

A fine romance

Heather Smith *reflects on* Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49. 58-end

The question of their children's life partners makes many parents anxious. Ideas about what kind of person might be suitable will vary, but most parents just hope for someone who will make their child happy. Abraham wanted just that for Isaac, but he also felt the burden that this child carried. He was the promised child who would make Abraham the father of a multitude of nations. No wonder he wanted to find a suitable wife for his son. What follows is effectively an arranged marriage. It is arranged by Abraham in the sense that he has a specific family in mind. Although he does not know the details of all the family members, having left a long while before, he sends his servant with strict instructions about who would be suitable.

The servant must have felt a great weight of responsibility. He turns to God and asks that the right woman will offer him a drink at the well. But will Rebekah agree? She does, going back with the servant to meet her future husband. Everyone is happy and the multitude of descendants of Abraham moves on a generation.

It's hard not to suspect that Abraham feels he has to give God a little help with fulfilling the promise – just as he did when it seemed that Sarah couldn't bear a child and Hagar was a better prospect. Nevertheless, God worked with his insecurities, and does the same with ours. God can bring the best out of whatever situation we create for ourselves. 🍀



Lord, teach us to rest in the knowledge that you will bring about the best for us. Help us to believe that we need not fear for those we love because they are safe in your hands. Amen.

Climbing Kilimanjaro – part IV – reaching the summit

by John Witcombe

John Witcombe concludes his account of climbing Kilimanjaro.

We were roused from our sleeping bags at ten o'clock on Saturday night and set off slowly to climb the gruelling final 1,200 metres to the summit. Extreme altitude makes thought and movement difficult. Each step takes huge effort and

progress is painfully slow. Nausea and headaches are overwhelming, and the determination to succeed competes with the knowledge that to press on through the symptoms of altitude sickness can be fatal.

Then, after seven hours of putting one foot in front of another, we reached Stella Point on the edge of the volcanic cone. Across to our left were the tops of the glaciers tinged pink in the sunrise. An hour's walk round the rim got us to the summit, 5,895 metres.

I'm very happy that my sixtieth year started on top of Kilimanjaro. Now I'm back to the day job, scaling the challenges and heights of being Dean of Coventry Cathedral. But it doesn't take much for me to think myself back to the mountain and a journey fulfilled. 🍀

Cities of the Bible Ephesus

by Caroline Fletcher

Ephesus was a wealthy city in Asia Minor, current-day Turkey. It was an important commercial centre with a harbour bordering the Aegean Sea.

Today its impressive ruins attract many tourists. Among these is a single column – the remains of the once magnificent Temple of Artemis, which was one of the Seven Wonders of

the World. Ephesus associated itself closely with the goddess Artemis, but during the two or so years that the apostle Paul was based in this city, he clashed with artisans who made money from this idol worship. The theatre in which a frenzied crowd railed against Paul for discouraging idolatry (Acts 19:23-41) can also be seen today.

Ephesus has further New Testament links. Tradition holds that the apostle John lived in Ephesus and was buried there. Also, Paul's companion Timothy oversaw the Ephesian church and there is a New Testament epistle written to the people of Ephesus. 🍀

“Prayer is simply a two-way conversation between you and God.

Billy Graham (1918-2018), evangelist