

Sarah

Barren *to*
Full of Faith



Week Three



Sarah

Week Three

Monday

During our online *Bible study session for last week we talked about a well-used tool of the enemy known as the “what if’s.” Today I want to begin by addressing its guilt inducing counterpart – known as “if only.”

No doubt a familiar phrase often spoken in the tone of our own familiar voice, “If only I _____.” I am sure you can fill in the blank with your own struggle.

“If only I hadn’t _____”

“If only I would have _____”

It is a phrase of regret. Something we feel when we are disappointed or dissatisfied with what we perceive as yesterday’s failure. I say perceive because I have come to realize that many of our regrets and subsequent guilt have nothing to do with sin (and the conviction of the Holy Spirit) but rather a self-imposed expectation.

However, when not dealt with properly it can lead to sin. Instead of trusting in God we will find ourselves acting in self-dependent unbelief!

As we continue in our study of Sarah, I want us to turn our attention this week onto the faithfulness of God through our failures. This attribute of God can be defined as His grace. Our entire relationship with God is built upon, established, progresses, and will be brought to completion by His great grace. Even though this is a profoundly, well establish truth in the word of God, we still struggle with wallowing in the “if only’s.” This is because we must constantly be reminded of and immersed in this truth!

So let’s begin by taking a look at the grace of God working in the life of both Abraham and Sarah. And although the example we will look at today is primarily focused on Abraham we can know the same was also true for Sarah because her faith is mentioned along with Abraham’s in Hebrews 11:11.

Take a few minutes to s-l-o-w-l-y read through the following passages from Romans 4. As you read think of:

law and works = self-effort

faith and belief = dependence on God





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...if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness Romans 4:2-5

For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; Romans 4:13-17

Now go back and read it through again. This time mark in a distinct way the following words: **faith and belief**

In the space below write out what these passages tell you about faith.

*Corresponding teaching can be found for each week's lesson on the website-
4HisBeloved.org or on the Youtube channel **youtube.com/lisacook**





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For further clarification I want you to read through the same passages printed out below in the Message version. Use a highlighter to highlight whatever seems to stand out.

So how do we fit what we know of Abraham, our first father in the faith, into this new way of looking at things? If Abraham, by what he did for God, got God to approve him, he could certainly have taken credit for it. But the story we're given is a God-story, not an Abraham-story. What we read in Scripture is, "Abraham entered into what God was doing for him, and that was the turning point. He trusted God to set him right instead of trying to be right on his own."

If you're a hard worker and do a good job, you deserve your pay; we don't call your wages a gift. But if you see that the job is too big for you, that it's something only God can do, and you trust him to do it—you could never do it for yourself no matter how hard and long you worked—well, that trusting-him-to-do-it is what gets you set right with God, by God. Sheer gift.

That famous promise God gave Abraham—that he and his children would possess the earth—was not given because of something Abraham did or would do. It was based on God's decision to put everything together for him, which Abraham then entered when he believed. If those who get what God gives them only get it by doing everything they are told to do and filling out all the right forms properly signed, that eliminates personal trust completely and turns the promise into an ironclad contract! That's not a holy promise; that's a business deal. A contract drawn up by a hard-nosed lawyer and with plenty of fine print only makes sure that you will never be able to collect. But if there is no contract in the first place, simply a promise—and God's promise at that—you can't break it. Romans 4:2-5 MSG

This is why the fulfillment of God's promise depends entirely on trusting God and his way, and then simply embracing him and what he does. God's promise arrives as pure gift. That's the only way everyone can be sure to get in on it, those who keep the religious traditions and those who have never heard of them. For Abraham is father of us all. He is not our racial father—that's reading the story backward. He is our faith father.





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We call Abraham “father” not because he got God’s attention by living like a saint, but because God made something out of Abraham when he was a nobody. Isn’t that what we’ve always read in Scripture, God saying to Abraham, “I set you up as father of many peoples”? Abraham was first named “father” and then became a father because he dared to trust God to do what only God could do: raise the dead to life, with a word make something out of nothing. Romans 4:13-17

Now it is time to consider your own “if only(s)” in the light of what you have just read. How can you apply this to your personal regrets?

To be clear- grace is not a license to do whatever we want nor and excuse to be lazy and apathetic. Rather it is the power of God to live out the plan and purpose of God in spite of our failures, foibles, shortcomings, mistakes, and yes, even when we yield to sinful attitudes and actions. God factored all of this into the equation when Jesus went to the cross 2,000 years ago. The ONLY thing we can do to please God is to put our faith in Jesus Christ. Go ahead and close out today by writing a prayer of thanks in faith to the Lord.





Sarah
Week Three
Tuesday

Live Stream

Verses

Topic

Points To Remember





Sarah

Week Three
Wednesday

Do you remember how Abraham ended up with two sons? We will look at this today but first let's take a moment to briefly review Abram's and Sarai's journey up to this point:

Abram and Sarai were gentiles (unbelievers) dwelling in Ur of the Chaldeans worshipping idols. It was there that God appeared to Abram and promised to make him into a great nation, calling him to leave his family and country and go to a land that He would show him (Genesis 12). Abram and Sarai left their homeland and went as far as Haran in partial obedience, taking their father (Terah) with them. After Terah died they set out from Haran and traveled into Canaan where God again spoke to Abram. At this time Abram was 75 years old, Sarai was 65 and still barren. Shortly thereafter a drought settled over the land and Abram lies about Sarai being his wife (calling her his sister) in order to protect himself. Pharaoh then took Sarai into his house with the intention of making her his wife. But God intervened delivering Sarai from Abram's half baked scheme. Another 10 years pass and Sarai still remains barren. This is where we will pick up the story today in our study.

