

Zach Meyer

Wrestling With God in the Waiting and the Wanting

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Series: Multipliers

Genesis 15-16:4

**BIG IDEA – HOW YOU RESPOND IN YOUR WAITING AND WANTING  
DETERMINES THE DEPTH OF YOUR FAITH AND THE DIRECTION OF  
YOUR LIFE**

Two Cities Church, what's going on? Like Pastor Kyle said, my name is Zach Meyer. It really is an honor to preach God's Word to you this morning. I am the director of operations here, which basically means I am the one people text when something is broken or when they do not like the temperature in our building. So, if you're sitting there, and you're thinking about sending me an email telling me you're cold, I'd love to hear from you. Feel free to reach me at "davidvogel@twocitieschurch.net," and we can talk about that at length.

I'm also a husband and a father. My wife Meredith and I will be married seven years on Tuesday of this week, and she is 35 weeks pregnant with our fourth. Griffin is 1 and in a big-time biting phase right now, so that's a lot of fun. Grace is 3 and can do no wrong, except maybe for smiling pictures. I don't know if you noticed that in the picture. Eli is 5 and asking all of the questions. The other day, he asked me if there would be lemonade in heaven. If you have an answer to that, please let me know.

Another thing you should know about me is that I have a very distinguished birthday. On October 27 of 1993, two things were born in Charlotte, North Carolina: me and the twenty-ninth NFL franchise, the Carolina Panthers, which must mean that in the providence of God, I have been destined to be a big fat loser, because that's all the Panthers know how to do.

Now, I know some of you have a little bit of hope, especially after that game last week. If that's you, I just want to encourage you that after the service, on each side of the stage, our prayer team will be available, and they would love to pray with you, because it has been a whopping 10 years since the Panthers last went to the Super Bowl, where they lost to the Denver Broncos.

Just to put into perspective how long ago that has been, how long the irrelevancy has gone on...10 years ago, in 2015, Netflix still mailed DVDs, your headphones still had cords, and Bitcoin was \$340. Okay. Why in the world am I telling you all of this? Well, when we show up in Genesis 15, which is the passage we're going to be in this morning, that is exactly how long Abraham has been waiting on God's promise. It's only a few flips of the page in your Bibles, but it has been 10 years since Abraham received the promise in Genesis 12.

When we show up to Genesis 15 this morning, there are three words we could use to describe Abraham's situation: *waiting*, *wrestling*, and *wanting*. Now, if you're anything like me, those are three words you do not like, but if we're honest, sometimes those three words are good descriptions of what our relationship with God can feel like.

Some of you may be in an exciting season of waiting. Maybe you're engaged or waiting on the birth of a child or just looking forward to time together with family over the holidays. Others of you, though, are probably in a hard season of waiting. Maybe you're waiting on a job or maybe you're still waiting on a spouse or maybe you're waiting on a test result.

Maybe it's that thing you said you were going to multiply. Fourteen months ago, you wrote it down on the card, and you've been praying like crazy, but it hasn't happened. Our waiting can lead us to wrestle with questions like, "God, where are you, and what are you doing? Do you see me? Do you hear me? Are you even there?"

Well, today, we're in our third week of our *Multipliers* series where we've been learning about the life of faith through the life of Abraham. What we've said each week is that faith is taking God at his word and taking your next step. What we're going to see in our passage today is that these seasons of waiting and wanting can either be a barrier to faith or the exact place where faith is built. What matters is how you respond.

The main point of our message today is *how you respond, how you wrestle with God in your waiting and in your wanting, will determine the depth of your faith and the direction of your life*. Multipliers are people who wrestle with God rightly. We're going to walk through Genesis 15 and 16 and learn what it looks like to do that.

The first thing we see is that we have to *fight fear*. Let's look at it together. This is Genesis 15:1. **"After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: 'Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.'" So, the first thing we see here is that Abraham is afraid. God comes and says, "Fear not." The only reason he would say that is if Abraham was afraid.**

Both the context of this passage and the content of the vision show us something about fear, and it's that fear is misplaced focus. If you remember, back at the end of chapter 14, the king of Sodom comes to Abraham and offers him a bunch of goods as a reward for helping him in battle. And what does Abraham say? He's like, "No, man. No thanks. I'm good. I trust the Lord. He is my protector and my provider."

