GENESIS: THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS · STUDY NOTES

Study 15: A bride for Isaac, and Abraham's death

For personal study or groups

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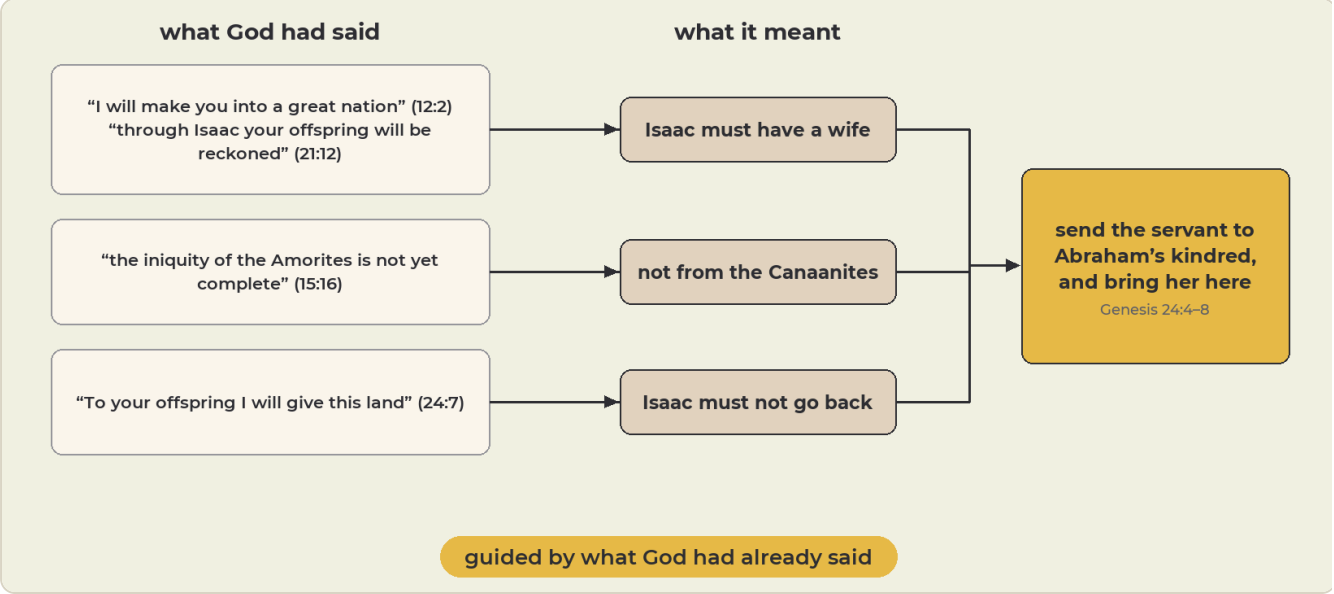
How to use these notes. Watch each part's video on biblehelp.net, or read the text below. Look up each passage in your own Bible and write the answer on the lines. The verses are printed at the back if you need them. At the end there are questions to think about on your own or to discuss in a group.

📖 **Before you start: read Genesis 24:1–25:18.** Read it in your own Bible, all the way through, before the videos. Then in this study we go through it together, a few verses at a time. (About 12 minutes.)

PART 1

The servant's prayer

Genesis 24:1–27; Deuteronomy 7:3–4; 2 Corinthians 6:14



What God had said, and what Abraham decided: three things God had already said (a great nation through Isaac, the Amorites' iniquity, the land for Abraham's offspring) meet in one decision: send the servant to Abraham's kindred, and bring the bride here.

1. "The LORD had blessed him in every way." Abraham was about a hundred and forty: he was a hundred when Isaac was born, and Isaac was forty when he married (25:20). Sarah had died three years before. Abraham had every reason to give thanks: protection in Egypt and Gerar, victory over the kings, great wealth, the friendship of God, and the promised son. And yet one thing was unfinished. God had said, "through Isaac your offspring will be reckoned", but Isaac was forty and unmarried, and Abraham was old. This is the longest chapter in Genesis, sixty-seven verses, because it is not only a love story: it is the story of how God carried His promise from one generation to the next.

1 **Read Genesis 24:1–9**

What did Abraham make his servant promise? What did he say would go before him?

2. The servant and the oath. Abraham called "the chief servant of his household, who managed all he owned". He is never named in the chapter; many have thought he was Eliezer of Damascus (15:2), but we are not told. Perhaps that is fitting: the whole chapter is about his master and his master's God. "Place your hand under my thigh" was a very solemn way of making an oath (Jacob asked the same of Joseph, 47:29). And he was to swear by "the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth": not the god of one land, but the God who rules Canaan and Haran alike.

3. Not from the Canaanites. Abraham did not despise his neighbours (see his courtesy to the Hittites in chapter 23). The reason was their gods and their ways. Later, Moses gave Israel the same command and the reason: "because they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods" (Deuteronomy 7:4). A husband and wife share everything: if one belongs to the LORD and the other does not, the pull is always away from Him. The family of Nahor was not perfect (Laban's house later had household idols), but they knew the name of the LORD and were Abraham's own kindred. Ishmael's mother got him a wife from Egypt; Esau would marry two Hittite women, who "brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah" (26:34–35). In the New Testament this is no longer about nation or family: "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14), and a widow is free to marry "as long as he belongs to the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39). If you are already married to someone who does not believe, this is not a word against you: "if a woman has an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him" (1 Corinthians 7:13). Stay, love and pray.

4. What God had said, and what Abraham decided. God had never said, "Isaac must marry," or "not a Canaanite," or "Isaac must not go back." Abraham worked it out from what God had already said. John Piper calls these the "trajectories" of God's Word, like the path of something thrown, which shows where it is going. God had promised a great nation through Isaac, so Isaac must have a wife. God had said the iniquity of the Amorites was growing towards judgement, so not from the peoples of Canaan. God had sworn to give the land to Abraham's offspring, so Isaac must stay in the land. The three lines meet in one decision. That is how God guides His people most of the time: not by a voice from heaven but by His written Word, understood and believed. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105).

