

January 28-Genesis 28

Marriage is a God-ordained and beautiful covenant. It has the potential to be used of God to reflect to a dying world the relationship between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5) and it can be a wonderfully holy and sanctifying relationship in a believer's life. However, marriages can also be unhealthy and destructive. In fact, the Old Testament is replete with examples of Godly men who were sidetracked by ungodly wives (see Solomon). These unholy marriages always caused men of God to stray from their relationship with God causing immense pain both in their personal lives as well as on the whole nation of Israel. This of course was foreseen by God which is why the Old Testament records God's clear command not to intermarry with pagan people (i.e. Deuteronomy 7:3).

Marriage has and always will be a big and influential decision in our lives. Consequently, one of the more difficult situations we face in life is deciding who to marry. Often times, these decisions can cause conflict within the family as the parents have a different standard for their child than the child. Sometimes, it can be difficult heeding the advice of godly counselors or even of God Himself, but Jacob gives us a great example regarding submitting to wise counsel in this regard.

Wise counsel often comes from the missteps of the one who is advising. This is certainly the case in the situation of Jacob and Isaac. Let's look at why Isaac told Jacob not to marry a "Canaanite" woman. The term Canaanite was a broad term that actually encompassed many different people groups in the area that Isaac lived. One of these groups was called the Hittites. If you look back at Genesis 26:34-35 you will read "When Esau was forty years old, he took Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite to be his wife, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah." So, we see in this last text that Isaac's reason for telling Jacob to avoid Canaanites was based on experience! Isaac had seen the heartache of a bad marriage and was trying to save his son from the same. Obviously, we do not know exactly why Esau's marriage was so unhealthy, but we do know that at least part of the reason why was almost assuredly the religious differences between the two parties. Historically, the Canaanites were pagan people who mocked Israel's God. A marriage without a united conviction in Christian principles is a marriage that is susceptible to great harm. In fact, God's Word warns us today not to be "unequally yoked" 2 Corinthians 6:14. The image there is of two parties that are not pulling in the same direction. Inevitably, a marriage containing a believer and unbeliever will result in parties pulling in opposite directions.

Second, let's look at Jacob's response. Verse 5 says "Thus Isaac sent Jacob away. And he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, the son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother." In short, Jacob did EXACTLY as his father had instructed him. There was no argument or disagreement, Jacob was smart enough to realize that his parents wanted what was best for him and so he trusted their judgment. In this instance, Jacob recognized wisdom and heeded it in his life. Are you heeding wise advice today? Of course, the purest wisdom in the world comes from the very Word of God. The Bible shares with us in 1 Corinthians 1:30 that Christ "became to us (believers) wisdom from God." In Christ we have the ultimate wisdom necessary to live and navigate this life. He is a wise Savior who is also merciful and forgiving! Why not begin even today to heed His Word as you live your life trusting that He can heal the wounds from your past mistakes and help you avoid pot holes to come?