

Can God Deliver Me From a Mess I'm In?

- All right, we continue the hillbilly, redneck saga of the family in Genesis. We're in chapter 20. And some of you may have thought, "Man, I wish I could have been in the Bible." I'll tell you, the more I study Genesis, I'm glad they didn't put my family in the Bible, amen. I don't want everybody knowing about our stuff. Well, we're gonna get to know this couple, Abraham and Sarah, a little bit better today. They're one of the most significant and famous couples and families in the history of the world. And what we're gonna see is even though they are believers and they have been believers now for a few decades, they get themselves into quite a mess. And at some point in all of our life, we make some decisions that get us in a situation that we can't get ourselves out of. And we have nobody to blame, but ourselves. And ultimately we can't save ourselves. And if God doesn't show up, we've got ourselves a real situation. If you're not in that right now, it's coming tomorrow, just to let you know, where we find ourselves. And oftentimes when we make these bad decisions and we get ourselves into a real mess. If we're married true or false, it affects our spouse? All the time, it does. And if you've got kids or grandkids, they're involved as well. And that's what we're gonna look at today. This family makes a real strategic error. They get themselves into quite a mess. And in Genesis 20, we're gonna answer this question, can God deliver me from a mess that I'm in? So we're just gonna read their story. And if you're married, maybe just hold hands. And this will be a little bit of healing for you. "From there, Abraham journeyed toward the territory "of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur, "as he's sojourned in Gerar." So he is moving his whole family. Probably thousands of people in this household. He's got a big business and he's got a large estate. "And Abraham set of Sarah, his wife, she is my sister." They did this previously in Genesis chapter 12. He tried to give her away once, he's gonna give her away again. At first, you don't succeed. Okay, you laughed, not me. "And Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah." So he's got the guy's wife. "But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night." Like a mob boss. "And said to him, behold you are a dead man." I love God's subtlety. "Because of the woman whom you have taken "for she as a man's wife. "Now Abimelech had not approached her." So they hadn't been intimate yet. "So he said, Lord, will you kill an innocent people? "Did he not himself say to me, she's my sister." They played the whole, she's my sister routine. "And she herself said he is my brother." They're both liars. "In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands, "I have done this. "Then God said to him in a dream." God shows up supernaturally. "Yes, I know that you have done this "in the integrity of your heart. "And it was I who kept you from sinning against me. "Therefore I did not let you touch her. "Now then return the man's wife or he is a prophet." He's a godly man, what? Huh? "So that he will pray for you and you shall live. "But if you do not return her "know that you shall surely die, "you and I'm going for your whole family." So Abimelech got up early in the morning, he set his alarm. He's like, "I'm not sleeping in tomorrow." "Honey, why are you getting up so early?" "I got something to do." "Are you sure?" "No, I'm real sure, I gotta get up early." "So Abimelech got up early in the morning, "called all his servants and told him all his things." Tells his whole estate. "And the men were very much afraid. "Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "what have you done to us? "And how have I sin against you, "that you have brought on me and my kingdom, a great sin. "You've done to me things that ought not to be done. "And Abimelech said to Abraham, "what did you see that you did this thing?" Okay. Husbands real quick, just look at your wife and

say this, I'm doing pretty good. Okay, doing pretty good. So the story here is we'll just deal with the characters in succession. So Sarah here, she's about 90-years-old. Like give grandma a break, right, like give her a break. Can't she retire already? So she's around 90. They had been waiting about 25 years. God told them that they were gonna have a son who would lead to a family that would lead to the nation of Israel, that would bring the son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ into human history, through this crazy hillbilly family. The boy hasn't shown up. And what's about to happen is, they're right on the brink of their blessing. If you keep reading, they're gonna have Isaac, their son, shortly after this episode. And here's what often happens in life. When you have a great test, it's oftentimes right before a great blessing. And this is what's happening here. God is testing their faith. And I believe that also it's possible that Satan is at work behind the scenes, tempting their faith. Sometimes when you find yourself in a really hard season, it feels like man, there's a lot of opposition, it's hard to do the right things. We're in a dark difficult place. It's oftentimes because there is a blessing on the horizon and the enemy or circumstances are trying to keep you from it. The right at the precipice of finally getting their baby boy, they've been waiting 25 years. And it's like they're gonna trip over their own feet right before the finish line and not make it to the blessing. Now this family, this marriage, they've got some serious problems. They both are capable of bad ideas. How many of you are married? Let me say this, you're both capable of bad ideas.

- [Man] Amen.

- Amen, okay, says the guy who's sleeping on the couch tonight. Okay, so the way this works, in this instance, Abraham's got the bad idea, but previously Sarah had the bad idea. So previously Sarah's idea was, "Well, I don't have a kid. I've got this younger maidservant Hagar, "why don't you marry her and have a kid with her?" That was a really bad idea. And Abraham went along with a bad idea. Here, Abraham comes up with an adultery idea. Previously, Sarah had the idea that he should commit adultery. And now he has the idea that she should commit adultery. Now these are believers. Now I'm not sure at this point, the evidence would hold up in court, but they are God's people. And she goes along with the lie. He says, "She's my sister." They look at her, she's like, "Yep, that's my brother." And so what happens here, ultimately, they're guilty of adultery, they're soon to be guilty of adultery unless God intervenes and lying and lying. And what we're seeing here is a pattern with the men. Previously, there was a nephew of Abraham's, named Lot, he had two daughters and what did he do? He gave them away to a horrifying mob of perverted men, is what he was offering to do before God intervened and saved those girls from horror. What happens here for the second time, Abraham gives his wife away. In both instance, it seems like the men don't really value the women. If I could state the obvious. God shows up to protect the daughters. God shows up to protect Sarah, the wife. Because ultimately that's his daughter. And what happens, some cultures are chauvinistic, some cultures are feministic. In the chauvinistic cultures, the men treat women like second class citizens and don't really honor and protect them. That's what's happening here. And so what happens then is there is an overreaction that's feminism. And that is well, "We're just gonna trash men "and speak ill of men and look down on men "so that women can be empowered." We learned earlier in Genesis that we're not supposed to have chauvinism or feminism, but ultimately God made the first man.

