

What Is Holding You Back?

Do You Have the Champion Qualities of Eliezer?

My favorite sports team growing up was the Oakland Raiders. I'm not sure why I loved them so much as I never played organized football. It may have been that as a child, they were the only team from Oakland that was always on TV. Perhaps it was the wild characters on the team. Nonetheless, I was going to college in Missouri when the Raiders played in the Super Bowl. No one at my college was a fan of the Raiders as Missouri was the home of the biggest rivals the Raiders had. I sat in the dormitory living area where the TV was and watched the Raiders demolish the Minnesota Vikings. My screaming had to have been heard on the third floor of the dormitory. Every once in a while someone would come in and watch the game with me for a bit but it was mostly just me cheering on the Raiders. I realize that I was not the only one yelling and clapping as the Raiders made big play after big play but on that campus, I was. It was as if the Raiders didn't exist there, weren't achieving a great feat. Most champions are never recognized, are ignored by the masses and despite their heroics, no one knows who they are. For the next several weeks we are going to uncover some obscure champions from the Bible you should get to know. The value of their exploits deserves to be celebrated and discussed. Eliezer is someone you might not know by name, but he played a major role in the history of Christianity. He will be the basis for understanding today's big Idea which is, "With God as the one empowering your life and dreams, there should be no quit in you".

In the passage which describes his great deed, Eliezer is known only as a servant of Abraham. We really cannot be certain his name actually is Eliezer. We are just assuming that the servant Abraham thought would inherit his riches when he passed away was this same guy. **But Abram said, "O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"** (Genesis 15: 2 NIV) Genesis 24, where his story is told simply refers to him by the rather anonymous moniker, "servant". After Sarah, the mother of Isaac died, Abraham Isaac's father decided he wanted to locate a god-fearing wife for his son. The son was after all thirty-seven. Abraham brought in his servant and gave him what we now know was a monumental assignment. **He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh. I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac."** (Genesis 24:2-4 NIV) The choice of a wife for Isaac had eternal ramifications. The servant would be choosing who would be in the line, not only of the nation of Israel but more importantly for the Messiah, the Savior of the world. He may not have known at that point just what a huge responsibility this was for the world. I am guessing, choosing a wife for your master's son was big enough for him as it was.

Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim and made his way to the town of Nahor. (Genesis 24:10 NIV) This was no small order. The servant, already an old man, would have to travel over six hundred miles on foot or by donkey to reach the place where Abraham's relatives lived. Twenty or more days walking or riding gives you plenty of time to think. He may have had a lot to ponder but up at the top of the list was the strategy for finding a girl for Isaac. Around and around in his head different strategies were considered and discarded. He had plenty of rich gifts to give to whatever young lady he might offer the opportunity to be the bride of someone she did not know at all. Success and failure hung in the balance as the servant trudged along. It was probably the furthest he ever traveled but each day inched along as an eternity of wild, distracted thinking. Now consider this. The chief servant, as he trudged along with other servants of Abraham, was overseeing a fortune in jewelry. What would have kept him and the others from just absconding with the treasure and never bothering to make the long journey at all? Perhaps they each had family back home. Maybe there was a promise of a rich reward if they came back with a bride for Isaac. But that still would have been a huge temptation for any man to overcome. The servant was faithful to his word and kept plodding down the path God set for him.

It must have been quite a relief for the servant to finally make it safely to Nahor with all his body parts intact and the fortune safely in tow. But now came the Super Bowl for him, the World Cup. All that time and effort and planning was about to come down to one encounter, one particular meeting. His most important moment was before him. There was no wild crowd cheering him on in his next move, no great audience on pins and needles eagerly awaiting the outcome. Just the servant and his small cadre of co-workers who came along to protect the jewelry and the elderly

servant. And of course a teenage girl somewhere. He had one play to make. Pick the correct wife for his master's son and somehow convince her to go back six hundred miles and marry him. Easy.

We know nothing else about what this servant did the rest of his life but this; how he handled himself at a watering hole out in the middle of nowhere. The servant had one strategy that he settled in his mind for winning his Super Bowl. Pray to the same God his master Abraham worshipped. **Then he prayed, "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too' — let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master."** (Genesis 24:12-14 NIV) Don't get caught up in the mechanics of his plan. It is fascinating and much like the way Gideon selected his men by how they drank from a spring, but this was all God from beginning to end. If God did not have a bride arranged, the servant was sunk, and team Abraham/Isaac would lose. Everything depended on God.

There is a comical aspect to this historical account. Now it would seem that the servant was just going to close his eyes and go up to some random young lady and make his plug. He of course was much more decided than that. **Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor. The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again. The servant hurried to meet her and said, "Please give me a little water from your jar."** (Genesis 24:15-17 NIV) Did you catch that? The servant "hurried" to meet the beauty queen that arrived, the girl who was "very beautiful". He picked out the most lovely maiden at the well to "shoot his shot". Every work of God that involves the mass of humanity is a supernatural co-mingling of human will and supernatural working. It is always dirt and Spirit that join together, heaven and earth in conjunction. Some ask, "Did you decide to do that?" "Yes." "Did God have you do it?" "Yes". Why is Christ crucified so hard for the masses to comprehend? It is the axiom of God's activity. It is not just God. It is not just human. It is God in the flesh and bones of an actual person. Did God send Rebekah to the well? Of course He did. Did the servant pick out the most beautiful girl there to approach? Yes. God chooses to work through His people to accomplish what He has in mind. This time it was the servant. Next it is you...if you are paying attention to God.

The girl turned out to be Rebekah, the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor. Rebekah did all that the servant prayed the particular young woman who was to marry Isaac would do. After the servant met Rebekah's family and passed along extravagant gifts to Rebekah and her family members, the servant made his pitch. Everything so far had gone according to plan. Rebekah had offered to water the camels as well as give the servant a drink. Now they were all at Rebekah's home and after the servant recounted his prayer and the commission his master had given him to find a wife for his son, the rich and successful Isaac, (which the servant made clear), the servant waited to hear the response. Did he score a touchdown, kick the goal, make the basket, get the putt in the cup? Did he win? There was no need for an instant replay. Rebekah's father and brother were quick to respond. **Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the Lord; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has directed."** (Genesis 24:50-51 NIV)

Game over...well not quite yet. Mom wanted ten more days with her daughter before she would let Rebekah go. **But her brother and her mother replied, "Let the girl remain with us ten days or so; then you may go."** (Genesis 24: 55 NIV) How many of us have been there? Just when it seems you've done it, something comes up and delays everything, perhaps even wrecking your plan altogether. The servant could have passively accepted this and just waited to see if Rebekah really would leave and become Isaac's wife or fail in his pledge to Abraham. Success and failure often hangs in the balance like this. Keep in mind the servant's take on what he was doing. It was the Lord's work and God's power was behind his every move. His reply to mom was audacious yet just what you would expect from someone whose confidence was in God. **But he said to them, "Do not detain me, now that the Lord has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master."** (Genesis 24: 56 NIV) The next day Rebekah left with the servant. There is a power that those who walk with God possess that cannot be tamed by opposition, hardship, or disdain. When you have been born again, you have the might of the Lord Jesus Christ behind all you do in Him. Here is our big idea for today! There should never be a hint of quit in you if you know what you are doing is of God. Stay the course. Be bold and determined. Face any opposition with courage and conviction that Christ is in you and working through you. You can do what He puts in your heart. Paul said this. **I can do anything through the one empowering me.** (Philippians 4: 13) That is true of you too!