

Fixing God's Plan

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Date: 23 April 2023

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[0 : 00] of you, poor thing. Grab your Bibles, I want you to turn to Genesis chapter 16. Genesis chapter 16. You know, God has a plan for my life.

God has a plan for your life. And he'll show us how to live out that plan through his word. And if you're a Christian today and you've surrendered your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ and committed to live for him, when you did that, you were blessed to have the Holy Spirit of God indwell within you to guide you through the maze of daily decisions and discouragements and temptations and hindrances.

But the reality is we don't always agree with God on what he's doing in our lives and how he's doing it.

And when it does not suit us or when it does not feel right, we have a tendency to try to fix it. And sometimes that means we yield to temptation.

And when I mean yield, that's a real kind way of saying we mess up. We fall to it. We go our own way instead of God's way.

[1 : 39] Even though his word is clear about the matter, even though his guidance through our own time with him and our own relationship with him, and even the utterings of the Holy Spirit to our heart that are not audible but are louder than that, even with that sometimes the questioning of the timing of God causes us to go our own way.

And, man, some folks do a good job of justifying it. I mean, just ask them. They'll tell you how it's justified. Or they'll blame somebody else.

Or they'll try to wash their hands of it. But in our passage today, it's dealing with such as that. And it teaches us, I believe, a lot of lessons about what will happen when we try to fix God's plan by doing things our way instead of the way God has shown us to do it.

God has told us to do it. And God has even spoke to us individually, given us guidance of how his word is personalized into our lives and how we ought to follow it.

If a man of faith like Abraham can mess up in that plan, so can we. Genesis chapter 16, beginning in verse 1, it says, Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children.

[3 : 20] She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go into my servant.

It may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, his servant, and gave her to Abram, her husband, as a wife.

And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarai said to Abram, May the Lord, may the wrong done to me be on you.

I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me. But Abram said to Sarai, Behold, your servant is in your power.

Do to her as you please. Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her. Man, I wish I could clean this up for Sunday morning because it's kind of messy.

[4 : 38] But I am thankful that God tells the truth in His Word. He just puts it out there and shows us so that we can learn from it.

I want you to notice this morning what happens when we fall to the temptation of overstepping God or fixing God's plan, at least attempting to.

Because we sometimes miss God's plan. We overstep it or we try to fix it when we listen to people instead of God. This story starts long before this particular incident.

Before Sarai offered her servant to Abram, it started when Abram went to Egypt during a famine. Egypt had plenty.

And when you're hungry, you want to go to a land of plenty, and Egypt looked like it was a good spot. But you find that, as I spoke of when we talked about that passage, Egypt was never a good place to go in the Bible.

[5 : 51] It just wasn't a good place to go. It looked good all the time, but it was not a good place to go. It was dangerous. It was dangerous to Abraham, who was called Abram at the time.

And to protect himself, Abram called Sarai his sister. Now, she was his half-sister, and until somebody asked for her hand, nobody would kill him to get his wife if she was just a sister.

Therefore, he was good. But when Pharaoh, when she caught the attention of Pharaoh, and he wanted to bring her into his home, then that caused a problem.

And it just proved that he never should have lied about the thing to start with. Now, you say, well, I mean, he said it was a sister and half-sister, and that ain't half a lie. Well, half a lie is a whole deception, you know.

And plagues came to Pharaoh and started ruining his life, and when he finally realized that it had been due to his interest in Sarai, he told Abram to get her and get out and take all that he had been given.

[7 : 15] Take the sheep, take the goats, take the cattle, take the donkeys, take the male servants, and take the female servants, and the camels.

Take them all. It's what Genesis 12, 16 says. And one of those female servants was named Hagar. And Sarai said, since apparently I can't bear the child that God has promised to us, have one with her, and that'll solve it.

And that seemed like an acceptable solution to not having a child, therefore the world would have applauded Sarai's willingness to be open-minded about such a situation like that.

I mean, why not put feet on God's promises instead of merely waiting on them? I'll tell you why.

