

*“By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.”
Hebrews 11:11*

Laughter and Faith

“By faith even Sarah...” – Hebrews 11

One of the two females mentioned in the chapter of Hebrews 11, Sarah demonstrated faith in God in a way that qualified her to be included among this list of the heroes of faith. Her story is probably most known for the time that she laughed when God told her that she would conceive and bear a son at the age of 90, but begins even earlier than that.

In Genesis 12 we learn of Sarah and Abraham facing a dangerous situation in which they are fearful for their lives in a foreign land. Abraham deals with the situation by lying about the fact that Sarah is his wife, which actually puts them both in harm's way. This same scenario actually happens again later, as well (Genesis 20). These situations may not have been dealt with correctly, but we do see Sarah making the right choice of trusting God to work the situations out, rather than taking them into her own control. She placed trust in God's sovereignty and ability to take care of her, even when the humans placed in her life to provide for and protect her failed at this task.

Think of a time in your life that it was difficult to trust God. It may even be right now.

Later the situation of Sarah having a child in her old age arises. God had already spoken to Abraham twice about the fact that He would legitimately make Abraham the father of many nations. However, Abraham and Sarah had come up with their own plan to work out this situation, and resultantly, an illegitimate child had been born to Sarah's maid, causing a great deal of conflict between Sarah and her maid.

Now God sends a messenger to speak to both Sarah and Abraham, and tells them once again that He will be giving them descendants more numerous than the stars. This time Sarah is around (hiding outside the tent eavesdropping) when God makes His pronouncement about what He is going to do through Abraham and Sarah.

Sarah's response of faith was not immediate. Just as we often do, she had a moment of incredulity when she heard of the plan that God had laid out for her, and she laughed at the promise that God made (Genesis 18). Sarah was not perfect. She made many mistakes, and went through times in which she did not have faith, yet we can learn from Sarah's example, both in her victories and failures.

How much easier would it have been had Sarah had a right attitude and trust toward God from the start? Isn't the same true with us? How much heartache could we save ourselves and others if we would be obedient and submissive to God from the beginning?

Describe a situation in your own life that you have seen first hand the consequences of doubting God.

“...and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.”
Romans 4:21

Eventually, Sarah chose to submit to God, and God proved Himself faithful when she did. It was when Sarah's view of God slipped that she fell into disobedience. When she maintained her right view of Him, God proved Himself more than capable of doing all that He had promised.

What promise of God's are you doubting?

From where did Sarah's ability to believe in God stem?

Verse 11 of Hebrews chapter 11 says that Sarah was able to conceive “since she considered Him faithful who had promised.” Instead of focusing on the weaknesses and failures of herself and the humans around her, Sarah recognized that One much more powerful and loving than any she had ever known was in control. In the end, Sarah came to have a right view of God, and Sarah's story teaches us much about the importance of having a correct view of God. When she did not maintain her focus on Him and His true nature, disaster ensued. When she did maintain that focus, God never let her down. Sarah's life was one that vacillated between trust and submission, doubt and resistance, and yet God's constant faithfulness and reliability remained stable throughout her life.

At times Sarah's focus slipped from God to those around her. She disregarded her task of obedience and instead took on the responsibility of working the situation out herself, or she put that responsibility on her husband, her maidservant, everywhere but where it needed to be. That is when things went wrong.

What or whom do you trust to work out difficult situations in your life?

- Money
- Myself
- Other people
- God

Sarah made mistakes, and when life seemed to be spinning out of control she sometimes faltered, but ultimately her trust was in God and His trustworthiness, faithfulness, goodness, wisdom, and power. Sarah could not see how some things could be done, and was wrong in rushing ahead and trying to help God along, but she believed God when He had said that He would make Abraham a father of many nations. Because of Sarah's obedience, God gave Abraham and Sarah an abundance of descendants, and used them in the lineage of Christ, as well (vs.12).

Sarah went through a journey of faith and doubt, obedience and resistance. God was faithful to Sarah throughout this journey, even when her faithfulness lacked. God never gave up on Sarah, and was patient with her through her doubts and fumbblings.

Go back and look at the promise of God's that you are doubting. Now take that to God, honestly tell Him what you are thinking and feeling about that situation, and then commit to believing Him in that situation, for He is faithful.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?



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