

Genesis 21 sermon notes

by Steve Childs

Today is a very special day as we are going to be celebrating the birthday of a miracle child the Biblical patriarch [play video](#) Isaac, who was the long awaited son of Abraham and Sarah.

So let's all celebrate this day by shouting out the title of today's message together Happy [birthday child of promises](#).

Genesis chapter 21 is the climax of our historical narrative where we see God's **promise** to Abram and Sarai fulfilled with the birth of their promised child!

And for us, we can look back from this point and learn so much about Gods personality when it comes to keeping His promises.
But hopefully we can all learn a little bit about our personalities when it comes to **having faith in trusting Gods promises**.

There seems to be several different personality types that God has been using in these last 10 chapters to teach us about faith.

In a sense we see that the main characters from Gen 12 all the way up to this point are perfect representations **of our own personalities**.

[For instance look at Abraham the father of our faith:](#)

[Show real pic of Abraham](#)

Abram- was one of those guys who was very relationship oriented ...very easy going", **and conflict avoiding**. A phlegmatic
We saw this in Gen 13 when Abraham gave lot the choice of land to live on because they were" brethren and didn't want to quarrel with him."

But because of this personality Abe would go so far as lie in order to avoid conflict.

Ex. He lied to Pharo saying Sarai was his sister instead of his wife and not only put her in danger but bought sorrow to the ones he lied to (and... did it not once... but twice.)

Sarah pic 1-

Sarah pic 2 was a cleric as she was a competitive, impatient, jealous and sometimes harsh woman. And so instead of being patient and having faith in the Lord's promises... **she made her own faith.**

Ex. like she did by telling Abraham that the promises of God would come by a way and a time of her hosing through Hagar.

Hagar pic 1-

Hagar pic 2 is a melancholy whose name aptly means flight in Aramaic and is the type of person who has "thin skin" and because of this runs away from troubles and gives up instead of fighting to the end.

Ex. She escaped from Sarah who was mistreating her and God Himself made her return.

(We will see this personality show itself in this very chapter.)

Lot (his nephew)

Lot's wife

Lot was a sanguine which is the type **who always seeks excitement** and wants to be "where the actions is" which unfortunately puts him in the secular world along with the sinful pleasures and excitement that it offers.

This personality type can **play out multiple roles in life** even if those roles are conflicting.

Ex. He lived a double life by living in the most depraved, sinful environment imaginable ...and did it as a man of God. A believer living the role as an unbeliever.

All 4 of these characters fit the 4 different personality types

And we see how those personalities sometimes got in the way.

Sometimes with moments of weakness, sometimes moments of strength but **all 4 had been shown Grace by God despite those personality flaws.**

Now...I must admit that there was a question I have always wondered as a Christian for years and for me has been answered in part from the very chapter is...

WHAT IS THE DEAL WITH FAITH ANYWAY??? WHY FAITH?

Why is God so concerned with this word? Why would He made everything in His history based around Faith?

Think about it:

We can't please God without it...

We can't be saved without it!

We can't even pray to God without it...

So why faith then???

To answer that question let's all stand and read the first passage of scripture together... Lets read:

Gen 21-1

Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah

What he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.

Three times in this passage we see God boasting that He does what He promises.

You see, to God a promise is an everlasting unbroken covenant.

*And God understands that it's real hard to have a loving **relationship** with something you can't trust.*

My iPhone is like that. (Explain)

God wants to be perceived as someone that is always reliable so we can have a deeper trusting relationship with Him.

At the same time...He made Himself to be the standard of what He wants us to be.

- *He is reliable, so we are to be reliable.*
- *He is truthful, so we are to be truthful.*
- *And Look... He makes it known that He is trust worthy!*
- *Therefore we are to be trustworthy.*

God is the standard of what it means to be Godly.

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved [a]you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God [b]as a fragrant aroma.

But we are not these things in our society today.

*Rarely do we ever see those who are consistently truthful
Consistently dependable
Consistent in their promises*

And I believe it's because we don't have the standard anymore to follow.

So the first answer "why faith" is this ...

Answers: 1- Because we cannot fully know another person, all relationships require some degree of trust.

Especially when you're talking about an infinite God.

Next slide

Lack or loss of trust is one of the most harmful contagions to a couple's long-term success.

Without trust, a relationship misses two of the key anchors to a strong bond: safety and security.

God gets that. He understands that if we can't trust Him at His word, we can't have a strong relationship with Him. He wants to give us a sense of security in Him.

He wants us to feel safe in Him.

But because the world doesn't have God as the standard, they rely on other things to be their security.

- *Money*
- *Social groups*
- *Political party affiliation*

And because their standards are of the world they develop a whole different standard of morality.

- *Hollywood moralities*
- *Social media moralities*
- *School moralities*

And not surprisingly...people are more cynical than ever.

Because we live in an era where it's acceptable and normal to make unfulfilled promises

We throw promises around like confetti constantly without a second thought.

Just an afternoon at a shopping mall is filled with broken promises...