5. "Make sure that you do not take my son back there." The servant asked a sensible question before he swore: "What if the woman is unwilling to follow me to this land?" Abraham said twice, "do not take my son back there". God had called Abraham out of that land; to send Isaac back would be to undo the call. Hebrews says: "If they had been thinking of the country

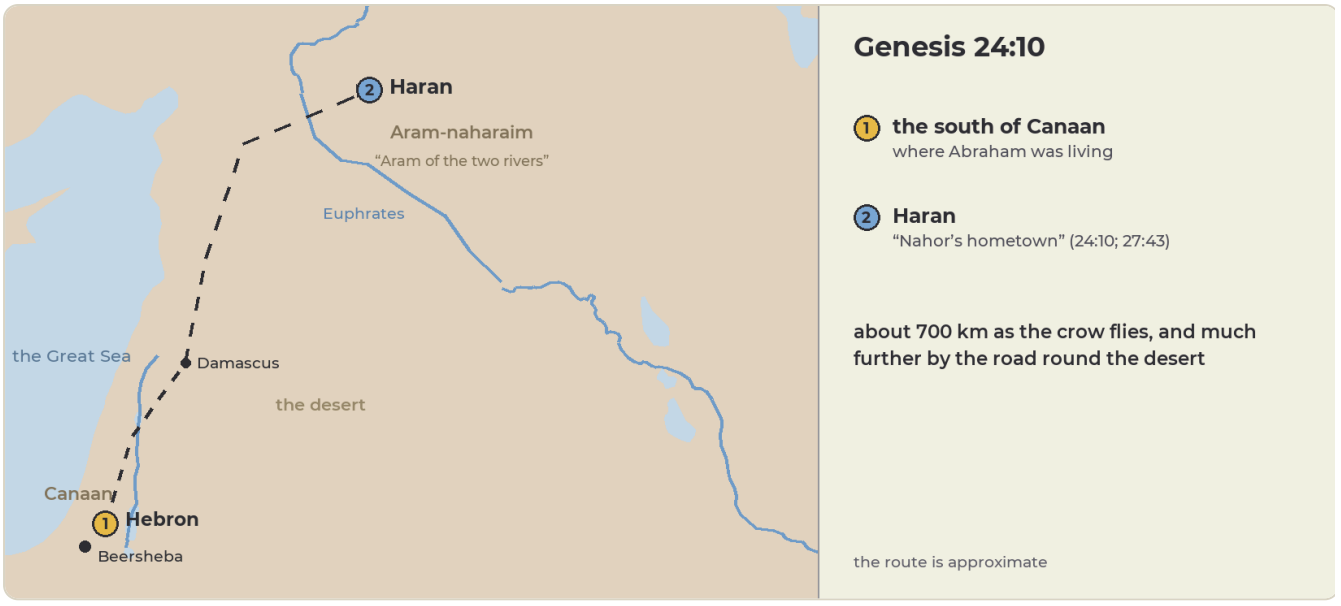
they had left, they would have had opportunity to return" (11:15). When God calls us to Christ, He calls us out of our old life, not back to it. If someone will not come to Christ, we do not change His message to meet them halfway: we go to them, proclaim the gospel and plead; but the call is always to come.

6. "He will send His angel before you." Abraham's confidence: "He will send His angel before you so that you can take a wife for my son from there." These are Abraham's last words in Genesis. His first words were in Egypt, "Please say you are my sister", when he was afraid and trusted his own plan. Now he trusts God completely: he was "fully persuaded that God was able to do what He had promised" (Romans 4:21). Yet he added: "if the woman is unwilling to follow you, then you are released from this oath". Not doubt, but wisdom: Rebekah would have to come willingly. The servant's task was to go and be faithful; the result was in God's hands. So it is whenever we serve God.

2 **Read Romans 4:20–21**

What did Abraham not do? What was he fully persuaded of?

7. The journey, and the prayer. The servant set out "for Nahor's hometown in Aram-naharaim" ("Aram of the two rivers", in the bend of the Euphrates), most probably Haran, about seven hundred kilometres as the crow flies from the south of Canaan, and much further by road. He took ten camels, a sign of great wealth, with rich gifts. At evening he made the camels kneel by the well, and before he did anything else he prayed: "O LORD, God of my master Abraham... please grant me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham." He had learned to pray from his master, who built altars wherever he went. He asked for a plain, present need ("today"). And he asked on the ground of God's promise: "kindness" is God's faithful covenant love, the "loving devotion and faithfulness" of Exodus 34:6. We pray on far better ground, in the name of Jesus: "I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13).



From Canaan to Haran: the servant's long journey north round the edge of the desert to "Nahor's hometown" (24:10), most probably Haran (27:43). The route is approximate.

8. A sign that tests the heart. He asked for a sign: the girl who would answer his request for a drink with, "Drink, and I will water your camels as well." This was not like tossing a coin: it was a wise test of character. To offer, unasked, to water ten camels after a long journey would take a kind heart and a willingness to work very hard for a stranger. Should we ask God for signs like this? The Bible records what he did; it does not command us to do the same. We have what he did not have, the whole of God's written Word. So we search it, think, take advice, and pray: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault" (James 1:5); "Trust in the LORD with all your heart… in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5–6). What we should copy is his dependence on God.

3 Read Genesis 24:10–14

What did the servant ask God for? What was the sign he asked for?

9. "Before the servant had finished praying." "Before the servant had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder." God answers before we have finished: "Even before they call, I will answer, and while they are still speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24). Yet the answer had been on its way much longer: in the last study we read the list of Nahor's sons, and one name had more said: "Bethuel became the father of Rebekah." God was preparing the answer long before anyone asked. Rebekah was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, Abraham's brother's granddaughter, the very family Abraham had sent for. The servant did not know it yet. "The girl was very beautiful, a virgin": the mother of the line of promise was a woman of integrity.

10. "She quickly... ran back to the well." She gave him a drink and then said, "I will also draw water for your camels, until they have had enough to drink." A camel that has crossed the desert drinks a great deal, and there were ten. The spring was down a slope: she went down and up, again and again, "quickly", "ran", until every camel had enough. It was glad, hard work for a stranger. When three visitors came to Abraham's tent, he "ran", "hurried" and "ran" for them (18:2, 6–7): Rebekah has the same open-handed welcome. "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2). Our character shows in small things done when we think no one important is looking. And all this time "the man watched her silently to see whether or not the LORD had made his journey a success": he had prayed, and he waited for God to finish what He had begun.

11. "Whose daughter are you?" When the camels had finished drinking, he gave her a gold ring and two heavy gold bracelets (the ring, we learn later, for her nose). A beka was half a shekel, so these were rich gifts, the first sign that more was coming. Then the question that mattered: "Whose daughter are you?" "I am the daughter of Bethuel." Of all the young women who might have come to that well, God brought the one from Abraham's own kindred. And again she offered more than she was asked: "plenty of straw and feed, as well as a place for you to spend the night."

12. "The LORD has led me on the journey." Before he said more to Rebekah, "the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD": "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." Not luck, but God keeping His promise to Abraham. God led him on the road, while he was doing what his master had sent him to do: "A man's heart plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). And see how quickly he gave thanks. We often pray earnestly, and when the answer comes we forget to thank God, or tell ourselves it would have happened anyway. May the answer drive us to worship, as it did him.

