

## Study 8

# BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES!

Genesis 23-25

### Bible Talk Discussion

What insights or observations from Sunday's talk did you find helpful, interesting or confusing? Note down any questions and see if you can answer them along the way.

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Does your family have any examples of heirlooms or traditions that have been passed through the generations?

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### Growth Group Discussion

These three chapters outline the deaths of Abraham and Sarah. However, sandwiched in between is the painstakingly detailed story of Isaac and Rebekah's marriage. The story raises a significant question: With Abraham and Sarah's passing, will the promise continue to be fulfilled with Abraham's descendants? Does the journey of faith stop here or can God's promises for land, people and blessing be fulfilled even without the great patriarch, Abraham?



At this point, the threefold promises remained unfulfilled. Abraham and Sarah live in Canaan but only as foreigners there. They have one heir but no grandchildren. They have been blessed but their blessing hasn't quite overflowed to the rest of the world.

We've got some long passages to look at today so split into two groups: One to look at the death of Sarah (23:1-20) and one to look at the death of Abraham (25:1-11).

## The Death of Sarah

**Read Genesis 23:1-19**

**1.** The story goes into great detail about the purchase of a burial site for Sarah. Why does the story go into such detail? What does it have to do with the promises?

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**2.** What is the relationship like between Abraham and the Hittites?

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The purchase of the small burial plot for Sarah marks the first time that Abraham actually owns a piece of the promised land. It's a small but significant moment. Sadly, Sarah doesn't live to see that moment.

# The Death of Abraham

Read Genesis 25:1-11

3. As Abraham dies, what description is there of the state of his affairs?

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4. What is the difference between Isaac and all of Abraham's other sons? Is this significant?

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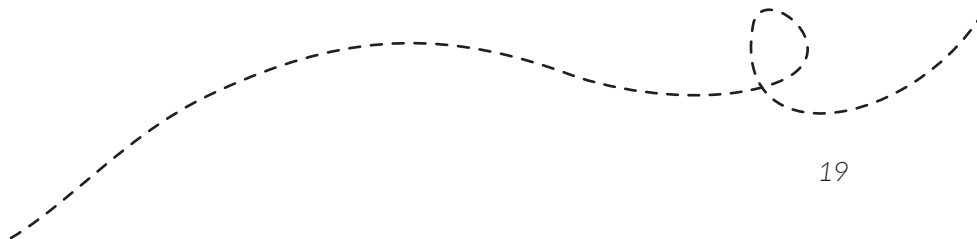
## The Next Generation: Isaac and Rebekah

Biblical authors often sandwich an important idea or story between two similar events. In this case, the bread is the deaths of Abraham and Sarah. But the vital part of the story is the stuffing in between: the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. It is one thing for Sarah to have given birth to an heir but it's another thing to see whether God's blessing will remain on Isaac. Abraham and Sarah are aware that the first important task will be to find Isaac a wife to ensure that the line of descendants continues!

5. Before we dig into the story here, what are all the typical elements of your standard romantic comedy?

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This is a long passage but it's a story full of suspense, coincidences and hidden motives. Read through the story quickly then split into groups and see if you can comic strip the story together. **Leaders, please provide some paper for this task.**

Also, use the map provided over the page to orientate yourself to the servant's travels.



### Comic strip activity

**Group 1:** 24:1-26

**Group 2:** 24:27-51

**Group 3:** 24:52-66

Reflect on the actions and motives of these characters:

#### Abraham's servant

**6.** How would you judge the servant's actions throughout the story?

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**7.** What does that suggest about God's role in all this?

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#### Laban

**8.** Does the story reflect positively or negatively on Laban?

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## Rebekah

**9.** What makes Rebekah a fit wife for Isaac?

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**10.** Reflect on her willingness to leave home and family. Does that remind you of anyone?

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**11.** What do you think of the blessing bestowed upon her in 24:59-60?

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You could argue that the main character of this romance story is not Isaac or Rebekah but Abraham's unnamed servant. His persuasive speech, his loyalty to his master and his determination to fulfil his task in the midst of Laban's questionable motives are exemplary. But the most remarkable thing is his clear dependence on God for success in the task. God is so clearly present with this servant, granting his success on the way. It's no coincidence that Rebekah was right there after he prayed. His first encounter is with a woman of faith – a perfect companion to the promise-bearer that she is to be married to.

The story again reminds us that this is a journey of faith. God's promises will be fulfilled through those who faithfully trust in the God who is sovereign and will not let his promises fail. Even death and generation change will not get in the way.

# At Journey's End



God is clearly watching over the promises through the births, deaths and marriages of these chapters of Genesis. But it also helps us to reflect on the fact that even death could not prevent God's promises in Christ. As Peter preaches,

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*<sup>23</sup> This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. <sup>24</sup> But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. **Acts 2:23-24***

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We now live with the knowledge that God can even raise the dead to keep his promises. And so we have even more reason than the servant to trust God and walk with Him by faith. Like the servant, that relationship of trust is most clearly expressed in prayer.

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*<sup>20</sup> But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, <sup>21</sup> keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. **Jude 20***

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**12.** How does prayer actually help us to 'wait for the mercy of our lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life'?

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13. What role does prayer play in your journey of faith?

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14. How are you going with it at the moment?

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## Pray

In light of what we've seen with the servant's trust in God, pray that we would have the kind of living faith that shows its dependence through daily and personal prayer.

Give thanks that we have a God who keeps His promises through the generations and even through death.

## Upcoming Events

### Soup on Sunday

Following combined service with  
Eatons Hill & North Pine

June 18

Eatons Hill  
Community Hall  
Apex Grove, EATONS HILL

