

CONFIDENCE IN THE FACE OF FEAR

Leader pages on pp. 134-137

THE POINT:
TRUST GOD WHEN YOU
ARE OVERWHELMED
WITH FEAR.

GENESIS 12:10-13,17-13:4

¹⁰ There was a famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to stay there for a while because the famine in the land was severe.

¹¹ When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife, Sarai, "Look, I know what a beautiful woman you are.

¹² When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' They will kill me but let you live.

¹³ Please say you're my sister so it will go well for me because of you, and my life will be spared on your account."

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¹⁷ But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Abram's wife, Sarai.

¹⁸ So Pharaoh sent for Abram and said, "What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me she was your wife?

¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She's my sister,' so that I took her as my wife? Now, here is your wife. Take her and go! "

²⁰ Then Pharaoh gave his men orders about him, and they sent him away with his wife and all he had.

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^{13:1} Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev—he, his wife, and all he had, and Lot with him.

² Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.

³ He went by stages from the Negev to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had formerly been,

⁴ to the site where he had built the altar. And Abram called on the name of the Lord there.

MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

Sister (v. 13)—Abram was technically asking Sarai to be truthful since she was his half-sister. But Abram's intent was to deceive Pharaoh.

The Lord struck ... plagues (v. 17)—This act foreshadowed what God would do in Moses's day to bring the Israelites out of Egypt

(Ex. 12:29), to take them to the promised land.

Bethel (v. 3)—An area of Canaan with greater rainfall—and more vegetation—than the Negev. This move probably was to feed the large flocks of Abram and his nephew Lot.

HOW DOES TRUST IN GOD HELP US OVERCOME FEAR?

What do you fear? Whether we want to admit it or not, fear is something we all wrestle with. Your fears could include standing on a tall ladder, a spider crawling on you, being the victim of violence, or getting sick and battling a disease. Or you may fear losing a job, something happening to one of your kids or grandkids, or just being alone. And a lot of people have the fear of death and not being completely certain what will happen after they die.

While some fears may seem small, any fear can have a crippling effect. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted some of the things that can happen when fear takes hold. There were fights in stores over the last pack of toilet paper. Fear can cause our minds and bodies to become almost paralyzed. For some people, just imagining that spider crawling on your skin—can fill them with fear.

What do we do when the ugly little head of fear begins to creep into our lives? An example from Abram's life shows us what we should do—and what we shouldn't do.

Focus on God Not Fear

// Genesis 12:10-13

A famine swept across the land of Canaan. God had called Abram to Canaan and made a covenant with him to provide land and offspring. However, the famine was so severe that fear kicked in and Abram chose to take his family to Egypt. Abram had fled the famine in fear, but he seemed to have traded that apprehension for the fear of being oppressed by the Egyptians. That fear led him to respond irrationally.

Abram's response should not surprise us since fear has the ability to reduce our sound judgment and logical reasoning. We see this on display as we see Abram's fear inducing him to hand over his beautiful wife Sarai to the Egyptian pharaoh so that his own life would be spared. We might think Abram was being totally irrational in passing off Sarai as his sister and not his wife, but perhaps it was in line with the cultural thinking of that time. Abram may have truly thought he was protecting his own life and doing the right thing even though this was a lie.



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WHEN HAS FEAR CAUSED YOU TO ACT IRRATIONALLY?

Simon Peter modeled the principle that when we focus on God, the less we focus on our fear. He and the other disciples were in a boat when a storm came up and began to pummel the boat in the waves. To their amazement, Jesus came to them walking on the water. With Jesus' command to come, Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on water! But when Peter began to look around at his surroundings and took his focus off of Jesus, fear swept in, and he began to sink (Matt. 14:22-33).

Fear and uncertainty strike at all of us. In those moments, we need to remember what Abram seemed to forget: God is with us and He will take care of us. In those moments, we must take our attention off of the fear and focus instead on the Father. Or, put another way, turn your worry into worship. Reasons to fear will always be around, but we have far more reasons to worship God. When we change our worry to worship and carry our fear to the Father, our perspective becomes clearer.

WHAT ARE SOME SITUATIONS THAT CAN CAUSE US TO BE FEARFUL INSTEAD OF TRUSTING GOD?

Our Fear Impacts Others // Genesis 12:17-20

When Abram arrived in Egypt, the beauty of his wife Sarai captured the attention of the palace officials. Sarai went along with her husband's scheme. The officials raced to Pharaoh with the news that a beautiful new woman was available in his land. Pharaoh had Sarai brought to his palace. In exchange for Sarai, the Pharaoh lavished Abram with valuable gifts.