Nice to see you again...well keep in touch

To the salesmen- "let me think about it and I'll get right back to you"

We even text our broken promises "Hey I'm busy, I'll call you later"

What if we kept those promises?

Imagine the testimony we can have when we do keep in touch?

If we did get right back to them?

If we did callback later?

This is why the Lord told us in **Matthew 5:37 to let our yes be yes and our no be no! For whatever is more or less than this is from the evil one!**

If that's how we live...then the evil one is the standard bearer...not the Lord.

And all it does is hurt us and it hurts others!

And I know these seem like small insignificant promises but...if we can't keep a simple promise, how then will we ever keep big promises???

Look marriage vows In America:

Two people get together and swear to God and in front of witnesses and sign an agreement that I will forever be with you no matter what!!!

And yet...there is one divorce approximately **every 36 seconds in America alone**. . That's nearly **2,400 divorces per day,16,800 divorces per week, and 876,000 divorces a year**

876,000 broken promises a year.

That's compared to the 1950s when we maintained an average of **25,000 a year**.

The yearly divorce rate in the 50s was **less than two weeks today**.
Something we are doing is not working!

Interestingly, at the dawn of **free thinking and open mindedness** of the late 60s the divorce rate starting in 1967 tripled in the 1970s which saw an average of 100,000 a year.

Because of this free thinking, modern progressive mentality a circle has developed.

And this circle spins us further and further down a hole far removed from the promises of God.

Circle: No God to rely on so we must only rely on ourselves-

But...because people are flawed and are not trustworthy as a whole, we become cynical saying "I can't trust anyone"

Because of Cynicism we further cement our position of, I don't believe in God.

It's the circle that satan uses against us.

And all that does is hurt us and hurts others

"Broken vows are like broken mirrors, they leave those who hold on to them bleeding and staring at fractured images of themselves."

God Himself will have no part in that. He will be the standard to follow. God Himself makes it known that what I say... I do

Let's move on to the next verse...

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

In this verse that we see another answer to the question...why faith?

The first answer was that because we can't fully know someone, all relationships have to have trust.

2) **God requires faith because it exposes our true heart toward Him.**

God asked Abraham in chapter 17 to circumcise everyone in his household and now He commanded Abraham to do the same with... baby Isaac.

Show pic of Baby

So hears the point.... did you ever notice that sometimes having faith in God can seem really stupid?

It's the whole "why would I do that? That's dumb!
Ex. Not having sex before marriage? That makes no sense.

Can't curse? Why? It's just a word.

Well this passage shows us the answer.
God was making a covenant with Abraham that he would have a son in his old age.

But Abraham end of the bargain was to do this crazy thing... to a baby...and on a seemingly random day. The 8th day. And that is...

CIRCUMSITION!!!!

WHY? Doesn't that sound stupid (and a little painful?)

It's very difficult to talk about circumcision because of the nature of where it is performed.

Yet it is still a very common practiced today.

**Within Judaism it is call bris Meelah and is performed by a mohel
the instruments used today have not changed much over the centuries
except in western culture the methods for circumcision have become
more high tech .**

I mean...it does seem like a strange way to initiate a covenant, doesn't it?

Throughout the Old Testament God spoke to man in picture form.

Nothing was done without foreshadowing a spiritual truth to come.

Circumcision was a **symbol** of living a life apart from sin. To cut it out of our lives

In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, Col. 2:9-14

New Testament scriptures speak of a "spiritual circumcision." This is what God is after. This Old Testament law was simply an example and picture to help us understand what God was really after ... **a heart that was circumcised to him.**

Circumcision was performed on the most intimate and vulnerable part of the human body.

Circumcision is a personal matter. . It isn't a matter for public display like what the Pharisees would do..

Circumcision wasn't something everyone could see.

Why the 8th day? Is that just some random number?

Nope? There is also a medical reason that predated scientific discovery

In 1935, Professor H. Dam discovered and proposed the name “vitamin K” that assists in blood clotting along with element known as **prothrombin**. (Clotting of blood)

Vitamin K, coupled with prothrombin, causes blood coagulation, which is important in any surgical procedure.

If vitamin K is deficient, there will be a prothrombin deficiency and hemorrhaging may occur.

On the eighth day, the amount of prothrombin present actually is elevated **above one-hundred percent of normal**—and is the only day in the male’s life in which this will be the case under normal conditions.

If surgery is to be performed, day eight is the perfect day to do it. **Vitamin K and prothrombin levels are at their peak.**

You see this is all just reason after reason why we should just give the Lord the benefit of the doubt. Because He is trust worthy!

Last section for today:

Ishmael and Isaac were 14 years apart. When Isaac was weened at 5 years of age Ishmael was at that time 19.

So because of this memorable moment Abraham throws a party for Isaac because he was no longer weening.

So Ishmael becomes jealous and maybe angry as he sees his inheritance slip further away and mocks Isaac.

(Remember...all this time he was told by his dad that he was going to be

the promised child and Hagar thought that her life had this significant purpose only to see it vanish in the birth of the true child of promises.)

Sarah sees this and becomes concerned and wants to protect her son.

