

## “Faith Under Pressure”

### INTRO:

- It was the fall of 2003, my second child, McKinna had been born in May and she was struggling with colic and it had been a challenge for my wife, Monica and I. I could tell exactly what kind of day it had been for Monica based on what I saw when I pulled up in front of the house when I returned home from work. If I didn't see anyone on the front porch waiting on me I knew that my daughter, had a good day. My daughter didn't cry so much and my wife was probably able to get some things done. If my wife was on the front porch in a chair with my youngest daughter, while our older daughter, Savanna, was playing in the yard or on the porch I knew it was a trying day, and she was ready for me to get home and have a break and get some help, but ok. If, when I pulled up, my wife came to the door of my truck and handed me the baby as soon as I opened the door of my truck I knew it had been a real difficult day. I was in my third year of teaching middle school, I was also in my fifth year of being the pastor of a small church. It was during this season of life I felt the Lord calling me to resign my teaching job and move to Kentucky to pursue a seminary degree. So, I did what I any good disciple should do when they hear the Lord calling them to go, I resigned from my teaching job and began to make plans to move to Kentucky and pursue my calling. Then in March my wife had some other news. . . . .she was pregnant with our third child, you would of thought that I would have figured out what caused that by now, but I hadn't! Notice I didn't say it was necessarily good news, but other news. Needless to say, my wife and I panicked a little, well a lot to be honest. I just had resigned my job and we were about to move to a different state without a home, without a job, and the main part, without insurance. We talked and reasoned a lot with each other over the next couple of weeks. Then I did what any self respecting man would do, I went to my principal and begged for my job back. I knew that my current position had already been filled, but I asked if anything, anything opened up and another position was available that she would allow me to stay at the school teaching. Long story short another position came open and I was able to return teaching at the same middle school. In November of 2004 we had a beautiful baby boy, Holden, our third and final child. However, reflecting on this situation a few years removed from it, I realized that the logical choice of asking for my teaching job back and staying in Georgia was a mistake. My wife and I had failed to really seek the Lord's will in this situation and what he wanted us to do. Yes, we prayed about it but it was more of a prayer of Lord how can we logically do this (knowing that answer was we couldn't) and not a prayer of faith, 'Lord how do you want us to do this'. We didn't pray and fast about the way the Bible instructs. You see the Lord was giving us an opportunity to step out on faith and trust him completely. The Lord wanted me to move to Kentucky with my young family and pursue my seminary degree, trusting that he would take care of us and provide for us and we missed the boat!
- While God used that time to continue to grow me and work out all things for our good, choosing Fear led to a 12 year detour from God's Preferred Plan and future for our family

- As talked about last week, We all come to decision points when we have to choose between faith and fear, belief or unbelief, and the choice gets even harder the more pressure that is applied

### Tension:

- **Human condition:**
  - **When pressure is applied, we often tend to take the path of least resistance**
  - **The path of least resistance is not always the right path though it's often the easiest path**
  - **The path of least resistance and easiest path is often not God's path**

### Continuing to look at Abram / Abraham

- Been Talking about how when Abram is got this incredible, yet ambiguous, calling on His life, Abram went...He chose to 'go' without the 'know'
  - Abram chose Faith and set out; and doesn't get far , he again and again is placed at a **fork in the road** with a decision to make between faith and fear when he and Sarai and the lot are entering Egypt; Abram isn't perfect (good news for us) and this is one of the times, we see Abram choose fear and the path of least resistance:

**Genesis 12:10-20** New International Version (NIV):

## Abram in Egypt

10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. 11 As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are.

12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. 13 Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."

- Wonderful that Abram thinks his wife is beautiful!

- We husbands don't tell our wives enough just how beautiful we think they are! [If you're here with your wife, tell her she's beautiful]
- Of course, here it's like Abram compliments her and then pretty much throws her under the camel...*fyi, it's never a good thing to throw your spouse under a camel!*
- Basically at this point Abram and Sarai find themselves in a sort tough spot
  - There's a famine, and they flee to Egypt, which historically was known to be less impacted by drought due to irrigation systems and technology that had been implemented
  - In Egypt, they are foreigner; aliens
    - As aliens, they have no kin to care for them
    - They have no property
    - They have no status, or rights, or power
    - They are vulnerable, and that fact puts pressure on Abram - he's squeezed to make a decision on what to do
    - When think of getting squeezed / Pressure - think of a VICE
      - And under pressure, he decides to essentially prostitute his wife in order to save his own hide.
        - Let's call that the 'fear route' - lying and prostituting your wife
        - Faith route = telling the truth and NOT prostituting your wife and telling the truth (even honesty and purity were godly values at that time)
  - For me
    - Fear route= Going back to teaching to have guaranteed income and insurance
    - Faith route= Trusting God to provide and not letting my family starve

14 When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. 15 And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. 16 He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

17 But the Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai. 18 So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have

you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? 19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife?"

