Reelin’ and Rockin’” – the meaning had not changed. That which young people are to preserve until marriage was now being cheaply sung about continually over the airwaves.

1960s – Feminist Movement, Equal Rights, women treated like men

In the 1960s, you have a cultural experiment that is doomed to failure. All self control goes out the window. Everything that was sacred: a woman’s purity, a little baby, femininity—it is all on its way out the window. The feminist movement really hits its stride and demands equal rights for women. Chivalry goes out the window, and respect for women begins to go out the window as well.

There was a time when they were going to take the men and ladies signs off the restrooms and make them all unisex. Society was trying to undo the very order of Creation.

Chivalry - There was a day a woman walked into the room and men would stand out of respect and open the door. Men would help women with their coat. Men treated women as treasured and special. The feminist movement has tried to put an end to that.

Then out of the feminist movement comes the sexual revolution. Out of that revolution, the pornography industry becomes culturally acceptable, and filth magazines start to be sold not just under the counter but eventually above the counter, and now men are being told that fornication and all uncleanness was normal.

1970s – The Pill and Abortion

The 1970s come along, and all of the sudden everything is out of control. The birth control pill is developed, and now, theoretically, there would be no consequences to wrong actions. In spite of the pill, ladies were still getting pregnant, and on January 22, 1973 America institute legalized abortion. Commitment in marriage is falling apart, so in 1974 we create no-fault divorce laws.

The Present – Total Cultural Meltdown

Now we come to the present day. This long and winding road of cultural lawlessness is how we came to experience an entire cultural meltdown over the course of less than 100 years. At no point did the culture ever come to its senses and say, “This is not working. We should repent and go back and reevaluate whether or not this is indeed wise.” You have been born into all of this, and sadly, you might think this is normal.

Statistics

Cohabitation

- In 1970, 36 % of Americans were unmarried.
- In 1980—39% unmarried.
- In 1990—41%.
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- Less and less people are getting married, why? Because they can live together, sleep together and they get some of the benefits of marriage without any of the obligations.
- Today as well there are over **86 million single adults**.
- In the 1950s, 80 % of all Americans were married – 1950.
- Today, 50 % are married, okay? People aren't getting married, and those who do get married aren't staying married.

More Single Parent Homes, mostly single mothers

Men are now into pleasure without any obligations. The magazines and the sitcoms have taught them that.

- So now 1/3rd of all children today are born to an unmarried women.
- 40% of children tonight go to bed without a father.
- 40% of all children today will live with a parent and that parent's live in boyfriend or girlfriend, and it's all really confusing.

My point is simply this: the world we live in is just not working. It is broken. It is messed up. It is not good, and it ought not to be normal for you if you are a Christian.

The Bible is True and Helpful

The Bible is many things, but it is most certainly two things – **it's true, and it's helpful**. A lot of people say, "Well, I don't care about the Bible" –that's fine, but if you do follow it you are going to have a broken life.

This whole world you're born into, it's not abiding in the truth. It's not truthful about what the consequences are, but **it's also not helpful**. If you believe the lies of this culture, it's going to **cause great damage to your life, the life of others**. It is a royal mess. **It's not set up for 50 years of marital fidelity and happiness and joy**. It is set up for fleeting pleasures that lead to a life of misery.

So what we need to do is what Paul calls the renewing of our minds. And so we are going to go to the very beginning, to the first book of the Bible, to a family that lived about 4,000 years ago, and we are going to unpack a biblical philosophy of marriage that is vitally relevant for the day in which we live. God's Word will give you a foundation for your family and for your future. Let's begin in Genesis 24.

Genesis 24:1-2 (ESV) — "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."

That sounds quite strange, doesn't it? That's different. Why would he put his hand under his thigh? Apparently, in this culture when you were real serious, and you wanted to make an oath, you put your hand under the other man's thigh as a sign that you and your entire family were committed to this promise. That's what they're doing here, a little different. I like shaking hands better!

Verses 2-3, “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.”

