

WHICH WORK WORKS?

SERIES BREAK

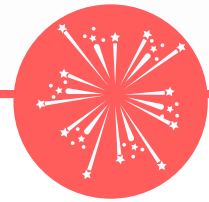


WORD

“So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

James 2:17 (ESV)

SPARKS



- Have you ever tried to make something happen too soon, only to realize later it wasn't the right time?
- Has there ever been a promise or dream you were waiting on God for, and you got tired of waiting?
- When you face a task that feels too big, is your first instinct to figure it out yourself or to ask God (and others) for help?

James reminds us that faith without works is dead, but not every kind of “work” honors God. Some work is entirely our own, mostly born of impatience. Some work is entirely God’s, arriving as pure miracle. And some work is a partnership, where God invites us to move even when it’s hard. Through Abraham’s story, this message walks through all three: his own shortcut with Hagar, God’s miraculous gift of Isaac, and the test of obedience on Mount Moriah. May this discussion help us tell the difference between striving in our own strength and faithfully working together with God.

1. OUR OWN WORK

Genesis 16:1-2

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; so she said to Abram, 'The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.'

When Abraham and Sarah grew tired of waiting on God's promise, they took matters into their own hands. Their solution produced a son, Ishmael, but also conflict, pain, and a family divided for generations.

Your own way may get you there faster, but it may also get you there illegally, unethically, or in sin.

When we stop waiting on God, we start justifying what we know is wrong. Our own work is what happens when we trust our timeline more than His. Is there an area right now where you're tempted to take a shortcut instead of waiting on God?

1

2. GOD'S WORK

Genesis 21:1-2

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.

Years after Abraham and Sarah's own attempt to fulfill God's promise failed, God did what only God could do: give Sarah a son in her old age, exactly as He had said.

When we stop trying to make it happen and start trusting God to make it happen, that's when the impossible becomes possible.

Our part is faithfulness. God's part is the miracle. Some breakthroughs are never meant to come from our effort; only from His power. What's one thing you're still waiting for God to do that you've stopped believing He can accomplish?

2

3. GOD AND US WORKING TOGETHER

Genesis 22:9–12

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar... But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham! Do not lay a hand on the boy... Now I know that you fear God.'

God later tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice Isaac, the very son of promise. Abraham obeyed, step by step, trusting God even when it made no sense. God provided a ram in the thicket and reaffirmed His covenant blessing. You don't get to skip your part just because it's hard. You get to trust God because it's hard.

God is not asking if we are able. He's asking if we're willing. The blessing is not stuck because God is withholding it; it's stuck because we haven't moved yet. What's one step of obedience God may be asking you to take, even if you don't fully understand where it leads?

LIVE IT!

- Set a goal too big for you to take credit for. A God-sized goal doesn't remove your responsibility, it multiplies your dependence on Him. (Isaiah 54:2)
- Don't pursue the goal alone, seek wise counsel. "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22). God often answers your prayer through someone who has already walked the road you're on.
- Move your feet, not just your mind. Put your faith into action. "By faith Abraham... obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8). You conquer fear by moving forward in spite of it, not by waiting for it to disappear.



PRAYER

- Ask God to reveal any area where you've been trying to force something to happen in your own strength or on your own timeline, and surrender your timing to His.
- Ask God for a goal too big for you to take credit for, and for the humility to seek wise counsel instead of pursuing it alone.
- Ask God for courage to take the next step of obedience today, trusting that He is not asking if you're able, but if you're willing.

