

Text: Genesis 24:62-67

Title: “Can We Talk?”

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles to Genesis 24:62. Today I’m beginning a series of messages on marriage entitled, “Famous Lovers of the Bible.” Maybe you read *People* magazine or another one of the reputable news sources where you get all the news about celebrity marriages. But believe it or not, there were famous lovers in the Bible. As a matter of fact we have some right here in our church. I’ll highlight two couples each week.

EARLY SERVICE PHOTO #1 – Donnie and Judy Voss (42)

EARLY SERVICE PHOTO #2 – Wes and Sandy Black (47)

LATE SERVICE PHOTO #1 – Chad and Kim Brantley (13)

LATE SERVICE PHOTO #2 – Doug and Rebekah McPherson (7)

Well the Bible contains many true stories about married couples. Some of them were strong and some struggled. And we can learn from each important truths about how to move from struggling to strong marriages. Today we’re going to look at the love relationship between Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac was the son of Abraham, and became the father of Jacob. In the Bible God is often called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob because they were the first generations of God’s covenant with the Jewish nation from which would come the promised Messiah, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And part of that family tree is the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. Let’s read about how their marriage began. **Read Genesis 24:62-67.**

So here we have the story of the beginning of the relationship between two of the famous lovers of the Bible ... Isaac and Rebekah. Though you may have heard of Isaac, you may not know much about his marriage to Rebekah. Let’s just take some time to flip through their biblical marriage album. We see some positives and some negatives.

1. A DIVINE FOUNDATION TO MARRIAGE

One long chapter (Genesis 24) is devoted to explaining the supernatural beginning to their relationship that was guided along by the gracious hand of God. You see, Abraham was concerned that his son should not marry one of the pagan women from Canaan where they lived. If Isaac was to carry on the fulfillment of the covenant that God made with Abraham, then Isaac’s future mate must be a woman through whom God can work. So Abraham sent his servant to Abraham’s homeland where he knew there would be a woman who believed in the one true God.

So there is a divine foundation to this marriage.

ILLUSTRATION – Tomorrow Nan and I will celebrate our 36th wedding anniversary. But I remember in my own heart how the Lord turned my heart to Nan. We had both dated other people in high school and college. But I remember realizing one day after Nan and I had been dating for a few months that I loved her in a way that I had never experienced before. It was as if God had put this love in my heart for her. I could have never picked a wife so good as Nan. At the time I thought

God was calling me to be a pastor, but I wasn't sure. I remember one time before we were engaged, but when we were talking seriously about our future together, that I went to interview for a position as college campus minister. I came back and told Nan that it just didn't seem right. She told me how she had been praying and was eager to know the outcome. You see, as a girl God had called Nan to be a pastor's wife. (She hadn't shared that with me yet.) She said, "If you had come back and told me that you were going into college campus ministry I would know that you were not the man for me." And I'm grateful for how God has directed our lives through these many years.

And this is an important principle for marriage for believers. You need to seek God as you seek the person whom He would have you marry. And one of the most important requirements for a believer in seeking a mate is that that person should also be a believer, and walking with God.

2 Corinthians 6:14 - Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

So Abraham was concerned that Isaac would marry the right woman. In those days marriages were typically arranged by the parents. Often the children had little say in the person they would marry. But the fact is that Abraham's servant, who was sent on this mission to find Isaac a wife, knew that he needed God's direction to find God's mate for Isaac. So the servant went to the land of Abraham's family and as he approached he prayed. **Let's go back to read Genesis 24:12-16.**

Again, this was an incredibly important union that was at the foundation of God's covenant with Isaac's father Abraham. Isaac and Rebekah would be the parents of Jacob whose name was later changed to Israel. Jacob's sons became the twelve tribes of Israel through whom God would bless the world, and from whom would come (2000 years later) the Messiah, Jesus Christ. So the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah was an important link in the chain of God's activity in presenting Christ to the world.

