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The Quiet Strength of
Godly Fear

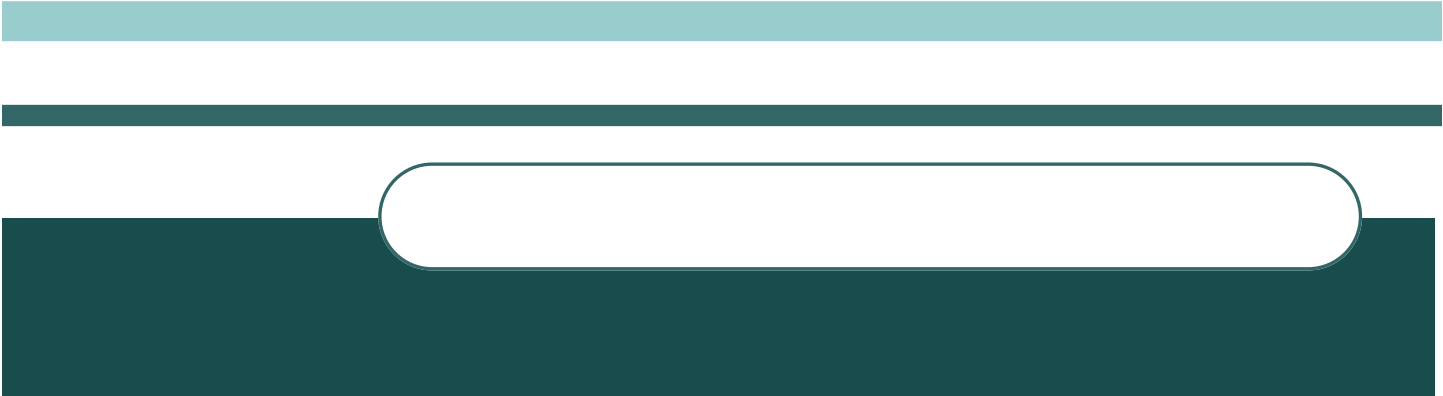
INTRODUCTION



Sarah's story is nothing short of extraordinary! Deep within the sacred pages of scripture, we discover the powerful truth. God magnificently restored her faith. He fulfilled His awe-inspiring promises. Can you imagine hearing that your aged womb would cradle the gift of youth? The once barren reality of old age blossoms into life at the command of the Ancient of Days. It's no surprise that Sarah laughed at such a breathtaking prospect. Indeed, it is a fearsome yet exhilarating thing to fall into the hands of the living God. This is true even when that fall leads us into His unexpected grace and seemingly impossible promise!

Critics today might hastily label Sarah as a foolish woman. They might criticize her for not voicing her thoughts. They could say she should have stood her ground more fervently. "A doormat," they might scoff. "She allowed Abraham to walk all over her." Yet, far from casting judgment, Scripture embraces her journey with admiration. In the glorious remembrance of the saints in Hebrews, we discover a powerful story. "By faith, Sarah herself received power to conceive." This occurred even when she was past the age. She considered him faithful who had promised.

With unyielding fervor, Sarah cloaked herself in the sacred blood of Christ. He is the eternal Son intricately woven into her lineage. He is the very embodiment of her



hope-filled anticipation. As she beheld the shimmering silhouette of Jesus on the horizon, she called out to Him. He is her flawless Lord. He is destined to lead her into a promised land. This place is a radiant heaven where all dread would dissolve in His glorious presence. She glimpsed her Savior, her divine Master — and in that profound moment, she recognized Him as Abraham’s Lord, too.

And therein lies much of Sarah’s excellence as a woman of faith. More than she feared the ill effects of her husband’s decisions, she feared her true Master. She was not a perfect saint. When we look to her as an example, we are ultimately looking to Jesus. He is the perfect object of her imperfect faith. But from Sarah and her story, we can learn one important lesson. Fearlessness isn’t a woman’s goal (contrary to what the world may tell us). Instead, we aim to fear the Lord. So with Sarah as our guide, consider with me three lessons in such countercultural fear.

We are going to focus on these key aspects of Sarah:

- Godly Fear Trusts God with what we do NOT control
- Godly Fear Pursues Holiness
- Godly Fear looks to God’s Promises
- When Earthly Fear Falls

SARAH IN SCRIPTURE

15 God said to Abraham, "As for your wife Sarai, do not call her Sarai, for Sarah will be her name. 16 I will bless her; indeed, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she will produce nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

Genesis 17:15

9 "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him.

"There, in the tent," he answered.

10 The Lord said, "I will certainly come back to you in about a year's time, and your wife Sarah will have a son!" Now Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent behind him.


11 Abraham and Sarah were old and getting on in years.[e] Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. 12 So she laughed to herself: "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I have delight?"

