

Faith and Marriage – Part 1

Genesis 24

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

Will you take your Bible, loved ones, and turn to Genesis 24:1, "Abraham was old and well advanced in years." He must have really been about 137 by now because Sara his wife had just died and she was 127 years old. So Abraham was old and well advanced in years. "The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." We knew this situation about 62 years before this when he was 75 and he was an immigrant from Hiram. We knew that God had blessed him in all things because we had watched him from a nobody, to being regarded as a great prince with all kinds of prosperity and riches. God blessed him in all things not because Abraham had never made a mistake. We have observed him making mistakes.

Not because he had never made an error. We have seen his life had many errors in it. Not even because he had not sunk back into self trust. We saw him do that remember in connection with those two kings when he lied about Sara his wife out of fear of his own security. God blessed him in all things because Abraham had determined that he would live his life in trusting in God and not in the world or people to give him what he needed. That's why God blessed him in all things.

There is an immense difference, loved ones, between the way faith and the way of sight. There is an immense difference between the way of faith in God for all that you need in this life and in of way faith in your circumstances or faith in other people or faith in things. Kirkegaard knew that there was an absolute break between the one way and the other. That's one of the things that he did for us. Kirkegaard emphasized the way of faith has nothing to do with the way of sight. The way of faith in God for all of your needs has nothing to do with the way of faith in men or faith in circumstances or faith in things. The two are absolutely different. Part of the difficulty that we have in Christendom today is that we have created a pseudo faith. I kind of hybrid faith that we express to each other as being the scriptural faith but it isn't really. So let's just clarify what we mean when we say that Abraham lived by faith in God.

Loved ones, it means that you believe that God has foreseen everything that will occur in your life, everything. He has foreknown it all. He has foreknown every difficulty you're going to have with the car this week. He has foreseen every problem you're going to have with your loved one at home. He has foreseen every difficulty you're going to have with your job. He foreknows all the problems that you'll have with your finances. He has foreseen them all. Faith, living by faith in God means that you believe that.

Now where do we get that? We get it, loved ones, from Romans; a well known verse that follows a verse that is even better known by so many of us. Its Romans 8:28 is the very well known verse but the one we are referring to is the one after that Romans 8:29. Romans 8:28 is: "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him." Romans 8:29 is the verse that states plainly that God has foreknown everything. "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined." You might remember when we were dealing with that in Romans it means predestined, "proaritsso" is the Greek word. He also predestined to become formed to the image of the son. For those who he foreknew God has foreknown everything that would happen to us. Yet he does not make it happen. It happens through our own free will. God has read us thoroughly. He knows the end from the beginning.

So believing in God and living by faith in him, first of all believes that he has foreknown

everything that will happen in our lives. Then that he has taken all those evils in you; your selfishness, your self pity, your anxiety, your self esteem, self deification, all the evil in you, your irritability, your bad temper, anger, all your evil in your circumstances, all things that will go wrong. The things that the falling world calls Murphy's Law, it is virtually a law because the world is falling and it's dominated by the prince of this world and all kinds of things will go wrong this coming week. God has taken all those wrong things in your circumstances and he's taken all the evil in other people, all the evil in people who will try to undermine you or try to destroy you this week. He has put all that evil in his Son and he has destroyed it there.

That is that well known verse that, I make no apology for asking you to look at it if you don't know it by heart, it's Galatians 6:14. "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world." That's it. The world, the cosmos, this whole world's system of circumstances and things and the people that aren't working right; God has put them all into his Son. That mighty death that took place in eternity and was manifested in history here in Calvary; God has destroyed all those things in him. Faith is believing that and believing that God has done that. Then acting as his Holy Spirit guides you so that he may manifest that victory here on earth. It means you don't tackle those things as if you have to strangle them to death by your own power or ability. By your own cleverness this week you have to hack your way through the massive circumstances that are falling wrongly for you. By your own wits you have to overcome the people who are trying to take you down this week. It means believing that God has already done that in Jesus and thanking him for it and resting in that, then listening to the Holy Spirit as he guides you to do things, through which or even apart from which, he will manifest that victory in your life.

Now the way of sight, the way that the world deals with the evils in itself and its circumstances and the things and people it meets is entirely different. The world sees that those things are there and it has to manipulate and suppress and bend those things by its own wits, power and ability. So the children of this world look forward to this week and know that all kinds of things will go wrong.

