

Guidance Needed

SESSION 2

Genesis 24:12-20,24-27

Memory Verse: Genesis 24:26

God directs the steps of those who seek Him.

Following wise guidance is essential to a full and meaningful life. We need advice from knowledgeable people in practical matters like buying a car or choosing health insurance. We need the warnings that stoplights provide to avoid accidents on city streets. We often need directions from navigational devices to arrive at our intended destination.

Above all, we need spiritual guidance to make decisions that honor the Lord and help us avoid disaster on the road of life. God has made that guidance available through His Word and prayer. Abraham's servant recognized his critical need for divine guidance as he obeyed Abraham's directive to find a wife for Isaac. As you prepare for this Bible study, reflect on how you might be struggling with significant choices. Pray that God will provide His wisdom and guidance in those areas—and that He will share the same blessings with the adults in your Bible study through this session.



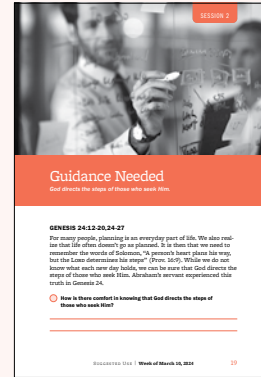
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For many people, planning is an everyday part of life. We also realize that life often doesn't go as planned. It is then that we need to remember the words of Solomon, "a man's heart plans his way, but the LORD determines his steps" (Prov. 16:9). While we do not know what each new day holds, we can be sure that God directs the steps of those who seek Him. Abraham's servant experienced this truth in Genesis 24. (PSG, p. 19)

How is there comfort in knowing that God directs the steps of those who seek Him?



Understand the Context (Genesis 24:1–25:18)

Chapter 24 of Genesis focuses on finding a wife for Isaac. For the Lord's promise to Abraham of multiplied descendants to be fulfilled, Isaac needed a wife. Therefore, Abraham sent his trusted servant, most likely Eliezer of Damascus (Gen. 15:2), to find a wife for his son of promise from among the patriarch's relatives. Abraham made the servant vow that under no circumstances would he take Isaac back to the homeland of Aram-naharaim. By placing his hand under Abraham's thigh, the bodily zone associated with Abraham's posterity, and swearing an oath, the servant affirmed that Abraham could depend on him to carry out his master's instructions (24:9).

The Lord responded faithfully to the servant's prayer for guidance, leading him to the household of Bethuel, the son of Abraham's brother Nahor. When Rebekah's brother, Laban, saw the gold ring and bracelets the servant had given his sister, he welcomed him into their home. The servant explained his mission and how Rebekah's actions served as a positive response to his prayer for the Lord's guidance. Rebekah willingly agreed to go with the servant and become Isaac's wife. She departed from her family, accompanied by her nurse Deborah (see 35:8).

After the group's return to the promised land, Rebekah became Isaac's wife. She provided needed comfort for Isaac in the days after his mother Sarah died (23:19-20; 24:67).

Chapter 25:1-11 concludes the record of Abraham's life. Apparently after Sarah died, Abraham took another wife named Keturah. Abraham, however,

gave gifts to the sons born to her and sent them away as he had Ishmael. Meanwhile, the covenant blessing rested on Isaac, the son of promise.

Abraham died at the age of 175. The description of his death in 25:8 emphasizes how the Lord's blessing rested on this patriarch. His burial in the cave of Machpelah calls to mind the significance of that site. It was the first piece of property to which Abraham gained title in the promised land (23:16-20). The cave became the burial place for each of the succeeding generations. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah were all buried in the cave.

The inspired writer noted that following his father's death, Isaac experienced God's blessing as the son of promise. At that time Isaac lived near Beerlahai-roi, a name that means "Well of the Living One Who Sees Me."

This background Scripture concludes with Ishmael's family records in Genesis 25:12-18. Like Jacob, Ishmael also had twelve sons. The passage reminds us of the Lord's promise to Abraham regarding Ishmael in Genesis 17:20-21. There, the Lord vowed also to make a great nation of Ishmael's descendants. However, the Lord's covenant would be confirmed with Isaac, not Ishmael. This son of Hagar died at the age of 137.

As you read Genesis 24:12-20, 24-27, reflect on how God directs the steps of those who seek Him. (PSG, p. 20)



PRIOR TO THE SESSION: Write the word *prayer* on the board.