13 But the Lord asked Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Can I really have a baby when I'm old?' 14 Is anything impossible for the Lord? At the appointed time I will come back to you, and in about a year she will have a son."

15 Sarah denied it. "I did not laugh," she said, because she was afraid.

But he replied, "No, you did laugh."

Genesis 18:9-15



21 The Lord came to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. 2 Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time God had told him. 3 Abraham named his son who was born to him — the one Sarah bore to him — Isaac. 4 When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God had commanded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

6 Sarah said, “God has made me laugh, and everyone who hears will laugh with me.” 7 She also said, “Who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne a son for him in his old age.”

Genesis 21:1-7

11 By faith even Sarah herself, when she was unable to have children, received power to conceive offspring, even though she was past the age, since she considered that the one who had promised was faithful.

Hebrews 11:11

6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do what is good and do not fear any intimidation.

1 Peter 3:6

Read Genesis 16:1-6; 18:12; 21:1-21

Abraham made some heart-wrenching terrible choices — choices that were thrust upon Sarah without her consent. Like Sarah, you may feel the gut-wrenching vulnerability of being shaken by the reckless folly and sins of others. The devastating impact of an unfaithful spouse may ripple through your children. The haunting consequences of pastoral disqualification can tear at your church family. The financial chaos is unleashed by one alcoholic's relentless addiction. Then there are the unpredictable storms that catch you off guard. They leave you gasping. There's the layoff that blindsides you. The natural disaster destroys your peace. The cancer diagnosis shakes your very foundation. The stillbirth shatters your dreams. All of these are excruciatingly painful, and all tragically out of your control.

The question looms large before us: What will we do when we find ourselves engulfed in suffering? Will we frantically seize control, desperately trying to mend the brokenness in others and the chaos they've wreaked? Will we seek retribution or surrender to bitterness? Will we audaciously shake our fists at God, choosing flagrant unbelief? Sarah grappled with each of these responses, yet none brought solace or resolution. Ultimately, she embraced a profound and transformative choice — a path illuminated by godly fear, one that Jesus himself courageously walked.

21 For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 22 He did not commit sin, **and no deceit was found in his mouth**; 23 when he was insulted, he did not insult in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten but entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

1 Peter 2:21-23


When we confront danger, disappointment, and profound pain, the true answer lies in turning our eyes to Jesus. We should not look within ourselves. Jesus carried the immense consequences of sinful humanity. His response was breathtakingly powerful. He did not revile or threaten. Instead, he epitomized trust in his Father.

34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing." And they divided his clothes and cast lots.

Luke 23:34

Will we choose to follow in his footsteps? Embracing godly fear means placing our unwavering trust in God over what we cannot control. We firmly believe that he is a just judge. The outcome rests securely in his capable hands.


Everyone carries a control freak deep within them, fueled by a society obsessed with control. In every aspect of our lives, we instinctively clutch at control. This applies to parenting, managing our finances, and our careers. We push towards our own version of order. But here's the hard truth: this relentless grip rarely



brings the peace and joy we yearn for. Why, you ask? Each time we try to control what isn't ours, we show divine ambition. That is where the peril lies. This ignites a cycle of fear: the more we attempt to control, the more we dread the thought of losing that control. And as that dread intensifies, we find ourselves spiraling further into the clutches of obsession. Ultimately, it's our fear that enslaves us. The only true route to liberation is through surrender and placing our trust in the Lord. So, when you feel the urge to take the reins, pause and reflect on these three pivotal questions:

Is it worth my concern?

Take a moment to pause and delve deeply into this pivotal question: is what you're striving to control truly deserving of your energy? Consider its significance! Is it life-altering? Transformational? The reality is, none of us have the power to control every situation, so let's choose our battles wisely! There are matters that demand our involvement – those that can shift the course of our lives – but let's not become ensnared by trivialities. It's essential to discern what genuinely merits our concern. If we allow ourselves to micromanage every detail, we risk being consumed by stress, potentially alienating those we hold dear. We must embrace the profound act of surrender, relinquishing our relentless grip on control, and entrust our worries to God. So I ask you, the very first question to confront is, **is it worth my concern?**




Is it mine to control?

Or in other words, does it truly make sense for me to step in and seize control? There are certain areas in life where it is not just important, but absolutely vital, for us to take charge. We must rise to that challenge! Surrendering to God does not allow us to abandon our responsibilities. It doesn't mean we can sit back and do nothing. If it doesn't make sense for us to hold the reins, we must not attempt to do so. Take finances, for instance. We cannot delegate the management and stewardship of our own finances. We have the authority, and we must wield it following God's guidance. God calls us to tithe and support the poor, and no one else can make those momentous decisions for us!