All kinds of circumstances will fall out badly for them. All kinds of problems will occur in their finances, with their automobiles, homes, relatives, colleagues at work. All kinds of disasters and the world looks forward to that as a mighty burden it has to tackle by its own cleverness, wits, knowledge of good and evil and shrewdness. That's the way of sight. That's the way of death. The other is a way of life. The other sees all those things as occurring because of a lie of Satan. That all those things still have power in them to destroy you. We see that that is a lie and the sting has been taken out of those things. They're real, you see. Well the Christian Scientist is in error, he says they're not real. He says the sickness isn't real. He says the financial problem isn't real and of course it's real. It results from a lie that it has not been destroyed and completely renewed and recreated in Jesus. So it's like a mirage on the desert. The moment you come up to it, it's gone. Those things are gone with one little word; it will fell him -- that word is Jesus. The moment you believe that God has destroyed those on in Christ, that moment their power ceases and fades. Once the elemental spirits that lie behind them and create their appearance of reality are gone then the thing itself falls before you. In fact often you'll find the thing is apparently still there but it's actually it hasn't brought about the result that you feared it would in your life. That's the way of faith.

Now Christendom has invented a third way, a kind of pseudo faith, or hybrid faith. This is the position that believes that God has crucified the world in his Son Jesus. Oh yes, we believe that.

We believe that all evil is in ourselves and in our circumstances and in other people have been destroyed. We believe that. When it comes to our own behavior, when it comes to our own action, when it comes to the imagination of our own minds we say 'yeah but we actually overcome them the same way as the children of the world' by our own cleverness and shrewdness. It's alright, you can pray about these things but what you really need to do is act and use the same weapons as the world does. It's really up to you. Sure, sure it's right that they've been crucified in Christ. We believe that but actually the victory is by us overcoming these through our own abilities and cleverness. Of course all kinds of justifications for this view are shared. 'Well, God helps those who help themselves.' After all God helps those who help themselves. You can't sit around praying. You can't just stand around doing nothing. That way of believing is a passive way.

Of course the real reason of that pseudo faith is not that there is any truth in it because the way of faith is nothing like a passive way. The way of faith is full of actions. The only thing is the actions are based on an absolute confidence that Christ has already destroyed these powers and the actions are the things that the Holy Spirit tells us to do. Like Moses striking the rock and the water comes out. Like the men walking around Jericho and the walls fall down. It may have no apparent relationship that is direct cause and effect to the problems but it is things that the Holy Spirit guides us to do and it fills our life with actions but they are actions guided by the Holy Spirit. So it isn't really true that it's a life of passivity. The real reason for this pseudo faith usually is that the self does not want to accept its death in Christ. It wants to retain its own freedom to do what it wants. So it cannot therefore believe that the world has been crucified in Christ. So Christendom is filled today with that pseudo faith. It's believing in your head that God has dealt with the evils in Christ but really when it comes down to everyday action; behave like the children of this world. Use your own shrewdness and cleverness, worry your way through it, fake your way through it and manipulate your way into victory.

Loved ones, Abraham walked the way of faith. It's an entirely different way. That's why God prospered him in all things. What we're coming to now is a very relevant issue where he dealt by faith in God alone. You'll see it in Genesis 24:2, "And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his house who had charge of all that he had. 'Put your hand under my thigh and I will make you swear by the Lord the God in heaven and of the earth that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell but will go to my country and to my kindred and take a wife for my son Isaac.'" It was crucial that that happened, of course. It was crucial and important that Isaac found a wife from among his father's people and not from the Canaanites who would eventually be defeated and driven out by the Israelites.

It's equally vital for everyone who is a child of the father of all that believe that they too take a wife or a husband from among the spiritual sons of our father Abraham. It's vital in other words that we are not unequally yoked. Those of us who are married know that it is vital that in your life partner you have a heart and a spirit that is like your own. Marriage is difficult enough and is enough of a workout without differing on such a basic thing as belief in God. So many of us will testify to the fact that it's not just a matter of persuading yourself. Abraham was very definite. He said I want you to swear to me, probably to Eliezer, the one who was to be his heir. He said I want you to swear to me that you won't take anybody, any woman from the Canaanites but you'll go back to my own country and get someone from there. It's vital for us to be as definite as that. Many of us fail in faith at that point. We say well she goes to church. Well he goes to church. He's really an enthusiastic achiever. He's read a lot more than me or she believes in the victorious life, you know. We know fine well in our hearts of hearts that they don't really stand in the same place as we do in regard to living by faith. So it's vital loved ones that you be as definite as

Abraham is.