Here’s what is happening. Abraham has a son named Isaac who is now 40 years old. He needs a wife, but Abraham says, “Don’t go get a wife from the unbelieving, Godless Canaanites. We need a nice believing Hebrew woman. So he’s going to send his servant Eliezer on a **450-mile journey** –

Verses 4-6, “but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.” 5 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?” 6 Abraham said to him, “See to it that you do not take my son back there.”

So Abraham says, you cannot leave Isaac in Babylon, in Ur of the Chaldees. God made some promises and covenants to me.

Verses 7-11, “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. 8 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.” 9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning this matter. 10 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. 11 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.”

All the ladies go out at night because it’s the cool of the day to get water for their households from the community well. He’s traveled 450 miles. He’s going to where the nice, lovely, young ladies are. Now he has no idea who it is that he’s looking for, so he prays. This is important. We need to pray! Hear Eliezar’s prayer.

Verses 12-14, “And he said, “O LORD, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. 13 Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. 14 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.”

So do you think God’s going to answer this prayer? You better believe it!

Verses 15-20, “Before he [Eliezar] 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. 16 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. 17 Then the servant ran to meet her and said, “Please give me a little water to drink from your jar.” 18 She said, “Drink, my lord.” And she quickly let down her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink. 19 When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, “I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking.” 20 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.”

How many camels? (Look at verse 10). **He took ten camels, and how many girllons does it take to fill up a camel? About the same as gas in an S.U.V., about 25 girllons** – for those of you who do the math, 250 girllons. This is a nice lady. How many of you ladies would go to a well for a complete stranger, get calloused hands pulling up a rope, maybe a bucket a girllon, take the girllon, run over to the trough, dump it out, 250 girllons to feed ten camels. Most women won't even get their husband a cup of coffee. She's in good shape. She's a working girl, calluses on her hands. This is a wonderful, hardworking woman.

Verses 21-25, “The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the LORD had prospered his journey or not. 22 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, 23 and said, “Please tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father’s house for us to spend the night?” 24 She said to him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.” 25 She added, “We have plenty of both straw and fodder, and room to spend the night.”

So Rebekah is sweet and hospitable. So Eliezer gives thanks to the Lord. We should thank God for godly ladies!

Verses 26-29a, “The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD 27 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.” 28 Then the young woman ran and told her mother’s household about these things. 29 Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban.”

Ok, enter Laban. – **Laban is a fake.** He's an opportunist. He's always looking to make a buck. He's a crooked guy. **He's very prominent in the rest of Genesis.** He's what I like to call the “used car salesman” of the Old Testament. His name literally means white. He's kind of a whited sepulcher. He's beautiful on the outside but ugly on the inside.

He sees the jewelry on Rebekah, and he's thinking: opportunity! So what does Laban do? He runs out toward Isaac! Isaac is Mr. Moneybags, Mr. Bling!

Verses 29b-33, “Laban ran out toward the man, to the spring. 30 As soon as he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister’s arms, and heard the words of Rebekah his sister, “Thus the man spoke to me,” he went to the man. And behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring. 31 He said, “Come in, O blessed of the LORD. Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house and a place for the camels.” 32 So the man came to the house and unharnessed the camels, and gave straw and fodder to the camels, and there was water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. 33 Then food was set before him to eat. But he said, “I will not eat until I have said what I have to say.” He said, “Speak on.”

So Eliezer recounts the whole thing in **verses 34 through 48**. I'll let you read that later. So then Eliezer says to Laban in verse 49:

Verse 49, “Now then, if you are going to show steadfast love and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.”

He's basically saying, “Here's what God's done. What are you going to do, Laban?” **Apparently her father's gone, so Laban is the head of the household, the**

older brother, and he is wanting to get permission from Laban to see if Rebekah would be willing to go back and meet Isaac, and perhaps, marry him.

Verse 50, “Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, “The thing has come from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good.”

In other words, if that’s what God wants, we can’t argue. What are we supposed to say?

Verses 51-57, “Behold, Rebekah is before you; take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has spoken.” 52 When Abraham’s servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the earth before the LORD. 53 And the servant brought out jewelry of silver and of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornaments.” So this is the price for the bride.

