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

TRUSTING GOD'S WAYS



THIS WEEK'S **focus**

Do things ever feel so out of control that you think, “Okay, time to take matters into my own hands”? It’s a pretty normal human response—but that doesn’t mean it’s a godly response. Sometimes when we take matters into our own hands, it shows that we’re struggling to believe God’s willingness to fulfill His promises. Today we’ll read about two occurrences of doubt. As a result of this doubt, Sarai and Abram stepped outside of God’s design for marriage and deeply harmed another person in the process. Doubt is a natural part of being a human, but when we struggle, we have an opportunity to cling to truth. We can have faith that God will fulfill His words in His way.



CENTRAL **truth**

We can have faith that God will fulfill His words in His way.



EXPLORE

scripture

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

GENESIS 15:1-6

1 After these events, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield; your reward will be very great. **2** But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what can you give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" **3** Abram continued, "Look, you have given me no offspring, so a slave born in my house will be my heir." **4** Now the word of the LORD

came to him: "This one will not be your heir; instead, one who comes from your own body will be your heir." **5** He took him outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "Your offspring will be that numerous." **6** Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

GENESIS 16:1-4

1 Abram's wife, Sarai, had not borne any children for him, but she owned an Egyptian slave named Hagar. **2** Sarai said to Abram, "Since the LORD has prevented me from bearing children, go to my slave; perhaps through her I can build a family." And Abram agreed to what Sarai said. **3** So Abram's wife,

Sarai, took Hagar, her Egyptian slave, and gave her to her husband, Abram, as a wife for him. This happened after Abram had lived in the land of Canaan ten years. **4** He slept with Hagar, and she became pregnant. When she saw that she was pregnant, her mistress became contemptible to her.

GENESIS 16:5-6

5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for my suffering! I put my slave in your arms, and when she saw that she was pregnant, I became contemptible to her. May the LORD judge between me and you."

6 Abram replied to Sarai, "Here, your slave is in your power; do whatever you want with her." Then Sarai mistreated her so much that she ran away from her.

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

CONVERSATION

questions

▶ READ GENESIS 15:1-6.

.01 Briefly summarize what we've read about in Genesis so far.

.02 What does Abram's question tell us about his faith? What does God's response tell us about Him?

.03 What does it mean that God "credited" Abram's belief in Him "as righteousness"?



CULTURE

Our world is full of people who doubt God's words. And truthfully, God's Word is full of people who doubted God's words! Despite all God's reminders of His promise, Abram struggled to believe the part about children. Rather than shame Abram, God generously provided more reason for him to believe. God did this in a way that honored Abram's humanity: He engaged Abram's senses ("Look at the sky!") and in doing so, God used the stars as yet another "promise reminder" within His creation, much as He had used the rainbow in Noah's day. Just as God had spoken the stars into existence, He could give Abram children. God uses His creation to invite doubters in our culture to believe, too! Romans 1:20 says that "since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse." We can look around and believe.

▶ READ GENESIS 16:1-4.

.04 What does it say about our faith when we try to fulfill God's promises in our own timing, like Sarai did?

.05 What harm was caused by Sarai and Abram's unbelief and disobedience?

.06 What might a faith-filled response from Abram have looked like?

▶ READ GENESIS 16:5-6.

.07 What excuses did Abram and Sarai make for the trouble they had created? What kind of excuses do we use when we make choices that are outside of God's will?

.08 Look back at Genesis 15:2-3. What is different about Abram and Sarai's doubts this time?

Q **GIVE AN ANSWER**

Was Hagar a slave? Some translations say that Hagar was Sarai's "slave," while other translations use the word "servant" or "handmaiden." We may feel deep alarm when we see the word "slave" because of what it means in our modern world. Before we come to conclusions about troubling information in the Bible, we should always look at the text and what it means in the historical context, rather than force our own experiences onto the text. But in this case, things don't look great even as we do that. We don't know how Hagar came to be a part of Abram and Sarai's household, but even if she was honorably employed, we can see that she was also horrifically exploited. She wasn't treated like a human; instead, she was used by Sarai and Abram for them to have a family! Stories like this should remind us that at the end of the day, God is the only One who is always good.

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

NOW

what?



CENTRAL truth

We can have faith that God will fulfill His words in His way.

.09 Is it harder to believe that God can fulfill His promises or that God will fulfill His promises? Why?