Is it for God alone?

The ultimate question we must fervently ponder is this: Is it truly for God alone? Are we grasping onto the reins of what should be surrendered into His divine hands? There are monumental truths that only God can manifest. Only God can ignite a transformation within a person's heart. Only God can usher in healing to our precious loved ones. Only God holds the compass to the futures of our children and those we cherish. The harder we grasp at what belongs solely to God, the more we entangle ourselves in anxiety and stress. If we find ourselves overwhelmed, let us examine: are we attempting to control what is fundamentally



His domain? Surrendering to God is an act of profound trust. It is a declaration that we believe He is orchestrating every detail in our lives. Trust Him! He is bound to fulfill His purpose! At the end of the day, it isn't an agonizing decision. Will we resolutely choose to yield our worries to God? Or will we be ensnared in a futile attempt to control every aspect of our existence? Will we try to control those around us?



Philippians 4:6-7 passionately reminds us:



6 Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.


Philippians 4:6-7

Read over the following scriptures about God being in control and then use the questions that follow to evaluate your own beliefs on control and God.

- Proverbs 19:21
 - Romans 8:28
 - Jeremiah 29:11
 - Isaiah 41:10
 - Psalm 46:10
 - Colossians 1:17
 - Daniel 4:35
 - Ephesians 1:11
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- How do you decide which things you should control and which you should let go?
 - How might being a control freak be less or an all or nothing approach?
 - Is this worth your time, attention, and energy to try to control the trivial and the unimportant?
 - When does trust (reliance on God) come easy for you? When is it hard for you? Why do you think that is so?
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- Faith is active reliance on God. What does that look like in your day to day experience?
 - Read Proverbs 3:5-6. Write about someone in your life who models this passage well. Why do you think they are so good at trusting the Lord?
 - The more confident you are in God, the more comfortable you are with His control. Agree or disagree and why?
 - Do you know why you trust what you trust? How do we trust in what we know as true when life feels out of control?
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- How can a person balance taking responsible action, but also surrender to God at the same time?
 - What is your first step and next step in surrendering to God rather than trying to control everything by ourselves?

Take one thing home with you:

We've all faced the daunting intensity of a control freak wielding power over our lives. It's an ugly sight when someone feels the need to dictate every detail of their existence and yours. The chaotic aftermath of trying to play God rarely ends well. Take King Herod from the Christmas story, for example. This ruler of the region discovered the miraculous birth of Jesus. He set out with dark determination to eliminate Him. The wise men sought the newborn king of the Jews. They unwittingly became pawns in Herod's sinister game. He desperately sought to extinguish any threat to his rule. Herod pretended to be benevolent. He coaxed the wise men into revealing the location of the baby. He falsely claimed he wished to worship the child. Yet, he believed he could manipulate the divine plan that God had orchestrated. This narrative fiercely reminds us that God holds ultimate authority. It is a reminder that He will triumph in the end. We must yield ourselves to Him instead of grasping for control over the uncontrollable.



GODLY FEAR PURSUES HOLINESS

⁶just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do what is good and do not fear any intimidation.

1 Peter 3:6

We cannot control people and circumstances. However, by the boundless grace of God, **we have the power to control our responses to them!** Sarah teaches us that *“even if some do not obey the word,”* we can still choose to obey (1 Peter 3:1). By doing this, we create opportunities to win others to Christ. We achieve this through our respectful and pure conduct (1 Peter 3:2). When confronted by fear, whether from past mistakes, present challenges, or future uncertainties, we do not aim for fearlessness. Instead, our aim is to cultivate a profound fear of the Lord. This leads us to true holiness!

Does this embrace the exhilarating growth of a courageous spirit that *“[does] not fear anything that is frightening”* (1 Peter 3:6)? Absolutely! Holiness is intertwined with bold courage. Yet, let us clarify: Christian courage isn't synonymous with pure fearlessness. Our ultimate goal is to deepen our relationship with Jesus. In knowing Him more intimately, we are transformed to reflect His essence. He exemplified perfect reverence and awe for the Lord.

For us, godly fear grows. It sometimes grows slowly through a lifetime of sanctification. The Lord provides opportunities to look to him when we are afraid, just as he did for Sarah. Just consider Sarah's record in the New Testament. In Genesis, we see her sins and foolish mistakes. Her struggle for holiness is laid

bare before our eyes. But how does the New Testament represent her? As a God-fearing woman of faith.

5 For in the past, the holy women who put their hope in God also adorned themselves in this way, submitting to their own husbands, 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. You have become her children when you do what is good and do not fear any intimidation.

1 Peter 3:5-6



This is exhilarating news for all of us grappling with fear! God's magnificent grace in Christ declares us holy, forgiven, and righteous in His sight – no debates, no exceptions.

