

Genesis 24

Aim of lesson

To show the wisdom of Abraham, the providence of God and the trustworthiness of Eliezer in choosing a wife for Isaac.

Background study

Genesis 15:2; Genesis 23; Proverbs 18:22; Proverbs 19:14.

Study the wedding customs of the time, the route of Eliezer's journey and the importance of wells in village life.

Suggested outline of lesson

Talk to the class about friendship. Discuss what makes a friend, drawing out the value of companionship, trust, interest in the same things, similar ideas and values, and reliability. Friends should be selected with care. Go on to point out how much more important it is that a wife or a husband is carefully chosen.

Abraham was growing old and he knew how important it was that the heir of God's promises should have a good wife who would share his hopes and ideals. He was aware that God would not approve of a Canaanite wife for his son. The local people did not share his faith in the one true God and behaved in ways that were not acceptable. Children will find it interesting and fascinating to learn that it was the parents' duty to choose marriage partners for their sons and daughters. In the absence of Sarah, who was now dead and who was very sadly missed, Abraham felt it incumbent upon him to make arrangements for Isaac to be married. As in all things, Abraham sought God's help and believed that God would help him.

Eliezer

Remind the children that Abraham was a very wealthy man and in command of a number of servants. The chief of these was Eliezer whom Abraham knew to be a trustworthy, God-fearing man. Abraham took him into his confidence and enlisted his support, insisting upon his solemn promise to carry out his wishes. It would appear that the placing of the hand under the thigh made the vow binding. Abraham assured Eliezer that the matter was in God's hands and that he was merely the instrument to accomplish God's will.

At this point in the story, having divulged Abraham's instructions to choose a wife from his family in the land where he used to live, ask the children by way of revision where this might be. Use a map to reinforce the answer. Describe the preparations for the journey, the animals being loaded with provisions and gifts, and then the departure of the caravan of ten camels. The journey would be long and tiring with many overnight stops at villages or oases. Describe Eliezer's arrival, just as the sun was going down outside the city of

Nahor. It was during this cool part of the day that the young women of the city came out to the well to draw water. As he watched the familiar scene, he wondered how he would know which one God had chosen. He prayed for God's guidance and asked for a sign. Ever aware that kindness would be a quality required in the one he was seeking, he realized that he would recognize her in the response he received to his request for refreshment. This surely reveals the profound influence of Abraham upon his servant.

Rebekah

Help the children to picture the scene in their mind's eye and, in describing the meeting, show how Rebekah was not only young and beautiful but kind, generous and alive with enthusiasm. Once again we see the hospitality offered to travellers, in her assurance that he would be welcome in her father's house. Thankfully, Eliezer praised God for blessing his mission. He had been guided to the right woman for she was related to his master (the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor). Narrate the eager recital by Eliezer of the fortunes of his master, and the purpose of his visit. Many questions would be asked and answered, and Bethuel's family would recognize that God's influence was at work. Because of this they had no hesitation in agreeing that Rebekah should go with him.

Relevance to the children's lives

The story shows us that relationships between people are important to God. Many lives have been ruined by bad friendships. What sort of friends should we choose, if we wish to please God? Do we think about the friends we have and ask ourselves whether we have chosen well?

Now focus on Rebekah as she made her own decision to go to Canaan without delay. Stress what it must have been like to leave home, probably for ever, to promise to marry a man she had never seen, and to go and live in a strange land many miles away. Her preparations were hurried, servant girls were chosen to accompany her, and finally at the moment of departure she received the blessing of her fond parents. Contemplate the thoughts that would pass through her mind as she made the journey to Canaan, and ask the class to suggest what things Eliezer would tell her on the way. The story has a romantic and happy ending which the children will enjoy. God had blessed Eliezer in his choice, and the couple in their devotion to each other. However, this marriage which began so well was to undergo severe trials.

Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, thank you for the happy story of Isaac and Rebekah. We know you are interested in our lives, so we pray that you will guide our choice of friends. Amen.

Memory verse

"I am the God of Abraham your father; fear not, for I am with you and will bless you" (Genesis 26:24).