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A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Note: For each of the following questions, refer to the **Sermon Summary** inside.

Observation—*What do I see?*

- 1 What key events from Genesis are used to illustrate Sarah's story?
- 2 What was Sarah's initial reaction to the promise of a son in her old age, and how long did she have to wait for the promised son?
- 3 How did Pastor Doug characterize Sarah's specific failures of faith—and according to Hebrews 11:11-12, how is Sarah ultimately described?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- 4 What does Sarah's impatience reveal about human nature?
- 5 Despite her failures, why is Sarah included in a "Hall of Faith", and what does her story teach about doubt and belief coexisting?
- 6 What is the theological significance of God asking, "Is anything too difficult for the LORD?"

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- 7 How does Sarah's story encourage you personally? How does it challenge you personally?
- 8 How do you typically respond when your plans lead to negative consequences?
- 9 In what areas of your life are you tempted to "help God out" instead of waiting?
- 10 What practical steps do you need to take in trusting God's timing?
- 11 Will you "judge God faithful" in your life? Y N How can we help you with that?

- 1 God's promise of a son (Genesis 15), Sarah giving Hagar to Abraham (Genesis 16), her mistreatment of Hagar, and her laughter at God's promise (Genesis 18).
- 2 Sarah laughed in disbelief. She had to wait 25 years!
- 3 Sarah's impatience, blaming others, venting anger toward Hagar, and laughing in unbelief at God's promise. Hebrews 11 portrays her as a woman of faith who believed God and received the ability to conceive.
- 4 We tend to take control and "help God" when His timing doesn't match our expectations.
- 5 Because her faith ultimately triumphed—God evaluates faith by its final trust, not just moments of doubt. Genuine faith can include struggle but ultimately results in trusting God.
- 6 It emphasizes God's unlimited power and challenges unbelief by pointing to His sovereignty.
- 7 Be ready with your own answers—but give group members time to think and speak up first.
- 8 Ditto.
- 9 Ditto.
- 9 Ditto.
- 10 Ditto.
- 11 Ditto.

Sermon Summary

From today's lesson we realize that we don't see people the way that God sees them. In our own lives, we must learn to see what God sees as He evaluates the quality of our faith. The context in which Sarah's faith is evaluated has to do with the conception of her son Isaac (Hebrews 11:11-12). The reason it is difficult to see Sarah as a woman of faith is because she failed to trust God on more than one occasion.

The Failure of Sarah's Faith From the Scriptures we discover that Sarah was an impatient waiter, and God tested her patience on many occasions. After God promised a son to Abraham and Sarah, time passed and nothing happened. Sarah grew impatient and decided that she would give God a hand (Genesis 16:2). Believing that God is intervening in her getting pregnant, she devises an alternate plan that involves her servant-maid. It is important to note that in her culture a barren womb—even the lack of a son—was seen as a disgrace and meant the end of the family line. Even if her motives were good, in the final analysis, Sarah was wrong in what she did. Her impatience overcame her faith and brought about disastrous consequences. There is always a price to be paid for running ahead of God. Sarah sought to evade responsibility for her actions. Something predictable happened as a result of Sarah's impatience and her decision to help God out. Hagar conceived a son and she grew to despise Sarah (Genesis 16:5). Abraham never should have submitted to Sarah's plan, but Sarah is not justified in trying to blame all of this on Abraham. Sarah is merely reaping what she sowed.

Sarah continued to complicate things by venting her displaced anger onto Hagar (Genesis 16:6). When we cease walking by faith, by default, we begin walking in the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21). With respect to Hagar, Sarah defaulted to a sinful, fleshly, angry and harsh response. Sarah laughed at the prospect of motherhood. In Genesis chapter 18, Abraham is 99 and Sarah 89 years of age—and still no promised son has been born from their union (Genesis 18:10-14). In this passage the message is that, for the Lord, nothing is too extraordinary—He delights in doing that which is impossible, marvelous, even surpassing! With respect to God's promise of a son, both Abraham and Sarah were guilty of unbelief. Abraham and Sarah's hearts had become a battleground for faith. The good news is that ultimately Sarah and Abraham did trust God in this matter (Hebrews 11:11-12). Their trust should give hope to those of us who sometimes struggle with trusting God (2 Timothy 2:13).

