

Genesis 20: Abraham and Sarah's Marriage

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Genesis 20 tells the story of one of the times where Abraham lied about his wife's identity. In fact, he spoke a half truth to the king of the philistines (Abimelech) and caused a plague on the people there because of it. It reminds us that a half-truth intended to deceive is still a lie. God came to Abimelech and told him that Abraham was a prophet (the first time that word is used) and that he was a dead man for attempting to commit adultery. Ultimately, Abimelech and Abraham make peace, and the issue is resolved (in chapter 21 they make a covenant of peace with each other).

But one point that is seen here is the character of Abraham and Sarah's marriage. How was it strong enough to overcome a number of issues? Several times Sarah is taken by another man, and Abraham lies about it. There is the issues that come with Hagar. Finally, they struggled with the problems of a barren womb. How is it that they remained faithful? We need to see that they have a model marriage for us to consider.

In 1 Peter 3:1-7 Peter charges husbands and wives on how to have a marriage in Christ. He uses Sarah as the model of a Godly wife in marriage. It is interesting when you consider that while there are a great many examples of men and women of faith, there are only a handful of marriages that can be declared successful in the bible. There were great men like David who were terrible husbands, and many others whom their marriages are unmentioned. Only a few (Ruth and Boaz; Isaac and Rebekah, Mary and Joseph; Priscilla and Aquila) might be singled out by their names. Peter's point seems to be to point to Abraham and Sarah as a marriage worth considering.

Why their marriage? We might look to how they each fulfilled their roles in marriage. Abraham as the Father-Leader; he led his home & family in spiritual matters. When time for circumcision came, he let his son into this (Gen. 17:23). Consider how Moses did not (Ex. 4:24). He made righteous spiritual decisions for his household, from his wife and children to even his servants. Finally, while we know that at least one example of this was for the worse, we know that he listened to his wife, a fulfillment of Peter's observation in 1 Peter 3:7

Sarah was also an important image of marriage. She was the Home-Guardian of an enormous estate, no small endeavor. In all things she is known as being faithful to God (Heb. 11:11) and to her husband (Gen. 20:13). She was submissive to her husband, and her addressing of him as lord was not a matter of weakness, but of strength, and assigning him the position of oversight in her home. When she was sent out to live in tents, she did so without apparent complaint.

Not everyone is blessed with a Godly spouse, but we want to encourage all to see in Abraham and Sarah what benefits there are in having a marriage that puts faith first.