And then he made the woman from the side of the man. And if ultimately he's ahead of her, he's a chauvinist. If she's ahead of him, she's a feminist. If they're next to one another, they're a married couple. That this is where the woman comes from and this is where she rightly belongs. But what these men are doing, they are dishonoring the women in their lives. Lot, the believer, dishonors his daughter. Abraham, the husband, dishonors his wife. And so it's important for us as men just to read the story and ask, "Okay, do I honor my daughters?" "Do I honor my wife?" "Would I be willing to hand my daughters off "to some unbelieving guys, "even to be engaged, as Lot did?" "Would I be willing to hand off my wife to another man, "as Abraham did?" And so Sarah she's in this horrible predicament. This is the second time that they have played this, "She's my sister" game and given her away. So in Genesis 12, Abraham went toward Egypt. As they were entering into Egypt, he got scared that something bad may happen to him because it says that his wife was very beautiful and his thought was, "Well, you're beautiful, "they're gonna want you. "To get you they're gonna hurt me. "So lie, say, you're my sister. "And then I'll give you to the king "and then you can go join his harem. "Yeah, that's a great idea, right sweetheart?" And he was afraid of his life. He should be afraid of his wife. I'll tell you this, if I did this to Grace, if the king didn't kill me, the wife would. My wife hates this story. We were talking about it this week. And I was like, honey, what do you think? She's like, "I hate that story, "I don't wanna talk about it." I was like, okay. So usually Grace has significant insight to the sermon. Not this week. This week, I'm just scared. That's all. Grace doesn't. How many of you women really don't like this story? Okay, so ultimately this is where we find ourselves. He's given away his wife and she has gone along with the ruse and the lie. So what happens here with Abraham, there was a time earlier in his life that God showed up and told him to move, "Pack everything and go." So he did. And then in Genesis 12, where he gave his wife away the first time, God didn't tell him to go, but he just went anyways. Here, God doesn't tell him to go, he just goes by himself, not by God's calling. The point is this, sometimes God will tell you to do something, but it's only once. It's not something you're supposed to repeat. God said, move. God. Didn't say, keep moving. When you have a big decision to make in life, and moving your family's a big decision, and many people are making that decision right now, as we're seeing massive relocation, nationally. People are pouring into Arizona. It could be a good thing to move or a bad thing, it depends if you're in God's will. And God didn't tell them to go and they just go. That may be why he has some fear, he's not confident he's in God's will. And he's moved into what we would call enemy territory. He's in the region of the Philistines. And as they're about ready to enter in, the Philistines or their enemies, what he says is this, "They're gonna want you beautiful wife, "and they're gonna kill me." How many of you guys at this point would decide not to go there. Right. If your options are, you gotta join a harem with hundreds of other women, led by a demonic cult leader king, and your 90, is that a win or a lose? That's a lose. Okay, or they're gonna kill me. Is that a win or a lose? That's a lose. If you're in a lose, lose, maybe you try and come up with an alternative plan.

- [Woman] Amen.

- Okay, because here, what he decides is, "Well, it's a, I'm gonna lose or you're gonna lose, "so honey, I'm gonna make sure that you lose." He's really being a terrible husband. So ultimately