Then, just a few verses later, right *here* at the beginning of chapter 15, God comes to Abraham and says, "Hey, don't be afraid. I am your protector and your provider." Well, what happened? Somewhere along the way, just in a few verses, Abraham shifted his focus from God to his circumstances, and he was afraid, which shows us that, oftentimes, when a difficult circumstance arises in your life, the difference between faith and fear is what you're focused on.

One of my favorite definitions of *fear* is the obsession over the "what if." We know this. A difficult circumstance or uncertainty can come into our lives, and our minds can be fixed on all of the potential negative outcomes. Like, "What if my health changes? What if that then affects our family, and what if that then affects our finances?"

We saw this during COVID. It has been documented by the World Health Organization that during the first year of the pandemic, we saw an unprecedented rise in fear and anxiety. Why? Because everyone was so focused on all of the things we didn't know. Like, "What if I don't wear a mask?" or "What if I don't wash my hands?" or "What's going to happen if Grandma gets COVID?"

Fear is the obsession over the "what if." Faith, on the other hand... Faith is not blind optimism. It is not happy, clappy, wishful thinking that things are going to work out in the end. No. Faith is proper focus. It is focus on the character of God that turns our "what ifs" to "even ifs." Like, "Even if my health changes, the Lord has numbered my days. He will fulfill his purposes for me."

"Even if something happens to my kids, God knit them together and has good plans for them." "Even if our finances change, the Lord is our shield and our exceedingly great reward." See, when difficult or uncertain circumstances come into our lives and start to vie for our attention, what it means to wrestle with God rightly is to fix our minds on him rather than our circumstances.

Let's keep going. Verse 2 says, "***But Abram said, 'O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.'***"

Part of why I love and trust the Bible is because of the honesty we see in it. God makes this epic declaration of his character to Abraham, and what does he do? He does not make Christian listening noises. He does not do the Christian soft snaps. He does not go and make an appointment at the tattoo shop to get it tattooed on his arm (says the guy with Bible verses tattooed on his arm).

No. What does Abraham do? He says, "Yeah, God. That's great, you being a provider and all, but where's the thing you promised me? Where is the son you promised me?" What is Abraham doing? He is dealing with his doubt, which is another aspect of what it means to wrestle with God rightly. We have to *deal with doubt*.

In one sense, doubt is the natural reaction to waiting. When a gap arises between what God has said in his Word and what we see in our experience, it is natural for doubts of all shapes and sizes to roll in. Like, some of you may doubt the goodness of God. Maybe you've had a front-row seat to some serious sin or suffering or death or tragedy, and you just wonder how in the world God could still be good in the midst of that.

Others of you may doubt the existence or truth of God, or maybe you know someone who does. Maybe you're more analytical in nature or you just have a hard time accepting the things in the Bible, like miracles, and things that don't seem to immediately fit with science or reason.

Others of you may doubt the *worth* of God. Some of you probably feel like the Christian life just isn't working. Like, maybe you started giving or started serving or started rediscovering the spiritual disciplines, and your life has only gotten harder. The things like peace and joy, these things that are supposed to come on the other side of obedience, haven't shown up in your life yet. You're starting to wonder if this whole following Jesus thing is all it's cracked up to be.

If any of that resonates with you this morning, I just want to tell you that you're not crazy and you're not alone. Somehow in Christianity we've developed this culture that puts guilt and shame around asking hard questions to God, but throughout the Bible, we see some of the heroes of our faith asking God hard questions.

We see heroes of the faith dealing with doubt. Like King David, the guy who had the most awesome nickname ever: man after God's own heart. He had a ton of doubt. He wrote half of the Psalms, and of the ones he wrote, half of them are some version of "God,

where are you, and what are you doing? Because it seems like you're anywhere but here right now."

John the Baptist... Jesus literally said John the Baptist was the greatest human being who ever lived, outside of him, of course. In Luke 7, John the Baptist sends some guys to Jesus to basically say, "Hey, Jesus, are you the guy or should we start looking for someone else? Because I'm sitting here in prison, and you're not doing anything about it." Gideon, Moses, Thomas... We could go on and on.

The Bible is full of illustrations that doubt does not disqualify. If anything, if you have doubts, based on the testimony of the Scriptures, you can be a really good disciple. To which someone may say, "What about James 1?" In James 1, it says the man who doubts is double-minded. He won't receive anything from the Lord. He's like a wave of the sea that's driven and tossed by the wind.

