

Intro: The first time it happened to me was in 1977 or 78. I was sitting all alone in a dingy hotel room in the city of Farmville NC, population about 2-3k, drinking a warm beer after having a cold can of soup for Thanksgiving dinner when it occurred to me, I am about as far from the will of God as it is possible for one man to be. This needs to change.

It happens to us all at some point in our spiritual life. We look up one day and we realize that we have strayed so far away from God's will in our life that we don't even know how we are EVER going to get back.

- Sometimes we do it intentionally... (We walk away, hear his voice...NO)
- Sometimes it happens gradually and unintentionally...(Heb 2) (One small compromise, sin, mistake, choice at a time)
- Sometimes it is the result of others actions in our lives that we had no control over (We are affected by their choice)

For whatever reason we "wake up" and realize, I am NOT where I need to be!

Somehow I have ended up in a spiritual place or condition that is NOT what I want...or what God wants...and I need to move

That is where Abram, Sarai and Hagar find themselves in Gen 16. They find themselves in a mess so tangled up that it is going to take God himself to unravel the disaster they have created.

- Abram has compromised God's plan and vision for his life, his ministry, his family and his future
- Sarai has encouraged Abram to practically destroy their marriage and their home
- Hagar has ruined her life to the point that she has burned every bridge of the past and has NO idea about her future!

These three have created a God Awful mess...all in the name of God!!!

Not a one of them has any idea how in the world they are EVER going to get out of the catastrophe they have got into.

Genesis 16:1-15 Pg 10

6 Guaranteed Ways to Get Yourself in Spiritual Trouble.

1. Listen to Others in Your Life Instead of God! 16:1-2

Abram had clear direction from God: Gen 15:4: "*An heir coming from your body*"

Yet, when things didn't work on his time schedule, he was willing to listen to Sarai instead of God

"Go, sleep with my maidservant..."

Now, he SHOULD have known better. ANY MARRIED man would KNOW this is NOT a good idea!

Guys, doesn't this make you want to say, Abram...WHAT WERE YOU Thinking!

Illus: This is the OT equivalent of something like, "Do these jeans make me look like I'm big in the rear?"

DON'T answer that question! Those Jeans could make you look like a semi backing up...answer is NO!

You See this mistake over and over in the Bible. God tells his people something...and they then go seeking a better answer!

Adam did it with Eve, Abram With Sarah, David with Mighty Men, Moses, Prophets, Disciples...all fell in same trap!

Sometimes we want to run a spiritual poll in order to get guidance. Family, Friends, CoWorkers...All over

When the reality is God has already spoken...Already told us what to do...We just need to wait...obey

- Ps 85:8 "*I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints-*"

2. We Limit God's Power and Work to what WE can See and Understand, Instead of What HE Sees! 16:2

Sarai saw the natural order of things. She gave up. She is past childbearing years. The opportunity has come and gone.

That's all that she can see...That's all that she can understand, that's all that she can believe. It's finished.

So, since life is governed by what WE see, and what WE understand and what WE think is possible...

Then, we should find another way to accomplish the same Goal!

Sarai saw the natural order of things

God sees HIS order of things!

God does what HE wants to do REGARDLESS of those who say it is impossible.

- Letter from a Church Architect in my desk that says...No, no way...not gonna happen...never move that church"
- Remember telling my friends in Cuba, God is going to send pastors study material...laughed...no way, never done
- Watched people healed from cancer, health concerns "disappear" Marriages hopeless healed...Restored

The issue is NOT, What is Possible. The Issue is, WHAT DOES God say?

Heb 11:1-12 "By faith..."

3. We Fail When We Don't Wait on God and Instead Take Matters Into Our Own Hands! Vs 16:4

Abram "fixed" it, didn't he?!!! He solved the problem. God didn't do what He wanted in Abram's time frame..He did it!

Waiting for God to work once He has promised to do so is one of the most difficult lessons/disciplines of spiritual life.

We KNOW what God is going to do...He has told us...But we can't seem to wait for it...So we Act on our own!

When we do that we set ourselves up for spiritual failure. We create problems that we never could have imagined.

Illus: Go to Bible College: I don't have the money. And Besides, I have always dreamed of working on the road!

I will go do what I want...and along the way make the money to do what YOU want God!

That ushered in three awful years in my spiritual life...Disobedience, Sin, Struggle Ended up in FARMVILLE NC

Wait for God...That is so EASY to say, so EASY to preach...but when you are living it, it is excruciating!

- Joseph: 7 years in prison
- Moses: 40 years in the desert

Never underestimate the struggle of waiting for God to work. But in addition...the amazing outcome when He does!

Illus: Wait for the Lord Medley from Psalms

4. We Fail When We Run Away From The Situation God has Placed Us In. Gen 6

This is something our culture doesn't understand at all. We think, painful/bad/leave; Feels good/good/ stay.

Not always true! God OFTEN puts His people in difficult situations and He wants us to STAY there and grow!

Often there is a lesson we need to learn, A character quality we need to develop, A habit we need to overcome, the very situation that we want to run away from is the situation he has specifically created to bless us and change us!

It goes against everything we know and believe to be true to think, God may WANT me in this tough spot! But He does!

God wanted:

- Moses in the wilderness for 40 years...he was getting him ready for the next 40! (I cant do this...yes you can, did!)
- David standing there in front of Goliath (Oh my God, if you don't come through...I am finished)
- He Wanted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego standing in front of the fiery furnace
- He wanted Daniel down in that lions den
- He wanted Paul in prison, 1/2-2/3 of NT written there
- He WANTED Jesus on that cross...
- He may WANT you in the middle of whatever situation you are in...to make you more like His son!

James 1:2-4 *"Consider it pure joy my brothers whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that testing...*

When you run, you short circuit the spiritual lesson God is teaching you

You avoid the Pain...AND the Progress you could make!

Before you hit the road, ask yourself...Does God want me here to LEARN...GROW...MATURE...DEVELOP?>

5. We Fail Spiritually When We Blame Others and Refuse to Take Spiritual Responsibility.

- Sarai blamed God...He kept me from having a baby vs 2
- Sarai blamed Abram for taking Hagar to his bed vs 5
- Abram absconded all responsibility (blamed Sarai) vs 6
- Hagar blamed Sarai mistreating her (despised Sarai) vs 4

Everyone in the story blamed someone else...and NO ONE OWNED UP AND SAID...I FAILED! I SINNED, IT WAS ME!

Matt 7:3-5 *"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye, and pay no attention to the plank in your own?"*

6. We Fail When we Don't Ask God For Wisdom About The Decisions we Face.

- Abram has had this AMAZING vision from God...Promise...Must have shared it with Sarai
- But when they got impatient...there is no biblical record that they EVER asked God...what should we DO?
- Hagar Never asked God...what should I do...(God said...SUBMIT!)
- This is the greatest fail of all! God is communicating, giving visions...spoken to Abram a couple times we know of And yet, in this greatest of all decisions...He doesn't stop to say, God, what do YOU want me to do!

Pr 16:25 *There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.*

Jas 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given t*

Six Things You Need to Do Next Time You Find Yourself In Spiritual Trouble.

1. Don't run AWAY, Run TO God!

Run to Him in Faith and Repentance

2. Don't blame others...accept responsibility

I have sinned!

3. Listen to God's direction...not your own!

Show me the way...Give me patience to wait Never move in doubt!

4. Look for God's Provision

Open my eyes to what YOU want to do

5. Submit to God's Plan

Help me remain under the pressure

6. Remember that God ALWAYS SEES! Vs 13

Remind me..."You are the God who see's me!"

CONCL

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.

30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.