



## ***LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LADIES: Part Two***

### **SARAH: LESSON 15**

This week we will be looking at the wife of the great father Abraham: Sarah, originally Abram and Sarai. (For the purposes of our study, both names will be used interchangeably.) Before becoming his wife, Sarai was Abram's half-sister. They had the same father, but different mothers. Marriage between near relatives was common in this day, often for religious reasons or to preserve family bloodlines. It was acceptable for a husband and wife to share a father, but not a mother. As the female fountainhead of the Hebrew nation, she is one of the most revered women in the Bible and female figures in all of history. There is more written about her than any other woman in the Bible, so let's get started!

#### **First Day**

1. Read Genesis 12:1-9. What facts do you find? Where does this story take place? Are there any repeated words or phrases?

Abram lived in Haran with his father, Terah. Terah was a ninth generation descendent of Shem, who had survived the great flood of the earth with his father, Noah. After the ark reached dry land, the sons of Noah "disemb-ark-ed" (ha!) and were tasked with repopulating the earth. However, all of the people born after the ark congregated together and all spoke one language. After they determined to build themselves a great city and make a name for themselves, the Lord confused their language and dispersed them over the face of the earth. Terah's family ended up in Haran.

2. According to verse 1, what did the Lord direct Abram to do?

3. Who accompanied Abram on his journey?
  
4. What was the promise the Lord gave to Abram?
  
5. How old was Abram at this time?
  
6. Imagine for a minute that your husband (or family member or best friend) came to you and said that the Lord told them to pack up all your possessions and head out to a foreign land where you don't know anyone, and when you got there you would receive amazing blessings from the Lord. Would you have trouble believing them? How do you think Sarai might have been feeling about this?
  
7. Read verses 5-9. List all the places that Abram and his crew traveled.
  
8. What land did the Lord tell Abram He would give his descendants? What did Abram do there?

That's all for today. We'll look more at Abram and Sarai's adventure tomorrow. For now, start practicing your memory verse!

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised." Hebrews 11:11

**Second Day****Practice your memory verse.**

1. Read Genesis 12:10-20. Why did Abram travel to Egypt?
2. What did Abram ask his wife to say to the Egyptians? Why?
3. Fear can be a strong motivator for deception. What types of fears tempt you to be dishonest?
4. What happened next? (vs 15-17)
5. When Pharaoh summoned Abram, what did he say? What could he have done instead?

Later, in Genesis chapter 20, Abraham makes the same mistake with Abimelech the King of Gerar. (Instead of making our mistakes over and over, why don't we learn from them?)

6. In Genesis 20:12, what technicality does Abraham try to use to justify this deception?
7. Look up and define the word "deceive."

8. Is it possible to deceive and tell the truth at the same time?
  
9. What would you do if your husband put you in a position to lie or asked you to deceive someone in some way? What are the challenges in this?

Although we know that lying is a sin, let's not judge Sarah too harshly. We live in a very different world. In her patriarchal ancient Eastern society, she would face great risk for going against her husband's wishes, not to mention the danger that might be in store for Abraham. Eastern rulers were known to take beautiful women into their harem and remove any obstacles to do so. The consequences we have today may be very different, but oftentimes we are faced with the same conflict: be dishonest or face the consequences of our honesty. Lord, please give us the strength to conduct ourselves with honesty and integrity and trust You with the results!

Let's continue with the story of Abraham and Sarah's journey.

10. Read Genesis 13:1-9. Where did Abram and his household travel to?

Abram and his family had prospered in Egypt. Their possessions became so great and their livestock so plentiful that the land of the Negev and Bethel could not support it all.

11. What did Abram say to Lot when quarreling arose between his servants and Lot's?

As the patriarch, Abram would have been well within his rights to take first claim on the better plot of land. Instead, he yields and gives his nephew first choice.

12. When you are faced with conflict, do you tend to give way to others or fight for your own rights? What does Philippians 2:3 say about this?

13. Lot chose \_\_\_\_\_ and Abram settled in \_\_\_\_\_.

14. How is the plain of the Jordan described in verse 10?

15. Spoiler alert! What happens to this land later? Why? (vs 13)

Lot was a true believer, but a shortsighted one. William MacDonald said, "Lot was a world-borderer. He got grass for his cattle, while Abram got grace for his children."

