

Session 5 Rebekah: The Extravagant Heart of the Bride

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

We're on part five in our "Studies in the Bride of Christ." We are looking at Rebekah as a picture of the extravagant heart of the Bride. We could title this, "Rebekah: Experiencing the Power of the Holy Spirit." Either title would work. Last week we looked at Eve and tonight we are looking at Rebekah.

"TO A PEOPLE WITHOUT MIXTURE, I WILL GIVE THE SPIRIT WITHOUT MEASURE"

Several years ago, the word of the Lord came to one of the leadership team and said, "To a people without mixture, I will give the Spirit without measure." I want to say that again: "To a people without mixture, the Lord will release"—or give—"the Spirit without measure." That would be one of the themes of Genesis 24 because Rebekah was a picture of extravagant responsiveness to the Lord and to the Holy Spirit. Our conviction is that a people without mixture will operate in the Spirit without measure.

GENESIS 24: TWO DRAMAS AT THE SAME TIME

Paragraph A. Genesis 24 tells us two dramatic stories at the same time. One is a spiritual story and one is a natural story. These two stories overlap and intersect at key points. The spiritual story is that the Father is committed to find a Bride for His worthy Son. The Father determined before the foundation of the world that He would have a prepared Bride for a worthy Son. Even before Adam and Eve were created, the Father's plan was clear: the wedding feast that John saw in Revelation 19 was the wedding feast already in the heart of God before Genesis 1. The Father had a clear blueprint from which He was operating.

The spiritual story, again, is the Father's commitment to find a Bride for His Son. The natural story was father Abraham finding a bride for his son Isaac. From a symbolic perspective, we can find the spiritual story in the context of the natural story. Not every detail you find has a corresponding spiritual truth, because there really is a natural story here, too. Even though not every detail crosses over into spiritual truth, it's still very clear that the spiritual story was intended in the heart of God. We see this drama, and must be careful not force clever ways to relate the story. I want to encourage you not to approach it that way. As a Bible teacher, which many of you are, I'm not looking for clever ways to make the story connect. I'm simply seeing myself in the drama. That's the way to read Genesis 24. Picture yourself in Rebekah's role, responding the way Rebekah responded. Her extravagant response is powerful, and it moved the heart of God. That's the real story line that will touch us in a spiritual way to edify our life in the present.

It's interesting that Genesis 24 is the longest chapter in the book of Genesis. The fact that it's the longest chapter highlights its significance; the Holy Spirit gave so much material to this one story.

ABRAHAM AS FATHER – ISAAC AS CHRIST

Paragraph C. We start with Abraham. He's a picture of God the Father. Twice in the New Testament we read that Isaac was a type of Christ (Gal. 4:24; Heb. 11:19). At the time of this story, Isaac was about thirty-seven years old.

THE NAMELESS SERVANT: THE HOLY SPIRIT

Paragraph D. A really prominent player is Abraham's servant. He's not named. That's significant, because he's a picture and type of the Holy Spirit's ministry. All the father's property is under his authority. Additionally,

he's unnamed in the story because the Holy Spirit moves among us in a nameless, faceless fashion, exalting Jesus. Of course, that's what He wants us to do—to operate in the same spirit as He operates—so that we're magnifying the fame of Jesus' Name and not drawing attention to ourselves. When I look at this servant of Abraham, I want to be like him. Then I look at Rebekah, paragraph E, and I want to be like her. I want to have the humility of the servant and the behind-the-scenes way of the wife.

THE BRIDE RECEIVES THE GRACE OF GOD

Paragraph E. At first, Rebekah is only in her teenage years. She's a type of the Church as the Bride of Christ, but this is the key part: she responds in an extravagant, wholehearted way and is a picture of the Bride experiencing the riches of God's grace. That's a point that's emphasized several times. You'll find in the notes that the riches and the wealth of Abraham's house are given to her by the servant. She's made rich and glorious as a free gift, and receives the riches of the wealth of the father's house. The way she responds is a primary theme in this story—a theme that is meant to inspire us and a theme we're called to imitate.

THE FATHER PLANNED A WEDDING FROM AGES PAST

Paragraph F. We're looking at the spiritual story line here. As I tell you the natural story, the spiritual story that's being emphasized and elaborated is clear. Jesus declared it with His own mouth about Himself in His final, public message before He went to the cross. He declared this to the people, not privately to His leaders, in Matthew 22. He stood before the people of Jerusalem and declared the message that had been burning in His heart for so long. He said, "The kingdom of God is like a king arranging a wedding for his son. I'm the Son, My Father is a King, and there's a wedding planned" (Mt. 22:2). That was His final public message. You can be sure He was excited to give that declaration. That's the main story line: The Father sent His most trusted servant, the Holy Spirit, on a mission to prepare a Bride for the Son, because this wedding was planned by the Father from ages past.

THE BRIDE MUST RESPOND FREELY

The Bride must respond in an extravagant way, but she must also respond in a voluntary way. God won't make her say 'yes.' That's one of the grand principles of understanding redemption. God won't make you say 'yes.' He will woo you, He will try and convince you, He will even put up roadblocks to hinder us you and to wake you up, but He won't make you say yes. He will honor your free will to such a degree that He will even allow you to go into darkness and lose everything if you want. But we choose. He won't violate our free will. That's one of the key themes: The Bride must extravagantly respond, and she must do it of her own accord—under the anointing and the grace of God, yes—but the grace of God can be resisted, even by believers. Paul pleads with us in 2 Corinthians 6:1 not to take the grace of God in vain. You can have it offered to you as a believer and not fully cooperate, and therefore lose grace's fullest impact in your life.