So, which is it? Is doubt a good thing or a bad thing? What I would say is that passage in James 1 is actually talking about a type of unbelief, and we have to see that there is a difference between doubt and unbelief. See, *unbelief* is the rejection of God. Unbelief is a continuous disposition of the heart to continually disbelieve. It does not ask God questions but instead makes accusations. It does not seek to understand God but is eager to dismiss him.

*Doubt*, on the other hand, is the desire to know and understand and believe when things just don't make sense. It wrestles. It questions. It struggles. It's not the absence of faith but an aspect of it. Do you know what the number one key difference between a doubter and an unbeliever is? It's the desire to believe. It's not necessarily *if* a person believes but the *desire* to, the *want* to.

Someone may say, "You know, I'm really struggling to believe what the Bible says about generosity." Okay. Well, let's start here. Do you want to? Someone may say, "You know, I'm struggling to believe what the Bible says about gender or sexuality." Okay. Well, do you want to? Pick anything in the Christian life. Do you want to believe? Do you want what the Bible says to be true?

You see, here's the thing. Sometimes, unbelievers will use doubt to hide. They may claim to be struggling to believe something when in actuality they've already decided not to. Doubters, on the other hand, *want* to believe. They *want* to trust. They just have a hard time doing so.

Ultimately, here's the thing: doubt is neutral, but it must be dealt with. Undealt-with doubt can very quickly turn into unbelief, but when you deal with your doubt,

oftentimes, it's the very thing that leads to deeper faith. We have to deal with doubt. How do you do that? Just a few quick ways of how to deal with doubt.

The first is by doing what Tim Keller called *majoring in the majors*. Sometimes in the Christian life it can be easy to get lost in the weeds. Like, was the earth created in seven literal days? Did the flood actually happen? How do we reconcile all of the miracles of Jesus? Those are not bad questions, but the ultimate question...

When you're having a hard time seeing straight, the ultimate question we have to ask and come back to is...*Who is Jesus Christ?* Who is Jesus? If Jesus is who he said he is, then everything else will fall into place. Faith is not the absence of hard questions; it's the daily decision to trust that Jesus Christ is who he said he is.

Another way we deal with doubts is by bringing them to other believers. Some of you just need to tell someone. Like, this week, you need to tell someone you're struggling to believe that God is good or that he's near or whatever it is. This is the main reason Community Groups exist in our church. We love sermon-guided discussion. It's great. It fosters good conversation. It helps us apply the sermon. We love it. It's a good thing.

But hear me. If you sit through sermon-guided discussion every single week and never open your mouth and tell someone what you're actually struggling with, you have completely missed the point. The Bible calls us to bear one another's burdens, and we can only do that if we open our mouths and tell people what we're actually struggling with or what we're walking through.

We have to bring our doubts to other believers, and we also have to bring them to God. In this passage, this is exactly what Abraham is doing. He's bringing his doubts before the Lord. A few weeks ago, we had some people over to our house for dinner, and we started talking about prayer. One of the girls started to say that sometimes, when she's praying through a difficult or uncertain situation to God, she will use profanity in her prayer to describe her situation to the Lord.

I've had a lot of thoughts about that as I've thought about it. On the one hand, is it ever right to use profanity in prayer or really any context? Probably not. Right? But do you know what *is* right? Being real. Because here's the thing: life is hard. We have a big God who desires his children not to spout off right answers to him and about him but to bring their real, weary, and heavy-laden hearts to him in prayer.

Think about your kids. When you pick your kid up from school and ask them how their day was, how do you want them to respond? "Good father, this is the day the Lord has made. We'll rejoice and be glad in it." No. You do not want them to say that. Right? You

want them to be real with you about what was good and what was hard. The same thing is true in the Christian life.

So, can I just ask you this morning... When was the last time you were real with God? When was the last time you were real with anyone? Some of you need to hear that progress will not be made with doubt or really anything in the Christian life by pretending. Progress comes by being real about our wrestling.

Some of us try to white-knuckle and carry our burdens. Others of us try to conceal them. What the Bible tells us to do is to cast them on the Lord. One of my favorite verses, Psalm 55:22, says, "Cast your burden on the Lord." He's big. He can handle it. He can take it. And it follows with a promise that he will sustain you. Like Abraham, we have to deal with doubt. Let's keep going. Verses 4-5:

***"And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: 'This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.' And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be.'"***

God does not commend Abraham's doubt here, but he does speak to it. And what does he say? He confirms and clarifies his promise from Genesis 12. He's like, "This Eliezer guy is not going to be your heir. Your very own son..." The Hebrew there is literally "From your own loins." It doesn't get much more clear than that. And how does Abraham respond? Verse 6: ***"And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness."***

After 10 years of waiting and wanting, after a total of 85 years of infertility, when, biologically speaking, it seemed like this promise coming to fruition was completely and utterly impossible, what does Abraham do? He chooses to believe, which is another aspect of wrestling rightly.