16. In verses 14-17, the Lord confirms His promise to Abram. How many times has the Lord confirmed His promise so far?

17. How does Abram respond in verse 18?

Every time the Lord speaks to Abram, he responds in worship. Abram spends his whole life as a nomad. Instead of building a house for himself, he continuously builds an altar for the Lord.

### **Third Day**

**Review your memory verse. How does Sarah's example boost your own faith?**

As we read yesterday, the Lord promised He would give Abram not only a beautiful parcel of land, but descendants so numerous it would be impossible to count them; the most blessed nation that was or will ever be.

1. Read Genesis 15:1-7. In verse 2, what question does Abram have regarding the Lord's promise?
2. What specific answer does the Lord give in verse 4?
3. At this point, Sarah was 89 years old and had been barren her whole life. Despite this, what does verse 6 say?

Perhaps you know the heartache that comes with infertility; what it's like to grieve month after month after month.

4. What kind of emotions might Sarah have felt through all those years?
5. Read Genesis 16:1-6. Even though Abram believed God would bring them a biological son, it's understandable that Sarah would feel helpless, hopeless, and want to take matters into her own hands. What solution does she come up with in verses 1-2?
6. How does Sarai respond when Hagar conceives?
7. When Sarai brings her complaints to Abram, how does he handle the conflict?

Her plan seemed to work at first. But as soon as Hagar becomes pregnant, Sarai despises her servant and blames her husband. Sarai doesn't know how to deal with the difficult situation, so she mistreats Hagar and drives her away.

8. Have you ever found yourself mistreating others unjustly? What can happen when, instead of dealing with the consequences of our actions, we blame shift, take our frustrations out on others, or try to just cast it out and avoid it altogether?
  
9. Are you often tempted to take matters into your own hands like Sarai? When is it appropriate to take action? What is the difference between inactivity and waiting on the Lord?

Now let's look at this story from another angle. Sarai knew that Abram had received the promise from the Lord but felt the heaviness of her own inability to bring it to pass. Perhaps her decision to bring in Hagar came more from a place of insecurity than an attempt for control. As one translation says, "Take Hagar my maid, and let not the promises of God fail through me."

10. Do you ever feel like you are insufficient to fulfill your husband's needs, plans, or goals? Or your own?
  
11. Do you think you are disqualified from God's service because of your sins, faults, or imperfections? Do you think that you are incapable of accomplishing God's promises? What does Ephesians 2:10 say about this?

12. How can our own insecurities lead us to make poor decisions?

Although it was common at the time for a man to take a concubine in order to have an heir, God had promised that Sarah would bear the promised seed. It didn't matter if Sarah was pretty enough, smart enough, or organized enough. It didn't even matter that Sarah wasn't biologically able! God had a purpose for Sarah and not even her own insecurities could thwart His plans. God has a purpose and plan for each of us as well, ladies, so let's submit ourselves to Him and watch Him work.

In verse 9, we see that Hagar is told to return to Sarai, and she later bears a son to Abram. Even though it was the right thing to do, it must have been very difficult for Sarai to receive her back.

13. Is there an estranged relationship in your life that needs to be reconciled? Do you need to humble yourself and ask for forgiveness from someone you have mistreated? Or maybe you are the one who has been cast aside and taken advantage of. Ask the Lord to soften your heart and forgive. What can you do to make peace with the other person? Share with your group.

We read this same story from the perspective of Hagar in our first session of *Life Lessons from the Ladies*. Before wrapping up, take a few minutes to review that lesson.

#### **Fourth Day**

##### **Have you been practicing your verse?**

1. Read Genesis 17:1-16. In our story we see that God confirms His covenant with Abram (again!) and does some name changing. What does the name Abraham mean?



Sarai-“quarrelsome” becomes Sarah-meaning “lady or princess,” the feminine form of the common title Sar, used by the Semites to designate a ruler. In verse 16 it says, “I (the Lord) will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.” Sarah, now 89 years old, has yet to conceive a child, but has been given the name with an air of royalty that designates her as the mother of many great rulers. The Lord names it, and she claims it!

2. What are some “now but not yet” names we have been given by the Lord? Write any Scriptures you find on this. How can we claim these promises now as we wait for their complete fulfillment?
  
3. Their future son’s name is provided by the Lord as well. The name Isaac (Hebrew Yitzchak) means “he will laugh.” When the Lord clearly stated that Abraham’s blessed nation would come through a son born to Sarah, what did Abraham do? (verse 17) Do you think it was unbelief? Explain.
  