GOD BRINGS FORTH THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

Natural history is going to end with a wedding feast. Natural history ends with the coming of the Lord Jesus in the clouds, in the sky, in flaming fire. All of heaven, as we learn in Revelation 19, will be in a spirit of celebration, because finally—finally—the Father's purpose has come to pass in time and space in the natural realm. Finally, there is a people drawn from all the nations of the earth who have voluntarily chosen to be prepared as a Bride. They said yes. They said yes! They were not forced; they agreed that this was the way they wanted to live. A great voice, a great multitude in heaven cries, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" (Rev. 19:6). God has exercised His power—to do what? "To bring a wedding to pass" (v. 7, paraphrased). The omnipotence of God has been displayed throughout history to bring forth the marriage of the

Lamb. That's point one—the Father has brought the marriage to completion—but the other point is that the wife is ready. She said yes. She was so wowed and wooed by the glory of Jesus through the ministry of the Spirit that she said yes. She made herself ready.

REBEKAH WAS WHOLEHEARTED

Paragraph G. This story, Genesis 24, isn't a story of how the bride was saved or how she received justification by faith. The story begins with her already living in the household of faith, so to speak. She's already a believer when the story begins. This isn't a story of how she was saved and forgiven of her sins in the initial way. This is the story of how she was motivated to wholeheartedness in order to live out that bridal ideal. There are several different descriptions in the Bible of what the bridal response would be. The absolute ultimate is a heart of abandonment, a heart of wholehearted response. This is how the story unfolds. The grace of God strengthens her to say yes, not just to fulfill her duty, but beyond the call of duty, to live out the life of extravagance so that she would love Him with all her heart just as He loves her with all His heart.

ABRAHAM SENDS HIS SERVANT TO FIND A BRIDE

Top of page two. In setting the stage for the drama, we begin to tell the story. The stage is back in Abraham's hometown, Hebron, where the story begins. Abraham speaks to his oldest servant, to the one who rules over all he has (Gen. 24:2). Now there was only one oldest servant who had all that authority. Of course, he's a picture of the Holy Spirit. Abraham, who represents the Father, says to his unnamed servant, his oldest servant who has all the authority, "I want you to make a vow to me; I want you to swear something to me. Here is what I want you to say to me. You will swear to me that you're going to go to the country I grew up in, to Ur of the Chaldeans" (v. 3-4, paraphrased). This was a region of the Babylonian Empire. I'll just call it Babylon, because it became the territory of Babylon, that famous territory referred to so many times in Scripture.

He says, "I want you to go back to the place where I grew up, because part of my family still lives in that region. I want you to find someone in my family line that shares the same faith that I have. Maybe they will not have it to the same maturity, but at least of the same household of faith. They will understand my story and they will believe in my story. I want you to go back among that family line and find a bride for my son. Bring her back here to Israel." It wasn't called Israel then—"back to this city"—which, again, was the region of Hebron. "Arrange to have my son marry her."

The oldest servant, this elderly man who is a picture of the Holy Spirit says, "OK. I swear to you, I will do it."

THE MANDATE OF THE SPIRIT: TO PREPARE A BRIDE

Paragraph B. The mandate is clear. Here is the mandate the Spirit of God has: to prepare an equally yoked Bride for the Son. Jesus doesn't want a live-in partner; that's not what He's after. He's after a Bride who is equally yoked with Him. He loves her with all His heart, and she loves the Lord her God with all her heart as well. Jesus' all is bigger than her all, but it's still her all that she brings into the relationship.

Paragraph C. Abraham says, "I want you to swear to me; I want you to vow that you'll complete this plan and that under no circumstances will you be distracted or allow this plan to fail."

So the servant makes a vow: "I swear."

Of course, in this we see the Holy Spirit's commitment. We see the focus of the Spirit. He's focused on keeping and bringing forth the plan of the Father's heart to give His Son an inheritance, a Bride.

Again, John had an open vision in Revelation 19. He saw it. He saw it ahead of time. The Holy Spirit is still focused on making that plan come to pass, and exercising the omnipotent power of God to bring the wedding relationship to fullness.

DON'T GO BACK TO BABYLON

Roman numeral III. In verse 5, the servant says to Abraham, "OK, I vow to you, but I want one qualifier here on the vow I've just made. What if, perhaps, the woman isn't willing to follow me? Perhaps she says no to the offer?" (Gen. 24:5, paraphrased). Because God will never violate our free will in His desire to bring us forth, we can stall out at whatever measure of obedience we want. He won't force us. It may grieve His heart, He may put up roadblocks to warn us, but He won't force us to say yes. The Spirit in this story, the Holy Spirit, is pictured as saying, "What if she's not willing?" Then the servant offers an alternate plan that Abraham doesn't like. Now, this is a natural plan. He says, "Shall I take your son back to where you grew up—back to Babylon? If the girl won't come with me, what if I bring him back on a second trip? I'm just trying to be helpful."

Abraham says in verse 6, "No, no. Don't bring him to Babylon. The drama must happen here in the land of Israel—not in Babylon" (Gen. 24:6). Fifteen hundred years later, the nation of Israel went back to Babylon under the discipline of God. It was a very negative and terrible experience. But that's another story for another time. Abraham says, "No, you don't want to end up in Babylon with the people of God. That's not good." In verse 7 he tells the servant, "No, the Lord took me from the land of my family, from the region of Babylon, and He brought me here to Israel. He swore to me that my descendents would come to their full purpose in God here, in the land of Israel" (v. 7). God has an actual purpose for the geographical land of Israel, because it's from there that Jesus is going to rule the whole earth. It has a purpose for billions of years. This piece of geography is strategic and significant. He goes on in verse 7 and tells his servant, "God will even send the angel of the Lord before you" (Gen. 24:7b, paraphrased). There will be supernatural intervention. There will be angelic breakthroughs. There will be power encounters. "I will help you," says the Lord. "I will help you bring forth a Bride, even through the release of the supernatural dimension of the Spirit."