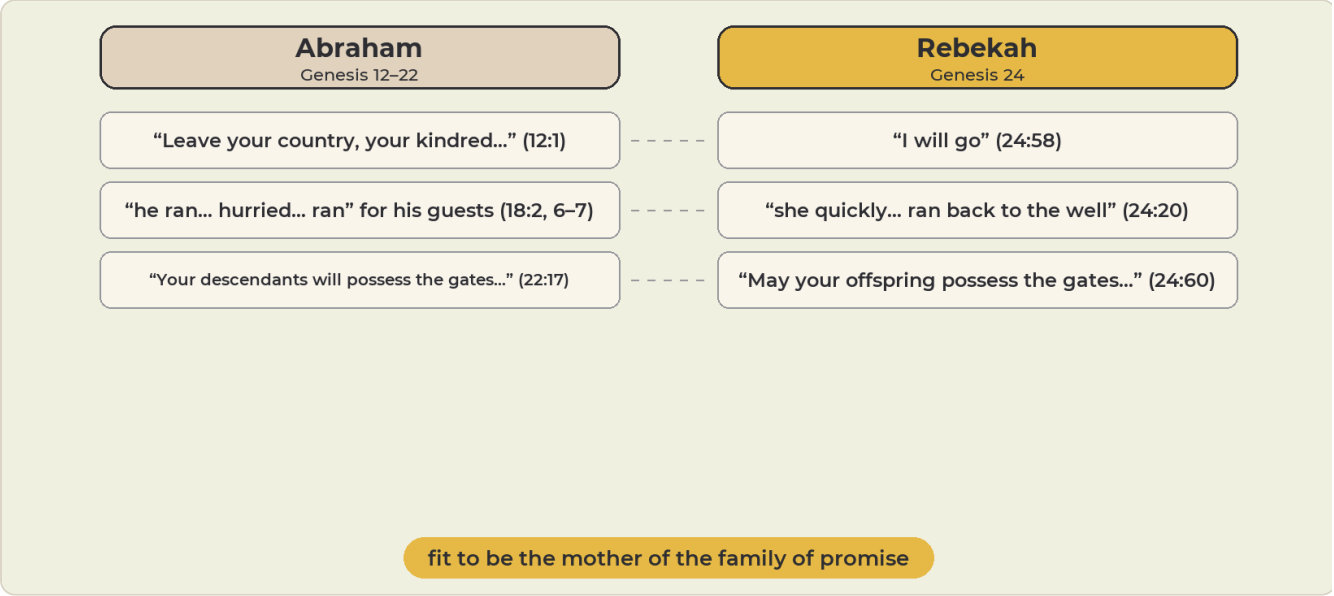
4 **Read Genesis 24:15–27**

What did Rebekah do for the servant and his camels? What did the servant do when he saw that God had answered?

PART 2

Rebekah says "I will go"

Genesis 24:28–67; 2 Corinthians 11:2; 1 Peter 1:8



Rebekah and Abraham: "Leave your country, your kindred..." and "I will go"; "he ran... hurried... ran" and "she quickly... ran back to the well"; the gates of their enemies, in God's promise (22:17) and in the family's blessing (24:60).

1. Laban. Rebekah ran home and told her mother's household, and her brother Laban "rushed out to the man at the spring". Why? Moses tells us: "As soon as he saw the ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists." Rebekah ran to serve a stranger; Laban ran when he saw gold. We should not make too much of one verse; but later in Genesis we shall meet Laban again, when Jacob comes to his house, a man who loved gain. Here, at his first appearance, we are given a hint. Yet his welcome is warm: "Come, you who are blessed by the LORD." The family still knew the God of Abraham. The camels were unloaded and fed, water was brought to wash the travellers' feet, and a meal was set before them.

5 **Read Genesis 24:28–33**

What caught Laban's eye? What did the servant say when the meal was set before him?

2. "I will not eat until I have told you what I came to say." The servant had travelled for weeks and spent the evening watching ten camels drink. He must have been tired and hungry, and the food was in front of him. But his master's business came before his own comfort. Long

afterwards, Jesus sat by another well, in Samaria, and His disciples urged Him to eat: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work" (John 4:34). The servant is a small picture of that single-minded devotion.

3. The whole story told again. The servant told the story almost word for word as we had just read it. Why? In the ancient world there was no bold type, no italics: to say a thing twice was to say "this is important". Note how he tells it: "I am Abraham's servant", his master and not himself; he speaks of his master's riches, and why: "The LORD has greatly blessed my master"; Isaac born in old age, "my master has given him everything he owns", the only heir. Above all he tells it so that they can see God's hand: the LORD blessed, the LORD will send His angel, I prayed to the LORD, the LORD appointed her, I worshiped the LORD. He wanted them to see what he had seen.

6 **Read Genesis 24:34–49**

What did the servant say about his master? What answer did he ask for at the end?

4. "Tell me." "Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; but if not, let me know." He does not leave them to think it over for weeks: they must say yes or no. Those who proclaim the gospel do something like this: we tell of a greater Master and His Son, and then we must ask: what will you do with Him? Not to answer is also an answer. "Behold, now is the time of favor; now is the day of salvation!" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

5. "This is from the LORD." Laban and Bethuel answered: "This is from the LORD; we have no choice in the matter. Rebekah is here before you. Take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, just as the LORD has decreed." Even Laban, with his eye on the gold, could see it. When God's hand is this clear, the only right answer is to bow to it. Bethuel is named, but Laban speaks first; we are not told why. Perhaps Bethuel was old; in those days a grown brother often spoke for the family. The servant "bowed down to the ground before the LORD" for the third time in the chapter, and then brought out jewels of silver and gold and clothing for Rebekah, and precious gifts for her brother and mother.

6. "Do not delay me." The next morning he said, "Send me on my way to my master." Her brother and mother said, "Let the girl remain with us ten days or so." It is easy to understand: they were losing a daughter and a sister, perhaps for ever. (Some see Laban's character here too, keeping the door open for more.) But the servant answered: "Do not delay me, since the LORD has made my journey a success." When God's way is plain, delay is rarely wise. Many agree that following Christ is right, but say, "Not yet." "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 3:15). "A few days" can become a lifetime.

7 **Read Genesis 24:50–56**

What did Laban and Bethuel say? What did the family ask for, and what did the servant answer?

7. "I will go." They called Rebekah and asked her: "Will you go with this man?" Notice that she was asked. Marriages were usually arranged by families, but the decision was put to Rebekah herself, as Abraham had said: "if the woman is unwilling...". And she answered: "I will go." In Hebrew it is a single word, with no hesitation. She was saying yes to leaving her mother, her brother, her home and her country, to travel for weeks to a land she had never seen, to marry a man she had never met. All she had was the servant's word and the evidence of God's hand in everything that had happened. That was enough. It is the faith we saw in Abraham: "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, without knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8). Rebekah left the same country, for the same land, with the same trust.

8. Rebekah and Abraham. Put them side by side. Abraham left his country when God called; Rebekah says, "I will go." Abraham ran to welcome strangers; Rebekah ran to water a stranger's camels. And her family's blessing, "Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands upon thousands. May your offspring possess the gates of their enemies", is almost what God had said to Abraham on Moriah (22:17). Rebekah is a woman fit to be the mother of the family through which God's promise would go on. And she did not go alone: her nurse went with her, who had cared for her since she was a baby (we learn her name, Deborah, when she dies, 35:8), and her servant girls.

