

CLOUD OF WITNESSES | 05:: Sarah

PRAYER: Before you dive in, just sit and be still for a moment. Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Invite the Holy Spirit to come meet you in this time with Him. Pray that He would use the words on this screen (or on your printed page) to touch your life and change you. The Lord doesn't hide. Scripture says if we seek Him, He will be found! Below is a prayer to use as a guide, if you want it, but use your words - whatever is sincere to you, your personality, and how you feel right now. This is your relationship with Jesus.

Dear Jesus: Thank You for this time with You. You are my refuge. Please cover me with Your wings and block out all distractions. Please help me to focus. You refuel me and right now, I am seeking to be filled. Please fill me with your word and use it to change me however You see fit. Help me to apply this to my life. I invite You into this moment. Without Your presence and Your hand on this moment, I know these words will go in one ear and out the other. But with You, I know these words won't go void and they will bring value to my life. I'm thankful just for sitting here with you, but I don't want to miss a thing. Thank You for teaching me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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You know when you find something exciting and there's just so much to share, you could talk about it for days? That's how Abraham's life is for me trying to write these posts. I mean... his life is recorded so extensively in scripture that there's no way in one post we could study it all! And actually – we're barely going to scratch the surface by extending to this post. But today we look at the life of Abraham's wife, Sarah! Hang on with both hands. Today is a little like drinking from a fire hose! Lots of information coming at you at once, but it's worth it! I promise.

We're going to break tradition, here, and will hop into Hebrews 11 last. First, let's finish up talking about Abraham.

READ GENESIS 12:1-9. YOU'LL RECOGNIZE IT FROM THE LAST POST, BUT TODAY LET'S LOOK MORE CLOSELY AT THE PROMISE THE LORD MADE TO ABRAM. IN YOUR JOURNAL, LIST EVERYTHING GOD PROMISES ABRAM.

The Lord's promise to Abram in verses 2-3 are very famous. Among other things, and in



not-so-many words, God is telling Abram that the nation of Israel would come from him (and it does – down the line). And (*spoiler alert!*) when God tells Abram that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you,” He means Jesus. Yes! If you trace the line of Jesus all the way back, it goes right to Abraham. God’s promises *never* fail – even if it takes a while to see them come to pass.

READ THE VERSES IN THE CHART BELOW AND JOT DOWN A SUMMARY OF GOD’S PROMISES.

VERSES	GOD’S PROMISES TO ABRAHAM
Genesis 12:7	
Genesis 13:14-17	
Genesis 15:1-6	
Genesis 15:12-18	
Genesis 17:1-9	

Did you write the word “descendants” or “offspring” a lot? Have your parents ever repeated something to you over and over, so you’d get the point? I think this is what God was trying to do with Abraham. From that exercise above, how many times did God mention that Abraham would have children? Yea! *Twelve times!*

WHAT UNIQUE THING ABOUT SARAI (SARAH) DO WE REMEMBER FROM READING HER AND ABRAHAM’S BACKGROUND STORY IN GENESIS 11? (SEE VERSE 30.)

Here’s the deal: Sarah was barren, meaning she was unable to have a child. But I think God was trying to break through to Abraham with all of these promises that He can do the impossible! It was not a crushing or debilitating thing for God to know that Sarah couldn’t have children. He can do whatever He wants! And the more things stack up to be impossible, the bigger the glory God gets when He comes through. And if He makes a promise, it *always* sticks. Nothing is impossible with God. We have such a myopic (meaning, small in scope) view of life and He sees *it all!* I have definitely seen the Lord work in the impossible, so much so that I love to call him “the impossible God.”

It’s amazing to watch Him break through walls that look so insurmountable for me. Sometimes it’s even fun! It’s like a defiant jab at Satan to believe God can break down barriers and do miracles. If you’re facing something that you’d consider to be impossible right now, keep believing! Keep praying. Pray that the Lord would help you to want what He wants in the situation – believing that He always gets what He wants! And what He wants for us is always best! If the miracle doesn’t come right away, keep at it! Wait on an



answer from the Lord.

