

Study 0076

From the case study in our last study, we arrived at quite a number of conclusions, some of which are that:

1. Marriage in the real sense of the word and concept as intended by God is essentially for those who are born again and Spirit-filled.
2. When the elders are involved in marriage, they distort its provisions to suit their fancy.
3. It is a lot easier to give counsel on the issue of marriage to a person who is born again and sanctified, than to any other individual or individuals in marriage.
4. A hard-hearted person cannot receive the word of God on marriage as intended by God.
5. The fruit of the womb in true marriage is a gift from God, and He will give such fruit to His children.
6. Female children are not an aberration, but a gift from God.
7. Divorce may be permitted by the traditions of men and even the Courts, but God does not allow it. Indeed, He hates divorce!

EXERCISE

Answer true or false to the statements below.

1. There should be some desirable physical qualities in a woman a man wants to marry.
2. A man is not under compulsion to marry God's choice for him in marriage.
3. A Christian woman can get married the way any other woman gets married.
4. The key to a good marriage is when the man finds a wife.
5. Parental consent may have been okay in the days of the Patriarchs, but in modern times it is not really necessary.
6. Love is so critical in the choice of a life partner, that where there is none before the marriage, there really should be no marriage.
7. With the advent of the Information Age and Social Networking (Facebook, 2go, etc.) we don't need God to make the choice of a life partner for us. We can get all the information we need on a any person we are interested in for marriage.
8. After the problem with Adam and Eve (**Genesis 3:9-12**), God stopped choosing life partners for men.

Text: Genesis 24:1-67

We have noted elsewhere that marriage mirrors the union between Christ and the Church (**Ephesians 5:22-33**). When we look at the story of Isaac's marriage to Rebekah, we see a type of the marriage between Christ and the Church. God, the Father, has sent the Holy Spirit to take a Bride (the Church), for His Son (Jesus Christ), from a far 'country' (the earth) among the Gentiles. And when all is done, the Bride of Christ will be presented to Him, at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (**Revelation 19:9; Matthew 22:1-14**). Therefore, we shall be using the story of the search for a wife for Isaac from our scripture text above, to illustrate how Christian men who are single, ought to obtain a wife from God.

- (a) *Isaac's marriage was initiated by his father, Abraham.* The believer in Christ has essentially three possible 'fathers' who can initiate marriage on their behalf. They are his biological father (especially where he is born again and Spirit-filled); his spiritual father (usually his pastor); and his heavenly Father, God. Anyone of these can initiate the obtaining of a wife for a believer in Christ (**Genesis 2:18; Judges 14:1-4**).
- (b) *It was Abraham's eldest servant who went to search for a wife for Isaac.* In bible days, the parents of the bridegroom or the friend of the bridegroom went to find a wife for the man (**John 3:29; 2 Corinthians 11:2**). For the believer in Christ, the Holy Spirit, our Paraclete, is the One who searches out a wife for us. Trying to choose a wife on one's

own is highly subjective, and influenced by one's fleshly desires, hence, a child of God should be content for the Holy Spirit to search out a wife for him and lead him to her. The space of search of the individual is limited, but the space of the search of the Holy Spirit is unlimited. While the individual can only search within the space that he knows, the Holy Spirit can bring a wife from further than the space available to the believer.