DISPLAY: Hold up a map or calendar and share with the group that both items support the concept of planning. Encourage a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 19 of the PSG. Read Proverbs 16:9 again and highlight God's role in our plans.

SHARE: Relate that today we often use apps on our phones or tablets to remind us about appointments. *We access a map app or GPS to get the best route and to keep us updated on traffic conditions or alternate routes. We recognize that plans don't just happen, so we want to be prepared.*

ASK: **How is there comfort in knowing that God directs the steps of those who seek Him?** (PSG, p. 19)

TRANSITION: *During this session, we'll see that both Abraham and Isaac were getting older, so Abraham developed a plan to find a wife for his son. Aware of God's covenant promise that all nations would be blessed by his offspring, Abraham wanted Isaac to marry someone from his own family rather than a woman from the surrounding area.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

As adults arrive, play the song "Praise the Father, Praise the Son" by Chris Tomlin in the background. Encourage the group to share some of the words or phrases that resonate with them from the song. At the conclusion of the group time, return to the song and read aloud the lyrics. (NOTE: If your group prefers hymns, use "Sweet Hour of Prayer," No. 429, *Baptist Hymnal 2008*).

A Request (Genesis 24:12-14)

12 “LORD, God of my master Abraham,” he prayed, “make this happen for me today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. **13** I am standing here at the spring where the daughters of the men of the town are coming out to draw water. **14** Let the girl to whom I say, ‘Please lower your water jug so that I may drink,’ and who responds, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels also’ — 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.”

(v. 12) LORD: This title, typically printed in small capital letters distinguishes the Hebrew word often written in English as *Yahweh* from another Hebrew word that means “Lord.” God revealed the significance of this title to Moses at the burning bush when He responded to Moses’s request to know God’s name with the expression, “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex. 3:14). The name is derived from the Hebrew verb “to be” and denotes God as the self-existent, covenant God who acts independently of outside influences.

(v. 12) God of my master Abraham: In need of guidance to find a wife for Isaac, Abraham’s servant prayed to the God his master worshiped. Apparently, the servant had observed Abraham’s faith and the difference that faith had made in Abraham’s life. Thus, whether the witness had been verbal or primarily nonverbal, Abraham had already provided guidance for his servant. Abraham’s example of faith motivated the servant to turn to the Lord for help in carrying out this important assignment from his master. Of course, it’s also possible that after years of service to Abraham, this servant also accepted God as the only true deity and had a relationship with Him as well.

(v. 12) Kindness: This significant Hebrew word is often written in English as *hesed*. The term conveys the concepts of compassion and faithfulness to one’s obligations. It is sometimes translated “faithfulness.” Genesis reveals requests for such loyalty on various occasions. For example, in a cowardly moment, Abraham asked Sarah to show faithfulness to him by identifying Abraham as her brother rather than as her husband (Gen. 20:13). Phicol, the commander of Abimelech’s army, sought allegiance from Abraham and pledged loyalty to Abraham (21:22-23).

In this account of finding a wife for Isaac, Abraham’s servant prayed that the Lord would show kindness or loyalty to Abraham. This would be demonstrated by fulfilling the servant’s request for a sign regarding the woman the Lord had chosen to be Isaac’s wife (24:14). As it turned out, God heard his prayer and responded positively.

(v. 13) Spring: This Hebrew word also means “eye.” The connection between the two words probably lies in the fact that a **spring** or well served as the eye or focal point of the landscape. The term is distinguished from the word meaning “cistern.” It designates water flowing from an opening in a hillside or valley. In Genesis 16:7, it identifies the fountain where the angel of the Lord found Hagar after she fled from Sarah’s mistreatment. Later, the fountain became symbolic of the Lord and His power to refresh.

Key Word

Appointed

The servant requested a sign by which he could clearly discern the woman the Lord had chosen to be Isaac’s wife. The servant recognized that Isaac’s wife needed the willingness to demonstrate hospitality, a quality regarded not only as good manners, but also as a sacred duty in the ancient world. The practice of hospitality involved entertaining or receiving a stranger into one’s household, treating the person as an honored guest, and providing food, shelter, and protection.

Further, the servant’s request related to the kind of personality that Isaac needed in a wife. Isaac, who possessed a quiet, retiring nature, found in Rebekah a woman who willingly took the initiative to act. In the end, God was behind the selection. He had appointed Rebekah to be Isaac’s wife.