That's where many of us begin to falter in faith; we kind of hedge. What Abraham did was he looked at the situation which was pretty impossible. He was surrounded by these Canaanites and yet he walked by faith in God and not in circumstances. Faith in God and not in the people he saw around him. So often we walk constantly by sight. Well I'm not meeting the kind of girl. I'm not meeting the kind of guy. It's the same kind of situation I'm in, how could you? So I better make do with what I can see. That's by sight and it will bring death and disaster to you. Walking by faith is walking the same way as Abraham did. I want no one as my wife or husband but someone who is a child of the Father of all them who believe. Who walks by faith themselves and that's what Abraham said to his servant.

In verse 5 there's a very good lesson for all of us. "The servant said to him perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?" I don't know how many of us do that. Lord I see the first step I should take here in this life of faith but what if, and we ask the what if questions. That's why I thought it was so good; it must be John wasn't it, from Mexico that puts these pieces, I don't know. The piece in the bulletin, "The Good Confession" [written by Watchman Nee] was a couple of Sunday's ago It seems to say the same thing. "Don't have a double confession so that one moment you confess yes he heard my prayer I am healed or I will get the money and then begin to question how it is going to come and what you ought to do to get it. You're latter confession destroys the first."

You see that's what was happening. Abraham said go and take someone from my country as a wife for my son and the servant said but what if she won't come? So often that is what we are doing. We receive a command from God and we go out in faith but we come back round behind our faith and we say but what if this will happen, or this won't happen. Do you see that this is not faith, it's fear. God hasn't asked us to tackle that yet. God's word to us always is walk on; walk on into the river and when you walk into the river then you'll see my power but don't stand back out here out of the river and want to see my power. Don't start asking what will happen if the river doesn't move back, you'll drown there's no question. You better just face that, it's me or nothing.

So often we get into the position we want to hedge our bets and our faith drains away, drains right away from us. So often we miss great achievements that God has for us in our lives because we hear the word of faith and we move out on it but then our little minds come round the back like this servant and say what if, what if she won't come or what if it won't work out. Immediately if you ever can say if that happens I'll do this then you're on your own. It's your own plan. It's your own power because God will only help those who can see that there's no help but in him at all.

Remember Fenelon's word, we depend on God for everything but we count on him for nothing. We depend on God for everything. We depend on him for our breath, our life, everything around us, but in actual life around us we so often count on him in nothing, or count on him for nothing. That's the situation we get ourselves into. When God guides us to do something and then Satan puts into our mind 'but what if you come up against this difficulty,' we should stay clear of that one. We should see the old flames of Satan licking towards us, that old dragon. Stand back and say I wouldn't touch it with a 40 foot pole.

So often we get caught up into it and say what if, oh well, that's right, I must think of 'what if'. Immediately we say the "what if", we are saying 'yeah, Lord we believe but we don't believe. We better provide a way of escape just in case you fail. That's not faith. Faith is all or nothing.

It's all or nothing and Abraham helps us and answers really interestingly the way that piece goes in the bulletin. It says you're later confession destroys the first. You begin to question how the money's going to come, I mean if you can work out how God's going to do it for you then you don't need God. Just trust him and leave him with that problem and go on your way rejoicing. If you start asking how he's going to do your later confession destroys the first. A wrong confession destroys prayer and destroys faith. Don't talk about sickness and your problems. Never talk about failure and then talk about the Word -- its absolute integrity and of your utter confidence in it, of your ability to act on it and hold fast to your confession of its truthfulness. That's really what Abraham does so well.

Verse 5, "The servant said to him, perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?" Abraham was on the spot. So often you and I are on the spot and we don't realize it. I don't know how often you and I have given the game away. We had spoken a word of unbelief at that point for all kinds of reasons; you know how we do it. We say well the other person doesn't really understand. Well we ought to explain to them, we ought to rationalize it. We say they are not at the same place as we are. We justify giving away our faith and losing it and letting it drain away. When somebody asks us a "what if" question we should stand steady. We have no other answer, no other way. If God doesn't come through I think we're finished but he will come through. Instead of that we think we don't want him to think faith is stupid. Actually faith is pretty stupid, unless God exists and then it's not stupid. If you're a person that's not sure he exists then it is stupid, but we try and we explain it somehow and we say, if this happens and this happens, then it won't be so bad to do this. Then we throw the whole thing away.