Imagine what Sarai must have been feeling in that moment. The text is silent regarding any response from Sarai, but she surely must have felt betrayed by her husband. Confusion, hurt, and fear were probably not far off. She likely questioned any confidence she had in God's promise to Abram.

WHEN HAVE YOU FELT BETRAYED BY SOMEONE?

Here's an important truth: fear not only can reduce our faith, but it also can affect the faith of those around us. By relying on his circumstances instead of putting his confidence in God's promise, Abram affected the faith of Sarai and also forced her



DIGGING DEEPER THE NEGEV

The Negev region that Abram crossed when leaving Egypt (Gen. 13:1-4), is a pie-shaped piece of land at the southern end of Israel. At its widest point, it is about 70 miles. It is a harsh, dry, desert region. Unlike the sandy Saharan deserts one might imagine, this region is much more like an Arizona desert. It is full of dirt, rocks, and canyons. It's also hot and dry, receiving less than 8" of rain per year. But, the Negev also features some beautiful landscapes, caves, waterfalls, craters, and important biblical archeological sites. This region also had cities such as Beersheba and Ziklag. The Negev is made up of almost half the land mass of Israel. The modern day city of Beersheba has well over 200,000 people.

What are some barriers to confidence people face today?

to lie. Admittedly, Abram's statement, "She is my sister," was technically not a lie. Abram and Sarai had the same father but different mothers (Gen. 20:12). This may sound strange to us, but in the ancient world, marriage within a family or tribe was common.

So here we have Abram and Sarai, half siblings, telling a half truth. We must remember that a half-truth always equals a full-lie. There is no way around it. The fear of getting caught or the fear of telling the full story only shows the lack of confidence we have in God to go before us. Those fears can lead to lies, and those lies only lead to hurting ourselves and those around us.

Abram's fear-induced lie also impacted Pharaoh and his entire household. Innocent people who had no idea what was going on were affected, as the Lord struck Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues. Scripture does not reveal the specifics of the plagues, but they were intense enough for Pharaoh to react and get to the bottom of Abram's lie. How ironic that we see a pagan Pharaoh calling out the great, faithful patriarch Abram. How humbling that must have been for Abram to get a moral lesson from a pagan Pharaoh!

Abram might have been a great influence among the Egyptians, pointing them away from their idols toward the one true God. But the opportunity for Abram to exercise any leadership was being dismantled by his fear and lack of faith. The level of our fear and faith today can have a ripple effect on others either for good—or bad. Fear and faith are both highly contagious. When chaos or trouble strikes, or when we have the opportunity to lead or influence others, we should consider how our attitudes and actions will impact them.

WHEN HAS YOUR FAITH OR FEAR HAD A RIPPLE EFFECT ON OTHERS?



Overcome Fear in God's Presence // Genesis 13:1-4

After Pharaoh gave the orders to leave and get out of Egypt, Abram took Sarai, his family, and all his possessions and started the journey back into Canaan. What could have been going on in Abram's mind as he traveled through the desert of the Negev after such a spiritual defeat?

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU EXPERIENCE A SPIRITUAL DEFEAT AND FALL INTO SIN?

When Abram heard the words from Pharaoh to go, he might have recalled God's promise when He said to him, "Go from your land" (Gen. 12:1). Abram seemed to forget God's promise when he felt threatened, but that's true for most of us. In those moments, we must remember that, even when we are unfaithful, God remains faithful (2 Tim. 2:13). God defines faithfulness by His very character; that is just who He is. When He makes a promise, He will keep it.

After we fail, it can be so easy to wallow in failure and to stop allowing God to move in us. Abram did not stop, nor did he leave his faith in Egypt. He moved back to where he came from—the place where he knew and worshiped God. The enemy loves to grab a shovel and bury us

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with the guilt of our past failures. We must keep moving so the dirt of guilt doesn't cover us, and we must keep moving toward the One who loves us and is ever faithful to us.

Abram went back to where he first built his altar. Perhaps Abram retraced his steps back to that place to show humility, to express remorse for his misconduct, to renew his allegiance, to remind himself of the original promise, to show his gratitude for God's mercy, or a combination of all these! The important thing is that he understood who he was and who God is. Abram's act of worship reflects his recognition of the incredible mercy God granted to him instead of the incredible judgment He could have granted.