The Triumph of Sarah's Faith Sarah was miraculously given the ability to conceive and bear a child “because she judged God faithful who had promised.” (Genesis 21:1-7). Sarah's faith conquered impossibility. When Sarah and Abraham were past the age of childbearing, Sarah had hope at a time when there was no logical reason to have hope. Sarah weighed the human impossibility of becoming a mother against the divine impossibility of God breaking His promise. You have to admire Sarah and Abraham. In spite of the fact that they struggled with the human impossibility of them having a child in their old age, in the end, their faith overcame their doubts and God fulfilled His promise to them. Sarah's faith conquered improbability. Abraham and Sarah believed God for 25 years without any specific evidence that God's promise was going to be fulfilled (Romans 4:19–20). With each year's passing, the more improbable it must have seemed that God was going to keep His promise. Abraham and Sarah waited in faith for a very long time.

Sarah's faith conquered inadequacy. It is obvious that Abraham and Sarah conceived a child by God's power. God is faithful to His promises, and we can trust Him even in the face of human inadequacy. Sarah's faith conquered inconsistency. If there is one thing a man is, it is inconsistent. And if there is one thing God is, it is consistent. That translates to faithlessness on our part, and faithfulness on God's. Sarah discovered that despite her faithlessness, God did not withdraw His promise of a son. God is faithful, even when we are faithless. When she realized that God was going to keep His promise, despite her impatience and lack of faith, her faith in God grew all the more! Sarah's faith conquered doubt. According to Romans 4:21, Abraham was “fully persuaded” and according to Hebrews 11:11 Sarah “judged God faithful.” In the responses of these two time-tested saints, we see the meaning of the word faith. Faith is a commitment.

From Sarah's life we learn that our spiritual struggles need not define us. By faith, we can rise above our doubts and struggles and live lives of power, purpose and promise.

1. Confess your doubts and spiritual failures to God and receive His forgiveness.
2. Determine to get to know God better by spending time with Him in His Word.
Schedule time daily with Him in your calendar—even if it is only a few minutes (Romans 10:17).
3. Choose to identify not with Sarah's struggles, but rather with her subsequent faith and faithfulness.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Monday—From Genesis 11:30 and 18:9–14, notice that God’s promises often begin with “impossibility”. Sarah was barren—humanly speaking, the promise of a child was impossible. God intentionally allowed the situation to reach total human inability before fulfilling His promise. God’s promises are not limited by human weakness; they are often magnified through it.

- Why do you think God waited so long to give Sarah a child?
- How does God use “impossible” situations in your life?

Tuesday— From Genesis 18:12–15 and Hebrews 11:11, notice that faith can coexist with doubt (but must grow). Sarah laughed in disbelief when she heard she would bear a son. Yet later, she is commended for faith. Faith is not the absence of struggle—it is trusting God through the struggle.

- What does Sarah’s laughter reveal about her heart?
- How does God respond to weak or imperfect faith?

Wednesday— From Genesis 16:1–6, notice that taking matters into our own hands dishonors God and leads to pain in our own lives. Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to produce a child. The result: jealousy, conflict, and long-term consequences. Impatience with God’s timing leads to decisions with disastrous implications.

- Why was Sarah tempted to “help” God?
- What are ways you try to “force” or “speed-up” God’s promises?

Thursday— Read Genesis 17:15–19 and 21:1–3. God remains faithful despite our failures. Despite Sarah’s doubt and misdeeds, God fulfilled His promise. Isaac’s birth was entirely an act of divine grace. God’s faithfulness is rooted in His character—not our performance.

- How does Sarah’s story encourage you when you fail?
- What does Isaac’s birth teach you about grace?

Friday— Read 1 Peter 3:1-6 and Genesis 12:10–14. Remember that true beauty is found in a gentle and quiet spirit. Peter points to Sarah as an example of godly womanhood. Her beauty was not merely external, but also internal—marked by trust in God (see Proverbs 31:28–30). Biblical beauty (faith, humility, and inner strength) is more important—and more lasting—than outward appearance.

- How does our culture define beauty differently than Scripture?
- What does a “gentle and quiet spirit” actually look like in daily life?
- Women: To which do you give more attention: inward beauty or outward beauty?
Men: What impresses you more: inward beauty or outward beauty?

Saturday— From Genesis 18:12 and 1 Peter 3:5–6, note that respect and trust flow from hope in God. Sarah referred to Abraham as “lord,” reflecting respect. Peter highlights that this flowed from her hope in God, not in Abraham’s performance. Biblical submission is rooted in confidence in God’s sovereignty.

- How does trusting God change how you relate to others?
- What might it look like for you to live “without fear” (1 Peter 3:6)?