

Text: Genesis 24:61-67

Title: "Laying the Foundation for a Happy Home" - Parts One and Two

Time: 11/23/08 am; 11/30/08 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: One of the things you learn very quickly as a baseball coach is the importance of the positions of pitcher and catcher. If you do not have talented players at those two positions, you are not going to have the foundation of a successful team.

Well, there are a couple of key positions in the home too, the husband and the wife. I can remember a Sunday School teacher I had growing up named Mr. Goldfus. He was always an example to me of what a dad should be. He had seven kids, and they were all on time to Sunday School every week, even though they lived about a ½ hour away. The Goldfus van always got there before I did, and I only had to walk 50 yards from my backyard.

During the morning service the Goldfus 9 were all lined up in the pew together and reverently attentive. One of the things Mr. Goldfus told us as our Sunday School teacher when I was a kid was that you do not need kids to have a happy home. I remember him saying that kids were in the home only for a short time and that the true essence of the home is the relationship between a husband and his wife.

The structures of happy homes are crumbling all around us today in large measure because this foundational relationship, the relationship between husband and wife, is not what it should be. In our passage this morning, two godly people are laying a foundation for a happy home. The home was far from perfect as we know from our study of Genesis. It had struggles. But it was built on a solid foundation in the relationship that Isaac had with Rebekah. I want us to learn some princi-

ples about laying the foundation for a happy home from our study of the passage this morning by looking again at the critical roles of husband and wife in the home.

I. A godly wife is foundational to a happy home (vv. 61, 64, 67).

Illustration: It has come to be believed that the philosopher Socrates once said, "By all means marry. If you get a good wife, you will become very happy; if you get a bad one, you will become a philosopher--that also is good."

Application: Even the secular world acknowledges the critical importance of the wife to the well-being of the home. We took some time a couple of years ago to look at what the book of Proverbs, the true source of wisdom, says about maintaining a happy home. We saw that of the 35 passages we looked at that touch on a happy home, 11 of these referred to the importance of a godly woman to a happy home, including the twenty-two verse discourse at the end of the book.

Solomon, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, makes clear that "he who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord" (18:22), that "house and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord" (19:14), and that "an excellent wife, [is hard to] find; for her worth is far above jewels?" (31:10).

Rebekah was such a wife, and I think we see three evidences of this in her life from our passage here.

1. Rebekah was willing to follow (v. 61).

Application: Did you notice that verse 61 emphasizes the fact that the servant took Rebekah. Being taken in this way meant that Rebekah had to willingly follow the servant (v. 61a). It turns out that the entire chapter uses this same word repeat-

edly, *being taken*, to describe the experience of Rebekah in this passage (vv. 3, 4, 7, 37, 38, 40, 48, 51, 61, 67). Clearly, to be the wife you need to be you need to be willing to be taken, to be lead away by another. You need to be willing to follow the way Rebekah was.

Did you notice when we read about the taking of Rebekah in verse 7, that Abraham spoke of a similar experience in his own life? Isaac takes Rebekah in Genesis 24 in the same sense that the Lord took Abraham in Genesis 12. Following God was the call of Abraham's life, and following Isaac in this same sense of submission would now become the call of Rebekah's life.

Paul explains this same principle in Eph. 5:22 when he writes, "Wives, be subject to your won husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body."

As Abraham and Paul teach, the relationship of marriage is designed by God to be a picture of His relationship with His people. He takes them and asks them to follow; even so a wife is taken, and it becomes her calling to follow. This is an important part of being a godly woman whose ministry is foundational to a happy home. As we look at the strength of the foundation of our homes, we must ask and answer the question, "Who is following whom?"

2. Rebekah was willing to honor (vv. 64-65).

Illustration: The concept that a wife ought to honor her husband is foreign to a world that models home life around the TV show "Everybody Loves Raymond." Even the world recognizes its own prejudice at times against the idea of honoring Dad.

This past year ABC News carried a story about Fathers' Day cards. They reported the following from the content of those cards: "Fathers sleep a lot, and they snore loudly. When they're awake, they like to fish or golf, but they're comically bad at both. They drink so much beer they're practically alcoholics, and they're complete couch potatoes, always watching television and hogging the remote. At least, that's the less-than-favorable image of Dad on Father's Day greeting cards. It's a striking contrast to the poetic praise often expressed at Mother's Day. Many men say they are tired of the 'put-down' cards and would like some affirmation for a change."

