

The Great Commission of Abraham

Genesis 24.1-67

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis, we read about Abraham, the great man of God, and his desire to find a wife for his son, Isaac. In his twilight years, the foremost matter on his mind is not where to live or how to spend his wealth, but who will carry on the family name through this promised family legacy.

Now we must understand the urgency of this event. If we look at the previous chapter, we see that Sarah, Abraham's dear wife, has passed away. And a quick glance ahead at the next chapter shows us that Abraham himself is very near to death. He knows that his days are numbered, and it is of utmost importance to him that Isaac become married and bear children to fulfill the promise that God gave to him in Genesis 12. Abraham was a man of faith, and he trusted God to fulfill this promise:

Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. (Heb. 11.12)

With God's bounteous promise in mind, finding a wife for Isaac was Abraham's most pressing concern.

As we read this wonderful story of adventure and romance, we see many amazing parallels with the Great Commission task that remains before us today. Let's take time to learn some of the priceless lessons which this story offers to us.

In fulfilling the urgent task of finding a bride for his son, Abraham calls for his servant, the steward of all his belongings. It is this man that Abraham commissions to go and complete the task. That servant heard the request and responded immediately. Thus, one of the first lessons we learn from this passage is that we must hear God's voice and go where He sends us (v.4).

Abraham gave his servant specific instructions before he left, and one was that he must not seek a wife from among the women of Canaan—the land where Abraham was living—for those people were under the judgment of God. Instead, he was to search for a woman from among his relatives in Mesopotamia. The servant was not to take Isaac back to his homeland, perhaps for fear that he may forget about the land where Abraham was living, which was where God had desired for his offspring to flourish.

These instructions remind us of the imperative to follow God's leadership. Just as the servant had to listen to Abraham's instructions, we must listen to our Master. If we look ahead in this story, we see that the servant obeyed not just Abraham, but God Himself:

"Then I bowed my head and worshiped the Lord and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son." (v.48)

It was God who would give success to the servant, and in the same way, we must depend completely upon Him to make us effective. We must ask ourselves, "What place does God have in mind? Who does he want us to reach?" Ultimately, this is not up to us, but to Him. The work of the Great Commission is God's work, not ours, so we must listen carefully and go where He sends us.

Along with his instructions, Abraham calls the servant to take an oath—a promise that he will fulfill this task. This was such an important task to fulfill, and Abraham had no spare time to waste on a failed mission. This reminds us today that our calling and our mission is not merely a response to orders, but an agreement that we make to partner with God and carry out His will. Just as that ancient bridal search was urgent, we have before us today an extraordinarily urgent task.

Let's begin with a warning. As you step into the work that God gives you, you'll be full of energy and hope. But it won't be long until you run into problems, and things will start looking hopeless. You'll soon become discouraged. You may even feel defeated. You'll face the temptation to give up and go home.

On October 29, 1941 Winston Churchill said to his men, "*Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense.*" Churchill didn't want his soldiers to give up. As Christian soldiers, we must not throw our hands up in defeat when things look bleak. The moment we give up, we've lost the battle. We must trust that Lord will fight for us and help us find a way.

But that doesn't mean to just keep on keeping on without regard to what's happening. Note that Abraham tells his servant that he is released from responsibility if the woman he finds for Isaac does not follow him back (v.8). Remember what Jesus said to the apostles when He send them out? If they found that a town was unreceptive, they were to shake the dust from their feet and move on. They were released from their obligation. The principle here is that we should not waste our time with unreceptive people. If we cross over into the realm of pressure and persuasion, we are likely just wasting precious time.

Now I am greatly impressed by the way this servant obeyed immediately. How wonderful that he was willing to drop everything and embark on the long and arduous journey! Certainly the servant in charge of all of Abraham's possessions had a lot on his plate. But there was no hesitation on his part. He made no excuses. He had no other priorities greater than this one. He simply got busy with the task and started on the way. This challenges us today. How many excuses will we make before we finally surrender to God's will? Are we going to hesitate, or will we completely trust Him and do as He commands?

A bit later, we observe the servant's wisdom in taking a team with him. He didn't go alone, as we see in verse 32:

So the man entered the house. Then Laban unloaded the camels, and he gave straw and feed to the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. (v.32)

This servant was no lone cowboy, for he knew the power of partnering. As we do our work today, we must also must find others with whom we can work. Don't try to do it all by yourself. Remember, not only will they be helping you, but you'll be modeling for them to strengthen their skills and their resolve to work.