So she tells Abraham to send her and the boy away. Abraham becomes greatly distressed but God tells him that it will be ok.

When we make decisions in life apart from the lord, all we ever do is bring complexity into our lives. Sin makes life painful and more complex.

This situation was impossible. Hagar is upset, Ishmael is upset, Sarah is upset, Abraham is upset and why?

Because they didn't believe the promises of God.

They did it their way.

And that's always what happens. Complexity.

14 Early 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.

15 When 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.

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. 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.

And this teaches us several things.

You notice that God made it so that she would see she was borrowing trouble

Why did God allow Hagar to go through this? I mean she was already going to leave a decade or so earlier and God made her go back?

In order to for God to show us that He is faithful, we have to be placed in situations that require faith!

Flexing our faith muscles:

Faith is an **action** word or verb. (It shows that it requires motion.)

In other words faith cannot exist standing still. It's like a muscle. Muscles produce motion and when we don't move, the muscles become weak and atrophied sets in.

Now there are other action words as well.

Like doubt and fear both of which are being exercised here.

The problem is... the one we exercise the most becomes stronger in our lives.

But look at how even our muscles become stronger.

First, when you first started strength training, you may have discovered that you were stronger after 6 to 8 weeks of training.

That's not our muscles getting bigger

Although your muscles were no larger in size, you were able to lift more weight and do more reps. Those changes come from **neural adaptations** and are independent of muscle size.

What happens is, in response to training, your brain learns to recruit more muscle fibers...

Your brain is essentially remembering the amount of fibers it would use before and the forcing those muscle fibers to "chip in" and help with the lifting.

More muscle fiber recruitment means you can generate more force. At the same time, recruitment of motor units and fibers becomes more **synchronized and rhythmic**, so that muscle fibers work better as a team. Your brain and nervous system are teaching your muscles to work closer.

This is basically how our faith works as well.

When we are put in a situation that requires a **movement of faith** our faith slowly but steadily increases because all that we have is focused in prayer, maybe fasting, and we attend church more, read the Bible **and everything**

starts to synch up.

But remember...Our faith muscles are not any bigger, it's only all working together.

But as soon as the exercise is over (the need for our faith muscles stops) we again go out of sync and become weak again.

What is better is the longer lasting exercise.

You know, the one that became a life style!

That's when the growth is real...It's stronger because it's in synch AND bigger.

And when we have moments of breaks from the trials and we are in a season of rest, the strength remains for the next set of challenges.

And you know how those muscles grow?

The fibers literally **become torn.**

The hardship that the muscles endure literally rip apart at the cellular level, and then are forced to swell the cells and regenerate new ones.

And u know what? **It's painful.**

It aches not even as bad the first day but very much the next day.

And the only way to reduce the pain is to either medicate (bad idea) or **stretch out that muscle.**

- **Stretch your faith!**
- **Trust harder!**
- **Trust longer!**
- **Believe the impossible.**

Stretch those faith muscles **so the blood** can reach the muscle cells to bring healing.

Of course, a great deal of the work is making sure you have a **balanced diet** and you're fitting all of your macronutrient and caloric needs.

For the body builder it's **proteins and vitamin rich fruits and veggies living a healthy lifestyle.**

For the believer it's chewing God's word,

It's praying and fasting and living a life worthy of the faith which we have received.

Not one poisonous to the body through sin but enriching through righteousness.

That's why God allowed them to go through this and it's why God allows us all to go through our trials. And instead of sitting back and saying why me...why is it always me...

Realize it's because God loves you and wants you to be strong for the kingdom.

To be used. Not fat and lazy and having life breeze you by. He wants us to use our faith muscles so we can embrace the promises of God.

And what are the promises of God??

For those who are seeking direction in life the Lord promises:

That if you Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

So delight thyself in the LORD: and he will show you the desires of your heart.

Psalms 37:4

For those who waiting on an answer in your life God promises...

That they who wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. - Isaiah 40:31

To those who have been wronged or mistreated:

The LORD promises to be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. - Psalms 9:9

The LORD Himself shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.- Exo: 14

To the addict He promises:

Because God is faithful, he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." -1st Corinthians 10

For in the day of trouble he will keep you safe in his dwelling; he will hide you in the shelter of his sacred tent and set you high upon a rock. -Psalm 27

For those who are struggling Finances / Jobs God Promises

That the Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. Deut. 28:12

So bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. -Malachi 3:10

For those suffering with anxiety:

God promises you that you don't need to fear, “for I am with you;
You don't need to be dismayed “for I am your God.”

For even though you walk through a valley of the shadow of death you don't have to fear evil, because I am with you ,my rod and my staff they will comfort you

1 I am your refuge and strength, your ever-present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.

Though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging
“I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” -Isaiah 41:10

For those suffering with depression God promises:

That when the righteous cry, the Lord hears it, and will deliver you out of all of your troubles. -Psalms 34:17

That the Lord himself will go before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor abandon you. So, do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee. -Isaiah 54:10

So seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. -Matthew 6:33

Gospel presentation:

Romans 10:9 if you confess...

John 3:16 For God so loved...