Because that's not a fulfillment of God's promise.

That's manipulating our way and trying to make it look good, and it never works like that. Sarai was wrong to suggest it. Abram was wrong to go along with it.

[8 : 31] Because when God speaks through His Word and personalized to your life by the Holy Spirit of God, listen to God, not to others.

People mean well. And some of them are looking out for your best interest. But they only have their own personal insight, which might be good, but it's not great.

And God's insight's not only great, but it's perfect. And so listen to God. It's a bad day when somebody tries to fix God's plan because they, by listening to other people instead of God, that's when we try to fix God's plan.

I'll tell you what else can happen when we try to fix God's plan. We try to justify what is blatant sin. Because this sinful plan was contrived by Sarai.

God had given them a promise of a coming child, and she felt like it was her job to make it happen. And when it seemed she had failed, she turned to other means, and her mistake was she tried to fix God's plan.

[9 : 49] If God makes a plan, He don't need you to fix it. God will see it through. And it is, if it's from God, it does not depend on you to make it happen.

All you have to do is to obey the Lord. do what He tells you to do. Do what He tells you to do and trust Him. It will not be on your timetable.

I can't prove it's, it'll always surprise you, but I can tell you it'll probably always surprise you. God will move quicker than you think He will.

God will move slower than you think He will. It's not your timetable, it's His. He developed chronology. He can handle it.

And when you try to fix it, it'll cause problems. That's what happens. Hudson Taylor put it this way, he said, God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply. However, having said that, I want you to understand that what they did was completely normal and acceptable in their society.

[11 : 12] It was the custom for a childless wife to permit her husband to take a servant as a second wife. And the offspring from that relationship was actually thought of as the child of the first wife.

But I want you to hear me, folks. In 2023, it is just as relevant as it was in that year, I promise you.

I want you to hear me. When society says it's right, it does not mean it's right. When society says that we can choose our gender and ignore the chromosomal makeup that God gave us, that's not right.

You can't do that. When society says that you can murder a child in the womb because it's your choice, that's not right.

completely normal to think that way in our society, but it's not right. When the moral codes of sexual acts are not based upon Scripture, but instead on the slippery slope of society, and that'll consist of unthinkable things that are accepted and applauded that does not make it right, if you're trying to figure out from the winds of culture what's right and what's wrong, just wait a minute.

[12:52] It'll change. But God's Word never changes. And I want you to hear me today. When society says that a Bible-believing and preaching church is one that's filled with bigotry and hatred, that does not mean it's true.

Truth and love is Scripture. But I'm telling you, I feel a responsibility when you get inundated daily through our world in confusing matters that are making our world into a chaotic, perverted place, you need to hear the truth.

and it needs to be clear. All of these matters are blatant sins and God does not ignore it and we cannot justify it.

Sarai was just listening to society. That's what she did. However, if Sarai's going to get thrown under the bus, so is Abram.

But they can't because they didn't actually have a bus. So, she's trying to please her husband but you don't sin against God to please anybody.

[14:12] And Abram knew better. He knew better. He had been living in Canaan for 10 years. He knew God would provide. But it's when we second guess God that we get in trouble.

This is the time that Abram should have taken to sit down with his family and to lead them and to look at his wife and say, honey, this is not how we're going to do it. I believe God will provide what he said he will provide.

I mean, I'm going to trust God in this matter. Now, he's an old man.

So, it's easy to see why he's listening to voices instead of to God but because he's giving up hope but you never have to give up hope on the Lord.

He's always faithful and he's always on time and it's never going to be on your timetable. It's always going to be on his. Abram should have just told his family that.

[15:20] Should have told his wife that. Thank you, ma'am, for looking out for me but no, I'd rather not but he didn't and I want you to understand that it was Abram that God had come to.

It was Abram that God had spoke to. Sarai had not experienced that covenant experience. She wasn't there when the presence of the Lord came through in that fire.

God's working in him. She was just going along with the flow that if it's normal in society, I guess it's okay and it's not.

And when we try to fix God's plan, we will try to justify blatant sin. But not only that, when we try to fix God's plan, we'll cause contention.

we will. We get petty when we act in the flesh. I mean, we do. We become jealous.

[16:22] We become angry, become paranoid, selfish. We just get ugly. And now there's a rivalry between Hagar and Sarai and no wonder because now Hagar is holding this over Sarai's head.

And so Sarai blames Abram. Now remember, she's the one that came up with a plan. But she blames Abram. Ladies, it's never our fault, okay?

What does Abram do? I mean, he's like a lightweight boxer. He's bobbing and weaving and trying to stay out from, you know, y'all work this out, you know. Sarai mistreats her and Hagar runs away.

Why? Because they wanted to fix God's plan. God does not need our help. What's you trusting God for today?

what is it in your life that you're holding on to that you need to let go of? What is it about God's plan and about what His word has shown you and about how what He has convicted you of or has He given you direction of and you and you're going to pause and you're going to wait and try to fix it first.

[18:02] That's what I'm talking about. Whatever that is. Let me tell you what God wants.

God does not want our help in fulfilling the plan that He's promised to us. God wants our obedience. And sometimes He holds out a little longer or a lot longer than we wish He would to grow our faith

and trust in Him.

You say, well, that wouldn't be my plan. He didn't ask you. It's His plan. We follow His plan. What God comes up with, God can handle.

He don't need your help. He just wants your obedience. It's not too hard for Him. But when we sin in an effort to fix the plan of God, we cause damage bigger than it first appears.

Israel. This is an out-of-wedlock birth that started a war-torn relationship between Israel and the Arab people that make up so much of history.

[19 : 29] Ishmael would be born and the twelve tribes of Ishmael would be absorbed into the Assyrians and then the Babylonians. And if you know anything about biblical history, you know that they always caused havoc for the people of Israel.

In verse 12 of this passage, Ishmael, the coming offspring is described as a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him and he shall dwell over and against all his kinsmen.

A donkey is resourceful unless he's wild and against everybody. God says, that's what your son will be. And history has proven it's true.

Sin and its ramifications are kind of like the side mirrors in a car. Long time ago, when they put mirrors on cars, they had a little message on the bottom of it.

Some of y'all remember it. It said, objects are closer than they appear. It means stay in your lane is what it means, okay? They didn't have blindside monitors to go on off in your mirror.

[20 : 41] You just had to trust it and it was saying don't trust it. And I will tell you the ramifications of sin are always larger than they appear. They are. But thank God, when we try to fix the plan of God, God's not absent.

He's not absent. This sense that God was not responding and was not going to led to this whole problem, but God knew what he was doing.

He also didn't give up on them when they messed up. Hagar went away. The abuse and the rivalry was too much for her and she went away and I want you to notice what happens.

It's in verse 7 of Genesis 16 it says this, the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur.

And he said, Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going? And she said, I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai. The angel of the Lord said to her, return to your mistress and submit to her.

[21 : 53] The angel of the Lord also said to her, I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said to her, behold you are pregnant and shall bear a son and you shall call his name Ishmael because the Lord has listened to your affliction.

He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen. So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her. You are a God of seeing for she said truly here I have seen him who looks after me.

Therefore the well was called Bir-la-hiro. It lies between Kadesh and Baird.

And Hagar bore Abram a son and Abram called the name of his son whom Hagar bore Ishmael. Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

We mess up and feel the effects of it but I want you to understand when we're feeling the effects of it God does not abandon us. You say well it sure does feel like it.

[23 : 13] Well I want you to understand something that I've told you before. God's presence is not based upon your feelings. It's based upon his promises and he will not leave you.

I want you to notice something here this angelical question. Where have you come from and where are you going? Does God not know where the girl's been? I mean you know he knows where the lady's been.

So why is he asking that question? Why would God ask any question? God never asks a question to get the answer. God asks a question so you can think about the answer.