Abraham was so good when the servant said that in verse 5 "perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I then take your son back to land from which you came?" Abraham said to him, "See to it that you do not take my son back there. The Lord, the God of heaven who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your descendants I will give this land.'" See all the things that God said to me that's what he answers, that's how he answers. That's fair enough. You may look pretty dumb. You may look stupid but you'll be keeping the faith. The Lord the God of heaven who took me from my father's house and land of my birth and has done all these things in the past, "who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your descendants I'll give this land', he will send his angel before you. And you shall take a wife for my son from there. But if the woman is not willing to follow you then you will be free from this oath of mine, only you must not take my son back there." So you must stay with what I do. There's no other answer. "So the servant put his hand on the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning this matter."

It might be good, loved ones, to be really honest with God about our own faith and the positions of faith that we take and to make sure that we don't give away with one hand what we have won with hard prayer with the other. Don't give away your faith in that sense. Don't give away the faith position that you have through a compromised comment of some kind. You might be like me I thought for a long time, my words, they were just words. If you could get over the embarrassing moment in the conversation it would get us onto something more maybe that would lead the person to Jesus. You're words are important. Your words speak forth your spirit. You can lose your whole faith by making a light, casual comment. You're either living by faith that God has dealt with the evils in your circumstances or your living by faith in your own ability to destroy those evils. It's either one or the other. There is no compromise possible.

Then you remember what happened in verse 10. "Then the servant took ten of his masters camels and departed taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, the city of Nahor. And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening; the time when women go out to draw water. And he said, 'Oh Lord, God of master of Abraham grant me success today, I pray thee, and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. Behold I am standing by the spring of water and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Let the maiden to whom I shall say, "Pray let down your jar that I may drink," and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels' -- let her be the one who thou has appointed for thy servant Isaac. By this I shall know that thou hast shown steadfast love to my master.'" It may be good to comment briefly that he didn't just make that up out of his own head. He obviously prayed to God, "Oh Lord God of master Abraham grant me success" and spent time before the Father and the Father guided him about this fleece. I think a lot of us just think it's a matter of making up a fleece. Well, God is not involved in that kind of game. He guides you and shows you. This is what the servant was led to say. Of course the heart of it is God you choose a wife for Isaac because I am not wise enough. Then Abraham obviously felt the same. Isaac himself trusted his father and the servant's judgment. Then they gave it to God.

In all things God's choice is all that matters but especially in that whole business of marriage, loved ones. Only God knows the person he has destined for you and he has chosen a person for you. No it's not a matter of anyone will do or many will do. God does not, remember Einstein says God does not rule the universe by the throw of the dice and if he doesn't run the universe like that he certainly doesn't run your life like that. You are a dear child of his and he has put you here with a careful plan for your life. One of the most important parts of that plan is for the person he has or has not for you to marry. It's equally important that you find out which ever answer it is because if you marry and God doesn't want you to marry, you'll be in as much trouble. So it's vital to get God's mind.

You know we have talked about this in past years. Our method is so foolish, childish and ridiculous that it just wants to make you cry and our society cries to the tune of 50% of marriages ending up in divorce day by day. Our method is watching all the girls go by. It's so dumb. We watch for a good looking girl and we think well she would be fun in bed and so we start making tracks to her. It's the same with the guy. You look for the good looking guy and you think he would be nice to be married to. We start tracking out a courtship. Human beings being human beings and appealing first to the old physical part of this, the rest of the personality has no chance. From the beginning you are doomed to end up in a decision that is based wholly on sexual attraction or on physical attraction. That has nothing to do with what is needed in a marriage as the years go by.

If it's not the big football player or the cheerleader we go for then it's a good provider. The girl looks for a good provider. She wants someone who is a good provider for her and her children; someone who will hold a steady job down and keep me. It's so sad isn't it that God's princes and princesses should reduce life to such a low level. I look for a good provider; someone who can hold down a job and can provide for me and the children. So we go for that. Then as the years pass we get more and more desperate and look at anybody as long as it's somebody that will keep us company. I don't want to be alone when I grow old. I don't want to have to close my own eyes when I die. I want somebody who will be there when nobody else will be there. I want somebody who will think of me as just there's. I want somebody who will give special love to me and give some sense of importance or make me feel that I matter to somebody.

