

Dating and Marriage

“...that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living....” Genesis 24:3

In Genesis 24, Abraham is older now and is doing what most parents do: begin to worry about their grand kids even before they are born. He knows that his days are numbered on earth and he wants to make sure that his son Isaac does not marry a Canaanite, but rather someone from his clan back in the homeland. So, Abraham sends his servant to go and find a woman of character and quality back in Ur—the place God had called Abraham out from. Essentially, Abraham was concerned that his son would marry someone of like faith rather than someone from the area he was living in that did not know or love Yahweh God.

This is great parenting. While we don't arrange marriages in our country (a practice that does have its merits I might add!), Abraham is parenting his son's future by doing a couple of things that are still relevant today.

First, Abraham is thinking about his son's wife and his future progeny. This means that Abraham is not just living out the faith in his own life, but he is investing in the faith of his son. More parents should think about their children's faith and how that spiritual life is expressed in whom they marry. Often in parenting, we think about getting good grades, treating others nicely, eating vegetables, wearing appropriate clothing, and getting enough sleep. And these things are good--they are just incomplete.

Thinking in a larger perspective is a great challenge for parents. Think about your grand kids and your great grandkids. How will they know about Jesus and the work he has done on the cross? How will they know about the love of God found in Christ? What can you do today to assure as much as you are able (children do make their own decisions obviously) that the generations that follow you will turn their hearts to Christ? One key thing is instilling the value of marrying someone of like faith. I think this begins at several levels.

Think about what your values are around dating someone? How old should a boy or girl be to begin dating? I personally think closer to 16 is much more appropriate. Advocate for group activities vs. one on one time. On and on the list might go, but the point is this: are you advocating for righteous dating with your kids? Teach them the value of purity before marriage, only dating someone of like faith, having fun and not getting prematurely intimate at a young age. When they are old enough, challenge and encourage them to remain sexually pure until they are married. Who a teen dates often marks the early experiences for what qualities that teen will look for in a spouse.

Second major truth from Abraham's example: Christian parents should be involved in the blessing of their children's spouse. It is so biblical and important for kids to learn this and for parent's to embrace this. Your blessing matters parents. Help your child prepare for independence and adulthood by instilling in them the value of your blessing. Bless them with

affection as you raise them. Bless them with affirmation when they succeed and grow. Bless them with hope and faith when they step out of the nest into independence.

Just a word to a young person looking to get married: seek a parent's blessing before you make your wedding plans and set everything in motion. Show honor to them by asking for their blessing. If you are a young man seeking to marry, show honor to the girl's parents if at all possible by asking for their blessing before you ask for that special someone's hand in marriage. It might be hard and it might take longer, but the blessing of a parent is often a channel of God's blessing through time (Ephesians 6:2).

It is so critical for parent's to focus on more than just vegetables and good grades. Instill the value of faith in Christ alone through grace alone and then to work hard to assure that your kids never give their hearts to someone who does not embrace those spiritual values too. Is this easy? No. It requires vigilance, prayer, and active involvement from parents. But, it is worth your very best effort.

Prayer: Father, help me to pray for my children's future. Prepare for them a spouse who loves you with their whole heart and reveal them to my child at just the right time. Keep my child pure and innocent until their wedding night and strengthen their faith in steps toward independence.