as well, we just learned earlier in Genesis, there was a town called Sodom and Gomorrah, they had sexual sin, what did God do to Sodom and Gomorrah? Eviscerated the whole town. What are Abraham and Sarah doing? Sexual sin. "Here, take my wife." That's adultery. Here's the big idea, as you read the story, is it difficult to see Abraham and Sarah as godly people? Is it difficult in this scene? Here's the big idea, the believers are not always the good people and the unbelievers are not always the bad people. Sometimes there's a decent believer that works out of their conscience. There's one of these guys Jesus talks about, in the New Testament, The Good Samaritan, not a believer, but he's a decent guy. And sometimes God's people are the ones who really are not acting in a way that is good. And here you're gonna see a Abimelech rebuke Abraham, the prophet. The unbeliever rebukes the believer. And he is like, "What the heck did you do this for? "Why'd you give me your wife?" And what's crazy about Abimelech, does the potential adultery bother him? Oh yeah, he's like, "You were gonna have me sleep with your wife." It doesn't bother Abraham, but it bothers Abimelech. Let me just say this, like, if you're in Vegas and you know, a guy's got a lot of beads around his neck and he looks at you and he is like, "You're nasty." You are, okay, you just are. What's happening here, the bad guy sees how bad it is. And here we're told that Abraham is a prophet. And the prophet is first mentioned here in the Bible. This is the first time we hear of anybody being called a prophet. Previous to this, God did all the speaking to people. Here God is gonna speak to people through people. So what a prophet is, a prophet receives a word from God and then delivers the word of God. This can happen in one of two ways, there are prophets who speak and prophets who write. But Abraham here is going to become a spokesman for God. He's gonna be a spokesman for God. And so let's look at Abimelech. We looked at Abraham and Sarah and Abimelech. Does Abraham obey God? Nope. Does Abimelech obey God? Yeah. See, it's really hard for us as believers to be like, "We're always the good people." And sometimes we have some really bad days. And this is a really bad day. Abimelech fears God, more than Abraham. He obeys God more than Abraham. And he's bothered by the adultery more than Abraham is. So what Abimelech calls Abraham out on is this, terrible witness. Is this a terrible witness? Abraham and Sarah are the first believers to show up. Like they know the real God, this king who rules a kingdom, he rules as a counterfeit of God. He's like a king with his kingdom. He's like a little Jesus. And Abraham shows up, "Oh, there's believers here, great. "Oh and they're liars and potential adulterers." It's a terrible witness. And so sometimes when you and I are making our decisions, it shouldn't be that we factor in what Proverbs 29:25 calls, "The fear of man." But it should be the witness to man. As we make decisions like, "Okay, God, what is right, what is wrong? "But also how does this look "to the non-Christians that I know, "family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. "Are they going to see a terrible witness from me, "out of this decision that I'm making." And that's in fact what's happening. So the hero of this section is ultimately gonna be God. Abraham and Sarah, they're not doing great. Abimelech doesn't even know the Lord. God gets involved. Couple things, I want you to see about God from this story. Number one, God is all knowing. He knows exactly what Abraham and Sarah have cooked up is their bad scheme. He knows that Abimelech has not yet touched Sarah. He shows up in a dream. So God is all knowing. And God knows the heart of Abimelech. And what Abimelech says is, "I didn't know." God's like, "I know you didn't know. "That's why I showed up before it got too late." So number one, God is all knowing. God not only knows what we're saying and what

we're doing, but he knows the motive of the heart. In addition, number two, God, here is a supernatural God. Nobody can get to the king. If you're a king with a kingdom and an army, nobody can get to you. God gets right in and God shows up in a dream. So God is all knowing and God is supernatural. God can speak, reveal, communicate, deliver, heal in extraordinary, unexpected, supernatural ways. Here, it's a dream. A vision is where God reveals visually when you're awake, a dream is where God reveals visually when you're asleep. And here's a big, important lesson, God is sovereign. Meaning, he's over it, okay. Abraham and Sarah, they're not in control. They they're not in control. Abimelech thinks he's in control until God shows up. And then what everyone realizes, God's in control. And what God says is, "I'm gonna warn you Abimelech, "don't touch that woman. "If you do, you'll have to deal with me "and there's gonna be consequences for your whole family." God is sovereign. Emotionally, this changes how you live. If you just think that it is you and your spouse and your family and your political leaders, and you don't believe that there is a God who is over your life, family and human history, you are going to self destruct with stress and anxiety. When you look up and you realize there is a God who is sovereign and he has authority and he knows everything and he can act supernaturally and intervene at any point, it changes how you live your life. So, you know, there's been seasons, even in our family, in our life, where everything looked very dark and very difficult and very dangerous. But you go forward because you trust that God is over it. That's the sovereignty of God. If you don't believe in the sovereignty of God, you can't be an emotionally healthy human being. And ultimately here, the believers aren't gonna fix it, and the politicians are not gonna fix it. The Lord needs to get involved. True or false, that's kind of where we're at right now? Right, the church ain't gonna fix it, the government ain't gonna fix it, we're gonna need God to get involved. And also we see here, God is good, he's good. Is he good to Abimelech? He is. What he says is, "I'm not gonna do anything, "if you do the right thing, that's good. Gives him an opportunity. God's gonna do good by Sarah, he's gonna get her out. God's gonna do good by Abraham and get him his wife back so they can have their kid. God is good to everyone in the story. This is the goodness of God. I don't know what you're going through. I don't know what your family's going through. I don't know what bad decisions your family has made. And we all have. As we read the story for some of us, it sounds very familiar. Yeah, family made a bad decision. It kind of pivoted us into the wrong place. It created a lot of pain. Marriages, relationships are strained or broken. Maybe even couples that were married are no longer together. Maybe there's been adultery and sexual sin. Maybe everything is really just a mess. And it's painful and it's dramatic. The issue is well, their God is our God. And as God was good for them, our God is good for us. And the good news is, God, doesn't just leave them. He involves himself to deliver them. This is where in this sermon, I just feel inclined to tell you this, give a little grace to your parents. I mean, compared to these people, your parents are pretty great. They did a great job. They didn't move you to a foreign country and give your mom to a cult leader. I mean that's, that's the bottom of the bottom right there. Give a little grace to your parents. Give a little grace to your parents. Give a little grace to your spouse. See what can happen is we read the Bible and we hear all the things that our spouse is supposed to be. And we get very judgey and disappointed. And then we read this and we're like, wow, okay, you're doing great. Like you're doing great. I'm not in Mexico, you know, in a harem, thank you. Good job. You know, and so ultimately there's an opportunity here, as God was involved in their family,

to be involved in your family, as God healed their marriage, he can heal your marriage. And as God put grace on them so they could put grace on each other. I just would tell you put some grace in your marriage, put some grace in your family. And while you're at it, get an extra dose of grace and give some to your parents, put a little grace on it. That's what God's gonna do here. So then here's the decision. It comes out of faith or fear. Genesis 20:11-13, "Abraham said." Let me just say this, when a man is guilty and starts talking, it doesn't get better, okay. Ladies, can I get an amen?

