**Answers Bible Curriculum – Digging Deeper (Lesson 39)**

**Overview**

**Lesson Focus:** When Abraham sent his servant to obtain a wife for Isaac, God demonstrated his control, even in humanly difficult situations. God kept his promise, providing Rebekah according to his perfect plan.

**Introduction:** Let’s recap what we have learned up to this point. Since this is a chronological walk through the Bible, we want to make sure that we are following the flow of history:

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Two thousand years before the time of Abraham, God created the world and placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden (Creation). They rebelled against God, bringing sin (Corruption) into the world. The increasing sin of man was judged by God in the Catastrophe of the flood about 1,600 years later. Shortly after the flood, the people rebelled against God again, and God confused their languages (Confusion) as a punishment.

So, remember that as we talk about Abraham, we are looking at a period of time which was about 2,000 years after creation.

* **Abraham was given a great promise from God, and that promise was to come through whom?** (*Isaac).*

God had called Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, and Abraham had obeyed God’s command. At the last moment, God stepped in to stop Abraham and provided a ram to offer in Isaac’s place. If you recall, we talked about how this was a foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice—Jesus—that the Father would offer on the cross***.***

A wonderful thread weaves throughout the Bible of God’s plan to redeem a people for himself. Knowing that God is faithful, we can trust him to fulfill his promises. Today, we are going to see more of those fulfilled promises.

* **What part of the promise given to Abraham is Isaac a key part of?** (*God promised Abraham that he would have many descendants. Isaac was the son that would continue Abraham’s line—a line that would ultimately produce the Messiah).*

**The Servant’s Journey**

As we look at the beginning of the family of Isaac and Rebekah, we are going to see how God is sovereign over every detail and is bringing his perfect plans to pass. To give us a little more context for this lesson, we are going to start with a short activity.

**Read Genesis 24:1-14:**

* **Abraham and Sarah were very old when they had Isaac, but how old was Isaac at the time of his mother’s death?***37. (She was 127 at her death (Genesis 23:1), and Isaac had been born when she was 90).*
* **According to our passage, how old will Isaac be when he marries Rebekah?** (*40).*
* **Looking into the future a bit—a preview of next week’s lesson—how long will it be before Isaac and Rebekah have children?** (*Twenty more years, since Isaac is sixty at the birth of the twin sons, Esau and Jacob).*

How amazing to think that we have such detailed information about these events that happened thousands of years ago. Knowing that God has seen fit to provide us with a true history of his redemptive work should be another great encouragement to us.

Now that we have read the text, let’s take some time to observe what it is saying to us. This process is an important part of understanding God’s Word.

* **What type of literature is this passage?** (*Historical narrative).*
* **Who are the characters in this account?** (*Abraham and his servant. This is likely Eliezer from Genesis 15:2).*
* **How was Abraham described in verse 1?** (*Old and blessed by God).*
* **What did Abraham ask Eliezer to promise him?** (*Abraham asked him to not take a wife for Isaac from the Canaanites but to go to his home country and take a wife from Abraham’s family).*
* **Who was Eliezer to swear by?** (*The Lord, the God of heaven and God of earth).*
* **What was the sign of the oath?** (*Abraham asked Eliezer to place his hand under his thigh to confirm the oath. This would be equivalent to shaking hands or swearing on a Bible).*
* **What was Eliezer’s objection in verse 5*?*** (*He thought the woman he found might not come to Canaan, and he wanted to take Isaac along).*
* **How did Abraham respond to the request?** (*Abraham forbade Isaac from going with Eliezer).*
* **What did Abraham remind Eliezer of?***(Abraham reminded him of God’s promise to give Abraham’s offspring the land).*
* **How did Abraham reassure Eliezer?***(Abraham told him that God would send his angel before him to ensure his success).*
* **What would happen if no woman accepted the proposal?***(Eliezer would be released from the oath).*
* **How did Eliezer respond?***(He swore the oath, took ten camels and gifts from his master, and headed to the city of Nahor in Mesopotamia).*
* **How did Eliezer acknowledge his dependence on God?** *(He prayed that God would give him success and show kindness to Abraham, and that the woman he asked to give him a drink and who would reply by offering both him and his camels a drink, would be the woman to marry Isaac).*
* **Toward the end of verse 14, what word did Eliezer use to describe God’s choosing of a wife for Isaac?***(“Appointed.”)*

**Discover the Truth:**

Abraham desired to have his son marry a woman of his own family, a common custom, and not a woman of the pagan Canaanites around him. So he sent his servant, Eliezer, to Haran to take a wife for him. Abraham showed his clear trust in God’s providence by assuring Eliezer that the angel of God would go before him.

