

Sarah

Women of the Old Testament—part 3

May 22, 2016

Genesis 15:1 - 18:15

DAY 1: Waiting on the promises of God

Genesis 15:1 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."

² *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?"*

³ *And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."*

⁴ *Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir."*

⁵ *He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."*

⁶ *Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

1. (Note: as the story begins, Abraham is known as Abram, and Sarah is known as Sarai)
2. This passage is known as the Abrahamic covenant, the second time God made a grand covenant with Abraham (see also Genesis 12). The Messiah would one day come through Abraham's blood line.
3. The descendants God points to are not just Abraham's blood descendants, but all of God's children by faith! How many descendants does God predict for Abraham?
4. Though Abraham is grateful for the reassurance of the covenant, Abraham sees a problem. What is it?
5. A pattern is developing for both Abraham and Sarah. God promises, but the son of promise is nowhere to be seen. The waiting continues over almost three decades! Abraham and Sarah pass through middle age and into the years when it was humanly impossible to have a baby.
6. How do you react when your prayers seem to go unanswered?
7. Waiting on God is sometimes quite confusing. Have you waited on God, longer than you imagined you would have to?

DAY 2: Taking matters into your own hands

Genesis 16:1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar;

1. Because of her advanced age, Sarah gave up on ever having children again. Has there been a time when, like Sarah, you've given up on God?
2. About two decades have passed since the first Abrahamic covenant. What do you think Sarah **felt** about herself?
3. If you had been Sarah what do you think you would have **done**?

Genesis 16:2 ...so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

4. What does Sarah conclude about God?
5. How does she justify her suggestion to Abraham?

Genesis 16:3 So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.

6. Sarah and Abraham did what we are tempted to do: take an action that was "normal" in the culture and use it to justify behavior that is out of bounds.

Genesis 16:4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived....

7. How do you think Sarah responded when she found out that Hagar was pregnant?

Genesis 16:4 ... When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.

8. Sometimes we are determined to have to learn things the hard way. How long did it take for Sarah to regret her decision to put Hagar in Abraham's arms?

9. How does human nature typically respond when it has made a mistake?

- a. Take personal responsibility?
- b. Find someone else to blame?

Genesis 16:5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me." ⁶ "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

DAY 3: God's faithfulness in spite of man's rebellion

1. Thirteen years pass between the debacle with Hagar. After both Abraham and Sarah rebelled mightily against the plan of God, God comes back to Abraham and reiterates the covenant promise about having a son through Sarah.

Genesis 17:15 God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.

¹⁶ I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

2. After all the "drama" of the Abraham-Sarah-Hagar debacle, how do you think Abraham and Sarah felt when God reiterated His covenant promise to Abraham and through Sarah?

3. Have you ever wondered if God had "given up" on you? What circumstance comes to mind?

4. How did God show you that He had not given up on you?

5. The Lord changed the name of Abraham's wife from "Sarai" to "Sarah."

a. "Sarai" means princess.

b. "Sarah," with the change of one Hebrew letter means, princess of nations.

Genesis 17:17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"

¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"

6. What do you see in Abraham's response?

7. Sometimes we wrestle with God about outcomes, and sometimes we wrestle with God about God's timing. Do you recognize a similar wrestling with God in your life? List the thoughts that come to your mind in your wrestling.

DAY 4: God shows up!

1. God “shows up” in the appearance of three strangers.

Genesis 18:1 The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. ² Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

³ He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. ⁴ Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. ⁵ Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way--now that you have come to your servant." "Very well," they answered, "do as you say." ⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of fine flour and knead it and bake some bread." ⁷ Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. ⁸ He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

Genesis 18:9 "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said.

2. When you were in school were you ever called to the principal’s office? What do you think Sarah thought and felt when she heard the men ask directly about her?

Genesis 18:10 Then the LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.

3. Imagine you are Sarah, and hear these words. You are eighty-nine years old. Your husband is ninety-nine. What would have been your response?

Genesis 18:12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

Genesis 18:13 Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son."

4. Why do you think a point was made about Sarah’s laughter? How was God revealing Himself to Sarah? What did God want Sarah to know about the messengers, about Himself?

Genesis 18:15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."

5. Why do you think Sarah lied? And why did the messengers correct her? What did they want Sarah to know about the Lord?

DAY 5: And then there were three...

1. At the age of ninety Sarah gives birth to her son, Isaac.

Genesis 21:1 Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. ² Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.

2. The Spirit of God takes great care to nail down some important details about the birth of Isaac!

a. What is emphasized about God's character in these two verses?

b. What do we learn about God's timing?

c. Why do you think it was so important, in this instance, to have the birth of Isaac be, without a shred of doubt, an act of God in behalf of Abraham, Sarah, and for all of us?

Genesis 21:3 Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.

3. You remember that not only did Sarah laugh, but so did Abraham. The name of the son is Isaac, which in Hebrew means "laughter."

Genesis 21:4 When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

⁶ Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." ⁷ And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

4. There are different kinds of laughing:

a. Scoffing, as in, "yeah, riiiiiiight."

b. Something sounds so preposterous that it's considered funny.

c. Laughter of joy.

d. Laughter of humble gratitude or what we call "grace," a laughter that delightfully receives what it certainly did not deserve to receive.

e. A "knowing" laughter.

5. What do you think Sarah discovered most about God through her lifetime?

6. What has stood out to you the most in Sarah's story?