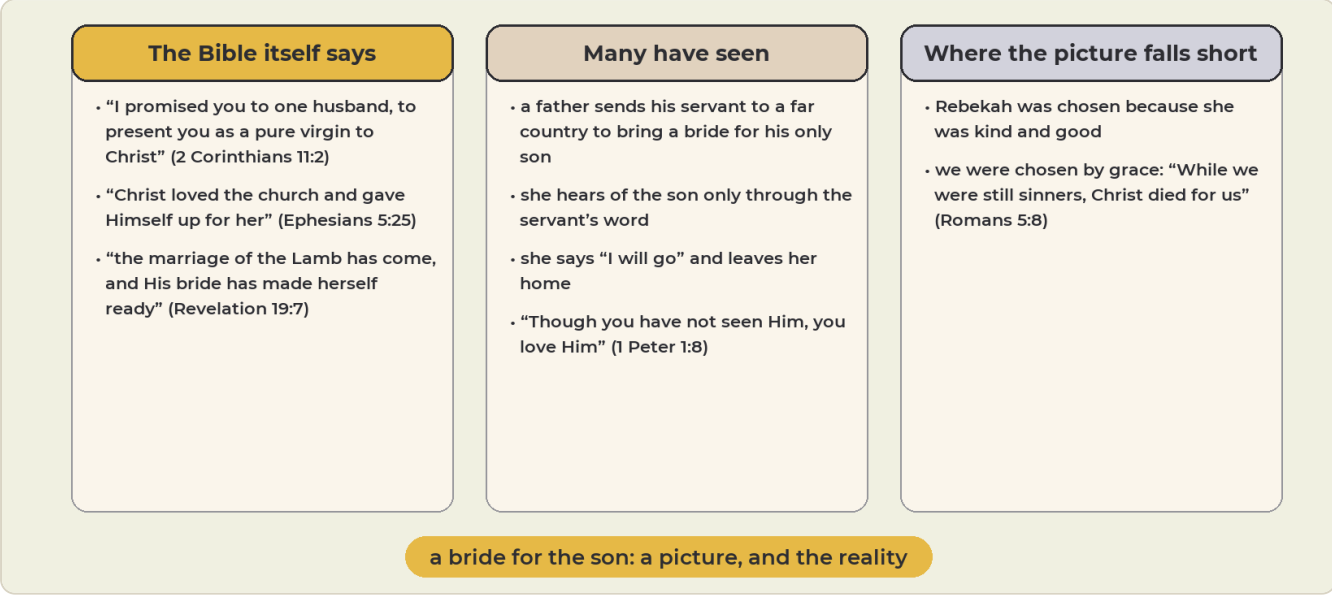
8 **Read Genesis 24:57–67**

What did Rebekah answer? What did Isaac do when she came to him?

9. "Isaac went out to the field to meditate." The scene moves to the south. Isaac "had just returned from Beer-lahai-roi", the well where the angel of the LORD found Hagar and she said, "You are the God who sees me" (16:13–14). Early in the evening he went out "to meditate". We are not told what he was thinking about, but meditation in the Bible means thinking deeply, especially about God and His word: "on His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2). Isaac was a quiet man who knew how to be alone with God; perhaps he was praying about this very journey. At that moment he looked up and saw camels coming, and Rebekah looked up and

saw him, and got down from her camel. "Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?" "It is my master." She took her veil and covered herself, as a bride did then. Then "the servant told Isaac all that he had done": he gave an account to his master's son, and his work was finished.

10. "Isaac loved her and was comforted." "Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah and took Rebekah as his wife." Sarah's tent had been empty three years; now Rebekah took her place: the promise had passed to the next generation. "And Isaac loved her": the first time the Bible says that a husband loved his wife. The marriage was arranged by a servant across hundreds of kilometres, but love was not missing; it grew, as God gave it. "And was comforted after his mother's death": God, who had guided the servant's steps for the great promise, did not forget one man's sorrow. His great purposes and His tender care for each of His children go together. The New Testament sets a far higher pattern for husbands: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25).



A bride for the son: what the Bible itself says (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 19:7), what many have seen (the servant, the bride who loves one she has not seen, 1 Peter 1:8), and where the picture falls short (Rebekah was chosen for her goodness; we, while we were still sinners, Romans 5:8).

11. A bride for the son. The Bible itself calls the church the bride of Christ: "I promised you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2); "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25); "the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready" (Revelation 19:7). The New Testament does not link Genesis 24 to Christ in so many words, but many teachers have seen a picture here, and we offer it gently. A father sends his trusted servant to a far country to bring home a bride for his only, beloved son. She hears of the son only through the servant's words; she has never seen him; but she believes, says "I will go", leaves everything, and travels to him. That is what it is to come to Christ: "Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with an inexpressible and glorious joy" (1 Peter 1:8). Charles Spurgeon said that she "must love him enough to leave her kindred, and go to a distant land". But here the picture falls short, wonderfully: Rebekah was chosen because she was kind and good. We are chosen for nothing in us: "God proves His love for us in this: While we were still

sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). So the question put to Rebekah comes to each of us: will you go with Him?

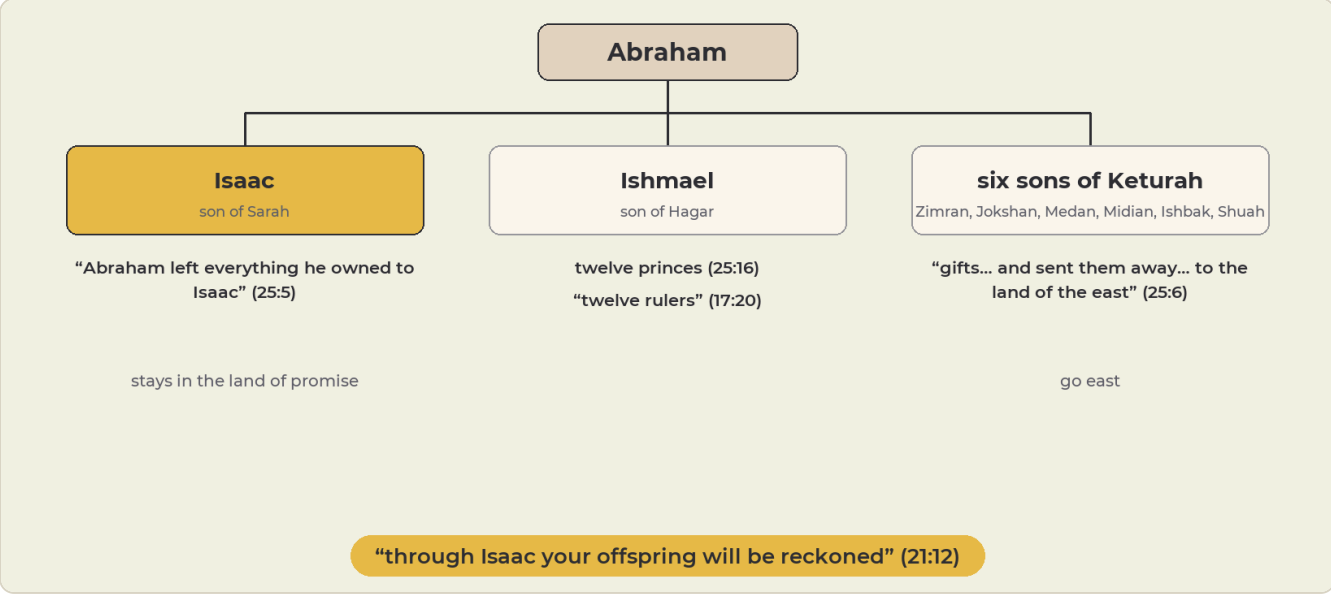
9 **Read 2 Corinthians 11:2**

How does Paul describe what he did for the Corinthians? To whom did he promise them?