54 And he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there. When they arose in the morning, he said, “Send me away to my master.” 55 Her brother and her mother said, “Let the young woman remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go.” 56 But he said to them, “Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master.” 57 They said, “Let us call the young woman and ask her.”

So they ask Rebekah, do you want to go, meet Isaac, marry him? What do you think?

Verses 58-61, “And they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” She said, “I will go.” 59 So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant and his men. 60 And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, “Our sister, may you become thousands of ten thousands, and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate him!” 61 Then Rebekah and her young women arose and rode on the camels and followed the man. Thus the servant took Rebekah and went his way.”

Now you know why they got the ten camels. This lady’s got travelling suitcases. Shoes, purses, accessories, hats, lotions, and potions, whatever else – she’s got all her stuff. Rebekah is the lady with ten carryons at the airport. **This is ten camels. That’s ten Hebrew U-Hauls.**

Verses 62-63, “Now Isaac had returned from Beer-lahai-roi and was dwelling in the Negeb. 63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening.”

So Isaac was having his devotions, praying, thinking on God.

“And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, there were camels coming. 64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel”.

Isaac is walking and so she is showing respect by getting off her camel.

Verse 65, “and [she] said to the servant, “Who is that man, walking in the field to meet us?” The servant said, “It is my master.” So she took her veil and covered herself.”

So she took her veil and covered herself.” **Most Hebrew women didn’t have a veil, but brides did.** She’s come this long way and left her parents to cleave to her husband.

Verses 66-67, “And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”

This is not the way it would happen in Chicago, right?

Isaac is 40 years old, needs a wife, needs a believing, Godly wife, but there aren't any one like that around him. So Abraham, his father sends his servant out to find a good, Godly girl. They pray. They worship. God sovereignly provides. Parental involvement at age 40? That's crazy!

No, we're crazy and they're normal. What we want to do now is we want to take our bankrupt culture, say, "That's not a good way to do it." And we'll look at 15 principles that tell us how to go from courtship, to falling in love, to marriage, in a way that pleases God.

Dating

So let's talk about dating. Why is dating WRONG?

Here's dating. It's privately overseen by the couple. No mom, dad, pastor, nobody involved. The goal is totally undefined and often times it moves rapidly into a loss of purity and a broken heart.

You must not go the dating route. It's just mind numbingly dumb. It doesn't go anywhere. **You spend lots of money, lots of time, lots of energy, lots of emotion.** How many of you have been in a dating relationship, and it didn't go anywhere? And then all you have to show for it is a broken heart.

Courtship

Courtship, here's what it is. **It's publically overseen by family and friends and church, your mom, your dad, people in your Bible study, pastors, good, Godly people.** Everybody's involved, right?

They're involved, and they're looking at it, right? There are referees. You have accountability. **You have visibility. You have responsibility. You have a goal: Marriage.**

You start as friends. It develops into courtship which is the testing phase. At that point you're working toward marriage, and if you do want to get married, and everybody's okay with it, then you go ahead and get engaged.

So let's look at 15 principles for marriage taken out of Genesis 24.

1. God created marriage, and it is therefore good! (Gen. 2:18; Heb. 13:4).

In Genesis, marriage is good. The man is good. The woman is good. Creation is good. The only thing that's not good, ***it's not good for the man to be alone.*** Hebrews said that, **"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled"** (**Hebrews 13:4**). Marriage is good. It's good to be married. God is pro-marriage. Get married.

The vast majority of Christians should and will marry. So the first thing you need to say is some of you came from broken homes, messed up homes. Perhaps your father wasn't around. Perhaps, like me, your mom had her boyfriends living there all the time, and you say, "You know what, I just don't want anything to do with that. I think it's bad." No, marriage is good if it's done biblically, if it honors God. If it's done in the way that God intends it can be a very good thing. I've been very happily married to Jill for 14

years. Marriage done God's way is AWESOME!

2. A Christian should NEVER be romantically connected to a non-Christian.

Verse 3, Abraham says to Eliezar, swear that "you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites". So, a Christian should never ever, ever, never, ever, ever, never, ever, ever, ever, never, ever, ever, never, never, ever be romantically connected to a non-Christian, ever.

