

Faith In Our Every Day Lives

Genesis 21:1-34

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- A. Appreciate God's Graciousness In His Fulfillment Of His Promises To Us (1-3)
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Introduction:

- A “save face” culture comes to church wanting to put our families, our business and our faith into a positive light.
- In reality, we all struggle – so let’s not fake it.
- The Scripture portrays 2 types of people: Sinners & the Savior
- We’re all sinners in need of a Savior – who came and gave His life on the cross as a payment for our sin and rose again on the 3rd day
- Genesis portrays its Bible heroes – not as perfect – but as sinners in need of a Savior
- Abraham had his struggles – but he became a man of faith because he learned to trust God in his battles
- Gen 20 – he lied, but God’s grace is greater than all our sin
- Gen 21 – we see vignettes of issues of faith in his marriage, his parenting and his business

I. Faith In God Towards Our Marriage Trusts In His Promises (Genesis 21:1-7)

A. Appreciate God’s Graciousness In His Fulfillment Of His Promises To Us (1-3)

*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. *3*Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.

- The Lord has spent several chapters reminding Abraham and Sarah of His promises
 - God Will Give Israel A Promised Land (Gen 12:1,7; 13:14-17; 15:17-21; 17:8; Ezek 47:13-23)
 - God Will Bless Abraham Personally (Gen 12:2; 17:5-21; 22:15-17)
 - God Will Make Abraham’s Descendants A Great Nation (Gen 17:4-14; 22:17)
 - God Will Bless The World Through Abraham (Gen 12:3; 22:18; Gal 3:16)
 - God Reaffirmed And Repeated This Covenant At Least Eight Times
 - (Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21; 22:15-18; 26:2-5,24; 28:13-17; 35:10-12)
 - The Abrahamic Covenant Will Be Fulfilled
 - The Abrahamic Covenant Is An Everlasting Covenant (Gen 17:7-8)
 - The Abrahamic Covenant Was Partially Fulfilled In Christ Being The Source Of Universal Blessing (Lk 1:54-55; Acts 3:25; Gal 3)
 - The Abrahamic Covenant Will Be Completely Fulfilled When Israel Possesses The Promised Land Forever (Rom 11)
- Now God is fulfilling His promise with the birth of Isaac
- Abraham and Sarah didn’t deserve this promise, but God is gracious
- Grace is giving us what we don’t deserve
- Sarah was 90 years old and barren

- Because she was barren, she felt exiled from society and even in her own family
- Now God has given her a child
- Abraham was a man of faith, but certainly not perfect
 - He didn't deserve to be the "father of many nations"
 - But God has blessed him with this amazing heritage
- Isaac
 - Name means "to laugh" – not a reminder of Sarah's faithlessness but amazement at God's faithfulness – it also conveys the joy Abe & Sarah have in God's promised son
 - Isaac was a child of promise, but he hasn't done anything worthy yet
 - This is all God's grace!
- I have a great wife, great children, a great mom and brother, great inlaws – I don't deserve any of it
- **Q: When is the last time you looked at your family and thanked God for His grace? We don't deserve them.**

B. Obey The Lord's Instructions Because He Is Faithful To Carry Out His Plan (4-5; Heb 11:1; Eccl 12:1)

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

- **Faith** is a call for **present obedience** in trusting the Lord for **future outcomes**

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

- Abraham obeyed God's instructions in Genesis 17 to circumcise his son on the 8th day as a sign of God's covenant with Abraham
- This was an easier application of obedience with a knife and his son than what he will have to deal with in Genesis 22 at Mt. Moriah
- But this was an opportunity for obedience
- We need to be obedient to God's Word in His instructions – sometimes it's simple, sometimes it's super difficult – but we must trust Him
- Do you trust God with your future relationships that you will honor Him with your faith and purity?
- Do you trust God with your business that you will be a man/woman of integrity?
- Do you trust God with your future college and career that you will be faithful to Him in the days of your youth

Ecclesiastes 12:1 Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and say, "Life is not pleasant anymore." (NLT)

C. Acknowledge Our Struggles Of Faith And Be Amazed At God's Great Faithfulness (6-7; 1 Cor 1:26-29)

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

- Sarah is admitting that she did laugh in faithlessness
- When she heard, as an 89 year old and a dried up reproductive system, that she was going to bear her first child at 90 – she laughed (and if we were her, we probably would too)
- Yet God can do the impossible and use the least likely person

- Be amazed that God can use us too

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 26For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

II. Faith In God Towards Our Family Protects His Promises (Genesis 21:8-20)

A. Deal With The Threats From Those Who Try To Thwart God's Will Within The Family (8-14; Lk 15:31-32; 1 Cor 13:4)

8The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. 9But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, 10and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac." 11The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. 12But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. 13I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring." 14Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.

- **Ishmael is 17** years old by now and didn't think much of his baby half-brother
- He probably heard all his life how he was **not the promised child and there was some resentment**
- Instead of rejoicing that our little brother is the chosen one, we get **jealous**
- Ishmael mocked Isaac (9) and this was a threat to Sarah who brought it up to Abraham
- Remember that Ishmael is the son Abraham has raised all these years – to send him off would be a difficult choice

- **"laughter"** is a **faithless** response to God's promise – this showed a lack of faith
- **"mocking"** is a **hateful** response to God's plan – this showed a disdain towards God
 - similar root, but intensified to a malicious response

- But his behavior was difficult
- Ishmael was envious of Isaac – not a loving response
- Ishmael was also mirroring the disdain Sarah had towards his mother, Hagar

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not *envy*; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up.

