

IMPATIENCE

GENESIS 15:1-6; 16:1-6

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay's ETB materials.)

1. Have you ever taken a shortcut that didn't turn out to be good?

Shortcuts are often helpful—until they lead away from where we should be, that is. In 2011, news broke of the discovery of a woman who had gone missing some seven weeks earlier. The lady and her husband were on a trip from Canada to Las Vegas when their GPS unit led them onto a snow-covered dirt road in the mountains of northern Nevada. Soon, they got stuck in mud and snow. After three days the husband tried to hike out to get help. The wife stayed behind in the van, surviving on snow, water, and trail mix. Finally, forty-eight days later, she was found by hunters in the area. Her husband's body was discovered more than a year later. Not all short cuts can be trusted.

2. When did you take a shortcut only to discover it was a bad decision?

3. Why is it so difficult for us to have patience? (We live in a fast-paced world where you can order something from Amazon and have it delivered the same day, in some cases! We prepare a meal in the microwave in a matter of minutes. We have the answer to almost any question at our fingertips.) God always delivers but on His time schedule not ours. When we try to take charge and rush God's timing we always get into trouble.

Today's study explores a time when Abram and Sarai got tired of waiting and tried to circumvent God's plan by creating a plan of their own.

Genesis 15 begins with the phrase, "After these events..." what events does this phrase refer to? In Genesis 12 we saw how God called Abram and promised to make a great nation out of him, from whom the Messiah would eventually come, to bless the whole world. The whole rest of the Old Testament is the gradual unfolding of that story.

In chapter 13 Abram and Lot's men were quarreling, and Abram exercised Biblical "meekness" and gave Lot first choice of the land—but God promised Abram the whole land would one day be his and his descendants' land.

In Chapter 14 Abram must rescue Lot, who was carried away captive by a coalition army of 4 kings. Abram leads his men against them and wins a battle with the kings, rescues Lot and all the possessions they had taken, and Melchizedek comes out to meet him and blessed him, and Abram tithed all he had gained in the battle. The king of Sodom told Abram he could have all the things he rescued from the opposing kings, but Abram said no, he wasn't going to take any of his possessions. That brings us to today's text.

BELIEVED! Read Genesis 15:11-6

1. Why do you think Abram might have been afraid? (Maybe he was afraid there would be continued conflict with the kings, and the people of the land. OR maybe he was afraid that he was not going to have an heir.)
2. What are some things we can be afraid of today? (Crime, sickness, death, loss of loved one, financial distress, business failure, broken relationships, conflict, war, etc.)
3. What is God's word to us today about these fears? (It is the same as it was for Abram: "Do not be afraid.")

I read this week in two different resources that the phrase "Do not be afraid" or "fear not" is in the Bible 365 times. When fear dominates our life, everything gets out of perspective; everything gets distorted.

4. Why did God tell Abram "do not be afraid?" (Because the Lord, Himself will be your shield!)
5. What was Abram's great reward? (It would seem that taken in the context that the "great reward" would be Abram's many offspring. But it could be that God Himself is the "great reward.")
6. Notice how honest Abram was with God. What was Abram's great concern? (He had no son to continue his blood line.)

7. What did God promise Abram about an heir? (He would have one from his own body.)
8. Where did God take Abram to drive home the point that Abram would have many descendants? (God took him outside the tent to see the stars. That's what your descendants will number if you could count them.)
9. Verse 6 is one of the most important verses in the entire Bible! Why is that true? (This is quoted FOUR TIMES in the New Testament—Rom. 4:3; 22; Gal. 3:6; and James 2:23.)

“Here is a man justified by faith before his circumcision, before the law, before Moses and the Ten Commandments. Here is a man justified by faith before the cross! The sin-covering blood of Calvary extends as far into the past as it does into the future.”

Read 2 Cor. 5:21. “When Jesus died on the cross, He bore our sins, paying our sin debt in full through the sacrificial offering of His body.” The Father's wrath and punishment for our sin were placed squarely on His Son.

That is the biblical doctrine of justification. Jesus Christ dying on our behalf and rising again to remove our guilt and acquit us before the bar of God's holy justice.

When you, by grace through faith, believe in Christ as your Savior from sin, a supernatural change of condition occurs. At the moment of your salvation, the very righteousness of God—His holy, moral character—is imparted to you. Christ instantly and permanently transforms your sinful state.”—Charles F. Stanley.

10. How does faith in God produce right standing before God? (All of our sin is placed on Jesus and His righteousness is placed on us.)

This is the MOST important truth we find in Scripture and unless we place our faith in God, like Abram did, we are forever lost!

IMPATIENT! Read Genesis 6:1-4

1. If you could go back in time and eliminate one mistake in your life, what would it be? Why? Apparently, Sarai's infertility seemed like a hurdle that even God could not overcome. So, Sarai concocted a plan to bring about what God had promised.

It was not uncommon in the culture of that day for a servant or slave to bear children in the situation Sarai was in. But that certainly was not God's plan.

2. What are some things in culture that are widely accepted but still violate God's plan? (Abortion. Homosexuality. Etc.)

Abram agreed with Sarai's plan. Despite having just heard from God, he followed his wife's lead without considering God's will in the matter. Hagar became pregnant by Abram and began to view Sarai with disdain. This was a hint at the future tensions between the descendants of Abram through Sarai and the descendants of Abram through Hagar.

3. What are the dangers of looking for a shortcut to fulfill God's promises? (It is disobedience and a lack of faith in God's promises.)

When we try to get around God's plans and promises, we can make things worse. That's what happened to Sarai.

IMPETUOUS! Read Genesis 16:5-6

1. What kind of excuses do people create when they try to do things without God? (Everybody else is doing it. I got tired of waiting. Blame someone else.)

Sarai was upset with Hagar's disposition toward her, and she blamed Abram. She even called on the Lord to “judge” between them concerning who was right and wrong. The truth is both Abram and Sarai were responsible.

Abram told Sarai to do with Hagar whatever she wanted. Consequently, Sarai mistreated Hagar. Eventually, Hagar ran away in desperation.

2. How does doing things our own way only make things worse? (Any time we are outside God's will, we will make things worse. Abram knew it was not right.)
3. How do you see that in these verses? (Relationships were destroyed.)

CHALLENGE!

- We can celebrate being declared righteous through faith.
 - We must safeguard against accepting shortcuts to God's plan.
 - Believers must take responsibility for their own sin.
1. How does being part of a Bible study group help safeguard against taking shortcuts to God's plans?
 2. What are some things you have tried to do without God?
 3. How would waiting on God have led to different outcomes?
 4. What would it look like to take responsibility for your sin?

Until we take responsibility for our own sin we can't confess, repent and receive forgiveness.

Pray