

Abraham Part 5

The Messiness of Playing God

Genesis 16:1-6

Memory Verses: Micah 7:18

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Some believe that the power of the atom bomb; the ability to create it and then the audacity to use it in leveling cities and killing a hundred thousand people, was a power that mankind was never meant to wield. This is a God type power. In response to this power, the creator of the atom bomb, Robert Oppenheimer, said this; "I have become death, destroyer of worlds." In other words, we should not be playing God.

It reminds me of one of my favorite movies, Jurassic Park; a movie about the ability to clone dinosaurs. A movie that may not be science fiction much longer. In it Jeff Goldblum's character says a great line. "Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn't stop to think if they should." Playing God is not something one should do lightly. With the power of the atom and the ability to clone animals, author James Frey adequately states, "we now have the power of God in many way; the atomic bomb, the ability to create life in a test tube, cloning, artificial intelligence.

But this isn't a recent occurrence. We've been playing God for a very long time. Since the beginning even; when the serpent told Eve, if you take of the fruit of the forbidden tree you will be like Gods, and she did! In fact, every time we ignore God's commands or live life without seeking his direction, we are in essence trying to play God. Every sin, every moment lived according to your own will and way, is a moment lived as though you were in control of your own fate. Is a moment where you think you are your own god.

When John Hammond created dinosaurs, the dinosaurs rose up and killed the tourists. Playing God is messy. When the United States decided to drop those bombs on Japan, we may have been ending a war, but we killed hundreds of thousands of innocent lives in the process. We began an arms race that introduced tens of thousands of nuclear weapons to the world. We created the means for our own extinction. Playing God is messy. When me and you decide to do things our way instead of God's way... things get very messy!

So far in this series we've seen a theme of faithfulness amidst the messiness of life. One of the primary concepts we've gleaned is that **faith isn't the absence of messiness**, rather faith is **revealed and strengthened when in repentance we ask God to help us clean up our mess**. As a man of faith, Abraham at times clearly sees the path of God

and obeys it without question. And then at other times, seemingly out of the blue, he lacks faith in God, and instead goes his own way creating a horrible mess of things. Regardless, when he comes back to God, God is faithful to forgive and bless him. When we are faithless God is faithful.

Today, we are once again going to see Abraham and his wife Sarah choose to play God and in the process make a terrible mess of things. And of course, in the end we will see God continue to be faithful; using our messes for his purposes. The main point today is this... **when we play God, we make God sized messes that only he can clean up.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to recognize here is that... **We Play God When We Stop Waiting On God**. Look with me at **Genesis 16:1-4**. Sometimes the promises of God take longer to come to fruition than we would like. Our response to this shows the strength our faith. Here we see that Sarah and Abraham's faith is waning. Abraham and Sarah feel that God has failed to come through in a timely fashion, so they try to do it themselves. They force the issue. They rush the process. If God isn't going to do it when we want him to then we must do it ourselves. **The first time I ever attempted a DIY home improvement project I called up my friend Doug to get some pointers. Doug is a contractor who can literally do anything in a house. I asked him, how long do you think it will take. He answered, "it depends, am I doing it without you or are you helping?" "Cause if you are helping it will take much longer."** The point is this... Doug didn't need my help to do the project. It would get done much faster if he just did it by himself. **God doesn't need our help. If he says he'll do it, he will do it in his way which is the best way, and in his time, which is the best time!** If we try to do it our way, it will take even longer. God's promises are a sure bet and the only way to mess up a sure bet is by trying to take matters into our own hands.

Why do we become impatient with God? Why is waiting on God so hard? We live in a culture where we expect things quickly. We want our food fast. We want our jobs done on a deadline. We set schedules and we expect them to be followed. But God doesn't usually do things quick. God takes his time to make sure things are done at the right time. And that time is not usually the time we want it to be. The longer God takes to do it the quicker we tend to lose faith. The longer God takes the quicker we tend to forget God's faithfulness. But God is faithful. He has never failed us. He has always kept his promises. So we must remember... **the depth of our faith shouldn't be dependent on God's timing, but his record.**

Sarah suggests that Abraham enter into a polygamous relationship with her handmaiden in order to have a child. This is a horrible idea for a number of reasons. First, God's plan for marriage is one man and one woman for a lifetime. What Sarah is suggesting is adultery. It's sin!

Polygamous relationships cause strife between everyone involved. Jealousy, envy, frustration, and bitterness. Marriage rarely survive adultery and polygamy. There is no such thing as an open marriage, there are only healthy marriages and broken marriages. There's God's way and man's mistakes.