- [Ladies] Amen.

- Amen, that was quick and devoted, okay. You can know who the guilty guy is 'cause he's talking a lot. Most guys don't say a lot 'til they're guilty. In us there's a small attorney, always comes out when we're guilty. "Abraham said I did it because I thought "there is no fear of God at all in this place." Like, "You people are horrible, so here take my wife." What? Even if that's true, let's say it is true, "Honey, these people are evil. "I'm gonna give them to you, okay." It doesn't seem like Abraham fears got either. "And they will kill me because of my wife." She's pretty, I'm a victim. "Besides she is." They have been believers long enough that they have gotten religious. Here's a religious answer, right. This is like the fine print in your condo timeshare. This is like that. "Besides she is indeed my sister." And then he goes into the org chart. "The daughter of my father "though not the daughter of my mother." I'm happy to clarify that. "And she became my wife." Ladies, what do you think? Yeah, you're not buying it okay. "And when God caused me to wander from my father's house." Who caused him? Oh God. "God, you know what? "There was a supply chain issue. "Economy went down real estate market cratered, "all God's fault. "He forced me to wander." This is like Adam in Genesis where God shows up and Adam's like, "Well, the woman's a real situation. "Oh and by the way you made her, "you guys should probably sort this out, I'm a victim." "I said to her, this is." Oh my gosh, this guy's awesome, he's awesome. "This is the kindness you must do to me "at every place to which we come say of me "he is my brother." Okay, here we go. So there's something that Jesus says is the difference between the spirit of the law and the letter of the law. And the letter is the technical fine print details. But the spirit is the heart and the intent and the motive. So he immediately goes to the letter of the law. "Well, technically she is my sister. "I mean from one side, not the other "because she's a half sister and then I married and so." But what's the spirit of the law? It's your wife. She's 90, you're a hundred, you guys have been married for a while, it's official. He's giving away his wife. And what can happen is when we're guilty, we're trying to find ways to defend rather than just be honest, own and repent. Whether or not she's a close relative, she is your wife. You're giving your wife away. That's the big idea. But here's what we all do, when we're guilty, we get very sort of law based and we get into the letter of the law. Now let me say this about Abraham. What seems to trigger his bad decision making is fear. If I could just state the obvious. And what he says here is, "I thought they were going to do." What to me? "They're gonna kill me." That's his fear. So ultimately when you and I make decisions, we make them out of faith or we make them out of fear. Let me just say this. All of our decisions come out of faith or fear. Abraham in the Bible is the man of faith. He's mentioned around 300 times. Every time he's mentioned, pretty much, somewhere in that same orbit, it has the word faith.

That's Abraham, Abraham is the prototype of faith. But there are times, even though he's a mature believer, having walked with God for a few decades and seeing God deliver him incredibly, supernaturally, repeatedly, there are times he makes his decision out of fear. This occasion, where he is heading into Gerar with his wife, I'll just ask the obvious question, does he make his decision out of faith or fear? It's fear. It's fear. Fear never leads you into the will of God, because fear is not about going into God's will, it's going away from something that may be painful or harmful. It's about running from not running to. Let me just spend a little bit of time explaining this. Because you and I we've got decisions to make in our life. And sometimes these decisions are so massive that they're gonna have generational implications and complications. This is one of those decisions. The counselors and those who are therapists and work in the brain sciences, just do little excursus, and then we'll do a clinical case study on father Abraham and his wife Sarah. They will say that our emotions exist in two states, regulated and dysregulated. Regulated is you in a healthy, normal, emotional space. Dysregulated is the unhealthy, unregulated version of you. Emotionally, when you're regulated, you have emotions. When you're dysregulated, the emotions have you. When you're regulated, you control your responses emotionally. When you're dysregulated, your responses control you emotionally. Now to use the language of the Bible, we would say that being regulated is living in the spirit. And that being dysregulated is living in the flesh. And what we see here with Abraham is when it comes time to make this decision, he is operating in a way that is dysregulated, it is in the flesh. Give you an example. So to be regulated, have your emotional life in the spirit. It's the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self control. Is that what he's demonstrating, love, joy, peace? No, he's not showing that. Instead of love, he really has contempt for his wife. Instead of joy, he's got fear. Instead of peace, he's very anxious. What happens is you and I, there's going to be someone or something in our life that triggers you. And it glitches you from the regulated to the dysregulated, from you in the spirit to you in the flesh, from the good version of you to the bad version of you. Has anyone experienced this? We all do. Two things, when we get dysregulated and we're triggered by fear, by anger, by bitterness, by jealousy, that's an unhealthy place to make decisions from. When we're dysregulated two things to warn. Number one, the longer you live in a dysregulated place, the less healthy you are. There are some people, he says, "They're gonna kill me." He said earlier in Genesis 12, when he made the same decision to give away his wife, not on the way into Gerar, but in the way to Egypt, he said, "I was afraid." So it's fear both times. His trigger is physical safety. That's his trigger. And the longer you live in a dysregulated situation or context, the less healthy you are. Like if someone is fearful for years, they're really not doing well. They're really not doing well. And we saw this the last two years, right? I mean the spirit of fear grip the whole country and planet. And there are some people, even though, you know, it's like, "Hey, all clear." They're like, "I'm still scared." Because they've now gotten used to living in a dysregulated state of fear. If you're a person who's angry and you're angry for years, that's not a healthy version of you. If you're jealous or bitter or unforgiving, and you live there for years, the longer you live there, the less healthy you are. And so you need to be careful. We're all going to get dysregulated. We're all gonna get triggered. You're gonna have a day where you're angry, where you're fearful, where you're jealous, where you're hurt, where you're frustrated. You're gonna get there. That's just a natural human response. But if you stay there, the worst thing you can do is make a