We have to *believe God's promises when they seem impossible*. In order to believe God's promises, we have to understand what they are. God's specific promise of an heir to Abraham here in Genesis 15 is a little bit different than his promises to us sitting in this room in Winston-Salem as new-covenant Christians.

So, first, I want to talk about what God's promises are *not*. God's promises are not guarantees to give you everything you want. I think most of us, if we're honest, understand that intellectually. I'm just not sure we always believe it functionally. It's like my kids with their Halloween candy.

At some level, they know I'm not going to give them everything they ask for, but at the same time, they think, "If we just ask incessantly, before and after every meal and at all times in between, if we can have another piece of candy, then surely Mom and Dad will give it to us."

In the Christian life, it can sometimes be easy for us to think, "If I just pray long enough, and if I just pray hard enough, and if I just 'persistent widow' it... Like, if I just eagerly bang on that door and knock, then eventually, God will give me what I ask for. I will wear him down, and he'll sort of feel obligated to give me what I'm asking for."

But here's the thing about prayer. We have to understand that prayer, properly understood, is both desire and deference. It's desperately asking but humbly submitting. It is yearning and then yielding to a God who is sovereign and good. This is the exact disposition of Jesus when he's in the garden about to go to the cross. He says, "Lord, if there is any other way, please take this cup from me. Yet not my will but your will be done."

Here's the thing. When our prayer lives are more about asking God for what *we* want than asking for God to do what he wants in our lives, something is off. It's an indication that we might not be relating rightly to the promises of God. Some of you need to be reminded this morning that God is not a means to your end. God is not a means to an end. God is the end.

The entire goal of prayer and the whole Christian life is to get more of God. He is the treasure. He is the thing our souls were created for. An incredible implication of the gospel is that when we believe in Jesus, that is exactly what God promises to give us. I want to be ultra-clear on what the promises of God are. No matter who you are or where you come from or what you did last night, these are some of the promises of God, and they are available today to those who believe.

For your past, you have been forgiven. Your sin has been dealt with. You've been reconciled. There's peace where there once was hostility. You've been adopted. You're no longer a slave but a son or daughter. You've been created anew. Your past and your shame and guilt have no weight anymore because you're a new creation in Christ. You've been justified, declared perfectly righteous in God's sight.

Today, for your present, you have a supplier who will meet every need. You have access to the very presence of God. You have a guarantee that your circumstances are not pointless. You have power. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you to effectively fight sin and walk in obedience. For your future, you will be perfected, you

will be resurrected, and you will inherit the new heavens and the new earth where righteousness, peace, and rest will dwell forever.

Those are some of the promises of God, and they are available. Sin, suffering, waiting, and wanting can make us feel sometimes like those things are not true or are not possible, but to wrestle rightly is to believe. So, can I ask you... Do you believe God's promises? Not just do you agree with them. Are you leaning the entire weight of your life on him and on those things or on the things of this world?

Charles Blondin was a famous tightrope artist and acrobat in the 1800s who was known for doing these ridiculous stunts on a tightrope across the gorge at Niagara Falls. He would do these ridiculous things like walking backward, walking on stilts, even cooking and eating an omelet. Some of y'all don't even know how to cook and eat an omelet at home.

One day, as the story goes, he shows up with a wheelbarrow, and he asks the crowd, "Who believes that I can push this wheelbarrow across the gorge?" The people start going nuts. "Yeah, yeah! We believe you. You can do it." He stops, and he looks at one of the people in the crowd and says, "Then get in the wheelbarrow."

We laugh, but that's what it means to believe God's promises. Like, not to just sit back and intellectually agree that, yes, God can do what he says. It's to lean the entire weight of our life on him and on his promises and believe that he *will* do what he says in our lives. Yes, it's costly; yes, it is risky; and yes, it is uncomfortable. If none of those words could be used to describe your faith, it's probably worth asking the question if you truly believe. We have to believe God's promises.

Let's keep going. Verse 7: ***"And he said to him, 'I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.' But he said, 'O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?'"*** Once again, we see that Abraham is a guy like us. He wants some assurance. He's like, "Yes, Lord, I believe, but how do I know? How do I know you won't go back on your word?"