Abraham says, "My son needs a wife. He needs a wife who loves the Lord because he loves the Lord."

- **1 Corinthians 7:39** tells us that we are "free to be married to whom [we] wish...[but] only in the Lord."

What that doesn't mean is this: "Well, my heathen boyfriend said he believes in God." James says demons believe in God. You need to go beyond that.

- **2 Corinthians 6:14**, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?"

So if you love the Lord, marry somebody who loves the Lord.

3. Men who want to pursue courtship should go where godly women are.

Eliezer had to go 450 miles out of his way to find a godly wife. You're not going to find a wife among the heathen. Probably you'll not find her at your work place. You're definitely not going to find her at a night club. **Rebekah's not at the night club. She's home reading Leviticus.** She doesn't work at the night club.

She's probably not by your cubicle at work. You've got to go where Christian women are. Abraham sends his servant on a 450-mile journey to go find a godly girl.

The girl you're looking for is probably not at the movie theatre. She's home watching *The Sound of Music*. Men, you need to be looking at church or at a Christian get together for a wife. You're not going to find her in the world.

4. Marriage is for responsible men, not for boys.

Notice Isaac's age. He is 40. He's a man. He's got a job. He's got a house. He's got a place in life. He's got it together. He's not a boy.

Back in Genesis, man will leave his mother and father, and he will be his own man. He's able to support himself and get married.

Marriage is for men, not for boys. If a boy gets married, he's going to act like a boy and get into debt and cheat on his wife and cause problems. Getting married does not make anyone an adult. You can't live off your parents. You've got to support yourself.

One commentator says that a lot of boys who chase women are like dogs chasing a fire engine. Should they catch one they would have no idea what to do with it!

5. The man takes the initiative and pursues a wife.

The man pursues the wife by going to the father. The father must give approval. When it was time to get serious with Jill, do you know what her words were to me? Ask my father.

Now Rebekah did not have approval, but Laban acted as her father.

If your daughter gets asked on a date, the proper answer is: ask my dad. Here's his phone number. And then dad can ask all the questions: Is it visible? Are you accountable and responsible to a chaperone?

So the guy has to pursue the lady. If he is not willing to chase you, he's not willing to work hard to keep you. In this story Rebekah's at home, and Isaac sends his servant. He makes all the initiative to go get this woman.

Ladies, you might ask, What about Sadie Hawkins? That's the date where the girls ask the guy. You need to wait on God.

6. The man must court the lady through the father (1 Cor. 7:36).

And every father should have a gun! If a young man wants to get to know my daughter, he's got to get to know me and her mother first.

There's a disputed verse in 1 Cor. 7:36, the translation is difficult, but I believe it generally identifies the father as the one who gives the daughter away in marriage. I'm going to read it from the NKJV.

- **1 Corinthians 7:36**, NKJV “But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin [daughter], if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry.”

So the principle is the father gives away his daughter to be married. We always ask at the wedding, “Who gives this woman to be married to this man”. And the father gives the answer: her mother and I do.

So courtship must take place through the father. The boy must be willing to get to know mom and dad and get to know my daughter on my daughter's turf. Not in some Volkswagen Rabbit.

My daughter's not going to go out with some ridiculous young man hitting the horn in some Volkswagen Rabbit with fur on the dashboard, stealing my daughter's heart.

In other words, the young man must court dad and mom before he courts the daughter!

My Experience with Jill's Parents

I don't have a parlor, but I can remember spending tons of time getting to know Jill at her house. I loved coming over for dinner. We'd play basketball with her dad. I was a college graduate. I had to win her parents before I could win her.

7. If there is no father, the mother or a godly couple takes the place of protection for the young lady.

Rebekah didn't have a father in her life, so her older brother Laban fulfilled that part.

Now, what if the young lady is in the same situation today. If she doesn't have a nice, godly father, what happens? Well, then maybe her mother takes her place. If mother's not there, then an uncle or a grandpa or a pastor or a godly leader or a good godly couple are brought in. Why? To help oversee things, to give wise counsel. Some of you say, “Well, I know exactly what I want to marry.” You don't know what you need.