decision when you're dysregulated, make a major decision. How many of you, when you were angry, you made a decision, it wasn't a good decision? You were jealous, you were bitter, you were hurt, you were scared, you were fearful, you were anxious, you were stressed, so you made a decision 'cause you thought, "Well, I just need to do something." And what you did was make it worse. I'm reading a book right now, I just finished it actually, I think it's a secular book. It's on trauma, trauma therapy. First chapter it's on social media. And they said that social media is where people who are unregulated, emotionally unhealthy, go to trigger one another. Does that explain the internet?

- [Woman] Yeah.

- They're like, everybody here is crazy. And this person's angry, so they go on and they act out of their anger and then it triggers this person and then they get angry, and then this person's afraid and then they post and then it triggers this person and they're afraid. And literally social media is held together by emotionally unhealthy, unregulated people triggering one another to generate ad revenue, to pay the bills. It's like a whole generation of trauma and pain and emotional abuse, to pay the bills. They said, if you get rid of social media, you immediately start to get more healthy because the healthiest people aren't on the internet.

- [Woman] Amen.

- Right, you know why healthy people have friends and they go places and they do things.

- [Woman] Yeah.

- And unhealthy people stay at home on their phone. That's how you can know who the unhealthy people are. They're on the internet. Not the healthy people, they're at the park. That's where they are. So let me unpack this, Abraham he's not in the spirit, he's in the flesh. He's not acting out of faith. You know what? "We need to stay where God told us to stay. "God told us to stay there. "You know, maybe the economy's bad, "maybe the housing market is down, "maybe the politics is weird. "But if God told us to move here "and he told us he was gonna bless us. "and he told us he was gonna give us his son, "we just need to trust that the son is coming "and God is gonna take care of us. "Cause that's what he told us to do." Instead of faith, it's fear. "Oh my gosh, economy's down things aren't good, "we're struggling. "The kid hasn't shown up, "ah, pack everything, we're gonna respond, "we're gonna react. "We're gonna make a decision motivated, "not by faith, but by fear." And his fear is this, "They're gonna kill me." And what's interesting, Abraham doesn't seem to me, and this is true when you and I are making a decision outta fear, not faith, we get pretty illogical. Because we get very emotional, so we're not very rational. We feel a lot so we don't think a lot. We already learned previously, Abraham has 318 men in his household, we were told that he raised from youth to be trained soldiers. He's got his own personal militia. Previously when his crazy nephew Lot got captured as a prisoner of war, along with his family in a conflict that happened near the border of Sodom, Abraham saddled up rode a hundred miles, brought us 318 mercenaries, brought together the kings of multiple

kingdoms, he was the commander in chief, he put together the military strategy. Hebrews says that he slaughtered everyone. He slaughtered the kings and armies of other nations. And here, he's scared. It's like you were Rambo, just a few chapters ago. And now, you know, you're Mr. Rogers with a sweater, you know like what happened? When you and I operate out of fear and not out of faith, we tend to get a bit irrational. And I don't know why he has fear in these moments, but it seems like when he's got the bigger army and the bigger bank account and he's in the strong position, he marches forward. When they've got the bigger army and the bigger bank account, he's gripped with fear. He's gripped with fear. And at this point, his fear is, "I'm going to die." He's around a hundred. You know, at this point, you could slip and fall. I mean it, you know, it's coming. You know, you're one ladder away from the end. I mean, it's just, I don't know. So let me say this, the number one command in the Bible that appears more than any other command is this, "Fear not." Why does God keep having to tell his people over and over and over and over and over, hundreds of times, "Fear not." 'Cause we keep getting afraid. It must be an ongoing issue, if it's an ongoing instruction. What happens is fear in us, leads to anxiety and stress in the body. There's a book it's called, "The Body Keeps The Score" and it talks about how fear in us causes anxiety and stress. And then our body starts to give us indicators that we're operating in fear and we're dysregulated. Give you some of those simple examples, but you're probably familiar with them. Mood swings, you get good news, you're so excited, you get bad news, you're so devastated. It's emotionally unstable mood swings. Your sleep is affected. You either can't go to sleep because you're too worried and anxious or you fall asleep and then you wake up 'cause your mind is racing. Or you're so tired, you can't get out of bed and you just can't get going. The body also will indicate fear, manifest in anxiety, as just brain fog. Just, I can't think. And I've had these in the past. There've been seasons of my life where I've had seasons, where I was operating out of fear. I'll never forget, one day, I was a church years ago, a guy came up to me, we were just visiting. He's like, "Where do you live?" I couldn't remember. I was like, I don't know. He laughed. I was like, no, like, I don't know. Like I've been there. I couldn't remember what town I lived in or what neighborhood I lived in. I came home and told Grace, said, I don't think I'm doing good. I'm lucky I made it home. And sometimes it's just that, you're like, what is going? Just brain fog. Sometimes it's just general irritability. There are days that it feels like your soul has a migraine. You know what I'm talking about? What happens when you have a migraine? A little sound sounds really big, because just, it's overwhelming. There are times when you're gripped with fear that your soul has a migraine. Every little thing seems like a big thing. You're just generally irritable. Just grumpy. You just, you can't handle anymore, you're done. Fear has driven you to that point. For some, they have stomach problems, stomach pain, digestive issues. For others, it's heart problems, heart palpitations, heart issues. For some people it's blood pressure, their blood pressure's way up. Why is that? "I don't know, I'm afraid. "I'm kind of stuck on in this fight or flight cycle "and I'm scared and I'm anxious "and my blood pressure's up "'cause I'm kind of heightened in alert." Sometimes you're sometimes your weight is affected. Some people can't eat so they lose weight. I don't know what that's like, but I've heard about it. I'm over on the other side, I would do comfort food, high carbohydrates. It just creates energy. Drink energy drinks, drink coffee. Just trying to sort of keep the body going when it needs a break. For some people it's just chronic sickness. As your immune system gets worn down, it's sinus infections and general

