

WHEN THE FAMILY ACTS ON ITS OWN

GOLDEN TEXT

“Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. (Genesis 17:19)

USEFUL PRACTICE

When human beings make hasty decisions about God's plans, the consequences of this action are inevitable.

SCRIPTURE READING

Genesis 12:1-3; 16:1-5

Genesis 12

1 The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

2 “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Genesis 16

1 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar;

2 so she said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

3 So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.

4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.

5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me."

LESSON OBJECTIVES

I – To identify that God's promises to Abram were also passed on to his family.

II – To recognize that we cannot try to "interfere" in God's plans.

III – To understand that a hasty decision can lead to unnecessary conflicts in the family.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout this quarter, we will study matters related to the family. On this occasion, specifically, we consider that, unlike other quarters, the subjects refer to the problems of the family's daily life. We will see what the Word of God has to teach us regarding problems of marital communication, jealousy, rebellion, quarrels, lies, hurts and raising children, among other subjects. In this lesson, in particular, we will focus on the hasty attitudes of Sarai and Abram, when they decided not to wait for the fulfillment of God's promise and to act on their own, "helping Him" to fulfill the promise. We will see the consequences of our stopping listening to the voice of the Lord in order to "listen" to the voice of a deceitful heart.

I - GOD MAKES PROMISES TO ABRAM

1. God's encounter with Abram. Abram came from a journey of conquests and personal victories since he left Ur of the Chaldeans and, later, Haran (Gen. 11:31; 12:1-4). However, the couple Abram and Sarai had no children. In Genesis, chapter 12, the patriarch was 75 years old

when God promised him a great offspring (Gen 12.4). In chapter 15, the Lord gives him a specific promise of an heir. And finally, when Isaac, the son of promise, was born, the patriarch was 100 years old (Gen. 21:5). Thus, we can say that Abraham waited 25 years for the fulfillment of the divine promise.

2. Doubt in the face of waiting. After the promise of getting descendants (Genesis 12), Abram had a concern: "Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" (Genesis 15:2). This question reveals that his faith was in crisis. Abram could not see the couple's dream come true, since Sarai was barren. It is no different with us either. Sometimes, we are blocked by doubts that prevent us from, by faith, seeing the operation of the supernatural.

3. God assures Abram of the fulfillment of the promise. As we have seen, Genesis 15:4 contains the promise of a son. In verse 7, the Lord says, "I am the Lord" (Gen. 15:7). So He allayed the patriarch's concern, specifying a promise: "This man will not be your heir [Ishmael]; but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir [Isaac]" (Genesis 15:4). Here, God is putting it to Abram that His promises are based on His own character, for He is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind; "Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (Num. 23:19). God faithfully fulfills His Word (Psalm 89:34). Unfortunately, however, Abram would waver in faith and would not convey to Sarai confidence in the promise (Gen. 16:2, 3).

II - INTERFERENCE IN GOD'S PLAN

1. Sarai's attempt to "help" God. Sarai could not bear children naturally because of her infertility, and, in that context, she was also advanced in age. Therefore, Sarai persuaded Abram that the best way for him to have an heir would be by taking the Egyptian servant, Hagar, and having a son with her (Gen. 16:2). At that time, it was allowed to do this so that a man could have an heir. This attempt to "help God" to fulfill the promise of a son was a rash move by Abram. In married life, it is important for the believing couple to consult God on everything. In this sense, Abram should convince his wife to wait for God, because He fulfills His Word (1 Kings 8:56).

2. They both waver in faith. In chapter 15, Abram is a man of faith. However, in chapter 16, the situation changes completely because he preferred to listen to the voice of his wife, according to Genesis 16:2: "Abram agreed to what Sarai said". The truth is that, faced with his wife's complaint, Abram calmed down and preferred to accept her argument and not believe in the miracle of both of them having a child as promised. The

two left the logic of faith and clung to merely human logic. We must be careful not to interfere in God's designs, because this could mean a deviation from the divine will. We cannot want to intervene in the original divine plan because of a hasty decision.

3. The problem with haste. Sarai abandoned and despised trust in God, preferring to solve the problem her way, in addition to leading her husband to the same mistaken and unbelieving attitude. By moving away from dependence on God, the couple could not avoid the disastrous consequences for their lives (Gen. 16:5-9). Hagar became pregnant and had the son that Abraham dreamed of having, but it sparked the historic family conflict between Abram and Sarai, between Sarai and Hagar and, later, between their children, Ishmael and Isaac. Many conflicts happen in homes because of hasty attitudes on the part of spouses. The result of this Abram's haste remains to this day, with the offspring of Ishmael and Isaac, that is, Jews and Arabs.

III - THE CONSEQUENCES OF A RASH DECISION

1. The strife in Abram's family. The couple's rashness ended up creating conflict between Abram and Sarai, caused by the new situation to which Hagar submitted. Discord and disharmony created an unsustainable situation within that home. Hagar, feeling privileged within Abram's house, since he was paying special attention to her because of the child in her womb, made Sarai jealous. She then began to be hostile to her servant (Gen. 16:4-6). This situation was very difficult inside the patriarch's house.

2. Abram's weakness. After all the experience with God and listening to his divine promises for personal and family life, Abram opted for weakness and carnality. He was not as firm as to persuade Sarai, in the face of the advice to have this child with Hagar, to trust in God and in his promises (Gen. 16:6). This story teaches us that we cannot just look at human solutions. There are moments in our lives when only the hand of God can operate. Let us be spiritually sensitive to discern what is our responsibility and what just depends solely and exclusively on God (cf. Ex. 14:15-18).

3. A mistaken opinion of God. When Sarai tells Abram that, "The Lord has kept me from having children", she seems to be asserting that God had prevented her from bearing children (Gen. 16:2). She moved away from the place of full dependence on God and preferred to make her own decision, using Hagar as a means to fulfill the divine promise. Her carnal heart caused her to despise the faith. In this sense, Abram's weakness was not that of not opposing Sarai wisely as to convince her to believe in God's miracle in her life. His wife needed an experience with God likely to give

her enough knowledge to understand that her husband was right about what he said. Therefore, it is necessary to pay close attention to a precious lesson: men of God have the role of spiritual mentors in their homes and, as such, cannot fail to govern them wisely (cf. 1 Tim. 3:5, 6).

CONCLUSION

This lesson teaches us about God's promises for the believer's life. However, it warns us of the danger of being so hasty as to interfere in the fulfillment of these promises. We have seen that this type of attitude had serious consequences for Abram's family. May God forbid us to try to interfere in his plans, for we know that his will is good, pleasing and perfect (Rom. 12:2).