

Children of the Bible

At that time the followers came to Jesus and asked, "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

Jesus called a little child to him and stood the child before his followers. Then he said, "I tell you the truth, you must change and become like little children. Otherwise, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. The greatest person in the kingdom of heaven is the one who makes himself humble like this child.

(Matthew 18:1-4, NCV)

Why do a series on children of the Bible? Well... why not?

All of us were children.

Many of us have had children,
raised children, or taken care of children.

Jesus says that he has special concern for children.

He also says that we can learn lessons from children.

In our series about children that we find in the Bible, we will learn faith lessons from these children and from their parents.

Warning: Not all these stories are "feel-good" stories.

These stories don't all have a happy ending.

The Bible teaches lessons for real people in real life.

Here we see both

good and bad,
beautiful and ugly,
happy and sad,
saints and sinners.

Here we see that God is faithful, even when we are not.

Isaac - part 1

The Child of an Impossible Promise

Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 17:15-19

Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 11:1-2,8-12

Gospel Lesson: Luke 19:1-9

Also see:

Genesis 12:1-7

Genesis 15:1-6

If we want to really know a child,
we should first know its parents.

If we want to know Isaac,
we need to first know Abraham and Sarah.

Before Isaac was born, the Bible describes four times that God spoke to Abraham, telling him that he will have many descendents, and that they will become a great nation.

But Abraham and Sarah had a problem.

They had no children.

And they were both very old --

Sarah was 90 and Abraham was 100.

Having children at their age? Impossible!

Continuing the story...

Later, the LORD again appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre. Abraham was sitting at the entrance of his tent during the hottest part of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When Abraham saw them, he ran from his tent to meet them. He bowed facedown on the ground before them and said, "Sir, if you think well of me, please stay awhile with me, your servant. I will bring some water so all of you can wash your

feet. You may rest under the tree, and I will get some bread for you so you can regain your strength. Then you may continue your journey.”

The three men said, “That is fine. Do as you said.”

[Abraham and Sarah served their visitors a large dinner...]

The men asked Abraham, “Where is your wife Sarah?”

“There, in the tent,” said Abraham.

Then the LORD said, “I will certainly return to you about this time a year from now. At that time your wife Sarah will have a son.” Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were very old. Since Sarah was past the age when women normally have children, she laughed to herself, “My husband and I are too old to have a baby.”

Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘I am too old to have a baby’? Is anything too hard for the LORD? No! I will return to you at the right time a year from now, and Sarah will have a son.”

Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I didn’t laugh.”

But the LORD said, “No. You did laugh.” (Genesis 18:1-15)

We like to compare Abraham and Sarah --
Abraham had faith. He believed God could do impossible things.

Sarah chose to be "realistic."

Abraham understood God's big plan for the future.

Sarah saw only her situation now.

Sarah trusted her feelings.

Abraham trusted God, no matter what his feelings said.

And that description for the two of them is generally true.
The Bible often honors Abraham for his faith.
The Bible says that Abraham is the "father" for all who have faith.
The Bible says that Abraham is our example for faith that we should follow.

But Abraham was weak human sinner, like us.
We see that clearly.
The Bible does not hide Abraham's sins,
his doubts, his wrong decisions.

What made Abraham's faith great [wonderful]?
Because Abraham great [large] faith? No.
Because Abraham was a really good man? No!
What made Abraham's faith great [wonderful]
not Abraham. and not his faith,
but God's promise, the One in whom Abraham trusted.



I believe this chair can support me.
But that belief is worthless until two things
happen.

- (1) I actually sit in the chair.
- (2) The chair actually supports me.

If I say that I believe, but I don't act on that belief,
my faith is worthless.

That's like a person who says, "I believe in Jesus."
or "I believe that Jesus died on the cross to forgive my sins."
...but that person never repents of his sins,
He only trusts Christ like a good luck charm,
the Bible says that faith is worthless.

Back to my chair example:

If I say that I believe... and I really do believe,
and I act on the belief by sitting in the chair,
but if the chair is broken, and it can't support me,
again, my faith is worthless.

That's like a person who is very spiritual -- maybe has lots of religion, and believes that religion with all his heart... he believes that if he does all the right things, he will become good enough, then God will accept him.