PART 3

Gathered to his people

Genesis 25:1–18; Hebrews 11:13–16; Matthew 22:32



Abraham's sons: Isaac (son of Sarah), who received everything Abraham owned; Ishmael (son of Hagar), twelve princes; and six sons of Keturah, given gifts and sent east. "Through Isaac your offspring will be reckoned" (21:12).

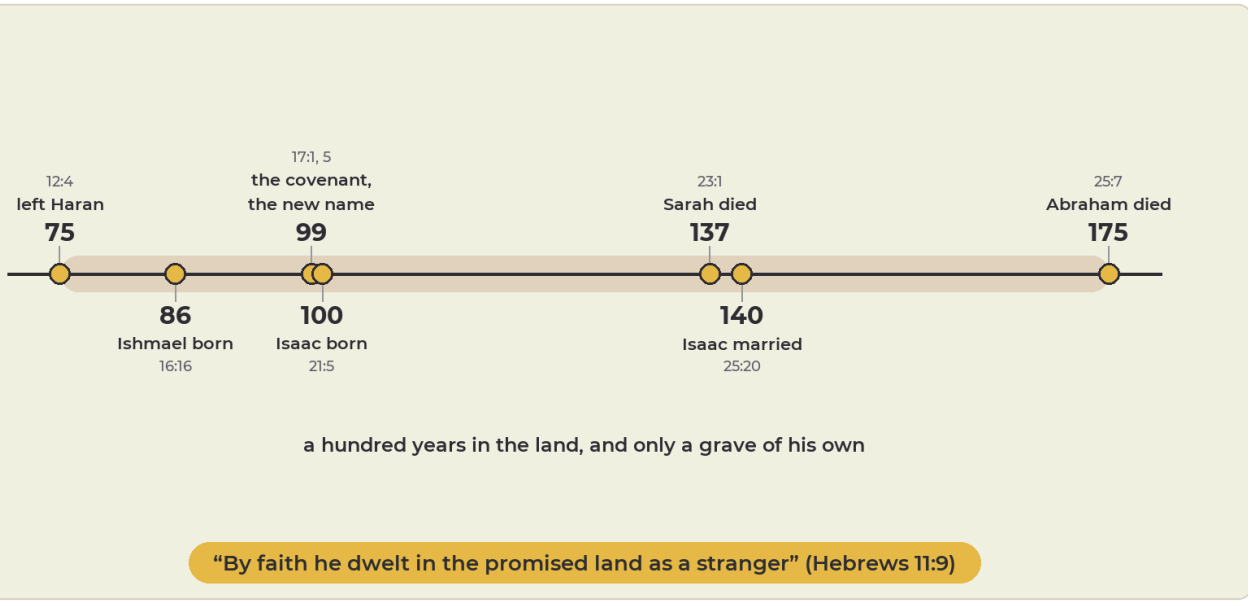
1. Another wife, named Keturah. This is the first we hear of her. When did Abraham marry her? The text does not say: some think after Sarah died, others earlier, and the words can be read either way. In 1 Chronicles 1:32 she is called "Abraham's concubine", a wife of lower rank, as Hagar had been. She bore six sons, and we are given some of their sons and grandsons. Most names mean little to us, but we meet Midian again: Midianites became a desert people, and when Moses fled from Egypt he kept the flock of his father-in-law, "Jethro, the priest of Midian" (Exodus 3:1). Why this list? Because God had said, "You will be the father of many nations" (17:4).

Isaac was the son of the promise, but many peoples were to come from Abraham, and here we see it beginning.

2. "Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac." Abraham gave gifts to the other sons and sent them away while he was still alive, so that there would be no quarrel over the inheritance after his death. It was not harshness: it was faith. God had said that the land was promised to Isaac's offspring, so Abraham ordered his house by the promise of God. In Genesis, going east is often going away from the place of blessing: Cain "settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden"; the builders of Babel went "eastward"; Lot "set out toward the east". But that is not the end for these families. Isaiah, looking ahead to the day when God gathers the nations, wrote: "young camels of Midian and Ephah, and all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and frankincense and proclaiming the praises of the LORD" (Isaiah 60:6): three names from our passage. The sons sent east would one day come back to praise Abraham's God. Many have seen a first sign of this when wise men came from the east to the child Jesus with "gold and frankincense and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11). All the families of the earth were to be blessed through Abraham, and even the sons who were sent away were not forgotten.

10 **Read Genesis 25:1–6**

What did Abraham leave to Isaac? What did he give the other sons, and where did he send them?



A hundred years in the land: Abraham left Haran at 75 (12:4), Ishmael was born when he was 86 (16:16), Isaac when he was 100 (21:5), Sarah died when he was 137 (23:1), Isaac married when he was 140 (25:20), and Abraham died at 175 (25:7).

3. A hundred years in the land. "Abraham lived a total of 175 years." He was seventy-five when he left Haran, so for exactly a hundred years he lived in the land God had promised him, and never owned it. He lived in tents, and the only piece of the land that was his was the cave where Sarah lay: "By faith he dwelt in the promised land as a stranger in a foreign country" (Hebrews 11:9). When he died, Isaac was seventy-five and the twins Jacob and Esau were fifteen: he lived to see the third generation of the family of promise.

4. "Old and contented." "At a ripe old age he breathed his last and died, old and contented, and was gathered to his people." The verse piles up words, as if Moses wants us to linger. "A ripe old age": many decades before, God had told him, "You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a ripe old age" (15:15), and now it had happened, word for word. "Old and contented": full, satisfied, like a man who has eaten all he needs. That is remarkable. Abraham had not seen most of what God promised: one son of the promise, not a nation like the stars; a grave, not a country. How could he die content? "All these people died in faith, without having received the things they were promised. However, they saw them and welcomed them from afar" (Hebrews 11:13). His contentment came not from having everything but from trusting the God who promised. A believer can die well not because life gave us all we wanted, but because we trust God for what He has promised; and dying well begins with living by faith now. "So teach us to number our days, that we may present a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

5. "Gathered to his people." This cannot simply mean buried with his family: the burial comes in the next verse, and only Sarah lay in that cave. It means that he went to join those who had gone before him. Jesus made this plain when people who denied the resurrection came to Him, and He answered from the words God spoke at the burning bush: "'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32). And in a parable Jesus spoke of a poor man who "was carried by the angels to Abraham's side" (Luke 16:22). For everyone in Christ, death is a gathering, not an ending: "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better indeed" (Philippians 1:23). One day the body too will be raised.

11 **Read Genesis 25:7–11**

How old was Abraham when he died? Who buried him, and where? What did God do after his death?