As Eliezer left, he took 10 camels and other men (verse 32 tells us of them) and gifts for the family of the woman he would take as a wife for Isaac. The trek was about 500 miles north from Canaan to Nahor’s city, Haran. This is where Abraham had left (Genesis 11:31) to go on to Canaan with Lot and others. His brother Nahor had stayed in Haran and established a family. In fact, you can still find this city in Turkey today.

Eliezer showed his trust in God’s providence by offering a very specific prayer to God and asking God to show him whom he had appointed as a wife for Isaac. Eliezer trusted that God would bless Abraham.

**The Servant’s Prayer Is Answered**

To summarize what happened next, as Eliezer was offering his prayer, a young woman came to the well and gave him a drink when he asked, and then she offered to water his camels as well. Eliezer was not certain that his mission had been accomplished, but he gave Rebekah jewelry, and she invited him to lodge at her father’s house—the house of Nahor!

Eliezer responded (in verses 26–28) by bowing down and worshipping God as he recognized that God had led him to a young woman from Abraham’s family. Eliezer knew that God had sovereignly directed his steps to meet this young woman at the well.

Rebekah’s brother Laban came and invited Eliezer and the others to his home. When they offered food to Eliezer, he rejected the meal until he had had the opportunity to tell them of the message from his master Abraham. Then he recounted the events to them. Notice their response to Abraham’s request.

**Read Genesis 24:50-61:**

* **How did Laban and Bethuel respond to Abraham’s request for a wife for Isaac?** (*They both recognized that the Lord had appointed this situation and that they were in no place to reject what God had appointed. They offered Rebekah to become Isaac’s wife).*
* **How did Eliezer respond to their acceptance?** (*He again fell to the ground in worship to God. He also offered them the gifts he had brought from Abraham, as would have been customary at the time as a sort of dowry).*
* **How did the house of Bethuel treat the men from Abraham?** (*They offered them great hospitality, giving them food and lodging as well as care for their animals).*
* **When Eliezer requested to leave the very next morning, how did the family respond?** (*Initially they asked him to give them at least 10 more days, but then they relented and asked Rebekah her preference).*
* **When Rebekah was asked to leave immediately, how did she respond?** (*She was willing to go).*
* **How did Rebekah’s family send her off?** (*They offered her a blessing—that she would have many descendants and that they would be powerful).*

**Discover the Truth:**

So Eliezer took Rebekah and the accompanying servants, and they headed back to Canaan less than 24 hours after Eliezer had arrived. God’s sovereign hand can be clearly seen in all of the events and acknowledged by all involved—no one doubted his guidance in these affairs. Finding Rebekah was the fulfillment of the prayer of Eliezer. She offered lodging, the family took in the men, the family recognized God’s hand in the events, and Rebekah submitted and was willing to obey God’s obvious plan for her marriage to Isaac.

We can’t read a passage like this without recognizing that God is sovereign over the affairs of men—even to the details of the marriage of a certain man to a certain woman. We can trust that the same God who was guiding these affairs is intimately involved in the lives of every believer today, as well.

**Examining Relationships**

As we saw earlier, God reveals very specific details to us in the text about the timing of the events. Now we are going to look at the details of the relationships between the people mentioned in this account.

Use the passages on the worksheet to identify the relationships and fill in the pedigree.

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**Connect to the Truth**

* As you looked at these relationships, it may have made you a bit uncomfortable. However, we need to make sure that we remember that marrying close relatives was the only option for our earliest ancestors, and it was not forbidden by God for another 400 years after Abraham when he delivered the law to Moses.
* **How were Abraham and Sarah related?** (*They shared the same father but had different mothers, so she was his half-sister. Abraham had used this fact to deceive Pharaoh and Abimelech in earlier accounts).*
* **Looking at the pedigree diagram, which is incomplete, who is the father of Bethuel?** (*Nahor).*
* **We don’t know the name of Bethuel’s wife, but what was his daughter’s name?** (*Rebekah, who is the sister of Laban).*

Looking at the left side of the diagram, we see that the wife of Abraham was Sarah and that their only son was Isaac. Abraham had Ishmael by Hagar, and in Genesis 25 you can read about his other children with Keturah.