You need somebody who's been married for a while that will give you frank advice. I didn't have a godly mom or dad. So for me it was a brother in the church, the music director named Dave Shaleen. It was also my own pastor.

8. A man should pursue a woman who will make a godly wife and mother
(Pro. 31:30).

Don't just say, "She's beautiful!" That's all I need! Beautiful is just fine. Rebekah's pretty, great, but beauty does not necessarily prepare a woman for motherhood.

- **Proverbs 31:30**, "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."

If she's going feed a camel, she'll feed a kid, right? You see she's a woman who is hardworking, industrious, nice lady, right?

A young man needs to ask, "Do I want my daughters to be just like her? Do I want my sons to marry a woman just like her?" If not, run for your life. Don't marry her.

A lot of guys will say, "She looks amazing." Well, you know what, in 50 years she's not going to look exactly the same, and if she drives you crazy, it could be 50 years of misery, right? Charm is deceitful, beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord, that's the one who should get cuts to the front of the line.

9. A man should not pursue more than one woman at a time.

I love the fact that the servant Eliezer shows up at the well and doesn't say, "Hey, ladies, I got this new reality show. Who wants to marry a millionaire? He prays. He asks God to guide him. He uses common sense and care. He sees the girl, and he worships God. God is up front and center in the whole equation. He prays with her family. But it's clear that she's the only one.

You might think a girl is special. Don't put your hands on her. That could be someone else's spouse some day. If it's not the one, then move on and protect your purity. Be holy and careful and clean. Don't give your heart away!

Men, have the guts enough to let the girl know your intentions. If you aren't ready to marry, then don't be looking for a woman. If you are ready, be upfront, and treat her like a sister. Don't have her and two others you are going to date. That's not respectful or wise.

10. There should be no intimate contact between the couple until marriage, and then there should be lots of it.

No sexual contact. What does that mean? You know what it means. Ephesians says even be a hint of sexual immorality. It should not be once named among you as a saint.

Where's the line? Well, I tell you what, zero; how about that? You don't want to get near the edge. You want to stay 150 feet or a mile from the edge. If you have no intimate contact before you are married, you have no regrets after you are married.

Be careful about hugging. No making out. No necking. No nothing.– why?

Well, first of all, God says that the body is holy, belongs to him, and it's sacred, and you're not to dishonor it in that way.

- **1 Thess. 4:4-7**, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. 8 Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.”
- **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.”
- Remember the words of Joseph when he was tempted to lie with Potiphar’s wife, **Genesis 39:9**, “[My master] is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

In addition, you don’t know who you’re going to be married to until you’re actually married, **you could be dishonoring someone else’s spouse sending them into marriage with baggage**. Do you really want to dishonor that person?

II. A woman should not pursue a husband, but pursue the Lord.

A woman should live her life without a guarantee that she will be married. Don’t pursue the man. The man you have to pursue is the WRONG MAN. Rebekah was content to be a hard worker with her older brother Laban.

For Rebekah, she’s drawing water out of a well. Next thing you know she’s on a camel going 450 miles away. She wasn’t looking, but suddenly she’s getting married.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7, it’s better to serve the Lord as a single person.

A woman should not pursue a husband. Don’t run around looking for a husband. Don’t worry about getting a husband, ladies. Here’s what you worry about. Holiness, love the Lord, read your Bible, confess your sin, walk with Jesus, humility, hard work, and hospitality. Those are the characteristics of Rebekah. She’s not looking for a husband.

She loves the Lord. She’s very humble. She works very hard. She practices hospitality. If you want to attract the right spouse, be the right person, and they will find you. That’s what I’m telling the ladies. If you’re a good, Godly woman who’s living her life with Christ, men will be attracted to you. The right husband will find you.

12. A woman’s character should be observed from a distance before the man initiates.

Rebekah is observed from afar by Eliezar. She’s got a servant’s heart.