Note: Every marriage is important in this respect. It is God's desire and His design for the marriage between a man and woman to be part of His redemptive activity through the Gospel. In Ephesians 5 the Apostle Paul outlines some of the most extensive teaching about Christian marriage. He talks about the God-given responsibility of the husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church. And he talks about the God-given responsibility of the wife to respect her husband. For by doing this the marriage between a Christ-following man and woman is a powerful picture of the redemptive relationship of Christ to His church.

Ephesians 5:32 - This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

So there must be a divinely spiritual foundation to each marriage. And as all of this unfolds, Rebekah's brother and father come to this conclusion:

Genesis 24:50-51 - Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the LORD; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has directed."

That's the single most important thing that any of us as parents could want for our children as they prepare for marriage ... "This is from the Lord..." They are confident that the Lord had directed the whole process. That's the way a successful marriage begins.

Another positive thing about the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah is that there was...

2. A LOVING CONNECTION IN MARRIAGE

Genesis 24:67 - Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Now to this point they have only seen each other from a distance, across the field. Isaac was out in the field meditating, the Bible says, and he looks up and sees the caravan of camels carrying this woman. And Rebekah asked the servant, "Who is that man standing out there in the field." The servant says, "That's your husband-to-be." And the Bible here says that she took her veil and covered herself.

Now the servant knows that Rebekah is beautiful, but Isaac doesn't. She has a veil over her face. And the next thing we see is Isaac taking her into his mother's tent, which was now his home and she becomes his wife.

I was curious about this scene. Did Isaac even know what she looked like? What did he think when she lowered the veil from her face? Did he say, "Oh my!" or "Oh no!"?

But it doesn't matter. Isaac made the choice to love Rebekah. This is an unconditional acceptance in their marriage. She is the woman God has chosen for him. What a great way to begin a relationship as husband and wife with this kind of loving connection. It doesn't just say that Isaac married her ... she became his wife and *he loved her*.

And that is the biblical responsibility of every husband:

Ephesians 5:25 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

And this is not just a one-way street. Isaac loved Rebekah, but it says that Rebekah comforted Isaac. The loneliness that he felt after his mother died was overshadowed by the comforting love of his wife Rebekah.

But after a great beginning, Isaac and Rebekah's marriage began to deteriorate in two very dangerous ways. The first thing we see missing in their relationship was...

3. AN EXCLUSIVE DEVOTION IN MARRIAGE

In the course of time God blessed their union with children ... twin sons named Jacob and Esau. Let's fast forward a few years to Genesis 25:

Genesis 25:27-28 - The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Interesting! It appears that they were closer to their children than they were to each other. It isn't uncommon that when a husband and wife have a poor relationship with each other they turn to their children as substitute relationships to fill the emptiness in their souls. Isaac and Rebekah seemed to be more wrapped up in the lives of their children than they were in each other.

And when this is the case, when the children are grown and leave, the husband and wife stare at each other and wonder, "Who is this person I live with? We've spent our entire married life focused on our children. And now we don't know each other. Do we even need each other any more?"

Sometimes the distraction in the marriage comes from the children. Sometimes there's an unhealthy obsession with one's parents. That's why Jesus says...

Matthew 19:5 - "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"

Exclusive devotion means that your love for each other overshadows your devotion to your children, to your parents, to your job, to anyone or anything else but the Lord.

Well this flaw in Isaac and Rebekah's marriage led to one of the most hideous schemes of deception recorded in the Bible. And it points out another important ingredient to a healthy marriage that was missing in Isaac and Rebekah's marriage.

4. HEALTHY COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGE

Sometimes couples think, "Well if we just have children, that will solve all of our problems." But the twins that are born to Isaac and Rebekah only agitate a problem that already existed in their marriage ... poor communication.

You may remember that Rebekah incites their son Jacob to deceive his father Isaac in order to get the traditional blessing that belonged to the first-born son (rightfully belonging to Esau). The blessing of the Jewish father on the first-born son conferred on him the leadership of the family and the primary heir to the property of the family. Again, that belonged to Esau. But Jacob is Rebekah's favorite and she persuades Jacob to deceive Isaac and steal Esau's blessing. Such is the unhealthy, even deceptive communication that has developed in this family.

And as you study their biblical marriage album carefully you see that they don't talk to each other very much.

- They each talked to God.

Genesis 25:21 - Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant.

And Rebekah prayed to God as well. When she became pregnant with the twins that fought within her, the Bible says...

Genesis 25:22-23 - The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”

Now this is important information about God’s sovereign plans for the nation of Israel, of which Jacob would be the father. But interestingly, we have no record that Rebekah ever shared with Isaac this important revelation she had received from the Lord about what was going on inside of her.

Couples should be able to talk about spiritual things with one another.

- They were physically intimate with one another. In Genesis 26 we learn that because of a famine Isaac had to take his family to the land of the Philistines to find food so they could survive.

Genesis 26:8 - Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah.

So there was physical intimacy between Isaac and Rebekah.

- But there was little if any communication between Isaac and Rebekah. There’s only one account of Rebekah speaking to her husband. This comes when Rebekah had warned Jacob that Esau was enraged because Jacob had stolen his blessing from him. Rebekah told Jacob to go to her brother Laban’s house, and wait for Esau to cool down. To disguise her true intentions, she lied to Isaac. And here are the only recorded words spoken by Rebekah to her husband:

Genesis 27:46 - Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I’m disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living.”

Interesting! The first and only words we have of Rebekah speaking to Isaac are ... “I’m disgusted...”

So those are the only recorded words spoken from Rebekah to her husband Isaac. But there’s something even more tragic. We have *no* record of Isaac ever speaking to his wife. That’s not to say that he never said anything to her, or that they never had a conversation. It’s just that there is not a single word of anything Isaac ever said to his wife.

The fact is that many, if not most, of the problems in marriages involve a silent husband. Sometimes the man may be naturally quiet, or simply doesn’t have much to say. Sometimes men don’t know

how to open up and communicate in a healthy way with their wife or the children. Sometimes men don't talk to their wives because they are preoccupied with the job, or with their hobby or with sports. But the man needs to know that his wife needs that kind of emotional openness with her husband. So guys, work on this.

And the same can be the case for the wife. Remember we're told way back at the beginning of their relationship that Rebekah comforted Isaac. Where did that tender concern go? It seems that Isaac and Rebekah grew apart over the years to where they didn't talk to each other.

Whatever the case, we can all learn to be better communicators in marriage. In closing, let me give you just a few simple principles about communication in marriage:

1. PULL, DON'T PUSH.

Open yourself up to your mate. But you can't force the other person to talk, but you can let them know you know how important it is.

2. ACCEPT, DON'T JUDGE.

When your mate talks about his or her feelings, remember they are talking about their feelings. You cannot deny that. The issue is not so much whether they are justified or not. Those are their feelings. Accept them without judging. When your mate shares their feelings or frustrations, never say, "Oh, you shouldn't feel that way."

3. DISAGREE, BUT WITH RESPECT.

Many times we don't know how to fight fair. There will be disagreements. When you must disagree, do it kindly and respectfully, not with sarcasm or disrespect.

4. SEEK TO UNDERSTAND, NOT JUST TO BE UNDERSTOOD.

ILLUSTRATION – I heard about an elderly couple who were sitting together one day. The husband's hearing was really bad. His wife leaned over and whispered, "I'm proud of you." The husband looked back at her with a puzzled look and said, "Well, I'm tired of you too."

It's easy to obsess over the fact that you don't think your mate understands you. What would happen if you just put that aside and became obsessed over understanding your mate?

5. LISTEN, DON'T DOMINATE.

You may never become a great talker, but the most important part of communication is listening. You learn to be a good listener. The wife needs her husband to listen with undivided attention, not one eye on television and the other on her, but both eyes aimed in her direction and wide open. That may be all she is really asking for. Men, love enough to listen!

CONCLUSION

In spite of their marriage struggles, God still used Isaac and Rebekah in His redemptive plan for mankind. In spite of their failures, the plans and purposes of God go forward.