6. "His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him." We last saw Ishmael as a boy sent away into the wilderness; now he and Isaac stand together at their father's grave. Death often brings together people who have long been apart. Isaac is named first, because he is the heir. They laid Abraham in the field he had bought, beside Sarah, the only piece of the promised land he ever owned, a pledge that the land would one day belong to his offspring.

7. "After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac." These are the first words after Abraham's death, and they are about God. Abraham was gone, but God had not gone anywhere: He carried the promise on to Isaac, and in the next study He will say to him, "I will be with you and bless you... I will confirm the oath that I swore to your father Abraham" (26:3). "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8). God's servants die; His work does not. That is a comfort to a family that has lost a godly parent, a church that has lost a faithful pastor, and every believer who wonders what will happen when they are gone. Notice too where Isaac lived: "near Beer-lahai-roi", by the well of the God who sees. The God who saw Hagar was watching over Isaac too.

8. "Twelve princes of their tribes." Before the story goes on with Isaac, Moses gives us Ishmael's family. God had said to Abraham about Ishmael, "He will become the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation" (17:20): here are twelve princes. God kept His word to Ishmael too. And the angel had said to Hagar before he was born that "he will live in hostility toward all his brothers" (16:12), and the last words of our passage say the same of his descendants: God's words come true, the hard ones as well as the kind. Ishmael lived 137 years and "breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people". Then Genesis says no more of him and goes on: "This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac" (25:19). Genesis is not unkind to Ishmael: God blessed him, as He promised. But the main road of the story, the road that leads to Christ, goes through Isaac.

9. Abraham's children today. Not only those born from his family: "those who have faith are sons of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7); "if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). Abraham died without seeing the nations blessed; but Jesus said: "many will come from the east and the west to share the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11). The question is whether we will be there: not because of our family, or our church, or our good life, but because we belong to Christ by faith. If we do, the God of Abraham is our God, and when our time comes we too will be gathered to His people.

12 **Read Genesis 25:12–18**

How many princes came from Ishmael? What had God promised about Ishmael in Genesis 17:20?

PART 4

Abraham in five minutes

Genesis 11:27–25:18 looked back on

1. The call (11:27–12:20). Out of a world scattered at Babel, God called one man, from a family that "worshiped other gods". He said: "Leave your country, your kindred, and your father's household, and go to the land I will show you", and promised him a land, a great nation, and a blessing for "all the families of the earth" (12:3). Abram went at seventy-five, not knowing where he was going. But a famine soon drove him down to Egypt, where fear made him lie about Sarai, and God stepped in to protect her, and His promise.

2. Lot and Melchizedek (chapters 13–14). Abram and Lot parted. Lot chose by sight, the well-watered plain towards Sodom; Abram let him choose, and God said, "Lift up your eyes", and promised him all the land he could see. When Lot was taken captive, Abram rescued him. Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, met him with bread and wine and blessed him, a picture, as Hebrews says, of Christ our King and Priest. Abram would take nothing from the king of Sodom.

3. The covenant (chapters 15–16). "Count the stars… So shall your offspring be." And "Abram believed the LORD, and it was credited to him as righteousness" (15:6): the great verse Paul uses to show that we are made right with God by faith. God made His covenant and passed alone between the pieces. But the years went by, and Sarai and Abram tried to make the promise happen through Hagar; Ishmael was born, and with him sorrow. Yet God saw Hagar in the wilderness, and she called Him "the God who sees me."

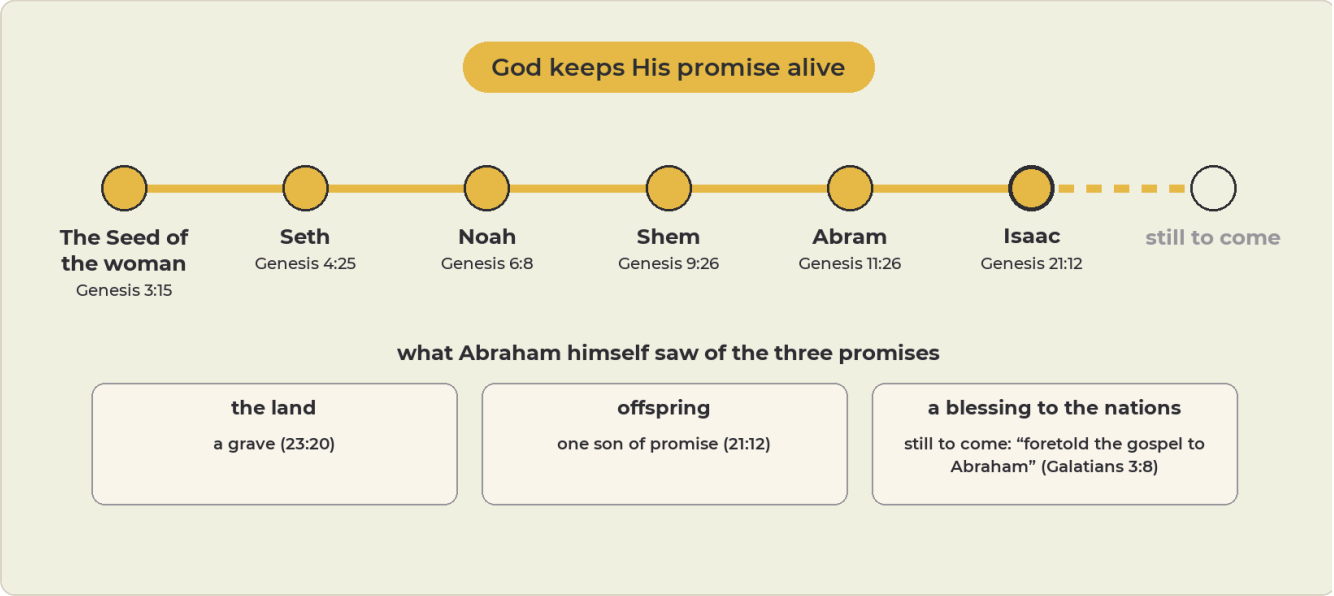
4. The sign and the visitors (chapters 17–18). At ninety-nine Abram was given a new name, Abraham, "father of many nations", and Sarai became Sarah. God gave the sign of circumcision, pointing to the circumcision of the heart that only God can do. Then the LORD came to Abraham's tent and promised that Sarah would have a son within the year. Sarah laughed, and God asked: "Is anything too difficult for the LORD?" (18:14).

5. The Judge of all the earth (chapters 18–20). Abraham pleaded for Sodom: "Will not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?" For ten righteous people God would have spared the city, but there were not ten. Fire fell; Lot was brought out by the hand; his wife looked back. Then Abraham, the friend of God, told his old lie again at Gerar, and God was faithful to him once more.

6. The LORD will provide (chapters 21–23). At the very time God had promised, Isaac was born. Then came the greatest test: "Take your son… your only son Isaac, whom you love." Abraham obeyed, believing God could raise the dead, and God provided a ram in Isaac's place. Abraham called the place "The LORD Will Provide". When Sarah died, he bought a grave in the land, a pledge of the promise.