Young men, see how she serves in church. See what her prayer life is like. See what she does on the job. See how she lives her life. Watch her.

You know, I was talking to a guy not too long ago, and I said, “What attracted you to your wife?” He said, “We were in a group of people in a room, and there was someone who was a little bit of a social misfit over in the corner. Everybody else ignored them. My wife walked over and struck up a conversation, was kind to them, brought them into the social circle and introduced them to her friends, and I thought, ‘What a tender, sweet, attentive woman.’”

13. God is sovereign, but we must also be faithful in obeying Him!

Can't God work if I want to do evangelize dating? He has, but I wouldn't depend on it. You'll probably end up with your heart broken. If you know to do right and don't do it, it's sin.

We don't make rules based on God's mercy. **I also know alcoholics who drive home every night and don't kill anyone, but we shouldn't do that.**

God is sovereign over the details of our lives through faithful people. You see the providence of God in this. God gives Isaac, gives this servant, the servant prays. He goes to town. God provides Rebekah at the well at just the right time. Laban does his job. Rebekah agrees, goes back to meet Isaac. God works out all the details of an individual person's life. This is our good, sovereign God, and the reason it works so well is everybody's obedient to the Lord, Abraham, Isaac, the servant, Rebekah. Laban does his job. Everybody's obedient to the Lord. **The sovereign Lord wants to work out the details in your life, but you need to obey him, otherwise you mess up his plan and get in the way.**

Obey God. Don't live together. Don't give away your purity. Don't be with somebody who's an unbeliever. Don't play multiple people in a relationship. Don't do all these things, why? Because God blesses obedience. You reap what you sow. Because the sovereign God is faithful, will provide, but you will definitely assist him if you are an obedient and faithful person. We see God's sovereignty, and we see human responsibility worked out well in the story.

14. The man must choose the woman he loves, and then love the woman he chooses.

Isaac loves Rebekah, but then most importantly, he must love the woman he chooses. A lot of people, “I want to marry the person I love.” Okay, great. Then love them. Then love them.

In most countries there are arranged marriages. They are much more successful than our American marriages.

In America, we marry the one we love, but we don't love the one we marry. Isaac loves Rebekah. He keeps loving her, and what that means is this. Ephesians 5:25 says, ‘Husbands, love your wives.’ **Well, if it's a command God must mean that you can do that. So it can't be just a feeling. It needs to be a commitment.** Do marry the one you love, but love the one that you marry.

15. Pray for your future mate because God answers prayer.

And the last point is this. God answers prayer, doesn't he? The servant prays, "Please, let me find a good, Godly woman" – And this servant happens upon Rebekah. We need to pray!

- **It's not just about personality type.**
- It's not just about being in the right place at the right time.
- It's not about saying the right words, and impressing her.

It's about prayer and the sovereign providential God works out the affairs of our lives so that we can meet someone that we can love, that the details can be worked out. Pray. You say, "But how do I pray?" Pray for your spouse. You say, "But I don't know who they are." God knows. You need to pray.

What if You've Blown it?

Because some of you are thinking, "It's already too late. I mean, fornication, wrong stuff in magazines and the internet, cohabitation, multiple partners, playing people, lying, not having a plan. It's too late, I have blown it. I have made huge mistakes, these huge sins. I'm a total fool. What now?" Well, grace.

See, that's the beauty of the Christian faith. Jesus Christ died for all our sins, specifically junk we're talking about. Not just a huge category of sin in general but the junk we're talking about. He died for that.

- **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Conclusion: You don't need to walk out of here totally depressed. You should walk out of here repentant of sin, if and where it is appropriate, and repentance is saying, "This is the way the world does it. This is the way I was doing it. I turned my back on that. I'm going to open my Bible, and I'm going to trust the sovereign God, and I'm going to pray to him and worship him. I'm going to function like a good servant. I'm going to be a good, Godly man like Isaac and be a good, Godly woman like Rebekah, why? Because God's empowering grace will enable me to do so. Jesus died to take away my sin. He promises to conform me to His image! Follow the Scriptures, not the world, in your pursuit of the right mate!