5. Read Genesis 18:1-15. Let’s bypass the question about a husband bringing home unexpected guests and requesting a meal be thrown together and go straight to verse eleven. When Sarah overheard (ahem, “eavesdropped”) the guests say that she would bear a child, what did she do?
  
5. When someone speaks God’s promises or blessings over you, do you laugh to yourself like Sarah? What is the Lord’s response to Sarah’s scoffing in verse 14?

6. Are you facing a hard situation right now? Perhaps it is your own infertility, a seemingly impossible financial situation, or a scary health prognosis. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Read Matthew 17:20 and Luke 1:37 and write your thoughts.

Meditate on these verses today.

Also, practice your memory verse!

### **Fifth Day**

**Write out your verse from memory.**

Today we will be reading one of the most difficult passages of Scripture, but we aren't going to shy away from it or gloss over it. Let's face it together head on and see what the Lord wants to reveal to us through it.

1. Read Genesis 22:1-19. Summarize what is happening in this story.

Although Sarah is not specifically mentioned in this story, we know that she is definitely affected by it. There are a lot of details we do not know, however. Did she know what God had told Abraham before he headed up the mountain? Did Isaac come running and crying to her after the events transpired? Did Abraham confide in her afterward, overwhelmed with relief over what could have been? Try to put yourself in the story and in Sarah's position as you consider the following questions.

2. If Abraham had told her beforehand what he intended to do, do you think she would have willingly let them go? Would you have?
  
3. How do you think you would handle it if the Lord asked you to give up your most prized possession, whether it be Him speaking to you personally or through your husband? It could be your home, your job, or even less tangible things like your reputation or privacy. They say we all have an "Isaac" we need to lay down. What is yours, and how attached to it are you?
  
4. Whether Sarah knew Abraham's intentions before, after, or not at all, she was in the position of having to submit to her husband's leadership as he was led by God. Read Ephesians 5:22-24 and Colossians 3:18. What is the key given in these Scriptures?

We know from Hebrews 11:19 that Abraham believed that even if his son died, the Lord could raise him from the dead.

5. Abraham heard directly from the Lord. What difficulties does this present to us as wives? How can we know that our husband is following the leading of the Lord? What protection do we have in our submission?
  
6. How does 1 Peter 3:6 say that Sarah serves as an example for us as wives?

Tikva Frymer-Kensky, a Jewish historian, explains that Sarah's (and our) submission is not a matter of inferiority, but of order. She states, "Although the Bible portrays a patriarchal social structure, it has a gender-neutral ideology. The women in the Bible are socially subordinate but

not essentially inferior; they have strong, independent personalities, and they often act to guide the course of events.”

In verses 12-14, the Lord stops Abraham, spares Isaac, and provides a replacement sacrifice. This story of Isaac is the most beautiful picture we have of the work that Abraham’s descendent, Jesus, would one day accomplish: taking our place and sacrificing Himself for our sins.

7. Thankfully, we are not in the position of God asking us to sacrifice our children on an altar. However, we must recognize that our children do not belong to us alone. Above all else, they are God’s. Do we ever make our children idols? How?
  
8. What are some practical ways we can “lay down” our children before the Lord? (Think of examples from their young age all the way through their transition to adults.)
  
9. What are some ways we can loosen our grip on the other things in life that we may be clinging to much too tightly?

Genesis 23 tells about the death of Sarah, and in the following chapter Isaac takes a wife to comfort him after the death of his mother. Isaac indeed does go on to fulfill God’s promise of a great nation: he is the father of Jacob, later renamed Israel, who would be the father of the 12 men who would become the 12 tribes of the nation of Israel. In Matthew chapter 1, we see a genealogy that takes us all the way from Father Abraham to Jesus the Messiah.

Sarah would also make her way into the New Testament as one of the great heroines of faith in Hebrews chapter 11, being one of only two women mentioned by name.

10. Read Hebrews 11:8-16. List the things that Abraham and Sarah did “by faith.”

Abraham and Sarah didn’t live to see all of God’s promises to them fulfilled, but they lived their lives as if those promises had already come to pass. They set their eyes on a heavenly hope, and God blessed them with an eternal promised land!

(This lesson was written by Dawn Spice! ☺)

