

# The Providential Matchmaker

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[0:00] Thank you. This is the word of the Lord. Please take a seat. And God, we look to you. You are God in heaven. You are God of heaven and earth. Our God is in heavens. He does all that he pleases.

Pray that you will show us through your word a big view of you. And for us to see the joy it is to be in Christ. That you are for us in Christ. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Yeah, it was a long passage. Thanks for standing with us. But we believe the word of God is living and active, speaks to us. And we are to devote ourselves to the public reading of scripture. And actually, I think it's a fascinating story. A love story.

And we see God's hand over all the details of the story. Now, it's about Abraham's servant going out to find Isaac, a wife.

The chapter begins with Abraham commanding his servant to do some matchmaking for Isaac. And as we read this, I want us to observe this. That Abraham has full confidence that this mission will succeed.

[1:04] Abraham has full confidence in God's providence. He says in verse 7, The Lord, the God of heaven, he will send his angel before you. And you shall take a wife for my son from there.

Trust that God will send an angel and make this mission prosper. Why does Abraham have this confidence that God will provide? First, Abraham knows who the Lord is.

He's God of heaven. That's what he says. The Lord, the God of heaven will do this. In verse 3, he addresses the Lord as God of heaven and earth. Abraham knows that the Lord is the one who made all of it.

Who made the heavens and the earth. He's the creator and the sovereign God over heavens and the earth. He holds all of this in his hands. Second, Abraham knows the Lord's promises.

Because some of us sitting here might be thinking, I really need to find a wife. And maybe that's true for you. But here, Isaac absolutely, certainly needs to find a wife.

[2:06] And that's because God made a covenant with Abraham. God bound himself in relationship to Abraham and promised to make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky.

He will make Abraham into a great nation. And in Abraham's offspring, all the nations of the earth will be blessed. That's God's promise to Abraham. And we've learned that the promise will come through Abraham's son, Isaac.

So for that to happen, Isaac needs to get married. To have children. So that he can have offspring. And so Abraham reasons out that God must provide Isaac a wife.

He's bound by his covenant. And that faith, that trust that God will provide, that God promised, it shapes how Abraham goes about this mission. He sends out his servant with some strict requirements.

Some strict non-negotiables. And that's because when we trust in God's providence, then we don't have to compromise. If God promises to provide for us, we don't have to settle and do it our way as we've seen Abraham do time and time again before.

[3:18] First, Abraham says in verse 3, this is the first requirement. He says in verse 3, Isaac's wife must not be from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell.

She must not be a Canaanite. Now, problem is, they were living in the land of Canaan. They were living among Canaanites. It'd be so easy to find a Canaanite wife. The servant can go out.

There's Canaanites everywhere. They were living in that land. But instead, Abraham tells the servant, go to my country and to my kindred. The servant needs to go back to Abraham's hometown, homeland in Mesopotamia.

That's over 800 kilometers away. And they didn't have planes. They don't have paved roads. That's at least a 20-day journey by foot. 800 kilometers. And not only that, he has to go to this place, maybe he's never even been, find one of Abraham's distant relatives, who knows what he looks like, and find a woman from that family as Isaac's wife.

It's a long journey. It's the harder way. So why do that? And that's because Abraham knows marrying a Canaanite would invite compromise.

[4:29] He was living in Canaan. If Isaac married a Canaanite, he would merge with the surrounding culture. He would take on their customs. Customs of people who didn't know God, who were committed to idolatry.

He would get swallowed up in their ways and forget the ways of the Lord. That this small covenant community that God made with Abraham was at risk of being swallowed up by the Canaanites, by their neighbors, and not just any neighbors, but by a people that we learned in Genesis chapter 15, who will be judged by God and cast out of the promised land.

The Canaanites would be judged by God and cast out. And so to protect Isaac against this, to protect against this compromise, Abraham tells his servant to go all the way back to his homeland in Mesopotamia to find a wife there for Isaac.

But in verse 5, the servant asks, what if the woman won't come with me? What if I go, I find someone, but she's not willing to come back with me? Fair question.

Right? Because imagine a stranger walked all over from Laos, walked from Laos to Hong Kong and told you, hey, pack your bags. I found your spouse. I don't know photos.

[5:44] Don't worry. Come with me. Right? You might have a few questions for that person. You might, you might not, you might ask a few things. But even if that happens, even if she says no, Abraham is adamant.

He says, you cannot bring Isaac back to my homeland. Even if she doesn't come, I know God will bring her. But even if, in the case that she doesn't, you cannot bring Isaac back.