Loved ones, it's all so pathetic. Yet you know our own hearts cry because who of us have not been

trained to go that way. To choose a mate by their physical attractiveness, their usefulness economically to us, by the happiness they might give us or the security they might give us. So we start looking to a human being as an idol for the things that only God can give us. Of course as the years pass by that's exactly what we find. We find no man or woman can give us security, happiness, or make us feel important. They will never make us feel important enough. They never give us enough happiness. We always want a little more happiness than they are prepared to give us. They never give us absolute security because they can't deal with cancer and they can't deal with recession.

So many of us marry for all those wrong reasons and as the years go on we get less and less satisfied with our mates because we are looking to them for things that only God can give us. We are treating them as idols and demanding from them joy and exhilaration, happiness and sense of eternity that only God can give us. We demand from them security and provision for all our needs that only God can give us. We demand from them worship almost that no human being is prepared to give to another one. So many of us enter into the whole agony of a marriage that begins to deteriorate as we look to the other person for something that they were never meant to give us.

Of course the purpose of marriage is entirely different from that. That's why it's vital that you allow God to choose your mate for you. Could I encourage you as I encouraged you years ago that the Bible states very plainly that to some of us is given the gift of celibacy and it is a gift? The idea of the old unmarried spinster or unmarried man is just not scriptural. God's will for us as a body is that we will live so close to each other here in this body and in homes throughout the world that we will live as husbands and wives to each other; that you will not fear or need anybody to close your eyes, we will be there. Some of us will be there. Some of us will love you as the brothers love the sisters in London and as the sisters love the brothers in London. They aren't married to each other but I can tell you it's a home. It's a family.

In fact it's more of a family than many of the married relationships that I have seen. That's God's will for us. That you don't marry in order to have company. You don't marry to get someone to love you. That's foolishness. That's something that God gives us directly from himself and through the body and through the brothers and sisters in Jesus. You only marry when God guides you and tells you to marry. He tells you to marry for definite reasons. If he doesn't tell you to marry then you had better stay single because there are great things that God needs single people to achieve. I didn't know all the way God was leading us when he guided us not to have children but I think it would have been terrible if we would have had children. I don't see how the child would have had a chance with the kind of life my wife and I have lived over these years.

So God will often guide you not to marry for the same reason because he will have some precious work for you to do that you can't do married. For God's sake, and Jesus' sake and your own sake and the sake of the poor person that you would enslave if you married the wrong one. Stay single if God wants you to be single. Please help us restore dignity to singleness and restore dignity to not having children. Restore dignity to marriage because marriage is not dignity today. Everybody says everybody is to be married. Everybody married ought to have children and there's no dignity to it. It's like a run of the mill thing that everybody does. Instead it's a plan that everybody has that's different for every one of us. So I encourage you please, please, please stay out of the fear that mothers, grandparents and relatives will instill into you. That's not right. No, you won't be lonely? No, you won't need someone to take care of you when you grow old? No, we will be there. Yes, we will be together. Yes if they say that's alright until the time. No, you can see it's working now. It's working in London. It's working in Guadalajara. It will work more and more. It's the only way God's people are meant to live. Don't loved ones; don't marry unless God clearly tells

you that you are to marry. Then he will lead you to the person.

Rather than try and finish this chapter tonight I should mention that you don't need to help God out. You don't need to join the choir because of the nice looking girls in the choir. You don't need to do that. That's not faith. You don't need to manipulate a little. You don't need to join that kind of pseudo faith brigade. You trust God and do with all your heart what he is giving you to do and he will lead you to the person. There are endless stories of dear men and women who went to Africa and left a loved one behind whom they thought they should marry but they gave that over to God. Years later those two people met on a mission field somewhere else in the world.