That's trusting... what? Trusting God's promise?
No, that's trusting a lie --- a lie from Satan.
Again, that faith is like my sitting in a broken chair... worthless.

So you see, faith itself has no special power.
The power is where? ...in God's promise.
God promised: Abraham, you and Sarah will have a son.
Abraham feelings said: "That's impossible!"
Abraham's situation said: "That's impossible!"

Who won? Abraham's feelings? or God's promise?
God's promise won,

Please notice -- this is very important:
God's promise does not depend on our feelings.
God's promise does not depend on our circumstances.

God's promise depends on what? no... who? God! Alone!

When we doubt, God's promise is still true.
When we believe a lie, God's promise is still true.

The challenge before us is this:

How do we respond to God's promise?

How do we respond to God's invitation to trust Him?

Do we nod and say, "Yes, it's true," but then do exactly the opposite of what faith means, like Abraham and Sarah did? (Genesis 16)

God in His mercy keeps His promise, no matter that we doubt,
God in His mercy keeps His promise, no matter that we disobey
... as Abraham and Sarah did.

Here is how this part of the story ends:

The LORD cared for Sarah as he had said and did for her what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. Everything happened at the time God had said it would. Abraham named his son Isaac, the son Sarah gave birth to. He circumcised Isaac when he was eight days old as God had commanded.

Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born. And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh. Everyone who hears about this will laugh with me. No one thought that I would be able to have Abraham's child, but even though Abraham is old I have given him a son."

Genesis 21:1-7

And from that son came
the great nation of Israel
and Jesus Christ, the Savior for all people.

Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 17:15-19

¹⁵ God told Abraham, "I will change your wife's name from SARAI to SARAH.

¹⁶ I will bless your wife, and I will give the two of you a son. Your wife will become the mother of many nations. Kings over nations will come from her."

¹⁷ Abraham bowed down on the ground and he laughed. Abraham thought, "Can a man have a child when he is a hundred years old? Can my wife birth a child when she is ninety? Impossible!"

¹⁸ Then Abraham told God, "Please let ISHMAEL become that son YOU promised."

¹⁹ God said, "No, Sarah your wife will have a son, and you will name your son ISAAC. I will make my agreement with your son. And that agreement will continue forever with all his descendants."

Epistle Lesson: HEBREWS 11:1-2, 8-12

1. Faith is knowing sure about the things we hope, and believing the things we can't see.
2. The people a long time ago received approval for their faith.
8. By faith ABRAHAM obeyed happened God asked him to leave his home and move to a land that God gave to him, and ABRAHAM was-leaving without knowing the place to go.
9. By faith ABRAHAM lives same-as a stranger in the Promised Land, same-as if that land belonged to someone else, and he lived in a tent with ISAAC and JACOB; God gave the promise to them also.
10. ABRAHAM searched for the city with foundations strong that God built.
11. By faith SARAH, she was old -- no matter. She received the strength to have a baby, because she believed she could trust in God's promise.
12. ABRAHAM was old and near to death -- no matter. Still from ABRAHAM came many children same-as the stars in the sky and the SAND on the ocean that no one can count.

Gospel Lesson: LUKE 19:1-10

1. Jesus came to the town named JERICHO. A man lived in this town by the name of ZACCHAEUS.
2. He was a tax collector, and he was a rich man.
3. ZACCHAEUS wanted to see Jesus, but he was short man, and he couldn't see because many people watched on the street.
4. ZACCHAEUS ran and climbed a tree to see Jesus, because Jesus was walking by that tree.
5. Happened Jesus came to that tree, Jesus looked-up and said, "ZACCHAEUS, come-down. Today I must visit your house."
6. ZACCHAEUS hurried-down and happily welcomed Jesus.
7. But all the people began to complain. "Jesus visits the house of that sinful man."
8. ZACCHAEUS then said to Jesus, "Lord, half of my things I will give to the poor people, and if I cheated anyone, I will pay again four times the money."
9. Jesus said, "Today salvation comes to a son of ABRAHAM.
10. The Son of Man came to seek and to save lost people."