And that is also an act of faith. Abraham trusts that God promised to give Isaac's, to give him the land. Along with that promise of offspring, God promised Abraham the land of Canaan.

And he doesn't want Isaac to step out, leave that land, leave that promise. He also doesn't want Isaac to be tempted to look back. Because living in Mesopotamia is the easier way.

It's the easier life. Abraham, since God called him to go his whole life, he wandered around in tents. He didn't have a city, a house, a homeland that he settled in.

[6:52] But Isaac, if he went back to Mesopotamia, he could go back and live with his relatives in a city where it was prosperous, where he'd be safe and secure, not wandering around. And in fact, we see in verse 10 that there was a city actually named after Abraham's relative, Nahor.

He could live, Isaac could go and live in a city run whose mayor was a friend of his, was a relative. He could live an easy, secure life there.

But Abraham says, no, you can't bring Isaac back because Abraham wanted Isaac to remember God's promise. They will receive this land. I won't look back. I won't look back to that land from which I came as we read in Hebrews 11 a few weeks ago.

And so Abraham tells the servant in verse 8, hey, if she won't come back with you, that's okay.

You're free from your oath. You're free from this obligation to me. Just do not bring Isaac back.

He has to stay here. And so I want to ask us, where are we tempted, in fact, in our lives to compromise? Where are we tempted to settle for less, take the shortcut, the easy way, to turn our backs to where God is leading us and what he's promised us?

[8:09] How about in relationships? We know God wants us to marry someone, to be yoked, to be equally yoked to someone. Someone who, in Abraham's, for Abraham, it was to find someone in his family.

For us, in our spiritual family, someone who is a follower of Christ within the household of God. It would be a lot easier for Isaac to marry a Canaanite.

There's a lot more Canaanites around than non-Canaanites in that land. It's a long journey to Mesopotamia. Because that same thing can compromise us. Let's trust in God's providence.

If a husband or wife is what we need, God will provide. If waiting is what we need, also, God provided waiting for Abraham. 25 years for Isaac.

If not getting what we want in this life is what we need, God will provide also. And so when we trust God to provide, we don't search, we don't need to search for shortcuts. We don't need to

compromise to take hold of what he hasn't given us yet.

[9:12] But also, trusting God doesn't mean we sit back and do nothing. God's providence also leads us to take action, pray expectantly.

So in verse 10, the servant sets off. He swears to Abraham, I will do all these things. And he sets off to Mesopotamia. He takes a journey of a few weeks to go to a place he doesn't know.

How is he going to find Isaac's wife there? How is he going to know who God has provided for Isaac? Servant is wise. He positions himself in verse 11. He goes by the well in the evening at the time when women go out to draw water.

See, he's smart enough. He sets up shop where all the action is. But on top of that, he's wise enough to stop and pray. Because out of all the women coming out to get water, how is he going to have any clue who God has prepared?

He wants to know. And so he goes and prays. And this is what he does. He asks for a sign in verse 14. He prays. Let the young woman to whom I shall say, please let down your jar that I may drink.

[10:17] Pretty much, I'll ask a woman to get me water. And if she says, I'll give you water, but also I'm going to offer to get water for your camels also. Without him asking, the woman who offers to also get water for his camels.

That, let her be the one that you appointed for your servant Isaac. That's the sign that she's the one. Now I want to think about this. Is a servant right to pray that, to ask for a sign?

I think so. He's not doing it out of fear and doubt. We see elsewhere, for example, Gideon's story, where he asks God for a sign with a fleece. Make the fleece wet, but the ground dry.

Make the fleece dry, but the ground wet. But Gideon there, he's asking out of fear. Again, even after God shows him a sign. In this case, the servant wasn't trying to force God's hand or rush his timeline or doing it out of fear.

He was on a journey that he knew was blessed by God, that God would send his angel before him. And he's praying for God to make clear what the next step is. And notice this.

[11:25] The sign that he asked for, it wasn't anything spectacular or supernatural or miraculous in the way we think about it.

He didn't ask God to write her name in the sky with some clouds. Right? Rebecca in the clouds. He didn't ask God to whisper her name in his ear.

He asked for something that was actually really ordinary. It's a specific request. Specific. But also a really ordinary, mundane one. And actually, it's a sign of good character.

He's asking for a sign that this is a woman that shows hospitality. A sign that she is someone who is kind and compassionate. Maybe to us, it doesn't sound like much to get water for camels.

But keep in mind, each camel can drink 100 liters at a time. He had 10 camels. That's a lot of work. It could take hours. It's an exhausting, inconvenient act of service for a stranger.

