

GOD'S PROMISE

Moving for the Promise

July 9, 2023

Overarching Theme: 2023 – Living the Dream

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

2023 can be a year of living the dream of faithful discipleship as we take a next step forward in following Jesus Christ.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Genesis 24:34-41 NRSV

³⁴ So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵ The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys. ³⁶ And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old, and he has given him all that he has. ³⁷ My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites in whose land I live, ³⁸ but you shall go to my father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son.' ³⁹ I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.' ⁴⁰ But he said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with you and make your way successful. You shall get a wife for my son from my kindred, from my father's house. ⁴¹ Then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my kindred; even if they will not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.'

Commentary:

Abraham made his servant to swear that he would travel to his relatives and find a wife for Isaac rather than from among the people of Canaan. The need for finding a wife for Isaac from among his relatives far away and moreover to bring her to where Isaac was in Canaan, by her leaving her home and people, was for the practical reason of the woman being from among those who shared a common heritage and culture with them and moreover for the spiritual reason that she too would come to worship and follow the LORD God and become part of the promise to Abraham and his descendants in Canaan. From the narrative we understand that Abraham's relatives in Aram-naharaim had known of and had reverence for the LORD God whom Abraham worshipped and followed. It would seem more possible that a wife for Isaac from such a people would be open to becoming part

of the promise to Abraham and his descendants in Canaan rather than one from among the Canaanites who could break from and take Isaac away to worship and follow other gods.

When Abraham gave this commission, his servant expressed doubt whether the suitable bride for Isaac from his relatives in a distant land would be willing to leave her country and come with him to Canaan. To this Abraham assured his servant of the LORD God's divine guidance and providence but at the same time he also acknowledged that it could be possible that this venture might fail if the woman did not cooperate. Abraham knew quite well in his life's experience that even though the LORD God led the way ahead, human decision and obedience to that leading was equally important. Therefore, he would not hold it against his trusted servant if the woman he was led to did not wish to come with him but that only he would go and try to bring a wife for Isaac from his relatives and not take Isaac to them or to anyone else.

Abraham's servant swore accordingly and went to Aram-naharaim and as he prayed for a sign to be led to the woman that God had chosen for his master's son, amazingly he met with Rebekah there who showed kindness to him and his men and their camels, who was from among his master's relatives, and who also welcomed him to her home. On learning that the servant had come from Abraham in Canaan, Rebekah shared this to her family and they too welcomed him into their home. With joy the servant recalled to the family what he was commissioned to do by Abraham his master whom the LORD God had been faithful to greatly bless, reflected in Abraham being prosperous and well in a time and place where resources were scarce and having an heir. The servant wisely left out the fact that his master made him swear that he would not take Isaac to his relatives but he did add the detail that he was assured success by the LORD God although the final decision lay with the woman and her family. But the servant sought the kindness and faithfulness of Rebekah's family toward Abraham in this matter.

Hearing what the servant narrated, Rebekah's family were persuaded to believe that the LORD God had led him to their household. Even as they were willing to send her with him to be married to Isaac in Canaan, they asked Rebekah to make her own decision. She too agreed and so with their blessings she was sent with her nurse to accompany Abraham's servant to Canaan and there she was married to Isaac and they entered into a loving relationship with each other. With this the last story of Abraham before his death and after the death of his wife Sarah comes to a close as the narrative shifts from the first to the second patriarch of the people of Israel.

- Adapted from The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol I, pp. 509-12 and Wesley One Volume Commentary, p. 24.

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Why did Abraham's servant mention about how his master was greatly blessed by the LORD God when speaking to his master's relatives in the context of asking for Rebekah in marriage to Isaac? Is wealth and having an heir always an indicator of being blessed by God?
2. Why did Abraham insist and make his servant promise that he would not get a wife for his son Isaac from among the Canaanites but rather from his relatives living in the distant land of Aram-naharaim?
3. What do the words of Abraham to his servant in answering his doubt on the possibility of the success or failure of the mission, teach us about God's guidance and about Abraham's faith journey? In what way is Rebekah similar to Abraham in their faith journey?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Genesis 24:40-41 NRSV
⁴⁰ But he said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with you and make your way successful. You shall get a wife for my son from my kindred, from my father's house. ⁴¹ Then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my kindred; even if they will not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.'