Have you ever asked that question? I know I have. Here's the thing. We know us. You know you. You know that you *haven't* and you *can't* love and obey God perfectly. We have not kept up our end of the deal, and we can't. So, how do we know that when God sees that, he's not going to go back on his word?

I did college ministry for about five years after graduating from North Carolina State University. (Go Pack.) When I would attempt to share the gospel with a student, this is the question I would ask them without fail almost every single time: "Hey, if you were to

die tonight and stand before God and he asked, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' what would you say?"

Typically, the response would be something like, "Well, God is merciful and, you know, I'm not as bad as *that* person, so I figure he'll just let me in." To which I would respond, "Okay. Yes, but how do you know? That question is too important to just kind of flippantly guess at. How do you know for certain that when you die and stand before God, he will let you in?"

Over the years of asking that, I've come to learn that there are people all over the place when it comes to assurance. There are some people who have false assurance. Jesus himself says in Matthew 7 that there is a category of people who think they will inherit the kingdom of God who actually will not.

That's my fear for some of you here today. You think that because you gave some money or were involved in youth group or because you attend church or went on the mission trip that you and God are good when, in fact, you are actually not, because your heart is far from him. You don't love him. You do not trust him. You have not gotten in the wheelbarrow, so to speak.

There are other people who don't have false assurance; they just lack true assurance. That's probably true of some of you here today as well. You think that surely God's patience has to have run out by now. With the number of times you've fallen short and said you weren't going to do it again and then went and did it again, you think there's no way God could still love you.

Well, here's what I want to tell you: no matter where you are, you can walk out of this room this morning with absolute certainty about where you will spend eternity, because the grounds for our assurance is found right *here* in the following verses as God makes a covenant with Abraham. Let's look at it, starting in verse 9.

**"[God] said to [Abram], 'Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away."**

What in the world is this all about? Well, we live in a written culture where, when we're committing to something, we sign a contract. When you go under contract on your house, you sign a million times, because you're committing to pay your mortgage, which is a lot of money. Well, Abraham lived in an oral culture where they did not sign contracts; they cut covenants.

Both parties who were committing would come together, and after all of these animals were cut up, they would lay them out, and both of the parties committing would walk through the pieces. They would symbolically say by walking through the pieces, "If either one of us doesn't keep up our end of the deal, we are willing to die, to be cut up like the animals."

Pretty effective, I think. I'm not sure where the phrase "Put some skin in the game" came from, but that is exactly what's happening here. God and Abraham are putting skin in the game. Verse 12:

***"As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the LORD said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.***

***As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.' When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces."***

This is where the original hearers would have been shocked, because both parties didn't walk through the pieces as expected, only one did. A smoking fire pot and a flaming torch walked through the pieces. That should sound familiar to all of the Bible readers in the room, because we're told in the book of Exodus that God himself led the people of Israel through the wilderness in a cloud by day and fire by night.

You see, God himself, God and God alone, walked through the pieces. By doing that, here is what he was saying to Abraham: "Abraham, I am so committed to fulfilling my promise, to keeping my word, that even if you fail and fall and sin and disobey, you do not have to take the punishment; I will. Even if you are unfaithful, I will remain faithful. I will die. I will be cut up. I will be torn to pieces. I will die instead of you." Two thousand years later, that is exactly what happened.

See, you and I are like Abraham. We have not loved and obeyed God perfectly. We have not kept up our end of the deal. As a result, it is us who deserve to die, to be torn to pieces like the animals. But Jesus Christ, 2,000 years later, came so that we wouldn't have to.

Jesus lived the perfect life, and by doing so, he upheld both sides of the covenant, not only God's but ours. He obeyed perfectly in every way that we've fallen short, and on the cross, Jesus bore the curse of the covenant in our place. He absorbed every last drop of

the wrath of God so we could be cleansed, forgiven, reconciled, and made righteous before the God of the universe.

How can we know for certain? How can you know for certain that when you stand before God he'll let you in? *That's* how you know for certain. When you put your trust and faith in Jesus, not because of anything *you've* done but because of everything *he* has done in your place, on your behalf, that's how you know that you and God are good.

