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## OPENING COMMENT

Sarah and Abraham have been waiting 24 years for the promises of God to finally come to fruition. Each month that passed signaled a new disappointment, until Sarah's monthly cycle was long over. Her hope for an heir passed with her physical capacity to procreate and so she doubts the promises of God. Everything in her experience is telling her that this promise is an impossibility, that God cannot deliver.

More often than not, we find ourselves in the same pattern of doubt and skepticism. We look at the physical circumstances around us and think that God could not possibly remedy or redeem it. We run through the list of possible solutions and determine that it is impossible. What we fail to understand, like Sarah, is that our problem is not practical, physical, or pragmatic. Instead, our problem is theological.

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## READ THE TEXT: Genesis 18

And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup> He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth <sup>3</sup> and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. <sup>4</sup> Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, <sup>5</sup> while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." <sup>6</sup> And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes." <sup>7</sup> And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it



quickly. <sup>8</sup> Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

<sup>9</sup> They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent."<sup>10</sup> The Lord said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.<sup>11</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. <sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" <sup>13</sup> The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?'" <sup>14</sup> Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." <sup>15</sup> But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."

## UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. What is the difference between what Abraham offers the three travelers and what he prepares for them?
2. Although the story is narrated by Moses, at what point in the story does Abraham become aware that he is speaking with God himself?
3. What does Sarah's response say about her, and Abraham's, physical state?
4. How does the Lord's response address Sarah's concerns?
5. What was Sarah's response to God pointing out her doubt?

## APPLYING THE TEXT

1. Although Abraham's hospitality may be foreign to our sensibilities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, how might we begin to show similar hospitality to those God brings across our paths?
2. What areas in life do you currently find yourself thinking like Sarah? What has brought you to that point?
3. How might we begin to train ourselves to think theologically about our circumstances instead of pragmatically?
4. Where do you go, or what do you do to remind yourself of God's capacity in your life?
5. In what ways would confidence in an all-powerful God act as an apologetic to the world around us?



## BIBLICAL THREAD

1. Genesis 21 – Isaac is born, and the promise of God is fulfilled.
2. Jeremiah 32:16-35 – God uses the same question (Is anything too difficult for the Lord?) In regard to exile and Israel's eventual return.
3. Job – The book wrestles with the struggle of suffering and God's ultimate control over it. In particular the last chapters outline God's response to Job's wrestling, which is simply to show Job His grandeur.
4. Matthew 19:16-30 – The parable and the rich young man. Jesus talks about salvation as being only possible with God.
5. 2 Corinthians 4:7-18 – Paul wrestles with the suffering we endure and compares it to the glory to come.

## CONCLUSION

God's simple answer to Sarah's doubt is to expose her lack of understanding in the capacity of the creator of the universe. Instead of outlining exactly how He will accomplish the promises He laid out, He simply asks "Is anything too difficult for me?" You see our doubt, Sarah's doubt, is not about our circumstances as much as it is about our view of God. Our problem is theological.

God's promises are true. His commands are justified. God's presence is undeniable. God's purposes are sure. God's capacity to redeem is undisputed. No situation is too big, messy, complicated, or unexpected. No suffering or hardship is outside of His knowledge. When we begin to understand our circumstances in these terms our disposition towards the challenges of life dramatically shift. How big is the God you serve?

## SHARE & PRAY

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### LIFE GROUP VISION:

The goal to meeting together around the word of God is three fold. First, we want to more clearly understand what God is saying to us through his Word and apply it to our own hearts and minds. Secondly, we want to build a loving community with each other to disciple one another toward maturity in Christ. Thirdly, we desire each of us, as ambassadors of Christ, to look outwards to our community and ask how we can bring the truth of the gospel to bear on those whom God has placed in our lives.

