

PERSONAL APPLICATION

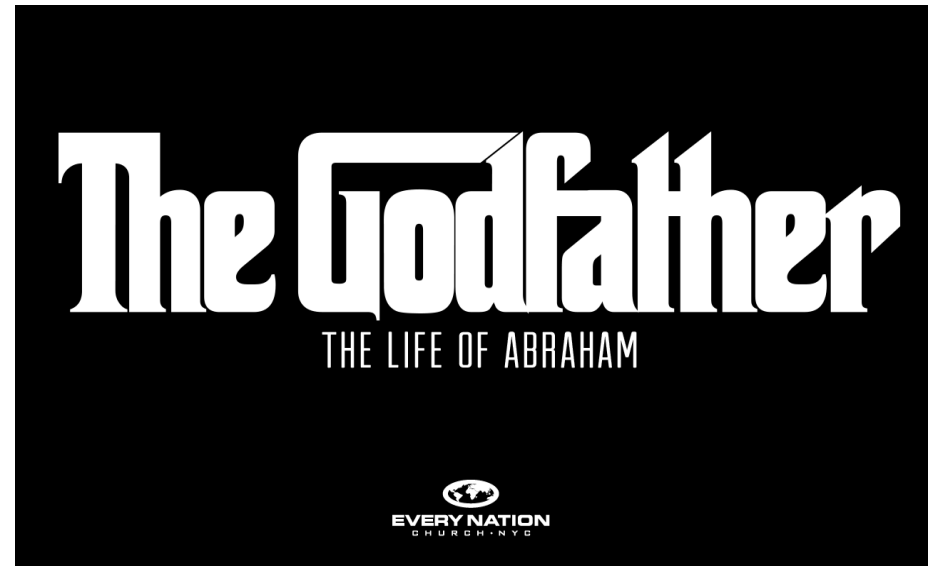
- What promises from God are you waiting on? How can you wait in faith on the fulfillment of God's promise in your life?
- Are you in danger of taking things into your own hands and attempting to fulfill God's promise your own way? What can you do this week to know and stay true to God's way of fulfilling his promises?
- Are there any messes you've made in your life that need God's redemption? What can you do to surrender to God and turn that area of your life over to him?

In addition to prayer and taking action, encourage them to partner with others to encourage each other, pray for each other during the week to be faithful to God and walk in patient obedience, pursuing God's voice.

PRAYER

- As you wait for God, ask God to build your heart and character so that you are able to not only receive but also to walk in God's promises.
- Ask God to help you grow in faith and trust in who he is and his promises.
- Ask God to take away the things in your situation that are distracting you from coming to him. Pray for God to stretch and to increase your faith as you patiently wait for his perfect timing.
- Ask God to redeem any messes you may have made while waiting on his promises.

NOTES



Lessons from the Life of Abraham – The Art of Waiting in Faith

CONNECT

- What's the biggest dream you have that you are still waiting to see happen? How long have you been waiting for it?
- Did someone ever make a promise to you that took a long time to fulfill? How did you feel while you were waiting? How did you feel when the promise was fulfilled?
- Would you consider yourself a patient person? Do unfulfilled promises motivate you, discourage you, or do you simply try not to think about them?

THOUGHT

Ever had a dream you thought would never come to pass? Still waiting on a few dreams? When he was 75 years old, long past normal child-bearing years, and still childless, God told Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation. At age 99, God upped the ante and told Abraham he would be the father of many nations. Not only did Abraham eventually become the father of a great nation, Israel, he became the father of many nations, all the Arab nations. In addition, scripture calls Abraham the father of all believers because of his great faith. How did Abraham maintain his faith in the face of such staggering odds against him over such an extended period of time? Today we'll take a look at Abraham's waiting period and discuss how we might learn to practice the art of waiting in faith.

WORD

*"¹¹And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. ¹²And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore."
Hebrews 11:11–12 (NIV)*

*"⁷Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham."
Galatians 3:7 (NIV)*

This lesson will be geared more for Christians than the unsaved. However, even among the Christians there may be those who have no idea what God's plan for their life is. Take them to Psalm 139:13-16. Let them know that God does speak and as they walk with God, they can learn to hear him. If someone asks how to hear God, you can put the question to the group, 'how does God speak?' or 'how has God spoken to you?'

1. PROMISE

"⁴Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir."⁵He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."⁶Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness."

Genesis 15:4–6 (NIV)

A promise given can be pretty exciting, a promise fulfilled can be extremely rewarding, but a promise unfulfilled can be very discouraging. Just like Abraham, we are all born with promises from God. The scriptures say that long before we were born God had already mapped out a great and hopeful future for each of us, tailored to who we are (Jeremiah 29:11; Psalm 139:16). The essence of Christian faith is belief in God's promises. How aware are you of God's promises for your life? How much faith do you have in God to fulfill his promises?

This point is more about growing our relationship with God. There is a truth to the saying, absence makes the heart grow fonder. Our response to God should be to seek him out through prayer, the word, worship, and fellowship. To pursue him when he seems distant.

2. WAITING

*So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.
Genesis 16: 3-4 (NIV)*

Waiting is a normal part of the process of a promise. But imagine waiting 25 years on a promise like Abraham and Sarah did. That's a lot of waiting, requiring lots of faith, especially considering how impossible their promise seemed. Ten years in, Abraham and Sarah decided to take matters into their own hands, abandoning God's plan for them to have a child of their own and producing a child who, although legally their heir, was not part of God's original plan. Waiting is hard but can be productive, especially in regards to our relationship with God, when we wait in faith. What could Abraham & Sarah have done instead of taking matters into their own hands?

This is the salvation message. God is in the business of forgiving our sins, righting our wrongs, loving us through our worst times and making our wrongs right. If you sense some might be convicted, don't be afraid to pause for a moment so they can get right with God.

3. REDEMPTION

*But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring."
Genesis 21: 17-18 (NIV)*

Ishmael, Abraham's son by Hagar is considered by many to be the father of the Arab nations. We all know of the deep animosity between the Arabs and the Jews. But did you know that Arab Christians and Christians in Arabia date back to the earliest times of Christianity (Acts 2:8,11; Galatians 1:15-17). And today, 'Muslim movements to Jesus are taking place in numbers we've never before seen.' (*A Wind In The House Of Islam*, by David Garrison) Some say churches in Muslim countries are currently the fastest growing in the world. God, because of his redemptive nature, seeks to turn our worst into his best. How do we bring God's redemption into our messes?