(v. 14) I will know: The Hebrew verb rendered **know** expresses a variety of shades of knowledge gained through the senses. It is also used to express acquaintance with someone, including the most intimate of human relationships. (See Gen. 24:16, where it is rendered “intimate.”) While the term typically designates knowledge gained by experience, it also indicates the contemplative perception a wise person possesses.

EXPLORE Genesis 24:12-14



APPLICATION POINT: Believers should approach God when seeking direction.

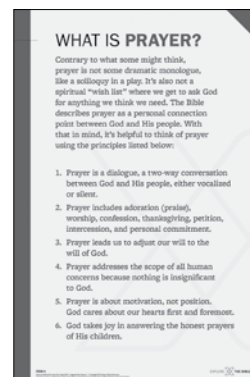
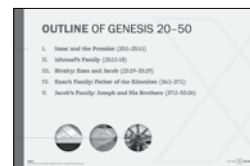
MINI LECTURE: Using **Pack Item 2** (Poster: Outline of Genesis 20–50) and **Pack Item 3** (Poster: The Patriarchs), along with Understand the Context, briefly summarize Genesis 24:1–25:18. Distribute **Pack Item 10** (Handout: What the Bible Says About Isaac) to provide additional information about Isaac. Highlight that Abraham recognized that Isaac needed a wife. Point out the word “prayer” on the board.

ASK: **What is prayer?** Encourage adults to read and respond to the Bible Skill activity on page 23 of the PSG. After a few minutes, share that prayer can be defined as “a dialogue between God and people, especially His covenant partners.”

READ: **Invite a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 24:12–14**, while the group listens for how Abraham’s servant prayed.

ASK: **What do you think prompted Abraham’s servant to pray?** (PSG, p. 22) Suggest that the servant probably knew Abraham’s commitment to prayer and could have been imitating what he had seen his master do. Direct attention to **Pack Item 4** (Poster: Principles of Prayer). Compare the items on the poster to elements of the servant’s prayer. Emphasize the role of prayer in our lives.

IDENTIFY: Lead the group to work in pairs to review the information for verses 13–14 (PSG, p. 22) and identify the two signs that the servant requested. Lead a brief discussion about the significance of each sign.



Group Activity Option

Physical

Label the corners of the room: *agree*, *strongly agree*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. Lead the group to respond to the following statements by moving to an appropriate corner of the room. After everyone has moved, allow time for volunteers from each corner to share their choices.

- Praying is easy.
- Asking for a sign indicates weak faith.
- An answered prayer is easily recognized.
- It is best to pray in a quiet, private place.

The Answer (Genesis 24:15-20)

15 Before he had finished speaking, there was Rebekah — daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor — coming with a jug on her shoulder. **16** Now the girl was very beautiful, a virgin — no man had been intimate with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up. **17** Then the servant ran to meet her and said, “Please let me have a little water from your jug.” **18** She replied, “Drink, my lord.” She quickly lowered her jug to her hand and gave him a drink. **19** When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, “I’ll also draw water for your camels until they have had enough to drink.” **20** She quickly emptied her jug into the trough and hurried to the well again to draw water. She drew water for all his camels.

(v. 15) Jug: This Hebrew word can also be rendered “pitcher,” “pail,” or “jar.” The vessel was used for both drawing and carrying water. Women typically carried this jug on their shoulders. The same Hebrew term identifies the containers with lamps inside that Gideon’s army broke in their unconventional attack on and victory over the Midianites (Judg. 7). The same Hebrew word designates the flour jar of the widow of Zarephath that the Lord announced would never become empty until He sent rain on the earth (1 Kings 17:14).

Key Person

Rebekah

The meaning of this name is uncertain. While some suggest it means “cow,” others interpret it as “ensnarer.” Her lineage as described in Genesis 24:15 identifies Rebekah as the great niece of Abraham. After marrying Isaac, she became the mother of twins, Jacob and Esau. The portrayal of Rebekah in the Scriptures reveals her complex personality. The text of Genesis 24 presents her positively as a beautiful virgin, a generous servant, and a woman who showed hospitality. She voluntarily chose to leave her home to become Isaac’s wife. Genesis 25–27 shows her in a less favorable light as she demonstrated favoritism toward Jacob, even to the point of deceiving Isaac to help steal the blessing set aside for Esau.

(v. 15) •Bethuel: This personal name means “house of God.” **Bethuel** was Rebekah’s father and Nahor’s son. Because **•Nahor** was Abraham’s brother (Gen. 11:27), Bethuel was also Abraham’s nephew. Bethuel was an Aramean from Paddan-aram (25:20). Genesis 28:5 identifies Rebekah’s brother, Laban, as also the son of Bethuel.