"DON'T BRING HER IF SHE'S NOT WILLING"

Verse 8. Now Abraham, speaking as the Father, says, "OK. I will agree with you on this one point: if the woman isn't willing, then don't force her. This isn't a shotgun wedding. Don't force her. I agree with you—if she's not willing, if she won't be involved, then I won't force her hand. You'll be released from the oath if she's not willing, because I don't want a forced wedding. That's not where it's going. I have something different in my heart for my son." So then the servant swore to him concerning the matter. Again, you can see the determination of the Holy Spirit, saying: "Yes. Yes. I will do everything in my power to woo her, to win her, to bring her back; but I won't violate her free will. That's the one boundary line that I'll uphold."

WE MAKE CHOICES FOR LOVE, BUT LOVE MUST BE REAL

Paragraph A. The issue of being willing. The servant mentioned it, and then Abraham, representing the Father, emphasized it. The issue of our free will is emphasized in the story several times. It's necessary that we make choices for love, and for that love to be real. In the secret place of our heart, we have to say no to pride and immorality, to compromise and covetousness, to bitterness and many other things. We must say no or love isn't love. It's our offering of love when we say yes. There's no substitute for you choosing love and obedience,

which are the same thing. No one can do it for you. God won't make you do it. The entire story line is in the balance because your life depends on whether you say yes. It's not just yes, initially, to salvation at an altar call; that's not what I mean. I'm saying your involvement in this grand story is dependent upon you saying yes, a permanent yes. That doesn't mean we don't have failures; that's not what I mean. When we fail, we must call sin, "sin," we declare war on it. We don't rationalize it; we don't cover it up. We war against it when we fail. Then, we take the mercy of God and jump back in the race to be wholehearted His lovers.

Top of page three. God wants them in the land, the land of Israel. It's not my purpose right now to focus on that point, but it's a grand part of God's end-time purpose. It's a part of the story line from Genesis 24. Again, I'm passing that by right now, just for time's sake.

“THE SERVANT TOOK HIS MASTER’S CAMELS AND DEPARTED”

Roman numeral IV. Top of page three. The supernatural help of the Holy Spirit. In verse 10, the servant is set. He knows what his mission is: go get a bride. He knows what the boundary lines are: he can't violate her free will. She has to have a wholehearted response to God. So, in Genesis 24:10, “The servant took ten of his master's camels and departed.” It was about a two-week journey with ten of the master's camels, for all the master's goods were in the hand of this servant. We find out later that these camels are loaded with gold and silver, precious clothing and prize possessions to give as gifts. Of course, that's an indicator of the riches of the grace of God as well as the gifts of the Holy Spirit. “He arose and went to Mesopotamia” (Gen. 24:10). He went to the city of Nahor, which, by the way, is the name of Abraham's brother. The city was named after his brother, so he was probably the first man in the city. I'm just assuming this; there's not much known about the city. His family line was the predominant family in that city. They were of the faith of Abraham; at least from our point of view, looking back, we can say that.

THE SUPERNATURAL HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Now the unusual part begins. It has been a two-week journey, approximately, give or take a day or two. In verse 11, the servant finally arrives in the city of Nahor, where Abraham's brother and his family line dwell. The brother is no longer alive, but his family line is still there. Abraham's servant makes his camels kneel outside the city (v. 11). They all kneel down, all ten, and they're beside a well of water. What happens next is that the servant offers a prayer to the Father—to God—and God supernaturally confirms the prayer. The servant offers a prayer and receives a supernatural, prophetic confirmation. The story line really picks up starting here. It's evening. This is the time, in ancient tradition, when women would go out and get water for the household at evening. He shows up at the right time. There are different women coming to the well to get water. By the way, that's a hard task. Think about drawing water from a deep well. You have to take the rope, lower a clay pot, pull it up, pour it in your pitcher, and walk the pitcher home. Water is heavy—eight pounds a gallon—if you get ten gallons, you have eighty pounds you're carrying home. That's intense.

THE SERVANT’S PROPOSAL TO GOD

Now the servant arrives at the well and offers a prayer (Gen. 24:12–14). This is intercessory prayer. He's thinking, “OK, I'm in the city. I don't know one person in this city. I don't know where to go.” He stands by the well and the ladies are coming (v. 13). Here's the prayer. It's a very unusual situation he presents to the Lord. If I were him, I wouldn't present this situation to the Lord. Again, Rebekah was a teenager, about fifteen or sixteen years old. He says to God, “Here's the deal. I'm going to walk up to a young woman and say, ‘Hey, would you give me a drink of your water?’” (Gen. 24:14, paraphrased).

THE ABSURDITY OF THE SERVANT’S PROPOSAL

I’m guessing he imagined he would do this several times until he found the right lady. He’s an old man. “Hey, can I have a drink of your water? Don’t I know you from somewhere?”

