

Wednesday, September 12, 2018: Discussion Guide for “Walking with Abraham: The Ups and Downs of Faith”—Sermon preached on Sunday, September 9

Text: Genesis 16:1-16 (ESV)

Brief summary (what’s the point of this text/sermon?):

What do we do when we face unfulfilled dreams? When life doesn’t turn out the way we want? When God doesn’t seem to be doing the things that he said he would?

Sometimes we “help” God. We do his work for him to “encourage” him to do what he said he would.

The problem is—that rarely turns out well.

But we can probably relate to Sarai’s frustration, can’t we? She was older and the chances of her conceiving a child were almost non-existent. That would have been devastating for her, especially given God’s promise that she and her husband Abraham would be the parents of a family that would eventually bless the world.

If you had been in her shoes, what would you have done? What should she have done?

In this story, what do we learn? About God? About trusting God?

How do we live out the implications of this passage? (Discussion starters for applying the sermon)

1. Put yourself in Sarai’s shoes. She was around 75 years old and had been barren her whole life. Even though God had said several times that she was going to have a son, after a while it became hard for her to believe it. What was going through her mind? How can you relate to that?
2. What was the underlying problem for Sarai? What was in her heart that caused her to doubt God?
3. How do we sometimes struggle to wait on God?
4. How do we sometimes “help” God do what we think he needs to do?
5. Think about this principle as it relates to the scenarios below. Discuss in class.
 - a. Parenting your children
 - b. Relating to/helping your aging parents
 - c. Health problems
 - d. Your relationship with your spouse
 - e. Your singleness and desire to find someone
 - f. A couple’s inability to have children
 - g. The apparent evidence that our country is rapidly turning its heart away from God.
 - h. Problems at work that could be fixed so easily if we discarded our standard of ethics.
 - i. Pressures to be guided by “the end justifies the means” kind of thinking at work or elsewhere. E.g., Sarai and Abram may have reasoned that what they were doing wasn’t wrong because it helped accomplish what God said he was going to do anyway. Do we ever reason like that?
6. In which area of your life do you find it most difficult to trust God, even when it takes him longer than you thought it would?