sickness. And every season that there's a cold, you're sure to get it. You're in a weakened position and state. For some people it's panic. There's just moments where they're just sort of scared and triggered and panicked and some people then self medicate. So in the morning, it's coffee, in the afternoon, it's carbohydrates and an energy drink. And at night it's, you know, alcohol or drugs or pornography or whatever the case may be. And it's trying to regulate the body. Let me say this, if you have fear, it's not a problem, as long as you regulate back to faith. The problem is if you have fear and you stay with fear, eventually it starts to break you, emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. And what happens is under the anxiety is fear. And it says this in 1 John 4:18, "Fear has to do with punishment." So what fear is, "It's gonna hurt me, they're gonna hurt me." Back to the story of Abraham. He's a man of faith, but in this moment his safety triggers him, he goes to fear. And his fear of punishment is, "They're gonna want my wife "so they're gonna kill me and take my wife." What I think is really interesting is, I just thought of this, his fear is not losing his wife. If he was gonna be afraid of anything, it should be losing his wife. If you're more afraid of losing your life than your wife, you're not a healthy man. I would rather die and Grace live, knowing at least she was married to a man who was not a coward. He's more afraid of himself dying than putting his wife in a situation where what she could face actually could be worse than death. When you take your wife, you hand her to a demonic godless king. There are no laws. There are no cops. There are no rules. He's got his own castle. She can't escape. He's gotta harem, they have to do whatever he says. And she's 90-years-old. Imagine what might happen to her. What's really interesting too, I just thought of this, maybe it's from the holy spirit, you decide, when we get fearful, we get selfish. He's fearful, all he's thinking about is, "What's gonna happen to me?" He doesn't think, "What's gonna happen to her?" This is where fearful people become very selfish people. We lose sight of the fact that other people are struggling and suffering and having a bad day and we become totally fixated with our own problems. Let me just submit to you, this is the world we live in, by the way. Everybody's hurting and nobody cares about anybody but themselves. So let me talk a little bit about fear. Fear is vision without faith. That's what Abraham demonstrates. He has a vision of his future. What is it? "They're gonna kill me." That is vision without faith. What he doesn't say is, "God loves me and my wife. "God saved me and my wife. "God promise me and my wife." Instead, he has vision with no faith. It's just vision with fear. He doesn't look up and see God. He just looks out and sees others. "They're coming to hurt me. "He's not going to deliver me." And what fear does, fear demands more information because we're trying to be all knowing or omniscient like God, so we can be sovereign like God. When you're fearful, you don't trust God, so you try to be God. Somebody needs to know everything and be in charge. "I got this Lord." He hears that these are some bad people, dangerous, no fear of God in their eyes. And then when he arrives, he has more information, he sees how they behave, and it only confirms his worse fears. But here's what happens, fear demands more information, but the more information you get, triggers more fear. Right, and again, just use the last two years. How many people are like, "I need to learn everything I can about COVID 19." And the more you learn, you didn't sleep better. You're more scared, more freaked out. He has information. Once he gets there and gets more information, he just has more fear. He's trying to be like God, all knowing and trying to be like God, all controlling. And then what fear does, fear turns us into false prophets. God just told Abraham, he was a prophet. In this moment, he's a false prophet. 'Cause his prophecy was,

