

Three's Company | Abraham #4

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God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation. That promise required an heir. Abraham and his wife Sarah eventually got tired of waiting for God to act, so they took matters into their own hands. How long will you wait on God to come through for you before turning to your back-up plan?

Waiting on God Is No Easy Thing

It had been 10 long years since God's promise, and Abraham and Sarah still had no son. They were worried. Sarah had always been unable to bear children. Now they were also both beyond normal child-bearing age. Something had to be done! So Sarah hatched a clever plan. But it wasn't God's plan.

Deciding to Be Your Own Deliverer Is a Dangerous Game

In the ancient world, being childless was seen as a curse. Beyond that, God's grand promise could never be fulfilled without conceiving an heir. You can imagine Sarah's anxiety, how she must have brooded to come up with a solution to this problem. But her plan depended on others instead of on God.

Genesis 16:1-3 Now [Sarah], [Abraham's] wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. So [Sarah] said to [Abraham], "The Lord has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." And [Abraham] agreed with [Sarah's] proposal. So [Sarah], [Abraham's] wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to [Abraham] as a wife.

Ancient customs allowed an infertile woman to choose a servant to act as her surrogate. The baby born would be that woman's rightful heir. But according to Scripture, Abraham was wrong to sleep with a woman who wasn't his wife. This plan also exposed his lack of leadership, as he passively gave in to Sarah's scheme. The results were not helpful.

Playing God Often Leads to Broken Relationships

We can all rationalize our actions, but when we step outside of our rightful role to try to play God's role, people get hurt in the process.

Genesis 16:4-6 So [Abraham] had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, [Sarah], with contempt. Then [Sarah] said to [Abraham], "This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she's pregnant she treats me with contempt. The Lord will show who's wrong – you or me!" [Abraham] replied, "Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit." Then [Sarah] treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.

Being pregnant with Abraham's heir – named Ishmael – Hagar flaunted her pregnancy in Sarah's face. Sarah blamed Abraham for her humiliation, and asked God to discipline him because he agreed to try her plan! Abraham responded without compassion for either woman. He passively punted the problem back to his wife.

When we pursue our own Plan B rather than trusting in God's Plan A, there are consequences. In this case, everyone was in conflict. Relationships were broken.

Trusting God Enough to Wait for Him Is Always the Best Option

God is worthy of our trust because he always keeps his promises. In his own timing, God came through for Abraham and Sarah. Fast-forward fifteen years, when Abraham was 100 and Sarah, 90.

Genesis 21:1-2 *The Lord kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age.*

The promised child – named Isaac – was finally born. The rest of the Bible describes how God did produce a vast nation from Isaac's lineage. So God was true to his word. His plan worked!

But Abraham and Sarah's failed attempt to bring about the promise on their own made things worse. Not only was their family thrust into conflict, but the nations that arose from Ishmael (Arabs) and Isaac (Jews) are still at war with each other today. It's never good when we get impatient and get ahead of God. Heartache and damage will result.

Daily Readings

- Day #22 Reading: [Genesis 26](#)
- Day #23 Reading: [Romans 1](#)
- Day #24 Reading: [Romans 2](#)
- Day #25 Reading: [Romans 3](#)
- Day #26 Reading: [Romans 4](#)
- Day #27 Reading: [Romans 5](#)
- Day #28 Reading: [Romans 6](#)

Discussion Questions:

1. Watch the video together or invite someone to summarize the topic.
2. When you were growing up, who "wore the pants" in your family? Mom? Dad? Kids? How were decisions made?
3. Read [Genesis 16:1-2](#). What might this plan suggest about Sarah's emotional state?
4. What consequences of her plan did Sarah fail to foresee?
5. Read [Genesis 16:4-6](#). Describe how each person in this triangle expressed hostility or conflict.
6. Of the three main characters in this story – Abraham, Sarah and Hagar – which do you like the most? Or the least? Why?
7. Read [Genesis 21:1-3](#). What does this story reveal about God's patience and faithfulness?
8. In what area of life have you been waiting "10 years" for God to fulfill a promise? How do you cope with such delays?
9. Write a personal action step based on this conversation.