There are dozens of stories that shows God is able to bring the right person into your life at the right time. He will faithfully do it. What you need to do is leave that in the Father's hands. If you say to me, does that mean should we not pray about it? Well, God's pretty slick and he has a fair idea of what you need in that regard. He has a fair idea that it's on your mind. If too many of us pray and pray about it and really we're trying to pray some guy or girl into it. That brings about the same error as if we chose them ourselves. No, you don't need to pray for the guy or girl. It's too easy for that to be psychic or soulish power that can persuade the person. They not why they ought to do this thing; no, rest in God, relax in him. Say, "Father, if you want me to never be married, I'm delighted to do what you have given me to do. If you want me to be married, Lord, I leave that in your hands." It is so beautiful because then you can engage in ordinary relationships with us here. You can enjoy relationships with all of us and we can enjoy relationships with you.

Then if you say to me how will I know? God's Holy Spirit is designated by the Father to make that clear to you and to make it clear to the other person. He will do that and that's what one of the marks of it, isn't it? Many of us would say that. One of the marks of God's choice is that it's a mutual conviction that comes from both of the hearts. One doesn't need to manipulate the other into it we just both gradually know. We just sense this is right. God means us to be together. One of the marks that it also brings is a great relaxation -- a great freedom from having to get this thing through fast or having to work to arrange this so that it goes at the right time, just a great restfulness in God so that he will bring it about in his own good time.

Maybe I should say one little word to those of us who have struggled through some marriages and have really found ourselves on the wrong end of it and now find ourselves divorced and wondering. Loved ones, I would want to be very sure before I go at it again. I just would. There is so much to do in God's world. There's so much for us to achieve together. It is so uncertain from scripture whether re-marriage is really scriptural. It is so uncertain. It is far safer to abide well on the right side of the scripture than on the doubtful side. So even though different people interpret it differently, there are those of you who have been through the mill and have come out and are trying to gather yourself together -- I would want to be very sure that God wanted me to marry before I went at it again. I would say, "Lord, that's good. I have experienced it once and it wasn't your plan for me so, Lord, what do you want me to do with my life?"

Now, loved ones, if there is any need here in our world it is the restoration of celibacy to some place of dignity and some place of the great achievements. You only have to look around at the world and see the great achievements that single people have brought about for God. Undoubtedly, that's his plan for many of us and we should be willing and rejoice in it.

So I would encourage you to see that there is only one way to find a marriage partner and that's to trust God with that and leave it secure in his hands. I would encourage all of you whoever talk

about these things to talk with dignity and talk in faith. I would talk in faith. I wouldn't help Satan by allowing the conversation to drag into that level where we start talking about this guy's nice or that girl's nice. I wouldn't descend to that livestock level where you're estimating or evaluating the talent. I would keep the relationship that we have with each other and that place in dignity that we have in Jesus. I would trust him. When the fears come up and your Mom says don't you think you're getting around that age and other's make comments, I would stand with Abraham which is standing with Jesus and you'll finally be standing with Jesus anyway. I would stand there and say the Lord will provide for me what I need. When they get the little knife in you and say, "Yeah but you have to help the Lord." You say, "No, I know a thing or two from scripture and I don't think I have to help the Lord. I think the Lord made the world without my help and I think he's well able to provide a partner for me without my help." Stand steady and firm. If you do, loved ones, the Father will be faithful. He will do for you what he did for Abraham and Isaac. In the next study we'll look at marriage. The marriage that many of us have gotten ourselves into and talk a little about God's reason's for marriage and how to get from where we are into his plan.

Let us pray.

Dear Father, we thank you for the way of faith. We thank you, Lord, that all is ready. All is prepared. You haven't sent us down into this complex world to sort our way through it as best we can. You're kinder to us than that, Lord. You know our minds are not up to it. You know we cannot manipulate and govern the world. You alone can govern the world. So, Father, we thank you that you have provided the answer to every evil in our circumstances, ourselves and other people and the things around us. You have provided that answer in Jesus and we need not fear. We can walk into this week with no fear with absolute confidence that you have taken the sting out of everything.

So, Lord, we know you'll have things for us to do as you had Moses and the others. Lord, we know there will be things that the Holy Spirit tells us to do. Not things that we'll have to work out by our own wit or manipulative powers. Then, Father, we thank you that this applies most of all to this whole subject of marriage and in finding the right marriage partner. Lord, we leave that in your dear hands. You have the person for us. If you haven't then we know that you have a life for us that will work better alone.

Father, we thank you. Thank you that you have planned everything perfectly and we can rest and trust in you. Lord, not even our mothers or fathers know us as you do. You know what is best and most fulfilling for us. Lord, we rest in that. Thank you that you do all things well.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each of us. Amen.