[12:32] An over-the-top act of hospitality. That's the sign he's praying for. Show me someone who's generous, hospitable, servant-hearted. He's asking God to show him someone like that for Isaac.

And so I think it's okay to ask for signs. God sometimes answers like he did in this case. Not always. He'll guide us. The regular way that God guides our decisions is by letting us know what is good through his word.

He reveals to us his will through his word. And by giving us wisdom. Guiding us to know what is good by the spirit. The servant, we saw, was wise enough to know.

Hey, woman, they will come out to the well in the evening. That's the time they come out to draw water. And he was wise enough to ask God to show a woman of good character for Isaac.

These are traits that we know are pleasing to God. These are good things to ask for. It's good to be kind and hospitable. And personally for me, before I married my wife Jojo, or before I met her, I personally, just on the theme of signs, I didn't feel called to pray for a specific sign on who I should date, who I should marry.

[13:49] But instead, my prayer was this. That God, could you show me someone who's not, not just a Christian. That's not negotiable for me. But please also prepare for me.

This is the sign. Prepare for me someone who is passionate for missions. Who shares that heart that I have. Who wants to make disciples of all nations. Who's willing to go. If you are calling me to go.

Someone who's heading in the same direction as me. That we can work side by side with together. Not going in different directions and holding each other back. Someone like that. That's the sign. That's someone I want you to prepare for me. That's what I prayed. And if it's to get married now or later, we trust God will provide. But in any case, won't compromise.

Let's not compromise. I thank God in my case, he provided as I prayed. I thank him for that. And anyways, back at the well in Genesis chapter 24, we see God answered the servant's prayer.

[14 : 49] And as God answered, we see his fingerprints. We see several fingerprints that God's hand was orchestrating this whole encounter. First, in verse 15, he says, verse 15 says, before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebecca.

So as the servant was praying, as the servant was asking God for the sign, before he even finished his sentence, there, Rebecca appeared instantly.

Imagine how that servant would have felt. It's like, whoa. Someone came just as I was praying.

Could it be her? And so he runs over to her and asks her for some water.

Imagine he's thinking, like, could this be? She's doing the things. She's looking over at the camels. Oh, she's asking. She sees the camels. And now she's asking about them. And now she's getting them water.

It's exactly what I asked God for. And this all happened immediately. God answered him immediately before he had even finished asking him.

[15 : 50] And then in verse 22, after the camels had finished drinking, in faith that God brought him to the right woman, he puts jewelry on her.

And that's when he gets more confirmation. He asks her who she is. And it turns out she wasn't just any kind stranger, any kind stranger who offered water for him and the camels.

Turns out she was actually Abraham's grandniece. She was the distant relative that Abraham had sent him to find. And think about it. What are the odds of that happening?

That the right lady from the right family shows up at the right time doing the exact right thing that he asked for. All these things lined up. It has to be the hand of God.

And notice this, that none of these things are supernatural miracles. Like God parting the Red Sea. Or raising Jesus from the dead.

[16 : 51] Things that we don't see every day. But it's just ordinary, mundane things. And it goes to show that God is in control of the smallest details. Every details in the ordinary, everyday things of life.

Because to arrive while he's praying, she probably left home before he even thought to ask about it. God was working even before the servant asked.

She had that thought to go to the well. And what about all the things that had to line up for her to arrive at that exact time? What if she bumped into a friend and then stopped to chat for a bit?

What if she forgot her water jug at home and then had to turn back and then go get it? God was taking care of all these variables even before the servant opened his mouth.

It's just like what Jesus said in Matthew 6. Your father knows what you need before you even ask him. As John Piper said once, God is always doing 10,000 things in your life.

[17 : 54] And you may be aware of three of them. That's the wisdom of God. He's probably orchestrating 10,000 different details in your life. But we only have the vision to see three of them.

And that's true for Isaac and Rebecca. It's true for us. He sees all these details. He's meticulous. And his providence extends over all of it. And so what's the proper response to seeing God do all this?

It is to worship. That's what the servant does in verse 26. The man bowed his head and worshipped the Lord. He bowed and worshipped and said, Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master

Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master.

He sees everything God does, gives the glory to God, and bows in worship. Now I have to admit, sometimes when God answers my prayer, I take what he gives me, but I neglect to give him the glory.

Hey, I did well on this test. I got the job I prayed for. Look how smart I am. Rather than thanking God and giving him the glory. Or, sometimes my mind defaults to saying, This was a coincidence.