"They're gonna kill me." Spoiler alert, they don't. Now they're gonna leave, Sarah might kill him. You know, that I would understand. But what he says is, "They're gonna kill me." That's a false prophecy. The most powerful voice in your life is yours. What you say about who God is and who you are and what the future holds, that's a prophecy. It's you trying to predict the future. If you're prophesying out of fear, you're going to be a false prophet. You will prophesy something for yourself that doesn't happen. What he prophesies is, "I'm gonna die." That's a false prophecy. Fear turns us into false prophets. In addition, fear is oftentimes more dangerous and deadly than the person or thing that we're afraid of. Like if you live your whole life in fear, the person or thing that you're afraid of may not destroy you, but your intestinal ulcer, your heart attack, your grumpy personality, your loneliness, because no one wants to be with you, that's gonna break you. Here, he is afraid of dying. But what he is afraid of is actually not as bad as the future that he is creating. So just think about this. At this moment, his wife is in a harem with maybe hundreds of other women. He doesn't know what they're going to do to her. He can't protect her. He's taken her out of her country. He's already moved her away from her family and friends. He's moved her to the promised land, but then he's moved her from there. He's not heard from God. God didn't tell them to move. God said that a son was coming. He handed off his wife. He's cut off the possibility of the blessing of his son. He has no ability to protect his wife. Who knows what they're going to do to her. Do you know what happens to a foreign woman who has no legal rights? There are no witnesses, there are no laws. She's 90-years-old. And she is available to the pleasure of a man who does not know God and gets to do whatever he wants. The world that he's created for her is worse than the thing that he was afraid of, dying. It's one thing, if you die and you set up your wife. It's another thing, if you live and you set her up for destruction. In addition now Abraham has left the promised land that God gave to him. God has given him a wife, he's given her away. And God promised them that his son was coming and they haven't seen the baby boy yet. He just gave up his family. He just gave up the nation of Israel. He just gave up the rest of the Old Testament. He just gave up Jesus Christ. The thing that he is afraid of is not nearly as devastating as everything he's willing to sacrifice, to avoid the thing that he's afraid of. And see the case study with Abraham is this. And I love you and I'm glad to teach, but we see this in his life, but we don't see it in our own. Because to us, our fears seem reasonable. This is where we bring in other people, wise counsel. Just as you and I get to look at Abraham's life, bring some people in to look at our life. Am I making sense? Is this a good idea, a bad idea? Am I just scared? Am I unregulated? Am I living in the flesh? Am I making bad decisions? Like what do you guys think? This is where you invite God's people in to give wisdom. And let me say this about fear. Fear is not just a feeling. It's a powerful spirit. 2 Timothy 1:7 he says, "God has not given us a spirit of fear." The spirit of fear is the counterfeit of the spirit of God. The spirit of God brings faith. The spirit of fear is the counterfeit of the spirit of faith. Abraham, he's a believer, so he has a holy spirit. And what he chooses in this moment, and he's done it previously, is the spirit of fear. When the spirit of fear comes upon you, it overwhelms you. All of a sudden, this is where people start to lose touch with reality, if they live under a spirit of fear for an extended period of time. They're not thinking clearly. They're feeling deeply, but they're not thinking clearly. And when the spirit of fear comes, some of you know what this spirit feels like. It just comes on, like, "I just, I feel oppressed, "I feel scared, I feel unsafe, I feel uncertain. "I feel disoriented, I just don't feel like myself." That's the spirit of fear.

And the Bible says that perfect love casts out fear. Just as a demon gets cast out, the spirit of fear is cast out by the love of God. And it's back to, "You know what? "No, there is a God, he is over this. "He is going to meet me in the future. "The God who was there in the past "says he's gonna be there in the future. "Now I look back and I see that he was there. "But when I look forward, "I can't see that he's going to be there." That's the spirit of fear. In addition, what fear causes is inner vows. When you have fear, when you're living and operating and decision making out of fear, what happens is you make inner vows. Because as you look at the future, you're afraid of who or what is going to harm you. Fear has to do with punishment. So you make a vow, "No matter what happens, this is what I'm gonna say, "this is what I'm gonna do." An inner vow is a counterfeit of a covenant with God. Now, Abraham, just catching up on the story, it talks about his covenant relationship with God. We just looked at one chapter, just a few chapters ago, might have been chapter 18 if my memory's correct, that God talks about covenant relationship with Abraham like a couple dozen times. God's like, "We gotta covenant, we gotta covenant, "we gotta covenant." And a covenant is that I trust the God, who's over everything to get me through anything. An inner vow is a demonic counterfeit of a covenant with God. It's a covenant with yourself. "In the future, God's not gonna be there, "so I need to decide how I'm going to take care of me." And then you make an inner vow. And people will use words like always or never. And usually an inner vow is to prevent a pain that we have experienced and don't want to experience again. Jesus says this in Matthew 5:34, "Do not make any vows." So what happens is when we're gripped with fear, we look into the future, we assume that God is not going to be there for us, so we make an inner vow to protect us. When trouble comes, our loyalty is not to the Lord, it's to the vow, it's to the vow. Let me say this, we then take our inner vows, we hand them to our spouses, we hand them to our children and they become generational curses. So what was Abraham's inner vow? "I'm afraid if they're gonna hurt me, "my inner vow is I need to sacrifice anyone or anything "to protect myself. "I'll sacrifice my wife." Sarah then was pressured by her husband to accept that same inner vow. Did she accept it? She did. 'Cause every time they show up somewhere, she's like, "I'm his sister." And he just told us this was their agreement for all of their trips. Before they go on vacation, before they go on their honeymoon, before they go on their mission trip, they go over the, "You're my sister" game. So he has an inner vow. He binds her to it. Let me say this, unity is great in a marriage if you're unified with God. If you're unified together, but not with God, you're a unholy alliance, that's what they are. They stick together, but they don't stick with the Lord. Then what they're going to do, they're going to take this inner vow, triggered by fear and they're going to hand it to their children. How do I know? Genesis 26. Now spoiler alert, if you come back, you're gonna see Isaac get born, he grows up, he marries a beautiful, wonderful gal like his mom, they're traveling, he's afraid that the guys are gonna want his wife and kill him, so he and his wife say, "She's my sister." It's in Genesis 26. Say, "Well, where did he learn that?" From his mom and dad. Some of you are caring for generational patterns that are not from the spirit of God, they're from the spirit of fear. They didn't enter your family through faith, but through fear. And some of your parents, your mom and dad hung together and they told you, "This is how you do it. "This is what you say. "This is what you do." Then you grow up and you're loyal to their vow. And sometimes there's even pressure generationally to be loyal to the parents or the grandparents and the family vow rather than the Lord. Does this make any sense? Okay, last section. Here's