Application: Respect from wife to husband would be a wonderful change in our world, the kind of change that could repair the foundation of a happy home. Honoring authority is rare in our society. Peter speaks of the opportunity that believing wives have of winning their unbelieving husbands to the Lord without a word through their behavior, more specifically "as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior" (1 Pet. 3:1-6).

That passage speaks of the example of holy women of former times like Rebekah. She dismounted her camel, took her veil, and in so doing honored her husband. We do not have camels and veils today, so what does respect for the husband from the wife look like in our context? Well, the pastor I grew up under wrote a book called *Family Fundamentals*, and in it he lists ten practical suggestions for honoring a husband: feed his ego, don't tell his faults to others, seek his guidance, respect his opinions, keep a neat home, sympathize with his trials, keep a meek and quiet spirit, meet his sexual needs, be thankful for what he does, and apologize when necessary. Happy homes need godly wives who are willing to respect their husbands.

3. Rebekah was willing to bring comfort (v. 67).

Application: This passage leaves you with the impression that Isaac and his mother Sarah were very close. Understanding the circumstances of Isaac's birth, one can see how this would be true. And yet we are told here that Rebekah was able to fill that void in Isaac's life, to replace that friendship ("it is not good for man to be alone," Gen. 2:18-25). Wives, you should have no closer friend than your husband this morning. You should be closer to him than your mother, than your sister, than your childhood friend with whom you grew up, and than your kids. Your husband needs to be your best friend. This is how happy homes are made.

Conclusion to Part One: A wife's following, honoring, and friendship are one-half of a solid marriage that is the foundation of a happy home. The lack of these qualities in the life of a wife is tragic for the home, certainly, but even more tragically, the lack of these is damaging to the marriage's testimony to the relationship of Christ and the church. Perhaps there is a wife here this morning who sees her own lack of these qualities, who needs forgiveness, and who wants to change.

The good news of the gospel is that the sin of sinners can be forgiven and washed and even overcome. The perfect husband of His church, the Lord Jesus, died to perfect His bride and save her from her sins. He will do that for any sinful wife willing to repent and trust Him for salvation today.

II. A godly man is foundational to a happy home (vv. 62-63).

Illustration: One of the tragic ironies of the instruction of the book of Proverbs on the family was that God used a man to write these instructions who did not follow what he wrote. He is, of course, David's son Solomon.

The contrast between the teaching of the book of Proverbs on the family and the life of Solomon demonstrates that the book of Proverbs must be God's Word and not merely Solomon's

word. Solomon wrote of the responsibility of a godly man to his home when he wrote, “he who troubles his own house will inherit wind, and the foolish will be servant to the wise heart-ed” (11:29). And yet he was a man who did exactly that, and his legacy was the loss of the ten northern tribes and the downward spiral of a once-great nation toward eventual captivity. It is all downhill after Solomon’s zenith, and it is all downhill because Solomon troubled his home.

Isaac was a better example of the truth of Proverbs well implemented. In our passage he lays the foundation for a happy home in three ways.

1. Isaac was willing to cultivate his fields (v. 62).

Application: Abraham is 140 years old when Isaac marries Rebekah (21:5, 25:20). He died 35 years later (25:7), at which time Isaac inherited his estate (25:5). In the meantime, Isaac had learned to make it on his own in the vicinity of Beerlahairoi (25:11).

What all this indicates is that part of Isaac’s preparation for a home of his own was the development of a discipline that would care for the home financially. A young man and a young woman are not ready for marriage until that young man has demonstrated the willingness and ability pay the bills incurred by a home (Prov. 24:27, 30-34: “Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house. . . . I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth [i.e., one who steals]; and thy want as an armed man”). Isaac’s fields never look like this. He worked hard.

2. Isaac was willing to cultivate his relationship with the Lord (v. 63; 25:21).

Illustration: Pastor Ashbrook, in his book on the family, relates the story of Pierre Loti, a French writer and naval hero of the 19th century: "In his autobiography he tells of reading about some of the Roman Catholic saints of the past. In particular, he read of Simeon Stylites who lived on top of a pillar at Antioch for forty years and thereby gained a great reputation. Emulating his hero he got a tall stool, set it in the kitchen, and announced to his mother and the cook that he would live there for forty years. His mother did not take kindly to the idea and an hour later he recorded in his diary, 'Thus I discovered that it is exceedingly difficult to be a saint while living in your own family'" (25).