Let's study this in more detail.

READ GENESIS 15:1-6. HOW IS ABRAHAM FEELING IN THIS TEXT?

At this point, Abraham has already heard from God several times that he would be the father to many nations, and that God would give his offspring the land of Canaan, etc. But you can see in this text that the wait (no pun intended) is starting to crush Abraham. He is staring at his circumstance, not focusing on the God he served. And no judgment, here, I've done it too! We all do it! Sometimes, waiting on the Lord's timing is hard, isn't it? And we start to doubt. Well, that's ok because God is patient, and He is not afraid of our questions. Take your concerns to the Lord in a respectful way and ask Him whatever you'd like to know. See what He says. I'm sure He will encourage you.

God's reaction to Abraham is patient and loving and we see that He offers a bit more clarification, here. "No, your servant is not going to be your heir... YOU will have a child!"

In Genesis 16, we see that Sarah is also cracking under "the wait". She did what we all are sometimes inclined to do when things aren't going fast enough – she took matters into her own hands. She, too, only saw the impossibility in front of her. In her mind, if Abraham was going to have a child, it certainly wasn't going to come from her! And so, she proposed something she thought solved the problem. Before the end of the chapter, we watch the whole story explode in everyone's face. This part of the story sets an example for anyone considering going their own way, rather than waiting on God.

In the very next chapter, however, we see God's reaction. So patient, so kind. He doesn't rake Abraham or Sarah over the coals for their decisions, He actually gives more clarification.

READ GENESIS 17:1-9. THERE ARE TWO SPECIAL "EVENTS" THAT GOD ORCHESTRATED IN THIS TEXT. CAN YOU FIND THEM?

God appeared to Abraham and made a covenant between Himself and Abraham. A covenant is like a contract. God is not only re-promising Abraham that he'll have offspring, but He is promising that Abraham's descendants will be "His (God's) people." That He will bless them, look over them, guide them, fight for them, etc. And He is explaining that in return for His provision, He will be *their* God – meaning they can't worship any other gods (or idols) other than God. After the Lord makes this covenant with Abram, He then changes Abram's name to Abraham.



Several people in the Bible get a name change from God – it always signifies a shift in that person’s life, like the Lord touching them and putting them on a new path to serve Him. Abraham is one of the first we see. In ancient times, your name was one way for a person to know you. Abraham, as we see in verse 7, means “father of many”. So, his name is literally a reminder of God’s promise to him and it is also a sign to everyone else that he would be the father of many. ¹

NOW HOP DOWN TO GENESIS 17:15-22. HOW DO GOD’S PROMISES BECOME MORE SPECIFIC?

We see in verses 15-16 that Sarai also gets a name change from God and in verse 16 we see that God specifically states that He will bless Sarah, she will have a son, and that she will be a *mother of nations* - the Mother of Nations to Abraham’s Father of Nations. He also tells Abraham the name of the son Sarah will have. It’s God’s kind way of saying, “let me make this perfectly clear...”

LOOK AT GENESIS 17:17 AGAIN. HOW DOES ABRAHAM REACT TO GOD’S PROMISE?

I love Abraham. He’s just so honest. There was no hiding his feelings after all he’d already been through in this saga. Sarah felt the same. Let’s flip to the next chapter and see specifically how she was feeling.

READ GENESIS 18:1-18

This set of scripture is just so sweet to me. I mean, picture it: there’s a tree far off from the tent (maybe not too far...) and Abraham just felt it in his soul that one of those men was the Lord. Who knows if maybe this was Jesus before Jesus was here on earth, but it was the Lord! Anyway... Abraham is so excited he runs and tells Sarah, “Quick! Let’s make the best meal we can!” Wouldn’t you want to give Jesus the best if he came to visit for the day? At some point, the Lord asks about Sarah and Abraham informs Him that she is in the tent. Then the Lord promises that Sarah will have a baby. Sarah, like Abraham, thinking about her old age at this point and her history of not being able to conceive, cracks up to herself. Probably not very loudly, but the Lord knows everything. So, He calls her out on it. Something like, “Hey, you in the tent! [nudge, nudge] Why did you laugh!?” Embarrassed, she lied about laughing. Imagine that whole day!