.10 Why is it important for us to wait on God's timing instead of taking matters into our own hands?

.11 How might this narrative be helpful to you the next time you're full of doubt?

.12 In what areas of life do we tend to doubt God's ways?

DAILY devotions

MEMORIZE GENESIS 15:6

7 ARROWS FOR BIBLE READING



What does this passage say?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage tell us about humans?



How does this passage prompt me to pray?



What does this passage demand of me?

day 1

GENESIS 14:1-16

DWELL

We've been reading about how God would bless Abram, and here we get a little insight into some of this blessing. Abram had such a large household of workers that he was able to take a miniature army to save his nephew Lot from the kings in the area. This also reveals Abram's love for his nephew—he was willing to risk his own life and household in order to save Lot.

← What would this passage reveal to the original audience about their ancestor Abram?

↪ Where was Lot living? (See v. 12.) What does this say about Lot?

MEMORIZE

Using colored pencils or pens, creatively write out Genesis 15:6 on a piece of paper. Then, “take a picture” of it with your mind and try to say the verse to yourself a few times without looking.

PRAY

Ask God to teach you through His Word this week as you read.

day 2

GENESIS 14:17-24

DWELL

This passage of Scripture has always been viewed with a lot of intrigue. Who was this priest and king? What is the significance of the bread and wine? Why did Abram give Melchizedek (whose name means “King of Righteousness”)¹ a tenth of everything? Psalm 110:4 says the promised Rescuer would be in the order of Melchizedek—so it’s safe to say that all of this points to Jesus!

↔ How do you see a glimmer of Jesus in this passage?

→ How does this passage inspire you to look for Jesus in other passages?

MEMORIZE

Write out Genesis 15:6 on a piece of paper or note card, and place it next to your bed. Make it a goal to say it five times before you go to bed and five times when you wake up.

PRAY

Praise God that all of His Word points to the gospel—the good news of Jesus! Ask Him to show you how that good news is good news for you today.

¹ David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary*, s.v. “Genesis 14 – Abram Rescues Lot & Meets Melchizedek,” <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-14/>.

day 3

GENESIS 15:1-6

DWELL

In an act of kindness to Abram after his battle against nearby kings, God told Abram not to be afraid—God was Abram’s shield. Comforted by this, Abram had the courage to confess his doubts to God. (Of course, God already knew.) God used this conversation to invite Abram to deeper belief, and when Abram believed God’s words, it was credited to him as righteousness.

↓ What does this passage reveal about people and doubt?

↔ How can you use this passage to encourage a friend struggling with doubt?

MEMORIZE

Invent motions that match the words to Genesis 15:6, and practice them while saying the words out loud a few times. It probably feels a little weird, but when something is weird, it helps us remember!

PRAY

Praise God for the kindness displayed in this passage! Ask Him to help you see His kindness to you in your life.

day 4

GENESIS 15:7-21

DWELL

As God and Abram continued their conversation, God confirmed His promise to give Abram the land, and Abram asked God to help him believe. God "signed" His promise using a method that was a common practice in that day: He instructed Abram to cut some animals in half, then He passed along the path between the halves. This probably seems strange and gruesome to us, but at the time it meant, "This covenant is sealed with blood." Before God "signed," He gave Abram more information about the land: for four hundred years, Abram's family would live enslaved in a foreign land.

← How do you think this information impacted the original hearers, who'd just been rescued from slavery in Egypt for four hundred years?

↪ How does this compel you to pray for God to increase your faith?

MEMORIZE

Write down the first letter of each word of Genesis 15:6 on a note card. At least five times today, see if you can say the verse just by looking at the letters.

PRAY

Thank God that He is a promise keeper.

day 5

GENESIS 16:1-16

DWELL

Abram and Sarai's disbelief had horrific consequences—and yet, God still brought good out of it. He met runaway Hagar in the desert, and she was left without any doubt that He truly saw her. Abram and Sarai had only seen her as a means to an end; God saw Hagar and her child and valued them, and He assured Hagar that He had a plan for the good of her and her child.

↑ What does this interaction teach you about God?

↔ Who do you know who might feel unseen? How can you pray for them and serve them?

MEMORIZE

Tell a friend or family member that your memory verse this week is Genesis 15:6, and explain what it means. Then, invite that person to randomly quiz you at some point today to see if you can remember the verse.

PRAY

Praise God for being the God who sees. Even when no one else sees you, He does.