As the servant goes out, he prays for success (v.12). But think about it—he could have been focused on how vulnerable he would be traveling in the desert at the mercy of the elements, wild animals, or raiders. But he apparently wasn't focused on his fears, but on the task. He wanted to please his master, and he trusted in God to help him:

"He said to me, 'The Lord, before whom I have walked, will send His angel with you to make your journey successful...'" (v.40a)

As workers on a mission, we must also depend fully on God as we seek to be successful in His mission. Have you considered that He sends His angel with us as well?

Indeed, this man goes out with resolve—but also with great boldness. He expected God to work! Look at verse 17 and you'll see that he wasn't a shy man. He confidently approached the woman at the spring, and in fact, he ran to her and asked for a drink of water. Doesn't that sound familiar? We see Jesus doing just that in John 4.7 with the Samaritan woman. In response to the servant's visit, Rebekah excitedly ran to tell the news. And around 17 centuries later, the Samaritan woman did the very same thing (John 4.28–29)!

As the servant went on that journey, he was willing to let others provide for his needs. Upon his arrival, his provision came from those on the journey: they watered his camels (v.14), and they set food before him (v.33). This looks familiar, doesn't it? When Jesus said not to take provisions and to eat what is set before us (Luke 10.4, 8), He was reinforcing that our resources are in the harvest.

Now, let's look at what the servant did once he had an audience with Laban:

33 But when food was set before him to eat, he said, "I will not eat until I have told my business." And he said, "Speak on." 34 So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. 35 "The Lord has greatly blessed my master, so that he has become rich; and He has given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and servants and maids, and camels and donkeys. 36 "Now Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master in her old age, and he has given him all that he has. (vs.33–36)

What did the servant do? He proclaimed three things:

1. His master's business, making it clear why he is there (v.33 ff.)
2. His master's riches—the great wealth that God had given him (v.35)
3. His master's son that he dearly loved (v.36)

Isn't this what we do when we bring the gospel to others?

1. We declare our Master's business: to give all the people of the world an opportunity to be saved.
2. We share our Master's riches: his power to save, and His desire to "supply all your needs according to His riches in glory" (Php. 4.19).
3. We proclaim our Master's Son: Jesus Christ, the One who provides the way to salvation.

This is an amazing story which challenges each of us in several ways.

First, are you ready to go at a moment's notice? The servant in this story had no warning. Abraham called him, and he was ready to go as soon as he was commissioned for the task. Are you like this servant—ready to act now? Or are you waiting and making excuses for your delay?

Second, are you ready to serve without recognition? This servant's task was of utmost importance to Abraham. Now, do you remember the servant's name? That's right, we don't even know his name. Are you prepared to work tirelessly for the Lord, even if nobody even notices or gives you recognition for your work?

Third, are you ready to give God the credit when you see Him at work? Throughout this journey, the servant gives praise to God—never to himself. He served selflessly, and as far as we can tell, received no reward for his work except the satisfaction of pleasing his master. Are you ready to humbly give God all the glory, rather than being proud of your achievements?

Finally, are you ready to open your eyes to see the great potential before you? Near the end of this story, we see Rebekah’s relatives bidding farewell to her. It would likely be the last time they would ever see her, and it is evident from the text that they felt something of a joyful sadness as they watched her go.

But what they say as she was leaving is profound—a great blessing:

“May you, our sister, become thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them.” (v.60)

Do you hear what they are saying? Think about it: how much is a thousand times ten thousand? Ten million! And note that it’s plural. They are wishing for her descendants to multiply into the tens of millions! And this, my friend, is the great potential that lies before you. God desires for you not merely to bring a few people to the Kingdom, but to produce a Rebekah-sized movement—a legacy far beyond anything you can even imagine. Can you see it? Can you believe God can do it? Indeed, He can!

And now this great story comes to a close. The servant brought Rebekah home and introduced her to Isaac, and she became his wife. Mission accomplished, faithful servant! You have completed your journey and fulfilled your task by finding a bride for your master’s son. Dear friend, this too is your task: you are going out to find a bride for your Master’s Son. You are bringing in people from darkness into the Kingdom of light so that they may join in the great marriage feast of the Lamb:

Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” Revelation 19.6-7

Now go, get to work. Put your foot forward in the first step of the journey. God has been preparing you, and He has been making ready the way before you. Go, while there is still time, and watch as the Lord does mighty and wondrous things through you.

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