[19 : 12] And you guys know, I used to be a stock trader. I'm trained to thinking statistics, probabilities. I want to do a statistical test. Was this the hand of God? Was this a coincidence?

Or did God really answer my prayers? But scripture tells us, scripture reminds us that nothing is left to chance. Nothing is outside God's control.

Proverbs says, The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord. Every time someone throws a dice and it lands a certain way in Macau.

Even that is under the providence of God. Under the sovereignty of God. Everything that happens, whether we label it coincidence or not, it is from God.

Under his providence. And we can thank him and give the glory back to him. And so, Rebecca, hearing that Abraham's servant is in town, invites him over, runs back to tell her family everything that happened, because she knows this is God.

[20:14] And her family, they offer him food. They set a table before him, offer him food. But the servant refuses to eat until he has a chance to speak.

He wants, his first priority is to explain what God has done to lead him exactly to Rebecca. And as we read, he tells the story again from the top.

The story that we just went through. He tells it again from the top. And as he does, his whole focus is to highlight for us once again, the Lord's providence.

From the Lord blessing Abraham his entire life. To this confident assurance that the Lord would make his journey a success. to his prayer.

And God answering it at the right time, at the right person, providentially. And so, the long and short of his retelling of the story is this. That the only reason I'm standing before you guys, the only reason I'm standing here, that I met Rebecca, is because God sovereignly led me to her.

[21:21] God guided everything. And he puts the ball back into their court. He tells them, this is what the Lord has done. This is my testimony. This is what I've seen God do.

Will you recognize his hand in it? Obey him and let her go. And go to Isaac and be his wife. And so they respond in verse 50.

Rebecca's brother and dad, Laban and Bethuel, her brother and dad, they answered and said, the thing has come from the Lord. We cannot speak to you bad or good. So take her and go and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken.

In other words, if God has spoken it, if he's ordained it, then we can't say it otherwise. We will let her go. And upon hearing that, the servant worships the Lord again.

He doesn't go and thank Laban and Bethuel. That's not what he does. He goes and worships God. The glory doesn't go to her family. They made the decision, but the glory goes to God.

[22:24] He's the one who made sure that the servant's journey was successful and even cleared that last hurdle of getting Rebecca's family to give permission. And they say they let Rebecca go.

The next day, servant prepares to leave. But they change their mind. In verse 55, they say, hey, let the young woman remain with us a while.

At least 10 days after that, she may go. The servant's set on this mission. He says, don't delay me. The Lord has prospered my way. Don't delay me. She has to go.

This is what God wants. And so they call Rebecca over to resolve this, to resolve this conflict. They ask her in verse 58, she's the one that breaks the tie. Will you go with this man?

Are you willing to go with him? And she settles it with just a simple answer. I will go. I will go.

[23:23] Think about the faith that this took. Rebecca never met Isaac. She's never texted him.

She doesn't have a photo. She's leaving her family, her home, all that she's ever known, following a stranger she just met the day before to a foreign land, to marry a man.

Yeah, she has no idea who he is. Purely because she saw God work, she saw God's hand, and she believes his promise.

As we read this, does this remind you of someone else who was called to leave his country and his father's land and go? Who else believed God's promise and stepped out in faith?

Rebecca sounds a lot like Abraham. Rebecca trusted the providence of God just like Abraham did and followed the footsteps of his faith. And so they go. Rebecca goes with the servant back to Canaan, and that's where we get this final scene.

It's romantic. It almost reminds me of a K-drama before it cuts to that closing song on a cliffhanger. Isaac was out in the field. He's meditating.

[24:32] He looks up, and then he sees camels. He sees Rebecca. At that exact same moment, she looks over. She sees Isaac. Their eyes meet, and then the song begins, and it cuts in the cliffhanger.

That's the end to this beautiful love story. That's the end of the episode. It's a match made in heaven. It's a match made in heaven. This love story is a display of the providence of God. That's how it ends, and Isaac was comforted after the death of Sarah. Now, that's the story. What does it have to do with us? What does God's providence mean for us?

And I'd like to point our attention back to something that we've sort of taken for granted when it comes to thinking about God's sovereignty and how his sovereignty relates to us.

Okay? Throughout this whole story, we saw that God is clearly in control. He's orchestrating all the details behind the scenes, and we say that God is sovereign.

[25 : 35] He is absolute control over everything that happens. As Psalm 115 says, our God is in the heavens. He does all that he pleases. That's his sovereignty.

But let's ask a question. Why is God's sovereignty good news for us? We know God is in control. That's great. But why is that comforting for us?

What's the connection? Because if we stop and think about it, God's sovereignty could be terrifying to us. It could be terrifying.

For example, if you went to Satan and you told him, hey, God is sovereign and he has a plan for you. He's in control of everything.

Nothing escapes his control. That is the worst possible news Satan can hear. Because he has made the almighty God his enemy. And God is sovereignly against him.

[26 : 39] That's true for Satan. And it's also true for us, for sinners who have rebelled against the holy God. It's true for us too.

But when we think about God's sovereignty, God's plan, we often expect that God is on our side. And why are we not afraid?

How can we listen to a story about God's sovereignty and be comforted about it? How can we celebrate God's sovereignty? That God is sovereign over us.

And this is where God's sovereignty becomes God's providence. We have hope because God is not just, is for us.

God is for us, not against us. His sovereignty is exercised for our good, for his glory. that he is not just sovereign, but he is sovereignly for us.

[27 : 40] That's our hope and comfort. And we have this hope because God made a covenant with us. Just as God made a covenant with Abraham, and Abraham had confidence, the Lord will be with me and bless the servant on the journey.

We have confidence because God made a covenant with us through his son Jesus. Jesus went to the cross and took the wrath of God upon himself, dying in our place so that God is no longer our enemy.

And he rose from the dead. Through him, through Jesus, we can rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not by anything that we do, but only if we put our faith in him.

Because of Jesus, we have God's promise that for those who love him, all things work together for good for those who are called according to his purpose. That's the only reason we can read a chapter like this and be comforted rather than terrified.

That because of Jesus, God is not merely sovereign, but he is sovereignly for you. He is sovereignly on your side. He is, just as he was covenantally committed to finding Isaac a wife, he is covenantally committed to your good for his glory because you are united with Christ.

[29 : 05] And our lives are not just left to chance or luck or coincidence. The same God who orchestrated 800 kilometers walking to bring Rebecca, to bring the servant and Rebecca to the well at the exact same time, the exact second.

That same God, he knows what you need before you even ask him. He might not give you everything you want, but he knows what you need. He knows what is best for you.

He knows the 10,000 things when we only see three. And he is orchestrating our lives right now for our good, for his glory. So if there's one thing you can remember today, remember this.

God is not just sovereign. He's not just God on high and in control, but he is sovereignly for you if you are in Christ, if you believe in Christ.

And so in light of this, how should we live? I'll leave us with three quick things that we see from this passage. First, we fight compromise because if the sovereign God is for us, who can be against us?

[30 : 09] We don't need to take shortcuts in our relationships. We don't have to compromise our integrity for that promotion. We don't have to compromise our time with God to study for that test.

God's providence prevents compromise.

Let's do it God's way. And second, we pray to him and we praise him. We make our requests known to God, cast all our anxiety upon him because he cares for us.

He knows what we need before we even ask. And whenever God answers, in big things, small things, everyday coincidence, if you want to use that word, don't just give the glory to random chance and luck.

It's all under his providence. Bow before him, give him the glory. Finally, we step out in faith.

Stepping out in faith for Rebecca meant 800 kilometers of walking to meet a stranger.

But today, stepping out for faith for us could mean trusting God with our children and for their future.

It could be believing that God orchestrates just as he's sovereign at the well.

[31:14] He's sovereign over our hospital visits too. He's sovereign over our family, over our life.

Have the faith of Rebecca. She didn't know what the future held, but she knew the God who held the future.

And so she could say, I will go. And I shared that quote from Hudson Taylor earlier, that God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply.

He'll never lack God's supply. We saw that in Genesis 24. Abraham, he did it God's way. The servant did it God's way.

We saw before. He compromised and it didn't work. But in this chapter, we see him trusting his life to the sovereign God. And God answered, arranging every single detail, every single thing down to the very second.

And if we belong to Jesus, if we are in Christ, he will do the same for us. So let's trust him, refuse to compromise, and do it God's way. Let's pray.

[32:21] God, we bow before you and give you glory. I remember, we read earlier in Psalm 8, what is man that you're mindful of us, the son of man that you care for us?

We are on earth. You are in heaven. What right do we have to come before you and ask you anything and pray?

God, we thank you that you are for us, that you love us, that we have boldness, access with confidence through our faith in you, and we can bow our knees before you and make our request known to you.

Thank you, God, that you care for us, that you have bound yourself through the blood of Jesus to glorify your name in doing us good. God, we pray that you strengthen our faith.

We believe in you. Help our unbelief. Help us when we waver. Help us to cast all our anxieties on you because you care for us. Thank you.

[33:23] We have this hope and assurance because of the cross, because of your son. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.