WHEN GOD IS SILENT

(Genesis 16:1-9)

I. The account.
   a. Genesis 16:1
      i. Sarah had been unable to have children.
      ii. At this time, she was about 75 years of age.
      iii. No doubt, she felt as if it was not going to happen for her.
   b. At 75, there was little optimism in her mind she was going to have a child.
      i. What was probably the most frustrating part for her was that about 10 years before this, God had told Abraham that he would have a son.
      ii. Genesis 15:5.
   c. The problem was 10 years had passed and she was still yet to bear a child.
      i. She was getting older every day and felt like it was an impossibility for her to bear children.
      ii. God had been silent for 10 years about this situation and you can imagine how frustrating it must have been for them.
      iii. You can imagine their conversations:
            1. God we want a child so badly!
            2. Where are you God?
            3. When are you going to keep your promise?
   d. One of the hardest things to do in life is to wait on God.
      i. It has been said that God is never in a hurry, but yet He is never late.
      ii. We have to understand that God’s view of time is quite different than ours.
      iii. To Him, a thousand years is like a day because time means nothing to Him.
      iv. So we know that 10 years is nothing for sure, but it was an eternity for Sarah.
   e. A 4 yr old was sitting in his car seat on what was supposed to be a four hour trip.
      i. Of course, he asked when are we going to get there, or are we almost there yet non-stop.
      ii. Finally, a fed up mother said, “We still have 90 miles to go so don’t ask me again when we’re going to get there.”
      iii. The boy was silent for a while, but then quietly asked, “Will I still be 4 when we get there?”
   f. To that 4 yr old, a 4 hr car ride is an eternity.
      i. To an adult it is not so long because we have experience time.
      ii. To God, a few years on earth is like a few seconds to us because He has experienced eternity.

II. The solution.
b. Sarah couldn’t wait on God any longer so she came up with a plan.
   i. She came up with a terrible plan at that.
   ii. Desperation can make us do stupid things.
   iii. She gave her husband permission to have sex with her handmaid.
   iv. Abraham, in a dumb moment, agreed to the plan, and Hagar became pregnant.
   v. Custom in those days allowed this to be done.
   vi. A barren wife often would offer her servant as a substitute, and as a result, the child born in that situation would become the legal heir.
c. In reality, Sarah did what a lot of us would do and took matters into her own hands.
   i. She took action when it appeared that God was silent.
   ii. Surely somewhere in scripture it reads “God helps those who help themselves” doesn’t it?
   iii. No it doesn’t, does it?
   iv. Rather, we read Psalm 27:14; 37:7.
   v. Sarah was tired of God’s silence, so she decided to do something about it.
d. This made things all better didn’t it?
   i. Notice Genesis 16:5.
   ii. She now resents the maid and Abraham.
   iii. Why should she be mad at Abraham when she said it was ok?
   iv. Probably because she wanted him to say something like: “No dear, if you and I can’t have a child together, then we just won’t have one”.
   v. Abraham failed to take charge and let his guy instincts take over, allowing this dumb plan to go forward.
e. Sarah mistreated Hagar so that she left and that is often what happens when we do something dumb.
   i. We take out our frustrations on others.
   ii. Hagar had done nothing wrong.
   iii. She was a piece of property and really had no say in the matter.
   iv. Hagar eventually came back and gave birth to Ishmael, who became the father of the Arabs.
   v. The Jews, the descendants of the son God had planned for, and the Arabs are still fighting today.
   vi. All because of a rash decision by Sarah and a dumb one by Abraham to go along with it.

III. Some lessons learned.
   a. When God seems silent, expect it to be difficult.
      i. 10 years probably seemed like an eternity to Sarah.
ii. She had waited 65 years without a child but was then told she would have one.

iii. It had to be difficult.

iv. God is sometimes silent when we go through difficulties because He is testing us.

v. Harold Wilke was born with no arms and one time, when he was a preschooler, was struggling to get his shirt over his head and shoulders.

vi. He wrote about it this way: “I was grunting and sweating and my mother just stood there and watched. A relative turned to my mother and said Ida, why don’t you help the child? My mother responded through gritted teeth, “I am helping him”.

vii. Sometimes God is silent because it helps us mature (James 1:2).

viii. It may have been that God was testing Abraham and Sarah.

ix. How else do we know if we trust God if that trust isn’t tested from time to time?

b. When God seems silent, don’t get ahead of Him.

i. When we go against God’s timing and get ahead of Him, it almost always ends tragically.

ii. Teenagers can’t wait for marriage to have sex and end up pregnant or with a disease.

iii. We come up with our own plans for things instead of doing things God’s way and we end up lost.

iv. There was a church sign that said: If you want to make God laugh, just show Him your plans.

v. Isaiah 30:1.

vi. Someone has said that spiritual ends are never achieved by carnal means.

vii. Sometimes, the best way to find out what God’s will is, is to sit back and wait.

viii. Believe me, I know this is hard to do and have failed to do it at times, but it is the wisest thing we can do.

ix. Again, we need to be like the Psalmist (Psalm 130:5).

x. We must be people of prayer while we are waiting.

xi. Prayer will keep us from poor planning.


c. When God is silent, we can’t try to understand Him.

i. Sarah assumed she understood God.

ii. She even said, the Lord has kept me from having children.

iii. Just because God was silent didn’t mean she wasn’t having a child.

iv. We can’t try to understand God in that sense because God’s ways aren’t ours.

vi. God’s ways are beyond our comprehension.
vii. It may be that we never figure out God’s plan for us until we reach heaven.
viii. A missionary during WWII was imprisoned and placed in a concentration camp.
ix. The barracks into which she was placed reeked of body odor but was also infested with fleas.
x. The missionary complained to God about the fleas and could not understand why God would allow this one last indignity.
xi. The missionary started a bible study in the cabin with other prisoners, mostly Jews.
xii. If they had been caught they would have been killed.
xiii. However, the guards never came in the barracks.
xiv. One day the missionary overheard one of the guards say why this was the case.
xv. The guard said we don’t do go in there because of the fleas.
xvi. The missionary then understood why God allowed the fleas.
xvii. We don’t know what God is planning for us.
xviii. He is behind the scenes through His providence.
xix. We have to trust that He knows what He is doing.

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