You know Abraham and Sarah laid in bed every night talking ‘til they fell asleep about the things Abraham heard God promise him and how impossible everything seemed. You



know they regretted their decisions in the past. You know that this was just a heavy burden they were carrying and then right after the Lord makes a covenant with Abraham – the very next chapter – He comes to visit and repeats to Abraham and Sarah that Sarah will have a child. He knew they needed confirmation, and they got it!

READ GENESIS 21:1-7. SUMMARIZE IN YOUR JOURNAL WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS PASSAGE.

The story comes full circle, here. The Lord does give Sarah a son and just as God said, they named him Isaac. I love how in verses 6-7 she references the time she laughed at God's promise while she is holding the very promise in her hands. And it's no coincidence that they named the baby Isaac because Isaac means "one who laughs," so she and Abraham would forever remember that day by the tree.

Thinking back to the time Sarah had Hagar provide a son for Abraham (his son, Ishmael), we can see that even though Abraham had other children, the specific child that God promised was the child that would fulfill the promise. Ishmael and Isaac would both be the start of the "many nations" that God had mentioned, but through Isaac, God would establish His covenant (Genesis 17:19-21). And through Isaac, we get the nation of Israel (Isaac is literally Jacob's (Israel's) dad) and therefore the line of Jesus, like we discussed earlier.

NOW, FINALLY! LET'S TURN TO HEBREWS AND READ 11:11-12. HOW DOES SARAH'S REACTION EVENTUALLY CHANGE, BASED ON THIS PASSAGE?

Sarah considered God, who made the promise, to be faithful and because of her faith, she *actually* did become the Mother of Nations. And even the Hebrews writer poked fun at Abraham and Sarah's age saying Abraham was "as good as dead" by the time they had a child. So, the Lord let the impossible become even *more* impossible and then He fulfilled the promise – see how it just stacked up?

So how does all this apply to us? I mean, specifically, other than Jesus coming from their family tree – which is HUGE. Well, the Lord is patient with us, too, in our doubts and questioning. And, in the waiting, He sometimes brings promises to us over and over again. That could look like Him bringing you a certain scripture at church that touches you specifically or gives you hope. Then you see those verses again at just the right time. Then then sometime later, they pop up again. Then a little while later you see a post on Instagram related to it. Then a friend mentions it, randomly. And suddenly you get this feeling like it's coming into your life on purpose. That's the Lord reminding you of what He



said before. It can happen other ways than that, but I've definitely seen multiple times in my life that He's worked like that. It's not like looking for a random sign, this is more like you get a specific word from the Holy Spirit and that same verse keeps encouraging you, reminding you of what the Holy Spirit said before, especially when you are praying to the Lord about your concerns and doubts.

As we close, let's think about what the Hebrews writer said in 11:11, "and by faith even Sarah...was enabled to bear Children because she considered Him faithful who had made the promise..." Without getting into TMI, Sarah had a part to play in bringing this promise to life (literally). So, what this verse says is true. She trusted the Lord's words to be true enough that she decided to try to have a child even though she 90 years old. This shows us that we have a role to play, and our faith will propel us to do the actions that are required for certain promises to come to fruition.

Hang in there! God can do the impossible. We only need to be obedient and faithful.



DIG A LITTLE DEEPER:

* Have you ever questioned God's timing or how something that looked impossible was going to work out? Describe this time in your Bible. Are you still waiting? How did it ultimately turn out?

* Have you ever taken matters into your own hands when something wasn't going according to your plan or timeline? How did that turn out for you?



* Has God ever promised you something that seemed impossible? Have you reached the end of the story? Journal about how His promise come to pass. Or maybe you're waiting for something right now. Journal about that and write a prayer asking God for His help.



* How has the story of Abraham and Sarah's lives impacted you today?

Reference Notes

1 Zondervan, NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, 2016