

A Study in Genesis: Steadfast Love (*hesed*)

Scripture Focus: Genesis 24:1-27, 62-67

Sarah died at 127 years of age (Genesis 23:1-2) and Abraham mourned her death as did Isaac. Abraham's major concern afterward appears to be whom Isaac will marry in order that the covenant made by God to Abraham would be fulfilled through Isaac.

Abraham laid upon the shoulders of his servant, "the oldest in the house," the responsibility of finding a wife for Isaac. Notice the conditions set forth by Abraham. The woman could not be from the Canaanites (v. 3) and Isaac, under no circumstances, was to go with the servant back to the country from which Abraham came to help matters along (vv. 5-9).

- What do you believe is the significance of these two conditions made, very clear to the servant and which required an oath?

The servant obviously understood the importance of the assignment, so much so that he prayed for God's help in very specific fashion. See verses 12-14. Notice the servant prays for "success" in finding a wife for Isaac and he asks God to be faithful in showing "steadfast love" to Abraham.

- How does the servant's prayer strike you, first for the fact that the servant wants to be successful in fulfilling his promise to Abraham in the way that Abraham made clear?
- To what extent should we ask God to make us successful? Are there instances when we should not necessarily ask God to make us successful? Should athletes pray for victories? Should we pray that we successfully find a parking space?

The servant also prays that God's steadfast love (*hesed*) would be shown to Abraham. When Rebekah seems to become the answer to the servant's prayer (and she is), he prays again and gives thanks to the LORD "who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my servant" (v. 26-27). *Hesed* is not merely an emotion or feeling but involves action on behalf of someone who is in need. *Hesed* describes a sense of love and loyalty that inspires merciful and compassionate behavior toward another person.

The word is found in the Old Testament 250 times and expresses an essential part of God's character. The LORD is "abounding in steadfast love." Committed to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to show this steadfast love (*hesed*) to others. It is far more than ordinary kindness and friendship. It's been described as "an inclination of the heart to show amazing grace!" May God help us to do just that.