This young girl is thinking, “Hey, no, get your own water. My parents taught me not to talk to strangers.” For real, this is a weird situation. That’s his opening line: “Will you give me a drink of your water? I don’t have a pitcher, and would you do it?” He then says to the Lord, “If she answers yes, and of her own accord, without me suggesting it, if she says, ‘I’ll also water all ten of your camels...’” Do you know what it would take to water ten camels? A camel can drink fifty gallons in one setting, and they’ve spent two weeks walking. They’re thirsty. Ten camels, fifty gallons, 500 gallons of water.

So this young girl is going to volunteer: “Hey, I’ll draw the 500 gallons, eight pounds a gallon.” That’s 4,000 pounds of water. “I’ll do it. It’s only two tons. It’s evening time. I’ve worked all day. I have energy for two tons of water tonight.”

Now, this is the most remarkable fleece that the servant lays before the Lord. “If I say, ‘Hey young lady, can I have a drink of your water?’ and she says, ‘Sure, old man, and I’ll get 4,000 pounds of water for your camels—just on the side,’” he says to the Lord, “Then I’ll know that’s the one.” It’s true.

YOU CAN REALLY BE FLEECE BY A FLEECE

Again, don’t use that fleece; or use it if you really have faith. No, I’m kidding. Fleeces can really throw you off. I’ll go off on a little side note here. Fleeces. You can really be fleeced by a fleece. Because in that time, there was no Bible, right? They didn’t have a Bible. It’s not like they could open up to the book of Psalms. David wasn’t born until another 1,000 years after this. There was no Bible and there was no indwelling Spirit. They had no Bible, no indwelling Spirit, and we have both. Sometimes there’s a unique situation and the situation will speak to us. That’s the exception, not the rule. Some people go by fleeces, but they have a Bible and the indwelling Spirit. Fleeces will fleece you. I have watched this for thirty-plus years: people throwing their destiny to a fleece that the Holy Spirit didn’t approve of, but the person was committed to his fleece. I say, “Throw the fleece away. Don’t do it that way!” Those who are the sons of God are led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:14, paraphrased). Get in connection with the Holy Spirit. Don’t fleece your future away. Having said that, every now and then, in a very rare situation, you put it before God and it happens. It’s rare, and you don’t want to make that the primary means of getting direction for your life.

THE RICHES OF GRACE

Paragraph B. The ten camels and all Abraham’s goods speak of three things: the riches of grace, the gifts of the Spirit, and God’s abundant provision to complete the will of God in this girl’s life. Great wealth is on these camels’ backs. The camels are bringing this wealth to give freely to the girl who says yes.

THE PRIMACY OF PRAYER IN GOD’S PURPOSE

Paragraph D. So the servant offers this prayer. One of the key reasons the prayer is recorded is that the Holy Spirit wanted to emphasize the importance of the role of prayer in the purpose of God. It’s not just that prayer is important. It’s absolutely central to the bridal relationship. In a sentence, because the bridal relationship is given to men and women, we have connection with God’s heart. As sons of God we have access to God’s power and the throne of God. As the Bride of Christ, we have access to God’s heart and His emotions. Men and women are both sons of God. We operate in His power and have access to His throne. Both men and women are the Bride

of Christ. We have access to His heart and we can experience His emotions. We want to operate in both dimensions of the grace of God. Absolutely central to the bridal relationship is conversing with God's heart. God speaks and moves our heart; then we speak back to Him and move His heart. Then He releases His resources. That's the definition of prayer. God speaks and moves us; we speak back and move Him; then He releases His resources. This is critical in the bridal relationship.

This is one reason why I believe the servant's prayer is in this story. It pictures the relationship of how the Bride grows into wholeheartedness. He says, "When I see these two signs, I'll know this is the one." There are two basic signs: "She must not only give me drink when I ask it, but offer to water ten camels." This is a huge job. I mean, at a minimum, it's five hours—if her maid and a few others are helping her. It's 4,000 pounds of water. If she offers this extravagant response, and secondly if she's in the family line of Abraham, only then does he say, "She's the one." There you have it.

HIS PRAYER WAS ANSWERED BEFORE HE FINISHED IT

Roman numeral V. We'll continue with the story. It happened that before he even finished speaking his prayer to God (Gen. 24:15). He's in this prayer mode; he's at the outskirts of the city. He knows no one. He prays the prayer. All the camels have knelt. His team of men is standing over on the side. He prays the prayer; he doesn't know where to go; he doesn't know one person in the city. Behold, this young girl—a teenager—Rebekah. Abraham was her grandfather's brother. Grandpa Nahor had a brother named Abraham. The story had been told through the decades. Everyone in the family of Abraham knew, "My grandfather Nahor had an anointed brother. He heard the audible voice of God, had supernatural encounters, had amazing wealth given to him, defeated his enemies in supernatural ways, and had the favor of God on his life." The story had been told throughout Abraham's family line. She knew of her grandfather Nahor's brother, the anointed family member. They all knew, "Wow, he heard God's voice. Money came, power broke out, and miracles happened." She knew the story, undoubtedly.

REBEKAH COMES AND THE SERVANT RUNS TO MEET HER

So Rebekah comes, and she doesn't know who this old man is. He's there at the well. He's the oldest man in Abraham's court, or Abraham's family. This man is standing there. Abraham is about 140 years old; so I guess his oldest servant is probably up there alongside him. Rebekah comes out with a pitcher on her shoulder for the purposes of fetching the water for her family. She's beautiful and she's a virgin (Gen. 24:16). She goes down to the well, fills her pitcher, and starts back up the embankment. The servant sees this woman. She's the first woman he sees, so he runs to meet her (Gen. 24:17). Here is a fifteen- or sixteen-year-old girl, and an old man is running toward her. She's looking at him, thinking, "Uh-oh." She's never seen him before, and they didn't have many visitors in those days.