7. A bride, and a death (24:1–25:18). Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac, sure that God would send His angel ahead. Rebekah said, "I will go." And Abraham died old and

contented, and was gathered to his people. But the promise did not die with him: "After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac."



The promise thread so far: the Seed of the woman (3:15), Seth, Noah, Shem, Abram, and now Isaac (21:12). And what Abraham himself saw of the three promises: the land, a grave; offspring, one son of promise; the blessing of the nations, still to come (Galatians 3:8).

8. The promise thread. At the end of Section 1 the thread had reached Abram; now it runs on to Isaac: "through Isaac your offspring will be reckoned." Look at what Abraham himself saw of the three promises: the land, one grave; the offspring, one son of promise; the blessing of all nations, nothing yet. And still he believed. Scripture "foretold the gospel to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you'" (Galatians 3:8). That blessing came at last in Abraham's greatest Offspring, the Lord Jesus Christ.

9. What we have learned. That God calls people by grace: Abraham did not seek God; God sought him. That we are made right with God by believing His promise, not by our works. That God's people still fail, sometimes the same way twice, and God stays faithful. That nothing is too difficult for the LORD. That God Himself provided the Lamb, in the place of sinners. And that believers are strangers and exiles on the earth, looking for a better country, a heavenly one. Next: "This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac": Rebekah, like Sarah, will wait years for a child, and twins will be born, and God will say, "the older will serve the younger."

13 **Read Galatians 3:7–9**

Who are the sons of Abraham? What did the Scripture foretell to Abraham?

Study 15 in summary

Abraham, old and blessed, sent his oldest servant to find a wife for Isaac among his own kindred, not from the Canaanites and not back in the old country, because of what God had promised; and he was sure: "He will send His angel before you." At the well the servant prayed, and before he had finished, Rebekah came and watered all his camels. He worshiped the LORD who had led him. In Rebekah's home he told the story again, and Laban and Bethuel said, "This is from the LORD." Rebekah, asked, said "I will go", as Abraham had once gone. Isaac met her in the field at evening, loved her, and was comforted. Then Abraham died old and contented, and was gathered to his people, buried by Isaac and Ishmael. The first words after his death are about God: "After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac." The promise was carried to the next generation.

THINK IT THROUGH

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What do you learn about prayer from the servant at the well (Genesis 24:12–14, 26–27)?

2. What did Rebekah say when asked, "Will you go with this man?" (Genesis 24:58)? When has God called you to leave something and trust Him?

3. What does it mean that Abraham died "old and contented" (Genesis 25:8; Hebrews 11:13)?

4. Which part of Abraham's life, from Genesis 11 to 25, has helped you most to trust God?

HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART

Memory verse for study 15

Learn this verse by heart this week. Cut out the card and keep it where you will see it.

GENESIS · STUDY 15 · MEMORY VERSE

“saying, ‘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.’”

Genesis 24:27

Berean Standard Bible · biblehelp.net

“I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11, BSB)

AT THE BACK

The Bible passages (BSB)

1 **Genesis 24:1–9** *1By now Abraham was old and well along in years, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. 2So Abraham instructed the chief servant of his household, who managed all he owned, "Place your hand under my thigh, 3and I will have you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I am dwelling, 4but will go to my country and my kindred to take a wife for my son Isaac." 5The servant asked him, "What if the woman is unwilling to follow me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the land from which you came?" 6Abraham replied, "Make sure that you do not take my son back there. 7The LORD, the God of heaven, who brought me from my father's house and my native land, who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, 'To your offspring I will give this land'—He will send His angel before you so that you can take a wife for my son from there. 8And if the woman is unwilling to follow you, then you are released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there." 9So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.*

2 **Romans 4:20–21** *20Yet he did not waver through disbelief in the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21being fully persuaded that God was able to do what He had promised.*

3 **Genesis 24:10–14** *10Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed with all manner of good things from his master in hand. And he set out for Nahor's hometown in Aram-naharaim. 11As evening approached, he made the camels kneel down near the well outside the town at the time when the women went out to draw water. 12"O LORD, God of my master Abraham," he prayed, "please grant me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. 13Here I am, standing beside the spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. 14Now may it happen that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who responds, 'Drink, and I will water your camels as well'—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."*

4 **Genesis 24:15–27** *15 Before the servant had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her*
shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor. 16 Now the
girl was very beautiful, a virgin who had not had relations with any man. She went down to the spring,
filled her jar, and came up again. 17 So the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me have a little
water from your jar." 18 "Drink, my lord," she replied, and she quickly lowered her jar to her hands and
gave him a drink. 19 After she had given him a drink, she said, "I will also draw water for your camels,
until they have had enough to drink." 20 And she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran back to
the well to draw water, until she had drawn water for all his camels. 21 Meanwhile, the man watched her
silently to see whether or not the LORD had made his journey a success. 22 And after the camels had
finished drinking, he took out a gold ring weighing a beka, and two gold bracelets for her wrists weighing
ten shekels. 23 "Whose daughter are you?" he asked. "Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for
us to spend the night?" 24 She replied, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milcah bore to Nahor."
25 Then she added, "We have plenty of straw and feed, as well as a place for you to spend the night."
26 Then the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD, 27 saying, "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."

5 **Genesis 24:28–33** *28 The girl ran and told her mother's household about these things. 29 Now*
Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and he rushed out to the man at the spring. 30 As soon as he saw the
ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and heard Rebekah's words, "The man said this to me," he
went and found the man standing by the camels near the spring. 31 "Come, you who are blessed by the
LORD," said Laban. "Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the
camels." 32 So the man came to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and feed were brought to
the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of his companions. 33 Then a meal was set before the
man, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told you what I came to say." So Laban said, "Please speak."

6 **Genesis 24:34–49** *34“I am Abraham’s servant,” he replied. 35“The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become rich. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, camels and donkeys. 36My master’s wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and my master has given him everything he owns. 37My master made me swear an oath and said, ‘You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites in whose land I dwell, 38but you shall go to my father’s house and to my kindred to take a wife for my son.’ 39Then I asked my master, ‘What if the woman will not come back with me?’ 40And he told me, ‘The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send His angel with you and make your journey a success, so that you may take a wife for my son from my kindred and from my father’s house. 41And when you go to my kindred, if they refuse to give her to you, then you will be released from my oath.’ 42So when I came to the spring today, I prayed: O LORD, God of my master Abraham, if only You would make my journey a success! 43Here I am, standing beside this spring. Now if a maiden comes out to draw water and I say to her, ‘Please let me drink a little water from your jar,’ 44and she replies, ‘Drink, and I will draw water for your camels as well,’ may she be the woman the LORD has appointed for my master’s son. 45And before I had finished praying in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her jar on her shoulder, and she went down to the spring and drew water. So I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ 46She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels as well.’ So I drank, and she also watered the camels. 47Then I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She replied, ‘The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.’ So I put the ring on her nose and the bracelets on her wrists. 48Then I bowed down and worshiped the LORD; and I blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who led me on the right road to take the granddaughter of my master’s brother for his son. 49Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; but if not, let me know, so that I may go elsewhere.”*

7 **Genesis 24:50–56** *50Laban and Bethuel answered, “This is from the LORD; we have no choice in the matter. 51Rebekah is here before you. Take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master’s son, just as the LORD has decreed.” 52When Abraham’s servant heard their words, he bowed down to the ground before the LORD. 53Then he brought out jewels of silver and gold, and articles of clothing, and he gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious gifts to her brother and her mother. 54Then he and the men with him ate and drank and spent the night there. When they got up the next morning, he said, “Send me on my way to my master.” 55But her brother and mother said, “Let the girl remain with us ten days or so. After that, she may go.” 56But he replied, “Do not delay me, since the LORD has made my journey a success. Send me on my way so that I may go to my master.”*

8 **Genesis 24:57–67** *57So they said, “We will call the girl and ask her opinion.” 58They called Rebekah and asked her, “Will you go with this man?” “I will go,” she replied. 59So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham’s servant and his men. 60And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, “Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands upon thousands. May your offspring possess the gates of their enemies.” 61Then Rebekah and her servant girls got ready, mounted the camels, and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left. 62Now Isaac had just returned from Beer-lahai-roi, for he was living in the Negev. 63Early in the evening, Isaac went out to the field to meditate, and looking up, he saw the camels approaching. 64And when Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac, she got down from her camel 65and asked the servant, “Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?” “It is my master,” the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself. 66Then the servant told Isaac all that he had done. 67And Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah and took Rebekah as his wife. And Isaac loved her and was comforted after his mother’s death.*

9 **2 Corinthians 11:2** *I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. For I promised you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.*

10 **Genesis 25:1–6** *1Now Abraham had taken another wife, named Keturah, 2and she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. 3Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were the Asshurites, the Letushites, and the Leummites. 4The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah. 5Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. 6But while he was still alive, Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east.*

11 **Genesis 25:7–11** *7Abraham lived a total of 175 years. 8And at a ripe old age he breathed his last and died, old and contented, and was gathered to his people. 9His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite. 10This was the field that Abraham had bought from the Hittites. Abraham was buried there with his wife Sarah. 11After Abraham’s death, God blessed his son Isaac, who lived near Beer-lahai-roi.*

12 **Genesis 25:12–18** *12This is the account of Abraham’s son Ishmael, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s maidservant, bore to Abraham. 13These are the names of the sons of Ishmael in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 14Mishma, Dumah, Massa, 15Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. 16These were the sons of Ishmael, and these were their names by their villages and encampments—twelve princes of their tribes. 17Ishmael lived a total of 137 years. Then he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people. 18Ishmael’s descendants settled from Havilah to Shur, which is near the border of Egypt as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers.*

13 **Galatians 3:7–9** *7Understand, then, that those who have faith are sons of Abraham. 8The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and foretold the gospel to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.” 9So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*

Scripture: Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain. Quotations keep its American spelling. Like many English Bibles, it often says ‘man’, ‘he’ or ‘brothers’ where it means people in general, men and women alike.

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Study 15: A bride for Isaac, and Abraham's death

> **Memory verse:** “saying, ‘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.’” (Genesis 24:27). Say it together at the end, and ask who can say it without looking.

Aims

- See how God carries His promise from one generation to the next: Abraham, old and blessed, makes sure that Isaac will have a wife, guided by what God has already said (Genesis 24:1–9).
- Learn from the servant at the well how to pray and how to wait: he prays for a plain need, on the ground of God's promise, and worships when the answer comes (24:12–27).
- See Rebekah's willingness, "I will go" (24:58), as the faith of Abraham again; and Isaac, loving her and comforted (24:67).
- See Abraham die "old and contented", gathered to his people, and notice that the first thing the Bible says after his death is about God: "God blessed his son Isaac" (25:8–11).
- Look back over the whole life of Abraham, Genesis 11–25, in the recap (Part 4).

Suggested timing (about 2½ hours, or four meetings)

- **5 min** Welcome and short prayer. Ask the group to read Genesis 24:1–25:18 before the meeting.
- **40 min** Part 1 video (23 min); Genesis 24:1–27, with Deuteronomy 7:3–4 and 2 Corinthians 6:14.
- **35 min** Part 2 video (19 min); Genesis 24:28–67, with 2 Corinthians 11:2 and 1 Peter 1:8.
- **30 min** Part 3 video (15 min); Genesis 25:1–18, with Hebrews 11:13–16 and Matthew 22:32.
- **15 min** Part 4 video (5 min), the recap of Section 2, and its two questions.
- **10 min** Reflection questions. Close in prayer, thanking God that He carries His promise from one generation to the next.

For most groups, take one part each week. If you do, read the passage for that part aloud together before the video. Part 4 can be added to the end of Part 3.

Tips

- **Marriage to an unbeliever** (Part 1, point 3): the study teaches "Do not be unequally yoked" gently, and adds a word for those already married to someone who does not believe (1 Corinthians 7:13). Some in the group may be in that position: speak kindly, and do not single anyone out.
- **The sign at the well** (24:12–14): the Bible records what the servant did; it does not tell us to do the same. Guide the group to the ordinary ways God guides us: His Word, thought, advice and prayer (James 1:5; Proverbs 3:5–6). Do not let the discussion turn into stories of signs received.
- **Abraham's reasoning** (Part 1, point 4): God had not said, "Isaac must marry"; Abraham worked it out from what God had said. A good question for the group: where else do we need to ask, "What has God already said about this?"
- **Laban** (24:29–31, 55): the study gives a hint, not a verdict ("We should not make too much of one verse"). Keep to that.
- **"I will go"** (24:58): the point is her willing faith, like Abraham's. Do not turn it into a rule about arranged marriages today.
- **The picture of a bride for the son** (Part 2, point 11): the study separates what the Bible itself says (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25; Revelation 19:7), what many have seen (the servant, the bride who

loves one she has not seen), and where it falls short (Rebekah was chosen for her goodness; we, while we were still sinners). Keep these apart. Spurgeon is named once.

- **Keturah** (25:1): the Bible does not say when Abraham took her as a wife, and the study leaves it open. Do not let the group spend long on it.
- **Gifts and sending away** (25:6): Abraham gave gifts to the other sons and sent them east so there would be no quarrel; the study sees this as faith in God's promise to Isaac. Isaiah 60:6 and Matthew 2:11 are offered gently: "Many have seen a first sign."
- **"Gathered to his people"** (25:8): the study takes it as meaning more than burial (Matthew 22:32; Luke 16:22; Philippians 1:23). If someone grieving is in the group, this is a good place for gentleness.
- **Ishmael** (25:12–18): God kept His word to him too, the kind promises and the hard ones. Say plainly that the main road of the story, the road to Christ, goes through Isaac; but speak of Ishmael with respect.
- **The recap** (Part 4): it makes a good review of the whole of Section 2 at the next meeting. Ask each member which part of Abraham's life has helped them most.
- **Ask in the closing prayer** for people the group loves who have not yet said, "I will go."