Look up and read Genesis 16:1-6 then answer the following questions:

Whose idea was it to use Hagar to have a child?

Do you think Sarai believed the promise of God? Yes or No

Explain:

How would you describe her actions?

When the plan went sour who did Sarai blame?

Did her scheme forfeit the plans of God?

Were there consequences?





Sarah

Week One
Wednesday

We all have been created with the God-given need for love, significance, and security.

- **Love**

To know that someone is committed to your highest good

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” John 15:12

“I (the Lord) have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.” Jeremiah 31:3

- **Significance**

To know there is meaning and purpose for your life

“I cry out to God Most High, to God, who fulfills his purpose for me.” Psalms 57:2

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

- **Security**

To feel safe and accepted

“The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” Deuteronomy 31:8

Our self-willed and often faithless decisions can expose cracks in our foundational beliefs about God. Revealing an area(s) where we have believed a lie instead of the truth. From this account (in Genesis 16) are you able to identify any cracks in Sarai's foundation?





Sarah

Week Three
Wednesday

Now it's your turn. Can you think of a time when you have been guilty of trying to "help God out?" Briefly describe

From your own personal experience can you identify any cracks in your foundation? Circle the ones that apply.

LOVE SIGNIFICANCE SECURITY

In the space below write out a prayerful response using one of the passages on the previous page under **love**, **significance**, or **security**.

Lined writing area for a prayerful response.





Sarah

Week Three
Thursday

What is one 5-letter word that describes God's response to Abram and Sarai's plan to "help God out?"

— — — — —

GRACE

Grace is favor or kindness shown without regard to the merit of the one who receives it in spite of what that same person deserves.

Grace is one of the treasured attributes of God.

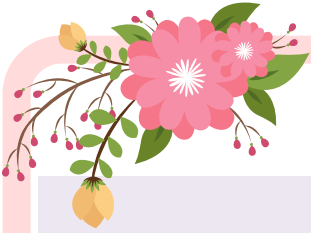
Look up the following passages and note what you learn about **grace**. Then choose one of these passages to meditate on using the outline on the following page.

- **Romans 5:2**
- **1 Corinthians 1:4**
- **2 Corinthians 8:9**
- **2 Corinthians 9:8**
- **Galatians 5:4**
- **Ephesians 1:6-7**
- **Ephesians 2:7-8**
- **Titus 2:11-12**
- **Hebrews 4:16**
- **Hebrews 13:9**



Sarah

Week Three



DATE

READ IT

WRITE IT



SAY IT

APPLY IT

PRAY IT





Sarah

Week Three
Friday

When you sin- what is the most important thing to remember? You are not under law but under GRACE!

There is therefore now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus
Romans 8:1

Trying to make up for it, pay for it, make amends for it, or do penance for it will profit you nothing except to place you back under the law. And we cannot live under law and grace at the same time.

When we do sin, 1 John 1:9 gives us a way to move forward- relying only on the finished work of Christ.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness
1 John 1;9

The account of Abram, Sarai, and Hagar (recorded for us in Genesis 16) are used allegorically to illustrate this law vs grace truth in Galatians 4. Take a few minutes to read through Galatians 4:21-31. Then draw lines from one column to the other to show what it represents.

Old Covenant New Covenant	Grace Law
Hagar Sarai	Mount Calvary Mount Sinai
Bondage Freedom	Hagar Sarai





Sarah

Week Three
Friday

In Galatians 4:30 we are told to “Cast out the bondwoman and her son.” Based on what they represent in this context how does this apply to you?

To be a child of the bondwoman is to be enslaved to legalism. This means you feel the need to perform well for God’s approval. Or to make up for failing God by doing good deeds. To try harder, work harder, or be better- in order to become the Christian you think you should be instead of resting in the finished work of Christ. If this defines your relationship with God, you are living under the shadow of Mount Sinai. The result of mixing grace and law often leads to cycles of frustration and shame. Becoming bitter and judgmental will be the fruit of this tree.

However, the freewoman represents the covenant of grace. Those who are a child of the freewoman are living under the shadow of Mount Calvary. This means no matter what sins you have committed, what weaknesses you struggle with, what inadequacies seem to hinder you, the grace of God has made you rich in Christ Jesus. And because of this grace you are fully and completely accepted by God! There is not a single thing you can add to what He has done. As you rest in His arms of grace , under the shadow of Mount Calvary your life will bear the satisfying fruit of love, joy and peace.



To close out this week’s lesson, on the following page I want you to draw a sketch to illustrate your life and the fruit it will bear as you choose to dwell- under the shadow of Mount Calvary.



Sarah

Week One

Friday



Mount Calvary

> P.S. Try adding "**by grace**" to the end of your prayer requests.

"Father, I ask that you would _____ **by grace**. In Jesus Name"

And see how it will transfer the burden from your shoulders onto His!

