

Women's Bible Study: When the Promise Tarries
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Text: Genesis 18:6-15

Overview of the Passage

Sarah was promised a son, and his name was to be called Isaac (Gen. 17: 19). God would establish His covenant with him. Even though Abraham had received this promise from God 24 years earlier, this is the first time God clearly states that Sarah would be the one to bear this covenant child. Before this encounter, Sarah had given up hope of conceiving because she had passed the age of childbearing. This led her to give her maid Hagar to Abraham so that the "promise" could be fulfilled. But God had other plans. His promise was to both Abraham and Sarah, so God again appeared to Abraham in the form of three men. Abraham recognizes that these were no ordinary visitors and treated them with reverent hospitality.

Genesis 18:6-8

And Abraham ran unto the herd and fetched a calf, tender and good, and gave it unto a young man, and he hastened to dress it. And he took butter and milk and the calf which he had dressed and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree, and they ate.

Imagine:

You are Sarah, unexpected visitors show up in your house, and without consulting you, your husband invites them to stay for dinner. Then he asks you to quickly prepare a very specific dish without inquiring whether you have the necessary ingredients.

Questions:

How prepared are you to welcome and entertain uninvited guests?

How do you react when others make decisions that has a direct or indirect impact on you without consulting you?

Read verses 9-12

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

10 Then one of them 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 very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.

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

Imagine:

Abraham had told Sarah about his encounters with God and God's promise to him. For the first time, Sarah gets to hear firsthand the promise that not only was God going to give Abraham a child but that she was going to be the mother. It gets better! God gave the specific gender of the child – a Son – and the exact time of his birth – in a year!

Questions:

If you were Sarah, what might you have thought and felt when you heard this news?

Why do you think Sarah laughed?

You may think that Sarah was eavesdropping. But remember that in those days, it was customary for men and women to sit in separate groups. However, it was expected that the women stay close in case they were needed. As to her laughter and question, Sarah was only stating the obvious.... barren women, especially those who are way past menopause, do not get pregnant! That was Fact, not Faith speaking!

Reflections:

What's promises are still unfulfilled in your life?

What are the facts in your situation, and what role does faith play in your waiting period?

Let's read the remaining verses:

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."

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

Imagine:

Sarah did not speak out loud. She thought to herself. But these "visitors" apparently heard her thoughts! Weird, right? The guests not only showed up uninvited and ate your food; now they can hear your thoughts too. Moreover, they question your faith in God: "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" If we can grasp the greatness of that truth, we can understand what it means to walk by faith.

Questions

Why did God ask Abraham and not Sarah directly?

What does this tell us about God's principle concerning the family? (Read Ephesians 5:22-33).

God did not question Sarah! His questions were to Abraham: Why did Sarah laugh? Is there anything too hard for the Lord? Remember, God's covenant was with Abraham! Sarah was only a vessel that He would use to carry the seed of His promise. Even though she was not addressed, Sarah felt so guilty that she tried to cover up by lying. How naïve – if God could hear her thoughts, could a laugh be hidden. Psalm 139:2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

Reflections:

How do you respond when someone tells you your faults?

Are there any secret sins you are covering up?

Key Takeaways:

God will always fulfill His promise, no matter how long it takes because that is His nature. God understands our humanity and shows us mercy even when we make mistakes. God did not punish Sarah for lying or change His mind about His promise. He showed her mercy. God does not want us to cover our faults but rather to repent and enjoy His mercy. Nothing is too hard for God to do!

Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, help us to trust you even when things appear to be hopeless. Always remind us that nothing is impossible with you. Amen.