Can We Talk?
Summer Sermon Series:
Love Secrets from Bible Marriages
Genesis 24:62-67

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A wife tells the following story:

Quote: We had made some changes in our lives. My husband had lost 50 pounds and after eight years of being a housewife, I had taken a job in a restaurant. When I returned home after my first day at work, I gave my husband a big hug.

He seemed to cling to me longer than usual. “Did you really miss me that much today, dear?” I asked.

“No,” came the reply. “But you smell so much like pancakes that I hate to let you go.”¹ Unquote.

Can we talk? I want to take a look today at a couple who certainly should have talked, but didn’t.

It is interesting to notice the marriage customs in the ancient world. After his wife Sarah’s death, Abraham realized he needed to find a good wife for his son Isaac. He wanted Isaac to marry someone of faith in the God he worshiped, known in the Hebrew language as “Yahweh”² (YAH-whey). By the way, Saint Paul also emphasized the importance of marriage to those of like faith (2 Corinthians 6:14³).

So Abraham sent his most trusted employee, the manager of his
household, back to his family in Haran to find a suitable wife for Isaac. Although we do not have time today to tell the whole story of how the servant found Rebekah, it is a great story you can read in Genesis chapter 24.

When the servant talked with Rebekah’s family and asked that she return with him to marry Isaac, these people of faith saw God’s hand in this plan. And, when asked, Rebekah agreed to go, a very courageous decision. She would travel over 500 miles to a strange land, marry a man she has never met, and never see her family again. But she did it because she knew it was God’s will for her.

What do you think the servant and Rebekah talked about during the long journey? Of course, Isaac. One commentator did some thinking about Isaac and wrote,

The old servant described him [Isaac] honestly and completely. Isaac was an unassuming, mild-mannered, peace-loving man. He would go to any lengths to avoid a fight (cf. Genesis 26:18-25). He was also a meditative man, not a quick thinker, but rather quiet and reserved. He was not the great man his father was, but he was a good man, with a steadfast faith in God and a sense of divine mission. He knew that through his seed God would bring spiritual blessing to the whole earth (Genesis 26:3-5). He was different from the radiant, quick-witted Rebekah ~ far different.

Quiet and reserved matched with radiant and quick-witted. Yes, sometimes opposites attract, but there must be common ground if this marriage is going to last, don’t you think?

Over the next twenty years or so, they were childless. Some of you understand that heartache. In the ancient world having children was not just important, you could even say it was mandatory, especially for a man as wealthy as Isaac.

Finally, Rebekah conceived and she was carrying twins. Now, we all know that having a baby does not solve problems within a marriage, and can,
in Isaac’s and Rebekah’s marriage it probably made things worse. It seems they had a communication problem.

Rebekah was the bubbly and vivacious one, and Isaac the more reticent one, preferring solitude. Surely she tried to talk with Isaac and surely he tried to communicate, but somewhere along the line it must have become easier to not talk.

Rebekah’s pregnancy was difficult. She cried out to the Lord and the Lord answered her with this prophesy: “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.” (Genesis 25:23, NIV)

Let’s understand what this word from the Lord really meant. The patriarchal blessing always went to the oldest son. In this case, the Lord is telling Rebekah that the blessing will go to the younger son. And as we know, Esau was born before Jacob.

But there is no biblical evidence that Rebekah ever communicated to Isaac this word from the Lord. This was not a minor prophesy, this is the sovereign choice of God Almighty as to who will be the next patriarch of God’s people. And Rebekah evidently remained silent about this.

Had things gotten this bad in their marriage? “Can we talk?” was not a question either of them asked the other, apparently.

Though the boys were twins, they could not have been more different. The Bible tells us, “The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents.” (Genesis 25:27, NIV)

Isaac was drawn to his son Esau. He loved hearing of his outdoor adventures and greatly enjoyed the venison stew his son made for him. Rebekah was drawn to Jacob, who was there with her every day in their home.
All the while, the matter of the patriarchal blessing hung over them. At some point, Isaac would bestow the blessing upon his oldest son, Esau . . . or so he thought. Still there was silence from Rebekah. Surely if she had sat down with him in an earnest conversation and told him what God had said to her, he would have obeyed God. And much deception and lies and heartache could have been avoided.

You probably recall the story of the giving of the blessing. Rebekah and Jacob cooked up a delicious pot of stew to go along with a dark and sinful plan: They were going to mislead and fool Isaac, taking advantage of his poor eyesight and get Isaac to give the blessing to Jacob.

They even went so far as to clothe Jacob in goatskins, because Esau was a hairy man and Isaac would no doubt want to touch him. And so the blessing was given to Jacob.

Esau was furious, vowing to kill his brother Jacob. And thus Rebekah hatched another deception, a plan to send Jacob away to her family in Haran on the pretense of finding a wife.

“Can we talk?” was never said in this household.

Can we learn anything from this marriage?

Trust is essential, of course, in any marriage. And trust cannot thrive where dishonesty and deceit is practiced, as it was in Isaac’s and Rebekah’s home. Love grows best in an atmosphere of honesty and sharing and communication and talking.

I have told this story a number of times, but it remains a great example of marital communication, or lack thereof. As you may know, President Calvin Coolidge was known for his reticence to speak. The story is told that one Sunday Mr. Coolidge went to church in Washington and Mrs. Coolidge stayed home.
When he returned to the White House, his wife asked him, “How was the service, Dear?”

“Fine” was his reply.

Wanting more details, she asked, “Was it a good sermon?”

“Yes” was his single-word response.

Trying again, she inquired, “What was the sermon about?”

“Sin” he said.

Still she probed. “What did the minister say about sin?”

The President replied, “He was again’ it.”

We have a mutual responsibility to communicate with our spouse. Our communication will probably never reach the level of ideal, but we all can improve. And remember Saint Paul’s exhortation to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Some years ago I heard a minister tell this story on a radio broadcast. He and his wife were driving along a rural highway and she was pouring her heart out to him about a very serious situation she was facing. As he glanced over to look at her while she was talking, he looked past her and spotted a deer out in the field.

Immediately, his mind was elsewhere. You see, this minister was an avid bowhunter – maybe too avid. As he looked at that deer, a whole fantasy took shape in his mind, as he saw himself pulling back the bowstring and firing an arrow at the deer.

When he snapped back to reality, he once again heard his wife speaking,
still pouring out her heart. And right then he knew he had to make some changes. While there is absolutely nothing wrong with his passion for bowhunting, he had let his hobby interfere with his duty to listen to his beloved wife.

I appreciated that story and his willingness to admit his error and then correct it.

Men, let’s do better. I know that talking does not come naturally to most of us. But we need to share. Wives, be patient with us and encourage us. We need help with this thing of communication and we will work on it because it is the right thing to do, as commanded by God himself.

To you who are not married and who hope to marry some day, I say take full advantage of the period we used to call “courting”, a time of dating and spending time with each other and of learning about each other. Don’t be in a hurry and don’t act in haste. Pray, asking God’s wisdom and direction and then obey what God tells you to do.

Believe the Gospel. Plain and simple. Believe in Christ who has made it possible for us to stand in God’s presence, pronounced not guilty of all sin.

Let us pray:

Our Father, bless all marriages. May we communicate with each other. May we share our hopes and dreams and even our fears. We thank You for our spouses and our children and grandchildren, who make our lives rich and full. May we be a family of faith in You, and may Your Holy Spirit rule in our hearts and in our marriages so that we are truly one in serving You. We pray this in our Saviour’s name, even Christ the Lord, Amen.

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For further study, Mark Fountain has an excellent short article, “YHWH”, in Holman Bible Dictionary, Edited by Trent C. Butler, www.studylight.org/dictionaries/hbd/view.cgi?n=6489, c. 1991.

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”

Haran is closely identified with Harran, now a village of Sanliurfa, Turkey. Since the 1950s, archeological excavations of Harran have been conducted, which have yielded insufficient discoveries about the site’s pre-medieval history or of its Patriarchal era.” www.wikipedia.org.


I have known this story for many years and have told it over and over. Apparently it is apocryphal, according to the website www.calvincoolidge.us/humor.html. President Coolidge is quoted as saying that “he had heard that story many times and that it would be funnier if it were true.”