REBEKAH OFFERS TO WATER HIS CAMELS

In verse 17, he asks her, "Hey, can I have a drink of your water?" (Gen. 24:17, paraphrased).

"OK, I'll give you a drink of water." Then we begin to see her extravagance. She says, "Yes, absolutely, have some."

He says, "Wow."

Then, in verse 19, she says the most unthinkable thing. She says, “You want me to water your ten camels? It’s 4,000 pounds of water. You want me to do that?”

He looks at her in amazement (Gen. 24:21). He’s amazed; he can’t believe this. It’s a funny story, but the supernatural involvement is a very important part of the story, because the Spirit is moving in invisible ways. The point is that the Spirit will continue to do this in our lives. That’s how we can understand the story as well.

She says, “Hey, I’ll get water for your ten camels” (Gen. 24:19, paraphrased). So she quickly emptied her pitcher into the camel’s trough. She ran back, ran down the hill, and ran back up. What’s the deal with her? This is remarkable.

In verse 21, the old servant is wondering. He says to himself, “There are two conditions. She had to make this very unusual commitment to give me and the camels water, and secondly, she has to be of the family line of Abraham. She has to be. I don’t know if she is yet.”

THE SERVANT ONLY ASKED, BUT SHE RESPONDED GREATLY

Paragraph A. She responded quickly and extravagantly. Here is a very important principle: The servant only asked her, but she responded extravagantly. That’s a huge principle. The Holy Spirit initially asks us for little responses, but the heart of the Bride volunteers greatly with an extravagant response.

The Holy Spirit says, “I want you to not do this and to start doing that.” It’s easy; it’s introductory; it’s an initial beginning of the relationship.

The heart of Rebekah, the heart of the Bride, doesn’t argue with the servant: “Yes, but can I get away with that? What about this? I’ll try, but I don’t think I really want to do what You’re asking. What about me? What about this? What about fun? What about, what about, what about? Where is a verse that makes this OK?”

She had none of that. He asked for a little thing, a drink of water and she said, “I will give my whole heart to this.” That’s the statement of the Bride’s heart. When I read this, I say, “Lord, this is what I want my life to be.” When God asks for a little, I want to offer Him a big response. I don’t want to argue with the Bible or find a way out—a loophole—that allows me to escape my obedience. I want to find a way to double my obedience, rather than find a loophole to avoid it. That’s the heart of the Bride; that’s what the Spirit is bringing forth in the Church right now, today. That is what He’s marking some of you with right now in this hour of your life. He’s marking you this very moment. Here we see the heart of the Bride in the way God intended. He’s looking for an extravagant response.

THE SPIRIT IS SEEKING ONE WHO WILL GO FAR BEYOND

Paragraph A. The Spirit asks for a small response, but when the Spirit asks us for a small response, He’s really giving us an opportunity to bring it up a notch. He really is. He’s not looking for someone who’s trying to find a way out of obedience or wanting to know the absolute minimum in the line of duty. He’s looking for someone who goes far beyond it.

“HOW FAR? HOW ABANDONED WILL YOU LET ME BE?”

I like the song we sing around here: “How far will You let me go? How abandoned will You let me go?” That’s the cry of the Bride. Not, “Do I have to give my money? Do I have to read and follow the Bible? Do I have to

fast and pray?” No. Rather, “To what degree will You give me strength to go beyond what I have ever done before?” It’s not just in those ways, either. Humility is the biggest, and asks, “How greatly will You anoint me? How far will You let me go in humility, in giving, in praying, in serving, in believing, in trusting? How far will You let me go? How abandoned will You let me be?” The question is not, “Do I have to do that, and can someone find me a Bible verse where I can get out of that?” Because, I promise you, someone can always find a Bible verse to get out of anything you want out of.

THE BEAUTY OF GOD IS THE BEAUTY HE IMPARTS

Top of page four. The message in verse 16 is that she was a virgin and very beautiful. The most amazing reality is that everyone in Christ is literally beautiful to God. The beauty that God possesses is the beauty He imparts freely to us.

Paragraph two. Every believer—I don’t care what you’ve done for the last ten years; I don’t care what you did yesterday—every believer who comes with a wholehearted, sincere response in believing Jesus, stands before God as a chaste, pure virgin by the gift of righteousness. Every single believer moves God’s heart. Your beauty moves Him, and you stand before Him without shame from His point of view. Even this part of the story describing her beauty and her purity is for our sake. He wants us to understand that we have beauty and purity in the grace of God to stand before God. It’s real; it’s not figurative.

JUST AS THE SERVANT, THE SPIRIT HAS A PLAN FOR YOU

Paragraph D. Again, it’s an unusual picture. It’s a little funny, but I don’t want to get lost in the humor of it. The old man is running to her. She could be taken aback, but she wasn’t. This is a picture of the zeal of the Spirit coming after you. He runs after you; He really does. He has a plan for you just as this servant had a plan for Rebekah. He believed she was the one. He wasn’t convinced yet, but he thought it was right. Sometimes, when the Spirit pursues us with such zeal and He’s really hemming us in, we’re taken aback a bit. We think, “What? What’s going on here?” It’s hard and unfamiliar, but He has a great plan for your life. That’s the point.

PERSEVERANCE AND FOLLOW-THROUGH ARE NECESSARY

Paragraph E. She didn’t stop until all ten camels drank. Again, this is a five- to ten-hour job. Undoubtedly, she had some of the maids with her, for they pop up in the story here and there, and they were probably with her here. Even so, it was likely a five-hour job, but she didn’t stop. I love that. She didn’t stop until all ten camels were finished (Gen. 24:19). Perseverance and follow-through are necessary to wholeheartedness. Many begin well, but they don’t finish well. They get distracted. They make big commitments about extravagant devotion and obedience, but as the months unfold, they don’t follow through. Follow-through is important.

KEEP YOUR VISION TO BE AS OBEDIENT AS YOU CAN BE

We’re all weak and broken people. We fail in our follow-through. That’s not my point, though. My point is that when we fail, we sign back up. We don’t give up the vision of extravagance. We fail—I’ve failed so many times—but by the grace of God, I call it failure, I receive the grace of God, I push delete, and I fight for extravagance once again. I don’t want to lose the vision to be radically obedient, as obedient as a man can be in the grace of God. That’s what I want. I come up short all the time, but I’m not letting go of that vision. It’s not a pipe-dream vision where it’s like a great poster. No. I want it to be a dialogue in my heart with the Lord, day by day by day. Again, I’m not reading the story and looking for clever ways to make the story apply to us. I want to find myself in the story. I read this story thinking of me, not thinking of you. I’m not looking at it as a

preacher; I'm looking at it as a participant with God. Find yourself in it. For me, I want to be like the servant and I want to be like Rebekah.

THE EXTRAVAGANCE OF GOD'S PROVISION

Roman numeral VI. It says that when the camels finished drinking, the man took a golden nose ring and two bracelets and gave them to her (Gen. 24:22). That's about a \$15,000 value in today's market. A shekel is about a half-ounce. Since they're gold, it's about \$15,000. Each of these bracelets is about five ounces of gold, about \$7,000 each in today's market. She says, "Wow, I got way more than I would have gotten per hour for five hours of water-carrying. If I had been paid what I deserved, I might have walked away with a few hundred dollars." He gave her \$15,000—way beyond what her response could ever have deserved. This is an insight into how God is with us.

THE SERVANT INQUIRES AND REBEKAH RESPONDS

Then the man says, "I want to talk to you now" (Gen. 24:23). She's just received this \$15,000 worth of jewelry, and she's thinking, "Who are you?"

He says, "I have a question."

She says, "I have time."

She's a little sweaty, undoubtedly, after carrying 4,000 pounds of water (probably with the assistance of her helpers).

"Whose daughter are you?" Question number one. And question number two: "Is there room in your house for me to come spend a few days there?" The level goes up really quickly: "Give me your family history, and, just so you understand, I want to come live at your house. Your parents, will they go for that?" (v. 23, paraphrased).

She said, "Nahor is my grandfather" (v. 24, paraphrased). You can read it slowly and put it together. "Nahor is my grandfather."

He thinks, "Unbelievable! That's Abraham's brother..."

She says, "And yes, we have plenty of food; come stay at our house" (v. 25, paraphrased).

ABRAHAM'S SERVANT WORSHIPED THE LORD

The man worshiped God. He entered into the celebration that will occur at the end of natural history, when all the saints and angels will be worshiping because God showed His omnipotence and brought forth a people who love Jesus. They are fully prepared, and He never violated their free will. That's where history is going. God is going to flex His muscles to bring this to pass. All heaven will celebrate. This servant touches that celebration right now. He's thinking, "Yes! Incredible! Amazing, but it's happening!"

WHEN WE SAY YES, HE ALWAYS ASKS FOR MORE

Paragraph A. The nose rings and the bracelets are evidence that she has received the grace of God in our symbolic application. Again, this isn't her salvation; it's the grace of God wooing her and motivating her. Look at paragraph C. Notice that the servant's request increased dramatically. There are three levels. First he said,

“Hey, give me a drink,” and the camels were watered. Then he says, “Hey, can I stay at your house with a team of men you don’t know? Will your parents go for that?”

“Yes.”

Finally, “Will you move to another nation and marry Abraham’s son—whom you have never met—but you know the stories of Abraham. Don’t you want to be a part of God’s story line, of which Abraham was such a critical part?”

When we say yes to the Holy Spirit, He always asks for more. Just so you know. If you’re listening, if you say yes to the Spirit, if you’ll water the camels, then He wants to move in. If He moves in, He wants you to go with Him to another land, not necessarily physically, and marry the Son. In other words, He’s asking for an abandonment that has absolutely no regard for cost. Again, a lot of people read the Bible trying to figure out how they can avoid giving the man the drink of water he wants. They’re figuring out Bible verses on how to skip fundamental, initial obedience. That’s not the heart of the Bride. Every measure of obedience we operate in gives us courage for more obedience. When I obey at one level, I receive courage to notch it up another level.

DO WE WANT HIM PERMANENTLY IN OUR HOUSE?

He asks, “Can I come and stay at your house?” Using the application of the Spirit, do we want the Spirit to come and dwell permanently in our house, or are we content to visit Him at the well every now and then? We’ll go to a Friday night meeting and get touched for a few minutes. We say, “I’ll visit the Spirit at the well. I don’t want Him invading the private, familiar areas of my life that no one knows.”

He wants to live in your house. But it doesn’t end there. He wants to take you to another land to be married with no regard for cost. The journey is this relationship; that’s really what He’s after, just so you know. He only starts with a drink of water, but that’s not how it ends.

