



Abram's Failures

Gen 12:10-20, 16:1-6, 20:1-13

[based on the sermon preached on 9.10.22 – available on the [church app](#) or at <https://lwac.org.au/sermons>]

KEY IDEAS

1. Abram is mostly an incredible man of faith. But when he faces several serious challenges he allows fear to overshadow or crowd out his faith.
2. Abram's faith fails in Egypt and Gerar, and with Sarai and Hagar, as he resorts to self-preservation and doing things his own way.
3. In spite of Abram's fear and failures, God is faithful to Abram and remains faithful to the covenant he made with Abram

CONNECT

- On a scale of 1 - 10, how easy (or difficult) is it to talk about your fears? (1 being very easy, you can't wait to tell someone: 10 being very difficult, you'd rather go to the dentist with no novocaine or anesthesia than tell someone about your fears.) Why do you think you find it easy or difficult to tell others about your fears? Why are you/we afraid to talk about our fears?

STUDY

Read Genesis 12:10-20

- As Abram goes down to Egypt, he realizes that because his wife, Sarai, is a beautiful woman his life may be in jeopardy. He is afraid. So he concocts a scheme for Sarai to lie about her being married to Abram and for her to be willing to be taken into Pharaoh's (or another prominent Egyptian's) harem, which will likely include sexual relations with another man. Admitting this is not Abrams' finest moment, what are some alternative actions Abram could have taken but did not? Think creatively; what else could Abram have done?
- We read in verses 14-15 that Abram's fears about other Egyptians wanting Sarai as their wife were realized; Abram's prediction came true. But v. 16 tells us that Abram then went on to be treated well, to be given favored trading status. In this way, Abram became wealthy. But this wealth was only because of his wife Sarai being in the harem of another man. Abram grows wealthy, Sarai suffers private indignity.

- What do you suppose was going through Abram's mind through all this? Do you think he was bothered by his success at the expense of his wife being in harm's way, in an adulterous relationship? Was fear still driving his silence in allowing this to continue? What do you imagine Sarai was going through? Do you think she resented Abram?
- As it plays out, Pharaoh is more upset by Abram's deception than Abram is. Are you surprised by this? After all, Abram is this great man of faith with whom God has entered into a binding covenant.
- What conclusions can we draw from this about the ability of non-believers to still be morally aware?
- What conclusions can we draw from this about God's faithfulness when God does not break his covenant with Abram even after Abram's fear and failure?
- Do you find comfort in the realization that God does not abandon or turn his back on Abram after this substantial failure due to fear?
- Throughout Abram's failure due to fear, God is faithful. Faithfulness is one of God's signature characteristics. Over 30 Psalms declare the faithfulness of God. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Cor 1:9, "God is faithful," and in 2 Tim 2:13, "If we are faithless, he (God) remains faithful."
- With this in mind, what is one area of your life where you are currently facing (or have in the past faced) fear? What would it look like to face this situation with faith instead of fear? What would need to change? What might the faithfulness of God look like in this situation?

Read Genesis 16:1-6

- Sarai's "Plan B" of trying to build a family through her servant, Hagar, may have been culturally acceptable at that time, but it still seems desperate when considering God's promise to Abram. Have you ever faced a desperate situation? What was that like? If you were a Christian at the time, was it difficult to keep the faith, to trust God in and through that situation?
- Why do you suppose Abram so easily and readily accepted Sarai's "Plan B" to build a family through Hagar, her servant? Do you think his fear and doubt (about God and his plan) were just as great as Sarai's?
- Of what do you think Abram and Sarai were afraid? That God had forgotten about them? That God was too slow in bringing about his plan? That God didn't have any plan at all? That God had changed his mind?
- How tempting is it for you to take matters into your own hands when you are afraid that God is being slow to act on your behalf?

- Share one situation for which you are currently waiting on God but in which it is becoming increasingly difficult to wait on God and trust him. What would your “Plan B” look like in this situation? How strong is the pull to go to your “Plan B”?

Read Genesis 20:1-13

- As you read through this passage, note the similarities and differences with Genesis 12:10-20. What are some of those similarities and differences?
- Are you surprised that years after the first encounter with Pharaoh wanting Sarah in his harem and Abraham’s lying about his being Sarah’s husband, he does it again? What do you suppose Abraham was thinking when he says the same thing: “she is my sister”? Why would he do this a second time?
- Are you equally surprised that Sarah willingly goes along with this scheme a second time?
- One of the more extraordinary features of this account is that even though Abraham does not protect Sarah, God does by appearing in a dream to King Abimelech and warning him of Sarah being married, exposing Abraham’s deception. What does this tell us about God’s ability to protect us and get us back on track even when we are acting in fear?

APPLY

- Identify one area or situation in which you are feeling afraid, where you are allowing fear, rather than faith, to reign. Talk to God about it. Then talk to someone else about it, someone who can be trusted with what you share. Fear loses some of its power to paralyze when it is brought out in the open, into the light.
- Which other aspect of this study has struck you the most and why? What are you going to do as a result ?
- Identify one or more truths from this study which speak to and can be applied in your life.

1.

2.

PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH AND FOR ONE ANOTHER

- According to need.