the good news, God saves and he keeps saving. Okay, God save them, they are believers, and he's saving them again. Let me say this or God doesn't just save you and then let you figure it out. He keeps saving you. Genesis 20:14-18, "Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen "and male servants and female servants "and gave them to Abraham." He gets a huge payday for this. That's called the grace of God. "And returned Sarah, his wife, to him." "Here, take your girl please." "And Abimelech said, behold, my land is yours, "dwell word pleases you." He's gonna play nice now. "To Sarah, he said, behold, "I have given your quote, unquote, brother." He doesn't know what to call these people. "He's like your family's so jacked up, "I don't even know what, "give me a name tag, "I don't know what I'm supposed to say here." "Your brother, a thousand pieces of silver. "It is a sign of your innocence "in the eyes of all who are with you. "And before everyone, you are vindicated." "Then Abraham prayed to God." You know what he came back to? Faith. He got regulated. He went from fear to faith. You're gonna go to fear, don't stay there, get back to faith. Usually the best way to do that is praying. Talking to God. "Then Abraham prayed to God and God healed Abimelech." You know why Abimelech could not consummate with Sarah? God did something to shut him down. Somebody say, "What happened?" I don't know. I don't wanna know. "And also healed his wife and female slaves "so that they bore children. "For the Lord had closed all the wombs "of the house of Abimelech, "because of Sarah Abraham's wife." God's a father and Sarah's his daughter. Abraham looks at his wife, he's like, "That's my wife." God's like, "Actually that's my daughter." Abraham's like, "Well, I get to do "what I want with my wife." God's like, "You don't get to do what you want "with my daughter." God is a father, he here involves himself to protect and deliver Sarah. And he goes to great means to do so. Let me just say a few things, as we head toward a close. God can forgive you. He forgave them. Now let's just be honest, what they did is it kind of unforgivable? What if they would've kept up with the plan? She joins a harem. He runs off with his second wife, that he's already got a kid with and Jesus is never born. That's a lot to forgive. That was their plan. Their plan was I'll run off with a second younger wife and we won't have Jesus come into human history. God forgave them. Here's what I wanna tell you. God can forgive you. Number two, did God restore them? Yeah, right back on plan. We're in a relationship, I'm gonna bless you. I'm gonna bless those who bless you. I'll curse those who curse you. I'm gonna get you back to the promised land. You're gonna get your baby boy. I fully restored you. Can God fully restore you? Yeah. Can he restore your marriage? Yeah. Can he restore your family? Yeah. But it's gonna take faith, not fear to get there. Did God bless them? Totally. Can God bless you? Yes. And some of you struggle with that. You're like, "But I don't deserve it." Right, that's the whole point of the whole Bible, but this story. If God only gave you what you deserved, you would go to hell. Everything else he gives you is grace and blessing is just grace. Did God answer their prayers? He did. How many of you, if you were God, you'd be like, "I don't want to hear from you people." No more requests, I've done plenty. Does God answer their prayers? He does. Their God is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is coming through this crazy family. And he saves us and calls us into his great family. And when it comes to the story of the Bible, there are times that a preacher like me gets up and there' a hesitancy to tell you about the fullness of God's grace. 'Cause the concern is you would abuse God's grace. Let me say this, I don't want you to abuse God's grace, but you're going to need to use God's grace. And I know we're ashamed of it. I know we're embarrassed by it. I know we look at this and

some of you are like, "They had a good family, let me tell you my story." We all need God's grace. Our marriages need God's grace. Our children needs God's grace. Our families need God's grace. And all we've seen over and over and over is God's grace. Adam and Eve blew it. God showed up, did the same thing for them. Noah got drunk, passed out naked in his tent. God showed up, got involved, sorted it out for him. Here, Abraham and Sarah, they make a mess of everything and God shows up and he gives grace to them. Let me explain to you in closing how he does this, he gets in the middle. Abraham and Sarah are sinning. Bad consequences are coming. God intercedes and he gets in the middle. Ultimately the son that's gonna come through them is gonna bring the son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the God who intercede and gets in the middle. That's why he went to the cross and died in our place for our sins. He rose from the dead. He ascended into heaven. And the Bible says that he lives today to make intercession. He's saved you at the cross and he's still saving you. He's saving all of us. He's just a God who keeps getting involved, getting in the middle and interceding. And he's a God who didn't just save us, he keeps on saving us. I just wanna give you an opportunity to spend some time talking to this God. Who do you need to forgive, parent, spouse, family member, because they've made some decisions that have caused you some pain? What are the relationships that you need to put some grace on? What are the people or things in your life that are out of fear, not out of faith? Where are you dysregulated not regulated? Where are you living out of the spirit of fear and not the spirit of God? Father, thanks for an opportunity to teach. And God, I just sensed that this is a moment where people are thinking and processing and praying. God, I thank you that I have the honor of opening your word for these dear people here at our church. I thank you that they're teachable and they give me the honor of teaching every week. God, I thank you for the honor of getting Bible teaching out online and trying to help others. And God, Abraham was a believer, a mature believer and a man of faith, but he had some fearful days and he made some bad decisions and they hurt the people that he loved the most. And God, we just thank you that you got involved. We invite you to get involved in our life. We thank you, Lord God, that you forgave them. Please forgive us. That you restored them. Please restore us. That you blessed them. May you please bless us. And that you answered their prayers. And so God, I just ask that you would answer the prayers of these dear people as they have some things to talk to you about. In Jesus' good name, amen.