While we recognize that fear reduces our faith and confidence in the Lord, one form of fear actually strengthens our faith. It is a fear we must increase, not decrease, in our lives: a healthy, reverent fear of the Lord. "In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence" (Prov. 14:26). The more we deepen our reverent fear of God, the more our faith and trust in His mercy grows.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1954, the African-American population of Belzoni, Mississippi outnumbered white residents 2–1. Yet they couldn't go to white schools, sit in certain bus seats, eat in white restaurants, and couldn't vote. The Reverend George Lee was a black minister who also ran a grocery store as well as a printing press. Lee wanted change, and he knew it would begin with the right to vote. George Lee, along with Gus Courts, started a chapter of the NAACP in their area. They printed information brochures and encouraged people to register to vote. At the time, African-Americans were required to pay a poll tax, which Lee encouraged them to do. Threats were made against Lee. As a result, white officials offered him protection on the condition he would stop encouraging people to register to vote. Lee refused and chose to confidently stand for rights and freedoms. On May 7, 1955, Lee was shot in the face while driving his car. He later died at the hospital.

How can the enemy use fear to weaken our faith and confidence?

LIVE IT

In what ways can you trust God in your fear?

The world can be a dangerous place at times, but God calls us to live in this world. This requires faith that He will be with us and enable us to endure and overcome whatever we encounter. Fear and uncertainty strike us all. In those moments, we need to take our attention off of the fear and focus instead on the Father. When we change our worry to worship and carry our fear to the Father, our perspective becomes clearer.

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- **Identify your fear.** Pinpoint one specific area of consistent fear in your life. Why does that fear continue to return to you? Make a plan to praise God despite this fear, praying into it.
- **Examine your influence.** It's possible your fears in the past have affected others. Ask God to reveal any people you have hurt because of fear. Ask for forgiveness from those people when appropriate.
- **Live in obedience.** Is there something God has been asking you to do that you've been too afraid to do? It's time to live in obedience regardless of your fears.

DAILY READINGS

1. IT'S ALL GONE // GENESIS 12:10

"There is absolutely no toilet paper here!" Do you remember that feeling? It seemed as if everything came crashing down as we all scrambled to find basic supplies. Some people physically fought each other for that last item on the shelf. Abram and Sarai found themselves in a similar, yet more serious, situation as there was a severe famine in the land. Famines can cause great devastation, including uncontrollable diseases, acute malnutrition, and even death by starvation. Therefore, Abram and Sarai were faced with a reality with no food. Regardless of the situation; however, we can trust in God's care and protection. God will provide.

In the midst of fearful circumstances, trust God's faithful love and care.

2. MAKING A MESS OF THINGS // GENESIS 12:17-19

Abram really made a mess of things when he decided to handle matters into his own hands rather than completely trust God's leadership. His lie about to Pharaoh caused God to strike Pharaoh's household with plagues. How often have you experienced issues because you've taken matters into your own hands, rather than trust God? He has promised to be with us and will enable us to endure whatever circumstances we may encounter. If we're not careful, our fear can have a ripple effect that can impact others—just like what happened to Pharaoh's household in these verses.

Trust God even when you are overwhelmed with fear.

3. GOD WILL // PSALM 91:14-16

When faced with fear that overwhelms you, do as so many of the psalmists did—reflect on who God is. Psalm 91 is an incredible psalm of trust in who God is and what He will do for His children—those who abide in His presence. God spoke to the psalmist, saying, "Because he loves me." God says these

same words to you when you express and show your love and trust to Him.

Personalize these verses by adding your name "Because _____ has set his or her heart on me, I will deliver _____" and pray this aloud to God.

4. CRUSHING CONFLICT // PHILIPPIANS 2:2-4

Being in relationships with other people generally means you will experience conflict at some point. Relationships and conflict often go hand-in-hand. Choosing how to handle that conflict, especially conflict among believers, can be a demonstration of one's trust in God. The apostle Paul challenged believers to be united in spirit and to avoid conflict by considering the needs of others above our own. When we boil it down, a lot of our conflicts stem from our own personal desires or selfish ambitions. Remember this is the stuff that ruins our churches and the relationships within our homes.

Prayerfully consider if you are more interested in looking out for your own interests or for the interests of others.

5. PROMISE KEEPER // DEUTERONOMY 31:8

At one point or another, we've all had someone break a promise. It hurts and it disrupts our relationship. Eventually, after enough promises are broken, we have a hard time believing any promise that anybody makes—including God. But God is not like the rest of us. Because of who He is—our holy and righteous God, He keeps all of His promises. In Deuteronomy 31, God promised His people that He would never leave them or abandon them. That promise is for us too. God will never leave you alone, He will never abandon you, and He will never turn His back on you. So no matter what we are facing, we should not be afraid, because the all powerful, all knowing God is by our side. Wherever you are, God will be with you.

Thank God that He keeps His promises and that He is always with you.



My Notes

Name

Email

Session Number

Answer 4 Questions

What did You learn?

What Is God saying to you?

What are you gonna do about it?

**Do you have any questions
about the reading?**





My Notes

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