When you put your faith in him, when you put your trust in him, you can say with the great preacher Charles Spurgeon, "I know that I'm saved, not because of anything I have done, nor because I always feel saved, but because God has said it and his Word is true." Let's keep going. See how chapter 15 ends. Verse 18:

***"On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.'"***

Chapter 15 ends with God and Abraham entering into a covenant with each other. You sort of expect to turn to chapter 16 and see that Abraham and Sarah have conceived the heir and the promise comes to fruition, but this is not what happens. Chapter 16, verse 1, says, ***"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children."*** They're still waiting.

If that isn't the Christian life... You know, as awesome and epic and powerful as chapter 15 is, chapter 16, verse 1, still comes. Oftentimes, it feels like we find ourselves right *here* in chapter 16, verse 1. Yes, we have the cross. Praise God. We have the cross. We have the resurrection. We have the promises. But Monday morning still rolls around, and our circumstances are still the same. They're still really, really hard.

It's here, church, that we have a decision to make. You have a decision to make in your waiting. It's like we said at the beginning. How you wrestle with God will determine the depth of your faith and, ultimately, the direction of your life. What chapter 16 shows us is counter-vision. It shows us what *not* to do. Let's read it again. Chapter 16, starting in verse 1:

***"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, 'Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived."***

So, Abraham and Sarah decide they're tired of waiting, and they choose to take control rather than to trust God. You can read the rest of the chapter this week in your Community Group, but it just goes on to show how horrible of a decision that was. It shows us that taking control rather than trusting God always, always, always has negative consequences, even if we can't see what they are immediately. God remains faithful, but that's still true.

As we close, I want to point out a tension that exists in these verses and in all of our lives. At any point in time, we know that God can do anything, but he does not always do everything. God can do anything. Did you see what Sarah said in verse 2? "***Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children.***" You see, she and Abraham were not barren from a lack of trying. God had, at least up until this point, prevented them from bearing children.

She knew what we know: God is completely sovereign over all things. He has all power and all authority to do all things that please him at all times, yet (we know this from experience) he does not always do everything. God does not always do what we want, when we want, and how we want it. I really think this tension is one of the most difficult, if not *the* most difficult thing in the Christian life, especially when the things we want and the things we're waiting on, as Christians, are God-honoring things.

For the life of me, I do not understand why some of the godliest couples that just want to be disciple-makers in the home struggle to get pregnant or stay pregnant. I do not understand why God heals some sicknesses and diseases on this side of eternity and not others. I do not understand why God lets godly, faithful parents watch their children walk away from him. I do not understand why there are so many of our prayers that seem like they go unanswered.

There are so many things that I, and all of us, do not understand, but here is what I *do* understand: Your waiting is not worthless. Your pain has a purpose. God is working all things, *all* things together for the good for those who love him. Nothing...no difficult situation, no uncertain circumstance...nothing in all creation can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Church, we have a trustworthy God. The question is...*Will we trust him?* Whatever you're waiting on, whatever you're walking through this morning, will you trust him? In just a second, we're going to take Communion together, but before we do that, I want to invite you to bow your heads. I want to call us, for the first time or for the five thousandth time, to trust God.

For some of you, today, God is calling you to trust him for the very first time. Some of you have never trusted the Lord. Your entire life has been one giant attempt at control to get everything you want. You have rejected God. You have not honored him. Yet today, he still desires a relationship with you. I want to invite you. I want to call you to lay down your striving and trust in the one, the *only* one, who can fully and finally satisfy the desires of your soul.

For the rest of you, will you trust him again? Will you trust him more? Will you open your hands, and will you trust that he is wise, that he knows what's best for you? Will you trust that he is generous, that he is a generous God who gives what is best for you? Will you trust that he is loving, that at all times and in all things God does what is best for you? And will you trust that he is good, that he himself is what is best for you? Will you trust him this morning?

Father, I pray that you would help us, as a church, to trust you. Lord, there are some in this room right now who are trying to trust you with their singleness, with infertility, with unmet expectations in their family. God, I pray that you would help them to trust you. There are some in this room, I know, who are trying to trust you with career uncertainty or job difficulty. I pray that you would help them to trust you and that you would provide for them.

God, there are others who are trying to trust you in the midst of sickness or disease or chronic pain. I pray that you would help them to trust you, Lord. There are others, Lord, who are trying to trust you with something they have never told anyone about. I pray that you'd give them the courage this week to trust you and to tell someone.

Lord, ultimately, your Word calls us to trust in you with all of our hearts, to lean not on our own understanding, to acknowledge you in all of our ways, and it follows with a promise that you will direct our paths. Lord, we trust you. We ask you to do it. We pray all those things in Jesus' name, amen.