Application: It is true that it is exceedingly difficult to be a saint while living in your own family. But Pierre's difficulty begins with his definition of *saint*. It turns out that none of us are able to be the godly men and women we need to be without fostering our relationship with the Lord. We are by nature sinners, not saints. The Lord has to save us from our sins; and He has to give us the grace to love something more than ourselves (see Eph. 5:29, "For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church").

Paul describes what we are unable to do without the Lord's help - refrain from hating our own flesh. But loving our wives instead of our flesh is a critical part of the foundation of a good home. We do not need the power of the Holy Spirit to come home, plopping ourselves in the easy chair, flipping on the TV, and demanding dinner. That all comes quite naturally; we love to love our flesh. But we need the help of the Spirit of God to love our wives the way we love our own flesh, which brings us to our last point. The fruit of the Spirit is love (Gal. 5:22).

3. Isaac was willing to cultivate love for his wife (v. 67).

Illustration: Bible love is the gift of self. One of my favorite illustrations that describes well the willingness of husbands to love their wives describes a man who tells his wife, "Honey, I love you so much I would be willing to take a bullet for you. You just let me know when it is coming."

Application: That obviously does not work. Love is far more than an act of heroics in a time of crisis. It is an ongoing relationship that needs to be cultivated (*he loved her* is stative, something ongoing and continuous). Love is not a puddle that we fall into; it is a command we are called to obey and a skill that we need to develop and improve on over time (see Eph. 5:25-33). Let's notice two ways Isaac demonstrated his love for Rebekah early on here.

(1) Isaac demonstrated his love for Rebekah by keeping her chaste prior to their wedding day. He put Rebekah in Sarah's tent; he did not cart her off to Beerlahairoi with him so that he could try her out for a while.

Illustration: Ray Fowler.org lists the following statistics about couples who live together without marriage:

"Statistically speaking, living together is not a trial of marriage, but rather a training for divorce.

"The number of unmarried couples living together soared 12-fold from 430,000 in 1960 to 5.4 million in 2005.

"More than eight out of ten couples who live together will break up either before the wedding or afterwards in divorce.

"About 45 percent of those who begin cohabiting, do not marry. Another 5-10 percent continue living together and do not marry.

“Couples who do marry after living together are 50% more likely to divorce than those who did not.

“Only 12 percent of couples who have begun their relationship with cohabitation end up with a marriage lasting 10 years or more.”

“A Penn State study reports that even a month’s cohabitation decreases the quality of the couple’s relationship.

“Here are some more statistics relating to the children of cohabiting parents.

“Children of cohabiting parents are ten times more likely to be sexually abused by a stepparent than by a parent.

“Children of cohabiting parents are three times as likely to be expelled from school or to get pregnant as teenagers than children from an intact home with married parents.

“Children of cohabiting parents are five times more apt to live in poverty, and 22 times more likely to be incarcerated.”
[[http://www.rayfowler.org/2008/04/18/statistics-on-living-together-before-marriage/.](http://www.rayfowler.org/2008/04/18/statistics-on-living-together-before-marriage/)]

Clearly, there are consequences for violating God’s design in this regard. Ladies, the man that will not keep you chaste prior to marriage does not love you as he should. Do not be fooled into thinking otherwise.

(2) Isaac demonstrated his love for Rebekah by making her his wife. This is a lifelong commitment.

Whereas Pastor Ashbrook had ten suggestions for wives to honor their husbands, he lists twelve for husbands to love their wives: let your wife know that she is loved, needed, and appreciated; don’t tell her faults to others; listen to her; respect

her opinion and discuss things; respect her concern for the home; consider her emotional nature; take the lead in spiritual things; pray with your wife; give her help with the children; take the lead in family discipline; be thankful for what she does and is; be a happy husband.

Conclusion: Chapter 24 is one of the happiest chapters in the Bible because so much here is going according to God's plan for the home, not man's. God has the same plan for our homes. His plan is designed for our home's happiness. It is intended to provide us with great joy and blessing. Do you have a happy home that is following God's plan? If not, what can you and I do to conform to God's plan rather than insist on our own way?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching