

January 24-Genesis 24

In Genesis 24, Abraham is nearing the end of his life and is concerned about finding a wife for Isaac. His desire is for Isaac to marry someone from Abraham's native people and so Abraham sends his servant back to his home with the task of finding a wife for Isaac. Abraham's servant finds himself facing a difficult task. How would you like to be responsible for traveling to a far off country and finding a mate for someone you work for? That's quite a bit of pressure!

In short, the servant decides that he is not capable of doing such a task himself so he does a very wise thing and he asks God for guidance. I would venture to say that all of us have asked God for help at various times in our lives. It is not unusual for people to seek God and request that He intervene in a variety of ways, but it is pretty uncommon to ask God to help as specifically as the servant did in this situation. We are often guilty of asking God to "help" us but not asking Him to help us in specific ways. I am reminded of the story of a man who was stranded on top of a roof in a flood. The man prayed to God for help and immediately a boat came by offering to help save the man but he refused their help because he just knew God would intervene. He continued to pray and a helicopter flew overhead offering help but the man again refused knowing God would intervene. Finally, a rescue squad shouted from the banks of the river offering to help and the man refused again. Shortly after, the man died and when he arrived in heaven he angrily asked God why He didn't help him to which God replied, "I send a boat, a helicopter and a rescue squad, what else did you want?" You see, so often we ask God to help or bless us in general even though we have specific ideas in mind. He so often does bless us but because we don't see the situation clearly or are not expecting Him to work in the way that He does we miss out.

Specific prayers display our faith in a powerful and faithful God. It is much easier for us to pray that God "help" in some way, but when we ask Him to help in a specific way; we are expressing faith that He hears us and is willing to intervene on our behalf. The servant's prayer is recorded in verses 12-14. In the prayer, the servant is recorded as articulating to God the exact words that he wants this chosen bride of Isaac to say. This is so important! Many of us would have prayed something like "God please make it known to me who you want me to pick" but we don't have any idea how God would make it known. The servant understood that he needed a way to identify this woman and that asking God to make this woman say something in particular was not outside of His power or His will.

When the servant prayed specifically, God answered and in doing so provided all of the confirmation the servant needed in moving forward. There are many Scriptures that encourage us to ask God for what we desire. Mark 11:24 says, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." John 14:13-14 states "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." It is important to note that Christ is clear that we are to pray "in his name" meaning we pray under His authority. This means that we must ask for things that are in accordance with His authority as expressed in His Word. In short, you cannot ask of God something out of sinful motives and expect God to answer, but if our prayers line up with His will we can know that God hears and responds!

How many of us think about God in this way? Do you see God as ready and willing to do what you ask of Him in accordance with His will or do you see Him as cold to your wishes and needs? Notice that the text tells us in verse 15 that the answer to prayer (the person of Rebekah) came "Before he had finished speaking". God answered and He answered quickly! You must realize that God delights in answering prayer and when we pray specifically, we give Him the opportunity to answer our prayers and, consequently, opportunities for us to praise Him for His answer.