So you can answer it for yourself. He already knows the answers. He asks it so that we can grapple with those questions in our hearts and then God tells her to go home and get back after it.

And I want you to get this and I'll close. When we make a mess of our lives by not allowing God's plan but instead trying to fix God's plan and we pout about it and we go off by ourselves it does us no good.

[24 : 18] And God came to her and said go home and get after it. Don't alter the plan of your life. Follow the plan of God for your life.

Now listen for some this morning that may be major. I mean God told Jonah to go west and he turned around and went east. He did exactly the opposite of what God told him to do. That's major. It could be what you consider minor. It could be stuff that you're dealing with just disobediently quite honestly. You don't think it's a big deal. God thinks it's a big deal. God went to the cross for the sins in your life that you think are small. He died for. So it is a big deal to him. Maybe you're dealing with stuff disobediently or stuff that you're not dealing with when God's telling you to deal with it. If so, I want you to do what God told Hagar to do. Get up and come home. He told her you get up and go back and serve your master.

[25 : 31] God's plan for your life. And I'm telling you today, if you know God's plan for your life does not involve what you're dealing with and what you're in the midst of it, get up and come home and serve your master and trust him.

Don't try to fix God's plan. Don't try to alter God's plan. Don't try to change God's plan. Trust God's plan.

Follow God's plan. Honor God's plan. And God will bless your life. God's plan. Because a life of obedience is a blessed life.

It's not our job to fix God's plan. It's our job to fix our eyes on God's plan. To fix our minds on God's plan.

To fix our hearts on God's plan. And then to do it. Whatever it is. With every head bow and every eye close this morning.

[26 : 40] I'm not going to even try to guess this morning. Where this hits you. Because for some you need to make a bold step of obedience.

It's not about that there's things in your life that are just you know blatant sins against God. It's just that God's leading you in an area and you're you kind of struggle to follow through with that and it's time to follow through with that.

You know. Man we live in a society of uncommitted people and the reality is if you're not committed to Christ you're committed to something and so we just need to be committed.

Maybe you're here this morning and that there is some blatant sin in your life and maybe it's blatant but nobody else knows about it but you but I mean it's real and it presses on you and you know it's not part of God's plan for your life and you've done your own deal and went your own way and you not wanted to give up that little area of your life.

Well it's time to give it up. It's time to get up and come home and serve the master in that area of your life. Maybe you're here this morning and you've never surrendered your life to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

[27 : 55] You never have. Never been a time when you can go back and say Lord I committed my life to you and I trusted you and asked you to forgive me and to save me. And if that's never happened to you I want you to know that today is the day of salvation.

We're going to stand in just a moment and we're going to sing and the most important thing you can do is obey God. You come down this aisle I'll be happy to help you know what it means to have a personal relationship with Christ. Maybe you've done that but there's areas of your life that you need to get right with God.

You deal with that. You can deal with it where you are. You can deal with it at this altar. You can have a pastor pray with you. However God tells you to do it. Maybe you're a guest with us and you feel like God's drawing you to be a part of this fellowship.

As a matter of fact you know that's God's plan. You're just kind of putting it off because you're not sure. Just follow God's plan. Just do what he tells you to do. Maybe you've made a private decision for the Lord but you've never made it public through baptism.

We had the joy last week of baptizing. Have more candidates that we're counseling now. Maybe when you look at your life the reality is that you've never been baptized as a believer and you need to obey God in that.

[29 : 04] I have no idea what God's doing in your life today but I pray that he is and I pray that you'll be obedient. I'll never ask you to do anything more than what God tells you to do and I never want you to be satisfied with doing anything less. Lord Jesus I love you and I thank you for your

love for us.

I thank you Lord for your love for every person in this place today. And I ask dear God that you'll move and you'll work in their lives. That you'll speak to them individually dear God. Let them know exactly what you'd have them to do and give them a boldness and a surrender as can only come from you dear God. To just simply follow you Lord I pray. In Jesus precious name. Amen.