Notice that it says Abraham listened to Sarah. Abraham is not listening to God here, but Sarah. Every time Abraham stops listening to God or takes his eyes off of God.. he ends up leaving the path of faith and makes a mess. Look at the mess that was caused here by Abraham and Sarah playing God. Hagar has contempt on Sarah, Sarah has contempt on Hagar, Sarah has contempt for Abraham, Abraham probably is a little upset with everyone. When we try to play God, when we use sex outside of his guidelines, when we try to force outcomes that should be left to God's timing, we destroy lives, we destroy marriages, we cause relational distress, and we make matters worse. Ultimately, this act caused the birth of another child that wasn't promised and created a new rival nation for Israel. **When we play God, we make God sized messes that only he can clean up.**

The second thing that we need to recognize is that... **We Play God When We Become Angry With God.** Look with me at **Genesis 16:5-15.** Sarah becomes bitter with Hagar and "deals harshly with her" to the point that Hagar feels she has to run away. Sarah's feelings for Hagar seem to be an anger worse than contempt. This is border line hatred. Sarah hates Hagar and either emotionally abuses her, physically abuses her, or both. And then eventually in **Genesis 21:8-21** exiles her and her son, Ishmael.

I would contend that Sarah's anger doesn't merely stem from her issues with Hagar. At the root of the issue is her anger with God. She is not happy with the fact that God allowed Hagar to conceive when she had yet to conceive herself. She's bitter with God. How often do we become bitter or angry with God because he blesses someone else instead of us. Sometimes people who we feel don't deserve the blessing get it, but we, who we feel do deserve the blessing, don't. And then our anger turns to the people that God chose to bless instead of us.

When we become angry with God it shows a lack of faith in his goodness. Let me assure you, all of his ways are good. Look at **Psalms 119:68**, & **Nahum 1:7.** When we become angry with God we often become confrontational with God. We have an attitude of, "I'll show you." This attitude leads us to try to take the lead. We play God by trying to outdo God. God didn't tell Abraham to deal harshly with Hagar or to send her away. Yes God allowed it to happen because he makes good things out of our bad decisions, but this didn't seem to be his first option. Sarah and Abraham dealt with Hagar and Ishmael the way they did, not

because it was God's plan, but because it was theirs. Sarah because of her anger and Abraham to appease Sarah.

They thought they could "show God." But think about it. What could have happened had Sarah loved and cared for Hagar and Ishmael? What might have happened if they hadn't been sent away? Ishmael became the Arab / Muslim nations. Isaac, Israel. These two have been adversaries for thousands of years. The Arab nations want to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. Israel seems determined to destroy any Arab nation that attacks her. They hate each other. But just imagine if they didn't. Perhaps this one event could have been different, changing the course of history. What a mess Sarah made. **When we play God, we make God sized messes that only he can clean up.**

The last thing we need to recognize is that... **We Play God When We Stop Trusting God.** Look with me at **Genesis 17:15-19.** God speaks to Abraham and assures him again that he will have a son. Abraham laughs. In **Genesis 18:1-15** God again shows up to assure Abraham and Sarah that they will have a son named Isaac. Sarah laughs. **Abraham and Sarah had become so fatalistic in their faith that they no longer had any hope in God's promise to give them a son. Just the mention of it caused them to laugh out loud uncontrollably. They had stopped trusting God. The whole Hagar issue was a mess from the start. The whole Ismael issue was a mess too. Nothing had worked out the way they had planned. And now they were 25 years older than they were when God originally made the promise. Their impatience and their bitterness had caused a spiritual separation in their souls. They couldn't hear God and even when they did they laughed at him and lied to his face. They were in a spiritual drought.**

Charles Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers of all time struggled with depression. He would have months and years where he felt God was not listening to him. Oswald Chambers, the author of the most popular devotional of all time: *My Utmost For His Highest*, also had prolonged times of not hearing from God. He called it the spiritual desert. Listen, there are going to be times where God seems distant. But let me assure you, that doesn't mean he is. It just means we need to keep faith. It means we need to renew our faith. It means we need to seek him greater. **Only in the spiritual desert can we learn to yearn for God as the deer pants for water.**

Lastly, let us look at **Genesis 21:1-7.** Eventually God does come through just as he said he would. The child of promise is born and guess what happens. Sarah laughs. But this time, not sarcastically, but with joy! This is God's way of showing us that when we repent he looks past our sin and mistakes and uses them to bring about his purposes. God forgives, God blesses. God takes our mess and works it for his purposes and glory. **When we play God, we make God sized messes that only he can clean up.**

Application

The bottom line today is this... when we play God we make huge messes! Messes that could easily be avoided if we would wait on him. If we would not grow angry with him. If we could only continue to trust him.

But we will all go through spiritual deserts when it is hard to trust God. We will play God and make messes that only he can clean up. But get this... God is bigger than our messes! He is glorified in the messes he cleans up. We praise God for the messes he cleans up. Look with me if you would at **Micah 7:18**. He makes beautiful things out of our sin and faithlessness... when we repent and turn back to him.

So yes, don't play God and don't make messes... but when you do, trust that he will be able to clean it up and make something good out of it. **When we play God, we make God sized messes that only he can clean up.**

Conclusion

Lastly, Jesus is the God sized answer to our God sized mess of sin! We have all made at least one mess and that is our sinfulness and lostness. But God has made a way through Christ to save us from this mess and all other messes. In Christ, all of our messes are cleaned up for good! Look at **Ephesians 2:4-9**. Only God can clean up the messes we make! Let him clean up your mess by accepting him as your savior. Let him clean up your mess by trusting in his redemptive power to sanctify you everyday!