Interestingly, this pedigree helps us see that Lot and Isaac were first cousins and that, technically speaking, Rebekah was Isaac’s first cousin once removed**.**

**The Bride Meets the Groom**

**Our last passage today will describe the arrival of the travelers to Canaan.**

**Read Genesis 24:62-67:**

* **What was Isaac doing as Eliezer and the others approached his home?** (*He was meditating in the field).*
* **How did Rebekah approach Isaac?** (*She dismounted the camel she was riding and covered her face with a veil. It was customary for a waiting bride to veil her face until the day of the marriage).*
* **What was Isaac’s response to Rebekah’s arrival?** (*He took her into his mother’s tent and then took her as his wife).*

**Discover the Truth:**

Just as Rebekah had submitted to God’s clear plan for her marriage to Isaac, Isaac received her as his wife. God’s perfect plan had been accomplished as the people involved in the events recognized God’s will and submitted to it.

After Isaac and Rebekah’s marriage, it would be twenty years before their sons, Jacob and Esau, were born. Fifteen years after that, Abraham would die and be buried with Sarah (Genesis 25:7–11). Abraham also had other sons with his concubine Keturah, but he had sent them away with gifts to ensure that it was clear that Isaac was to inherit the land (Genesis 25:1–6), just as God had promised.

Next week, we will pick up this amazing history with Jacob and Esau and the continuing hand of God in the

affairs of his people.

**Application:**

We trust that you can recognize this section of Scripture as a clear example of how God uses people to accomplish his plans. Abraham knew that God would be faithful to his promise to multiply his descendants through Isaac, and he sent Eliezer to find a wife for his son. Arriving at the city of Abraham’s brother Nahor, the servant prayed to God and acknowledged his dependence in finding the woman he already trusted God had appointed.

In kindness toward Abraham, God brought along Rebekah. She completely fulfilled the requests of Eliezer’s prayer and just “happened” to be one of Abraham’s relatives. But there is no accident in these events; rather, it is an example of God’s providence and faithfulness to fulfill his promise. God demonstrated his control over all of these affairs—his sovereign hand guiding all of these things. God provided a wife for Isaac, and through this marriage the nation of Israel would come. Their son Jacob would be the father of the twelve tribes that were the foundation of the people who would eventually inhabit the land promised to Abraham.

**Read Romans 11:33-36:**

In all of this, we are given the privilege of seeing how God unfolded his plan. His faithfulness is evident in all of these events, offering us a reason to put our faith in him and his good ways.

* **Why did Abraham refuse to have Isaac marry a woman from the Canaanites, and what parallel can we draw to God’s plan for marriage as described in the New Testament?** (*Abraham did not want Isaac’s wife to come from among the pagans of Canaan, but from his own family. It is clear that Abraham’s family knew God as they recognized that these events were from the Lord (Genesis 24:50–51). Rather than marrying a woman from the pagan nations in Canaan, Abraham desired a godly wife for his son. Likewise, God calls Christians to marry only those who are believers as well (2 Corinthians 6:14).*
* **What must be true about God in order for him to orchestrate all of the events surrounding the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah?** (*Consider the attributes of God, including his omniscience, omnipotence, sovereignty, wisdom, and grace. He is able to direct the affairs of men in a way that is beyond our comprehension).*

**Read Romans 8:28-39:**

* **What comfort can you draw from understanding that the same God who appointed Rebekah to be Isaac’s wife is still in charge of the world we live in today?** (*Romans 8, especially verses 28–39, points us to the truth that it is God who will work all of the events in our lives for good. It is his sovereign control that we can rest in, knowing that all of the providences of God—bitter and sweet—are from his hands and will accomplish his purposes. We are called to walk in obedience to his commands, demonstrating our love for him, and cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit to grow in holiness*
* **What is the significance of Eliezer’s worship at the granting of his prayers? Do you respond the same way?** (*His reaction was to bow to the ground and praise God for working in such a remarkable way. Many of us fail to recognize God’s providence in similar situations, and we don’t offer him the worship he is due for so many things that we take for granted. We would do well to take time each day to recognize God’s providence in our lives and praise him. We would also do well to thank him for the trials that he brings to us to help us grow to be more like Christ).*
* **What benefit is there in uncovering the details of the timing and of the relationships surrounding this passage of Scripture?** (*The details give us a clear picture of what was happening at the time. We are not left with vague ideas of what might have taken place, but a detailed, historical account that we can trust, including customs of the day and historical places consistent with what we know from other sources. We must remember, though, that these outside sources merely confirm what we already trust to be true from Scripture).*

**Prayer Focus:**

* Praise God for his unchanging character.
* Ask God to remind us throughout the week of who he is, what he says, and what he has done.
* Thank God for his promises and for his perfect plans to fulfill them.