- Ie/ Several years back, a teenage girl confided in me that she was envious of another girl in the same fellowship group. She resolved to pray for the spiritual success of that other girl. That was a positive way to love the one you are envious of.
- **Proper Response is Contentment: Thank God For The Privileges And Opportunities You Do Have**

Luke 15:31-32 ³¹ "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. ³² It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'

- Older brother of prodigal son was jealous when the younger brother came back from sin when the older brother was righteous the whole time
- V. 11 Abraham hears from God that it is OK to let Ishmael go to protect the child of promise and that God will take care of Ishmael
- Sometimes we need to make difficult decisions
- I fear I'm a compromiser because I'm a people person – I can trust in negotiation over truth, compromise over conviction, happiness over righteousness
- But when faced with tough decisions, we have to do the right thing for the good of our family
- Ie/ Breaking up with someone who won't walk with God with you
- Ie/ Breaking off an unhealthy relationship that could put your marriage at risk
- Ie/ Having a child move out because of unrepentant sin that puts your family at risk
 - Drug use in the home – you're trying to protect your younger children from that influence
 - Risk of physical harm or abuse

B. Trust The God Of Promise To Make Difficult Choices So We Can Leave The Results To Him (15-20; Rom 8:28)

15When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. **16**Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there, she began to sob. **17**God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. **18**Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." **19**Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. **20**God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. **21**While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

- God's approval of sending Ishmael and Hagar away was not that God disapproved of them, but that God would protect them
- God would protect Ishmael from doing harm towards Isaac
- God would make a great nation out of Ishmael and provide for him greatly
- Sometimes we need to separate from a situation the thrive – God knows that
- This situation was not only for the good of Isaac and Sarah, but for Ishmael and Isaac
- It doesn't seem to look good because of the "mocking" but God works all things together for good

Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

III. Faith In God Towards Our Business Demonstrates Integrity (22-34)

A. When We Trust In God's Gracious Provision, We Don't Have To Lie Or Cheat To Get Ahead (22-24; Ps 15:2-5; Lev 19:35-36)

22At that time Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything you do. **23**Now swear to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or my descendants. Show to me and the country where you now reside as a foreigner the same kindness I have shown to you."**24**Abraham said, "I swear it."

- Abimelech comes back into the picture with Phicol the commander of the army
- In ch. 20, Abe dealt with Abimelech with offspring and grazing rights
- In ch. 21, it's water (well) rights
- Make an oath that you won't lie to me again (like you did by saying Sarah wasn't your wife) and that you won't cheat me
- As a foreigner treated kindly in the land – be equally kind
- This is an pact of nonaggression
- Abraham consented to this Peace Treaty
- Abraham was asked to be a man of integrity

Psalm 15:2-5 He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change; he does not put out his money as usury, nor does he takes a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

Ie/ Washington Post states that 66%, surveyed in an unscientific poll, frequently lie to get ahead at work

Ie/ Doug Sherman states the 4 most common lies at work:

- Exaggerating accomplishments
- Not admitting a failure when called on the carpet
- Lying to make a buck or avoid an expense
- Not correcting a misperception when it is to your benefit

Leviticus 19:35-36 ³⁵You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume. ³⁶You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

- Understate the reliability
- Tip the scales to your favor
- State that the unnecessary warranty is necessary

B. When We Trust In God's Promised Provision, We Can Be Generous (25-31; Eph 4:28)

25Then Abraham complained to Abimelek about a well of water that Abimelek's servants had seized. **26**But Abimelek said, "I don't know who has done this. You did not tell me, and I heard about it only today."**27**So Abraham brought sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelek, and the two men made a treaty. **28**Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs from the flock, **29**and Abimelek asked Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs you have set apart by themselves?"**30**He replied, "Accept these seven lambs from my hand as a witness that I dug this well."**31**So that place was called Beersheba, because the two men swore an oath there.

- Abraham initiated the pact with Abimelech with his gifts of sheep and cattle
- As the recipient of the rights, he put up the animals
- Then he separated 7 ewes from the flock
- Abimelech asked for the reason why
- Abraham provided the animals – not a 50-50 deal
- Abraham put up the cost of this agreement because he trusted in God
- By accepting this gift, Abimelech would consent to the agreement and give well rights to Abraham
- The Heb. word for "swear" means "to bind with 7 things"
 - Swear = Heb. *saba*
 - Seven = Heb. *seba*
- As the walked through the slain animals together, the concept is that if either broke the covenant, they'd be like those sacrificed animals

Ephesians 4:28 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

C. When We Trust In God's Faithful Provision, We Must Be Peaceful With Our Colleagues And Management, Students And Teachers (32-34; 1 Thess 4:11-12)

32After the treaty had been made at Beersheba, Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces returned to the land of the Philistines. **33**Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the Lord, the Eternal God. **34**And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for a long time.

- With this covenant in place, Abimelech was assured that Abraham had dug that well and had well rights (water rights) in this treaty
- Abraham did what needed to secure peace in an awkward situation
- Abraham stayed there in Gerar, the land of the Philistines for a long time

- El Olam = everlasting God (new name introduced)
- This covenant is an everlasting covenant

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 "Aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing."