

1 introduction

Chapter 18-19 has just recorded some remarkable events in the life of Abraham and Sarah. God confirmed the promise that Sarah would have a son at her advanced age that would be a blessing to the world! He also shared his plans to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah due to their sin which led Abraham to pray for the residents of those cities and allowed him to learn about God's character. With these highlights encouraging Abraham, he enters chapter 20 where we expect conduct in line with such blessing from God. Instead, we see that he failed miserably in trusting God because of fear for his safety.

Even the repeated promises of God did not drive fear of potential danger from Abraham's heart. God used a pagan king to rebuke the righteous prophet, who had boldly pleaded for Sodom, when Abraham's faith failed. ¹

2 questions

1. What most stood out to you related to the message? Why?
2. What questions do you have about this story? What stands out to you?

¹ Tom Constable, Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ge 20:1.

3. Why does Abimelech not seem to be surprised about having a dream from God?
- **Insight** – In that culture, they believed in many gods and that gods spoke through dreams. This event would not be surprising to them, although Abimelech is clearly terrified by God speaking directly to him! This was something Abimelech had not experienced before. Remember, it is about 2000 B.C. when these events are taking place!

In Mesopotamian thinking, dreams are usually brought from the gods by the deity Zaiqu, whose name is derived from a word meaning spirit or breath, but here God is depicted as speaking directly. It is not unusual for these dreams to feature conversation.²

4. The abduction of Sarah by King Abimelech is very serious? Why?
- **Insight** – God had promised a son to Sarah. It is through her seed that the blessing to the world would come. The promised Messiah would come from that seed. If she becomes pregnant through Abimelech, God's plan to redeem the world is at risk!
5. What does God do to make sure Sarah does not become pregnant (see 20:17-18)?
6. What do God's actions to prevent all pregnancy in the house of Abimelech tell us about God?
- **Insight** – this event is so serious that God intervened in a way that ensured no one in Abimelech's house would become pregnant as long as Sarah was at risk! God is involved in his creation, and nothing can stop him from fulfilling his promises.

² John H. Walton, Genesis, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 494.

7. Where are you having a crisis of faith? Where do you need to be reminded of the trustworthiness of God to fulfill his promises and his will in your life?

8. What did Abraham misunderstand about living the life of faith?
 - **Insight** – he felt the need to help God and control his circumstances rather than faithfully trust God to accomplish his promises. Faith is simply trusting God to do as he promised.

9. What are some things we can learn from these events related to living the life of faith in God and his promises?
 - **Insight** – a couple of things include:
 - God is patient and forgiving of our failures
 - Man's free will cannot thwart the sovereign plan of God
 - Fear can cause us to do things we never thought possible.
 - God can use unbelievers to correct his servants.
 - Circumstances should never cause us to doubt God and his promises.
 - In many ways, we are just like Abraham!

10. What is the one thing you are going to take with you from this session?