Roman numeral VII. Top of page five. The young woman ran and told her mother, “Mom! I got \$15,000 from this old man! I’m sweating and dirty, but it’s worth it. He paid me a thousand times more than it’s worth. I invited him for dinner and to stay for a couple of days, and he has a team. A team of men is with him and a lot of camels, but he’s really nice; and he knows Grandpa’s brother, Abraham. He’s still alive! He’s 140. You know, the one who hears the audible voices and has visions—the anointing of God—and I want to be a part of this! I want to be a part of this story line that Grandpa’s brother knows about. I want to be a part of it! I’ve heard it for years, since I was just a girl” (Gen. 24:28, paraphrased). She was still just a teenager. She ran and told her mom the whole story.

WHEN LABAN HEARD, HE RAN TO THE WELL

Now, when Rebekah’s brother, Laban, heard the story, he said, “Fifteen thousand dollars? And Abraham? I know about Abraham. Whoa!” Laban ran to the well. He said, “I’m going to the well!” (v. 29, paraphrased).

“So it came to pass, when he saw the ring, when he saw the bracelets, when he heard the story, then he went and stood by the well” (Gen. 24:30, paraphrased). This is very important. When Laban heard and saw the evidences of grace, he ran to the well and stood there. He said, “I want an encounter like you had.” It’s critical that we tell the story. She told the story that motivated her brother to want to have an encounter at the well in the same way.

STORIES OF WELLS IN THE BIBLE

Incidentally, I have here at the end of paragraph B that there are three well stories in the Old Testament: three stories where a man meets a woman at a well, becomes betrothed, and eventually marries her. The first is Isaac and Rebekah, right here in Genesis 24. The next is Jacob and Rachel (Gen. 29:10). The third is Moses and Zipporah (Ex. 2:16). Now, Jesus comes along and He's in the same role. He goes to a well and asks a woman for a drink. It's the same story line, but she's a Samaritan woman. The whole city comes to the well, just as Laban does. That's another story for another time.

“COME IN, O BLESSED OF THE LORD”

Verse 31. Laban says, “Come in, O blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside my house? Yes, I have prepared my house for you and a place for the camels. Come in” (Gen. 24:31, paraphrased). There are a whole lot of principles there. So the man, the picture of the Holy Spirit, comes into the house. “Food was set before him to eat” (v. 33) But the servant said, “Though I appreciate the hospitality, I'm not going to eat until I tell you the errand I'm on, until I tell you the whole story of what's going on. I'm Abraham's servant.” He says, “Abraham is very anointed by God” (v. 35, paraphrased).

They say, “Yes, we know that.”

“Abraham had a supernatural son” (Gen. 24:36, paraphrased).

“Yes, we heard that Sarah had a baby. We heard all about it. We couldn't believe it.”

“But to that son go all the promises of God. The anointing of the Spirit is with that son, that supernatural son. All the wealth is his. More than that, the favor of God, the purpose of God, is his.”

THE SERVANT SUMMONS THE FAMILY TO DECIDE

Top of page six. Verse 49. I'll bring this to an end here in just a moment. The servant, speaking of the Holy Spirit, is says to Laban. “I want you to deal straight with me so I know whether to stay here or move on. I don't want to waste time. I'll act according to what you decide. Will you give me the girl to bring back to Abraham's anointed son for the favor of God and the purpose of salvation? Do you want to be in on this or not?” (Gen. 24:49, paraphrased).

Laban the brother and Bethuel the father responded. (Bethuel was an elderly man and that's why we don't hear much from him in the story). He went around the table and they said, “Hey, I want in on this. This thing is of the Lord. Here is Rebekah; take her and go. Yes, we buy into it” (Gen. 24:50–51, paraphrased).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR INHERITANCE

Now the servant brings out gold, silver and clothing, and gives it all to Rebekah. Earlier, she got \$15,000 from him. Now the entire deal is unpacked. It's worth millions and it all speaks of the extravagance of God's grace, the wealth of God that's hers if she will continue to say yes. It's the Bride's dowry, which is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance.

REBEKAH WANTED THE PURPOSE AND FAVOR OF GOD

Middle of page six. Roman numeral X. So the servant and his team told the whole story that night (Gen. 24:54). It was critical to tell the story because the details of the father preparing a bride for his son motivated Laban. It

will motivate anyone who sees themselves in that story. The glory of Rebekah’s heart is that she could see herself in the storyline. She wanted to be a part of the family of her grandfather’s anointed brother, Abraham. She wanted all the favor and purpose of God. She said, “I want to be a part of what God is doing in my generation; I don’t care what it costs me” (Gen. 24:57, paraphrased).

ABRAHAM’S SERVANT INSISTS ON LEAVING RIGHT AWAY

The servant and his team had the dinner, but they wouldn’t eat until they told the whole story (Gen. 24:54). Then they stayed all night. Now, it’s probably late, maybe three in the morning. Who knows? They have been talking for quite a while. Morning dawns and the servant says, “OK, I want to go, right now.”

Laban, her brother and her mother said, “Go right now? We just met you last night! I know you gave us a million dollars, and we know you’re with Abraham—we believe it, we know the story line, and she can go—but what if she waits just ten days?” (Gen. 24:55). It’s legitimate; a “domestic delay” is what I’m calling it. They say to him, “For sentimental reasons, for closure, just give her a chance to process all this and let us say our goodbyes” (v. 55, paraphrased).

The servant says, “No, you’re hindering me. I’m bound by urgency. I want to go to my master right now” (Gen. 24:56, paraphrased).

They’re a little taken aback. They say, “Man, this is intense. You’re not going to give us the ten-day protocol time to say goodbye, even for the sake of sentiment?” (Gen. 24:57, paraphrased). These are legitimate requests.

REBEKAH IS CALLED TO DECIDE

Mom and Dad and the rest of the family said, “She’ll say, ‘Give me a week or two.’ Let’s ask her personally” (Gen. 24:57, paraphrased).

Verse 58. This is one of the great statements of the whole chapter. They called Rebekah and said, “Rebekah, will you go with this man?”

She said, “I will go.”

This is the most radical decision. “Will you go with this man?” “Will you go with the Holy Spirit, now?” That’s the question I’m asking you and you can ask me. This is the most radical decision. It’s risky. She doesn’t know them and they will be crossing the desert. It’s costly, it’s difficult, it’s unfamiliar, it’s unknown territory, but she wants to be a part of the anointing that’s on Abraham. She wants the purpose of God, and so she doesn’t care what it costs her. We can ask one another, “Will you go with the Holy Spirit? Not to the anointed Abraham and the anointed Isaac. Will you go with the Holy Spirit? He’s taking you to a far more anointed Man. His name is Jesus. Will you go all the way with Him, regardless of what it costs you?”

Again, we’re talking about a fifteen- or sixteen-year-old girl. She hasn’t known them for even twelve hours. She’s going to marry a man she’s never seen. She’s crossing the desert with a group of strangers to a foreign land she’s never entered, but she wants to be a part of what Abraham is a part of—that desperately. She is saying, “Yes, I’m a woman of faith. I don’t care what it costs me. I’m in.” That’s the heart of the Bride: “I will go.” Another young woman said that in Luke 1:38: “Let it be done to me according to Your will, O God. I will do it. I don’t care what it costs me” (Lk. 1:38, paraphrased).

SHE'S BLESSED WITH THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM

Well, they blessed her. They blessed her with the same kind of blessing that Abraham had from the Lord. They said, “Since you’re going with Abraham, let’s just prophesy that the same anointing on Abraham will be on you. You’ll have supernatural multiplication. Thousands of thousands will be from your offspring. You will possess the gates of your enemy. You will have supernatural vindication, just as Abraham. Since you said yes, you’re under the anointing of this new man you will be connected to” (Gen. 24:60, paraphrased). And so, after that, they departed.

THE EXTRAVAGANT BRIDE ARRIVES

Roman numeral XII. We’re on the final verse or two here. They travel for a few weeks. Isaac comes up. He has anticipation; he has confidence. He knows the servant is going to bring back the bride. He’s gone out a bit from his hometown in Hebron.

“Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening” (Gen. 24:63). He lifted his eyes, of course; he was constantly looking. Finally there’s a day when the camels are coming. The camels speak of the Bride coming through the wilderness with an extravagant response—this beautiful woman with an extravagant response—adorned with the riches of God. He’s looking. It’s a picture of Jesus: filled with confidence that the Bride will come, but also filled with anticipation and longing. The camels are coming and Jesus knows they’re coming. When he sees them over the horizon, carrying this extravagant woman, adorned with the riches of God, his heart jumps. I tell you, Jesus, with all the prophetic certainty that He has, knows the camels are coming. There’s a Bride of extravagance being raised up in the earth right now, a Bride who is walking in the riches of the grace of God.

WITH ALL HIS HEART, HE LOVES US

She became his wife (Gen. 24:67). Here is the high point of the story: He loved her. She experienced the love of the anointed one. Beloved, we experience it now. There’s coming a day, however, when with everything that we’ve poured out, we will learn that we didn’t get paid according to what we deserved. We were paid a thousand times more. The greatest pay we’ll ever have is when we stand face-to-face with Him on that day, and we will find that He loves us even as the Father loves Him. With all the fullness of His heart, He loves us. That’s where we are going. Will we say, “How far will You let me go? How abandoned will You let me be?” It’s worth it. That is where the Bride is going. Amen. Let’s stand.

MINISTRY TIME

I’m going to ask all of the AAFA leaders to come and stand up here if they would. I’m not going to tell them what the altar call is. It’s going to be an abandonment-to-God altar call, but you wouldn’t have come here if you weren’t already into this. We so appreciate who you are in the grace of God. The Holy Spirit has spoken to us as a leadership team about the role of the African Americans. It’s not really right to say African Americans. It’s the Africans; it doesn’t matter if they’re in America. He has shown us the role of Africans in the end-time prayer movement. God has appointed them in the worship movement to a place of prominence on a global level. I know you know that, and we’re not calling it forth because we don’t have the authority to call it forth. We can only echo what the Father called. We don’t have the right to call it forth. It’s God’s call, but as a leadership team, we understand this. I know one thing, and you know it too: this is going to require the same abandonment of the Bride’s heart. It’s not a task or a service. It’s a connectedness with His heart that has no regard for cost.

I'm going to ask the Lord to touch you with His prophetic spirit. The Holy Spirit will give the Spirit without measure to a people without mixture. I'll have the folks from Poland come up here and be my ministry team. For real! These Polish men are fiery; they're intense! They have been building a house of prayer in Poland in the midst of so much resistance and adversity, and they're pressing through every obstacle. They won't take no for an answer. They got on the "bus" and came all the way over. There's a spirit of dedication on this Poland team. They come two or three times a year. Whole planes full of them come from Poland and they care about the kingdom—no matter what the resistance is. There's so much resistance over there. God is raising up a family of affection. It's an international family of affection.

I'm going to have one more group come up here: all the Asians that love Jesus in this house, I want you to come up here. The Polish and the Asians; they won't take no for an answer. I mean it. I'm not even being cute right now. There's an anointing of abandonment on these two groups. It's real.