Rebekah’s identity as a descendant of Nahor and **•Milcah** by Bethuel (22:23) provides the important genealogical criterion that Abraham had stipulated for a wife for Isaac (24:4). The passive role of Bethuel in the marriage negotiations has puzzled Bible scholars. His words, along with those of Laban, are recorded only in 24:50. Some think this portrayal of Bethuel sets up Laban’s aggressive character, which will be significant later in the Genesis story. On the other hand, elder brothers often played a prominent role in ancient Near Eastern households, including overseeing family marriage agreements (see 34:11-17).

(v. 20) Well: The Hebrew term translated **well** differs from the word rendered “spring” in Genesis 24:13 and 16. Wells typically had to be dug, and people often rejoiced in song when they discovered water (Num. 21:16-18). Water was scarce in the desert land where the patriarchs lived, thus wells sometimes became a source of conflict (Gen. 26:19-21). Women usually assumed the responsibility of drawing water for the family’s needs.

In addition, wells served as a meeting place not only for Rebekah and Abraham’s servant, but also for Rachel and Jacob (29:9-10) and for the daughters of Reuel and Moses (Ex. 2:15-19). In the account of Rebekah’s meeting with Abraham’s servant, the terms “well” and “spring” could be used interchangeably. Perhaps the well was fed from a nearby spring.

(v. 20) Camels: **Camels** were domesticated before 2000 BC and are still well-suited for desert travel. They benefit from their muscular bodies, padded feet, and humps of fat to sustain them on long journeys. The number of camels someone owned played a role in determining the measure of their wealth (Gen. 24:35). A young camel can travel 100 miles in a day.

EXPLORE Genesis 24:15-20



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can see God's answers to prayer when sensitive to His work.

READ: Read aloud **Genesis 24:15-20** while the group notes the description of Rebekah and her family.

SHARE: Point out that God was quick to respond to the servant's prayer. Highlight the first words in verse 15: "Before he had finished speaking."

DESCRIBE: Briefly discuss how Rebekah and her family are described in Genesis 24:15-20.

TRANSITION: *Without a doubt, the servant found greater success than he probably could have imagined. Rebekah was everything Abraham had described as a wife for Isaac. But now he had to clear one final hurdle: Rebekah's family.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Stopwatch

Show adults the stopwatch. Share that most of us have stopwatches on our phones that are easier to read and probably more accurate. Talk about why stopwatches are used. Agree that they are used to see how fast something can be done. Time a couple of volunteers as they perform a simple task—like saying the alphabet—as quickly as possible. Encourage adults to look at God's response time in answering the servant's prayer in verse 15. Talk about how God wasted no time in coming through.

Place Offered (Genesis 24:24-27)

24 She answered him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.” **25** She also said to him, “We have plenty of straw and feed and a place to spend the night.” **26** Then the man knelt low, worshiped the LORD, **27** and said, “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.”

(v. 24) Milcah: This name identifies only two women in the Old Testament. One was the wife of Abraham’s brother, Nahor. That **Milcah** was Rebekah’s grandmother (Gen. 11:29; 24:24). The other Milcah was one of the daughters of Zelophehad, who pleaded their case before Moses for an inheritance equivalent to what a son would receive (Num. 26:33). The name Milcah means “queen.” Nahor and Milcah had eight sons, one of whom was Bethuel, Rebekah’s father.

(v. 26) Knelt low: This term refers to the bowing of one’s head that accompanies the act of paying homage. The verb has a restricted use in the Old Testament, appearing only fifteen times. Thus, it emphasizes deep devotion or respect at especially critical times. For example when Joseph’s brothers brought Benjamin to Egypt, they demonstrated respect for Joseph by paying homage to him (Gen. 43:28).

The Israelites responded with devotion to the Lord when they saw Aaron’s signs validating the announcement that the Lord had called Moses to deliver them from Egyptian bondage (Ex. 4:31). Saul displayed this respect when he saw the vision of Samuel (1 Sam. 28:14).

Likewise, Abraham’s servant responded with such an act of awe and reverence when he learned that the Lord had guided him to the house of Abraham’s relatives (Gen. 24:26).

(v. 26) Worshiped: The Hebrew verb rendered **worshiped** literally means “to bow down.” In its various contexts it can refer to bowing to people as well as bowing to the Lord. For example in Genesis 33:3 Jacob “bowed to the ground seven times” as he approached his estranged brother Esau.

