

OVERCOMING THE DYSFUNCTIONS OF ISRAEL'S PATRIARCHS

II. Heeding God's Word With Our Marriages

(Genesis 12:9-20)

I. Introduction

- A. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Israel's patriarchs and their respective wives and families, though blessed of God, were imperfect people who at times made huge mistakes that led to serious marital and family dysfunction.
- B. Thankfully, Romans 15:4 states that we can learn from whatsoever things were written in the Old Testament for our edification, and that includes our learning how to overcome the dysfunctions of Israel's patriarchs.
- C. We view Genesis 12:9-20 on the need to heed God's Word with our marriages for our insight and application:

II. Heeding God's Word With Our Marriages, Genesis 12:9-20.

- A. After the Lord told Abram at Shechem that the land He would give his descendants was the land in which he was then sojourning, Abram built an altar to the Lord, he moved south to Bethel in the hill country to build another altar there and call on the Lord before moving further south into the Negev of Canaan, Genesis 12:6-9.
- B. However, in the Negev, Abram faced a severe famine, so to secure the livelihood of his livestock, he decided to leave Canaan and go southwest into Egypt where the Nile River always watered the land, Genesis 12:10.
- C. In entering Egypt, Abram asked Sarai his wife to make a huge sacrifice to save his life, Genesis 12:11-13:
 1. Sarai was then 65 years old, but she died at 127 about twice the lifespan of today, so she was middle aged, at the peak of her beauty as a very beautiful woman. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Genesis 12:11)
 2. In Abram's day, beautiful women entering a foreign country were targets for the harem of that land's king, and kings respected marriage but thought little of killing a married foreign woman's husband so they could take such a woman into their harem. (H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, 1974, Volume I, p. 424)
 3. Fearing that his life would be taken by Pharaoh for Pharaoh to acquire Sarai for his harem, Abram asked Sarai to say that she was his sister, that when Pharaoh took her into his harem, Abram would be well treated allegedly for Sarai's sake, which reasoning does not make sense to us! (Genesis 12:11-13)
 4. Though Sarai was Abram's half-sister, she was the daughter of a different woman than Abram's mother while they both had the same father (Genesis 20:12). However, stating this half-truth in this context would leave Pharaoh thinking that Sarai and Abram were not married, what would make Abram's half-truth a lie!
- D. While Abram and Sarai were in Egypt, the Egyptians saw Sarai and were impressed by her beauty, so she heeded Abram's will to claim that she was his sister, and she was taken into Pharaoh's harem, Gen. 12:14-16.
- E. This troubling situation resulted from several failures by Abram and Sarai (as follows):
 1. First, Abram and Sarai as man and wife were "one flesh" according to the Genesis 2:20-24 precedent. For him to tell her to say that she was his sister to open the door for her to enter Pharaoh's harem and for Sarai to heed Abram's request was for them both to fail to adhere to their "one flesh" union before the Lord!
 2. Second, God had promised Abram that He would make of him a great nation. Since Abram's wife Sarai was barren (cf. Genesis 11:30), and since God had provided one wife for Adam, setting the divine precedent of a heterosexual, monogamous union, God's promise in view of His precedents meant He was responsible to preserve Abram's life so he could sire future offspring through Sarai. Thus, Abram should have trusted God to keep him alive without having to tell Sarai to mislead the Egyptians to save his life!
 3. Third, though the land God would give Abram would eventually extend from the River Euphrates to the Nile River (Genesis 15:18), Abram then knew only that God would give him Canaan from God's Word in Genesis 12:1-7. To move into Egypt without consulting the Lord about where to go to handle the famine left Abram open to being tempted to get Sarai to say she was his sister and thus to violate their marriage!
- F. God in grace and faithfulness to Himself plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife, and Pharaoh learned of the marital union of Sarai and Abram. Thus, he summoned Abram to criticize him for lying to him about his relationship with Sarai, Genesis 12:17-19a.
- G. The Lord had not let Pharaoh be intimate with Sarai (Genesis 12:19b), and Pharaoh told Abram to take Sarai and leave Egypt with all that he had, with Pharaoh's men escorting them safely out of Egypt, Gen. 12:19c-20.

Lesson: *By violating God's marital precedents, by failing to believe God's promise to preserve his life to produce offspring by Sarai and my not getting God's direction on where to go to handle the famine, mostly Abram and to a degree Sarai almost got into trouble with God over their marriage though God graciously saved them from tragedy.*

Application: *May we trust God's Word regarding our marriages to enjoy God's blessing.*