- Consequences:
  - We usually think of punishment as 'consequences', but consequences can be good or bad
  - People suffered
    - Sarai - knew what it meant; couldn't have made her feel good
    - Egyptian people afflicted with plagues and serious diseases; possibly deaths could have resulted
  - Abram had to face the music
    - When we lie or speak badly about somebody, doesn't it usually come back around?
  - My story
    - 12 year detour
    - That time was good, but there were a lot of things going on personally
    - Felt like I was being 'tossed about'
      - Ephesians 4:14 "so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."
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**Worship Note:** Simply put, choices have consequences

- The fact is we have to face the consequences of our decisions and live with those
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Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!" 20 Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

So, Abram took the 'fear route' - lying and prostituting your wife - why?

- When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live
  - May have had some evidence to back that up, but essentially feared the worst

WHAT WOULD HAVE happened if Abram had chosen faith and NOT lied or prostituted his wife?

- Abram been killed? No bro
- Fear leads us to envision worst-case scenarios; RARELY do they happen
- Countless ways that God could have made that scenario work out if Abram would have chosen faith
  - Caused the Egyptians to be confused and fight among themselves like He did with Gideon
  - Caused a camel to talk and warn them that if they touched a hair on their heads they would perish
  - Opened up the earth and swallowed them or sent down fire?
  - Use your imagination here...
  - Abram could have avoided ALL of the negative consequences if he would have made the decision to choose FAITH BEFORE THE PRESSURE GOT APPLIED
  - Good principle in life:
    - Remember that being a principle when I did a program called Passport to Purity with my boys when the hit 6th grade

PASSPORT TO PURITY:

- MAKE THE DECISION AHEAD OF time thing for PURITY, Brent
- MAKE decision ahead of time to choose faith before pressure it applied

**Worship Note:** Decide **ahead of time** to choose faith

Vice grip - symbolic of pressure applied - pressure from finances, dysfunctional relationships, conflict...

That's where spending time with God daily really pays off...renew mind - Chris Valaton thread?  
Romans 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

GOD REDEEMED THE POOR DECISION

- Delayed things but didn't destroy it
  - Abram was blessed by Pharaoh eventually
  - Maybe sooner and wouldn't have had to 'face the music'
  - Me
    - 12 years- **Romans 8:28**= Being worked for my good

- In that time made many lifelong friends, some of you
- Enjoyed coaching
- Wasn't fulfilling calling
  - 2015 got the call about Ebenezer
- Now
  - Fulfilling my call
    - In the past 4-5 years prayed about being in full-time ministry and the Lord said wait, had just gotten 'content' hit the 'sweet spot' with bi-vocational ministry and as I said last week the Lord has told me it is time to leave teaching/coaching and pursue it!
  - Taking seminary classes online
  - God's promises/call wasn't destroyed, I just delayed it for a little while
- God's plan was delayed but not destroyed
  - We can't destroy God's promises
  - Our decision to choose fear might delay but doesn't destroy
  - At any point can choose faith at any point and vere back towards God's path

**Worship Note:** We can **delay** God's plans for our lives, but we can't **destroy** them.

- God still used Abram to be the Father of Faith...he's still that guy; that can be your story too, but don't waste time

## Guidance for Life's Adventure

If at a decision point and pressure is on, choose faith...

If you chosen fear and you are on that path, The Lord can redeem it, it's not too late!

[Need clear invite to response time, and make obvious worship isn't the only response, and that service is not over!]

# Faith Under Pressure

## Summary

Abraham (Abram) is known as the “Father of faith”. Even so, we see that there are times that he chose fear instead of faith. In the story of him and his household going to Egypt to escape the famine that was going on we see Abraham make a choice to stretch the truth and tell Pharaoh that Sarah (Sarai) was his sister and not his wife. This choice was riddled with negative consequences and effected many people. In our life we have the choice of faith or fear many times and it is beneficial for us to make that decision way ahead of time before the pressure of the moment has the ability to cloud our ability to make the correct decision.

## Scripture

Genesis 12:10-20

## Questions

1. Recall a time when you traveled a long distance for food? (It can be because you were hungry or just trying a specific restaurant/ type of food)
2. How do you think Sarah felt in this situation? What about the Egyptians that were affected by diseases and plagues?

3. What are some practical ways and examples in which we can choose faith over fear?