The English word for “worship” refers to attributing “worth ship” (honor or reverence) to the Lord. Worship of the Lord can be viewed in either a broad or a narrow context. In a narrow context, it is the act of the assembled people of God. In a broad context, all of life is to be lived as an act of worship or service to the Lord (Rom. 12:1).

(v. 27) Blessed: The Hebrew verb in this context means “to offer praise.” Here it is used of Abraham’s servant praising the Lord. Other examples of such usage appear repeatedly in the Psalms (see Pss. 16:7; 18:46; 28:6; 31:21; 34:1; 41:13; 66:8,20; 68:19; 72:18; 103:1-2). The person addressed as **blessed** was viewed as possessing the power for abundant and effective living (see 1 Sam. 26:25). The address became a formalized means of expressing praise to the individual because he had given out of the abundance of his life. Often, the Lord was addressed as blessed, as is the case here. Significantly, kindness and faithfulness are attributes for which He is frequently praised.

(v. 27) Faithfulness: One of the richest terms of Old Testament faith, the word translated **faithfulness** derives from a verb meaning “to support” or “to confirm.” Our transliterated English word “amen” also comes from this verb. We often translate that word “so be it.”

The noun “faithfulness” conveys the concepts of stability, certainty, dependability, and trustworthiness. In Genesis 24:27, the term describes the Lord’s nature. In Exodus 34:6, the word appears in a list of God’s characteristics. As a description of the Lord’s nature, the word is often coupled with **kindness** (Hebrew *hesed*). See comments on “Kindness” at Genesis 24:12.

Key Doctrine

God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. (See Matthew 6:25-34; 7:11.)

EXPLORE Genesis 24:24-27



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can praise God for His faithful provision and direction.

READ: Direct the group to read silently Genesis 24:24-27, looking for Rebekah’s response to the servant’s request and the immediate response of the servant.

EXPLAIN: Emphasize how Rebekah’s family responded to the servant’s request. Share that the remainder of the story emphasizes how Isaac loved Rebekah and how she was able to comfort him in the wake of his mother, Sarah’s, death (Gen. 24:67).

ASK: How is an answered prayer a demonstration of God’s faithfulness? (PSG, p. 26)

REVIEW: Direct attention to **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Background of the Patriarchs*). If some adults do not have a copy, provide copies of the handout. Point out Isaac’s information and emphasize how finding a wife was imperative for God to continue the succession of covenant promises to Abraham’s line.

TRANSITION: Abraham’s servant prayed immediately, asking for signs that his mission would be successful. Through God’s help, his prayer was quickly answered and, once again, the servant responded with prayer. This time, it was a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. As God’s people, we should be quick to worship God and to show Him gratitude when we sense His answers to prayer and His work in our lives.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Reflective

Give each adult an index card and a pencil. Guide the group to work in pairs to develop a diary entry that might have been written by Abraham’s servant based on this session’s key verses. Direct the pairs to begin with the prompt: *Today I arrived in the land of Abraham’s family . . .* Allow time for the diary entries to be shared with the group to summarize the lesson. Ask: *What is one thing you can take away and apply to your life from these verses?*

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 27 of the *Personal Study Guide*:
- *Believers should approach God when seeking direction.*
 - *Believers can see God's answers to prayer when sensitive to His work.*
 - *Believers can praise God for His faithful provision and direction.*
- GUIDE:** Lead adults to substitute "I" for "believers" as they reflect on these statements. Challenge them to consider what a life characterized by worship communicates to God and others. (PSG. p. 27)
- ASK:** **What are tangible ways you can praise God for His faithful provision and direction?** (PSG, p. 27)
- READ:** Reread Genesis 24:26 together as a group, sharing that the servant's response should be our response to God's faithfulness. Note that memorizing this verse and reviewing it daily in prayer time will help the group develop the habit of seeking God and praising Him daily.
- PRAY:** Close with prayer, praising God for His guidance and asking Him to lead the group to be more sensitive to His work in their lives.

After the Session

Reinforce the session by following up with anyone who shared a specific prayer need during prayer time. Reach out to those individuals with a visit or a phone call. Pray with them and encourage them to place their trust in Jesus for guidance and direction.

ADULT COMMENTARY



Want to go deeper in your study?
Explore the Bible Adult Commentary offers additional information and biblical insights related to the key passages.
(Available for purchase at **Lifeway.com.**)

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