- (c) ***Abraham specified who and who not to bring as a wife to Isaac.*** For the believer in Christ, God has made it clear who he may be married to, and who he should not be married to (**2 Corinthians 6:14-18**). A child of God can only get married to another child of God; and not to an unbeliever, or even a church goer!
- (d) ***Abraham's servant depended on God to direct him to the woman He wants Isaac to marry.*** In the choice of a wife, the man must rely on God, and not on his own ideas, his understanding or his friends prodding (**Proverbs 3:1-8; Psalm 37:3-6**). When we trust God, He will lead us to the right person.
- (e) ***Abraham's servant prayed for a means by which he would know God's choice for Isaac.*** God will indicate how you will know who to get married to; and by that token, who not to get married to, even from the broad spectrum of the possible women who are children of God. Such indicators can apply to men seeking a wife, as it can also apply to women seeking to know the man to say "Yes" to. Also, God will confirm His choice in ways that will be clear that such a person is indeed His choice.
- (f) ***A woman who is wife material is a woman who is submissive to parental authority, and who is involved in house chores.*** There is a wife, and there is a woman! Whilst a wife is a woman, not every woman can be a wife (**Proverbs 14:1; 31:10-30**). A wife is a well-mannered woman, who is hard-working, and God fearing. The inner beauty of a woman is more important than the physical beauty; for when the physical beauty is all but gone, the inner beauty remains (**Proverbs 18:22; 19:14; 1 Peter 3:1-6**). The real attraction for God is a kingdom-minded woman, not a worldly woman. A wife is that woman who is not averse to doing house chores, which she is already doing in her father's house or in her own home, if she is living away from home.
- (g) ***Parental consent is essential.*** For any marriage proposal to be regarded as a true proposition, the consent of the parents is usually a very important first step. Abraham's servant did not disclose his mission to Rebekah, but to her parents first! By parents, we mean the biological and spiritual parents of the woman. It is usually a very good first step to go to the spiritual parents first, before even the biological parents. Such parental consent acts as a layer of divine confirmation and approval. You don't pick a woman from the streets!
- (h) ***The consent of the woman is extremely vital.*** No woman should ever be forced into marriage. Her consent is extremely crucial, as she is the one who will live forever with the man. Even when God says to a man, "This is the woman I have given you to be your wife", the woman's consent is still required. When a man puts his trust in God for a wife, he should pray that God will reveal him to the woman as well, so that her consent will not be a problem. The consent of the woman can act as another layer of divine confirmation or approval.
- (i) ***There can be initial overtures of gifts to the bride to be.*** Please note that the initial overtures of gifts is not to entice or influence the woman into accepting marriage, rather, the gift is given after the decision to marry is made (**Proverbs 17:8; Exodus 23:8**).
- (j) ***There are gifts given to the parents of the bride to be.*** This will count for a dowry. Please note that a dowry is not the sales price of a bride, but a token or gift given to the parents and relatives of the bride to be. Christian parents should do away with their tradition, and pursue God's way for giving away their daughters in marriage.

- (k) *Love does not feature in the search stage of marriage.* Isaac did not know who was being brought to him, not to talk of being in love with her. The issue of love for the woman did not feature until after Rebekah had been brought in to Isaac. The love that a man has for his wife is the love God gives to him, and it is the kind of love that overlooks wrong and one that easily forgives (**Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Proverbs 10:12; 17:9**). Such love eliminates hardness of heart, which is the primary cause of divorce (**Matthew 19:8**).
- (l) *The woman leaves everything behind and goes to be joined to her husband.* When Rebekah left home, it was a very long journey, and she left everything, except the maids her family sent with her to tend to her needs. And as the woman leaves all behind her and enters into the marriage, so also must the man leave all behind and enter into the marriage, so that the two can become truly one!
- (m) *There must be a consummation of the marriage.* This is a very critical aspect of marriage. Both Parties are not pieces of furniture to be looked at.

It is very important to state that as much as God initiates marriage, He does not compel anyone into accepting His choice for marriage. The freewill of the individuals concerned is left intact, and they are at liberty to accept or reject God's choice for them in marriage. However, it should be noted that a person who deliberately rejects God's choice in marriage cannot expect God to remove problems he encounters in the marriage he has chosen for himself. "*He who finds a wife ...*" (**Proverbs 18:22**) should be understood in the context of a man who is favoured by God, and led by God to obtain a wife. A brother or sister must be prayerful at all times, so that he or she can hear God clearly on the matter of marriage, because whosoever they get married to, they must remain in the marriage until the death of either of them!