1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus,

33 Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. 34 Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the one who died, but even more, has been raised; he also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.

Romans 8:1, 33-34

As the day ends, we may have faced fear imperfectly. However, we turned our hearts to Jesus and feared Him. Thus, we will proudly be recognized as



God-fearing women of unwavering faith. His righteous blood envelops us, deeming us “*not guilty!*”

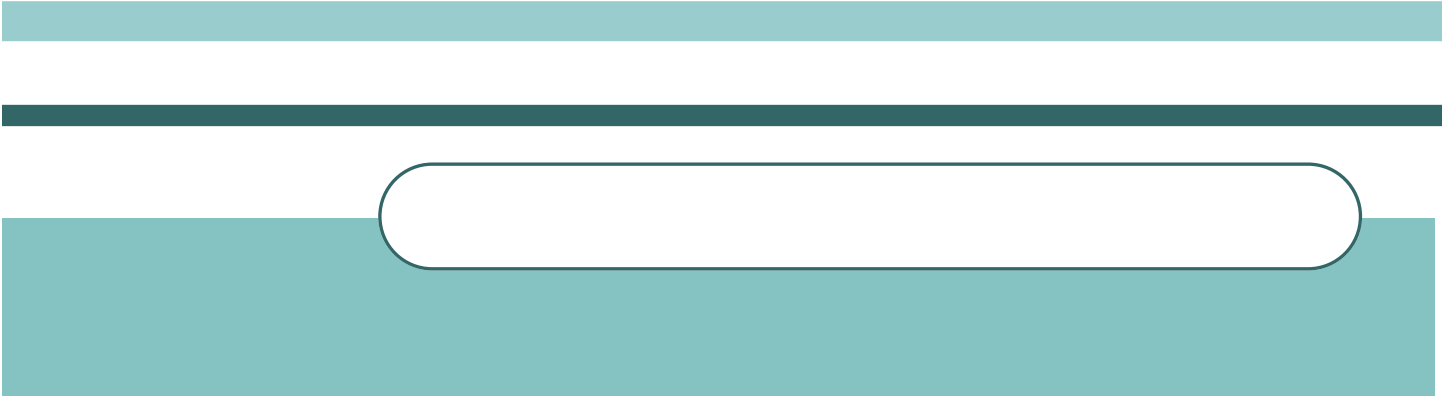

In light of this empowering reality, we cast aside fear and fervently pursue holiness! We are indeed the children of Sarah when we do good. We boldly refuse to let anything frightening intimidate us.

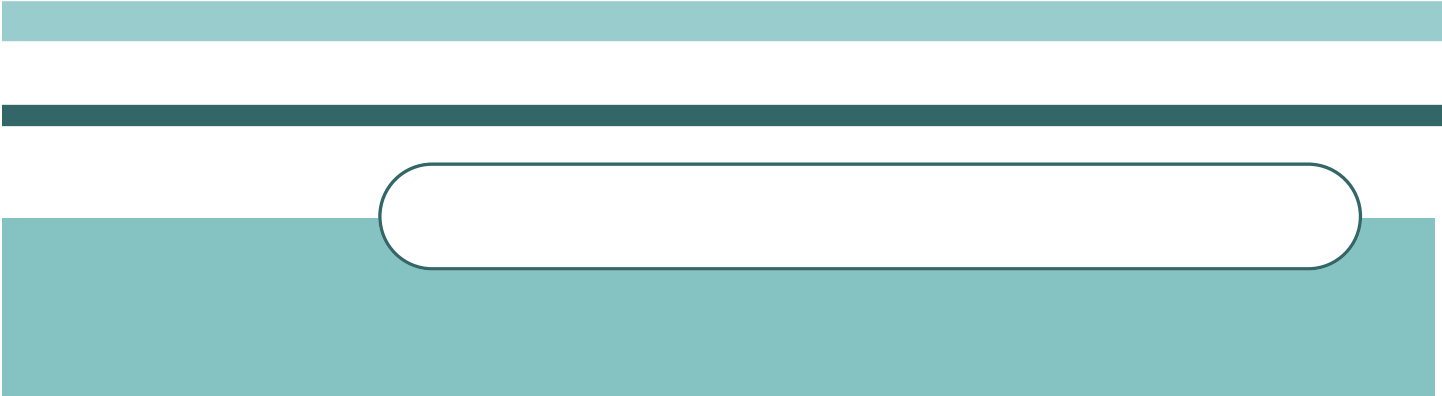
Questions to ponder about God and fear spark a deep exploration. What does it truly mean to fear God? It involves distinguishing between the empowering essence of healthy fear and the debilitating grip of unhealthy fear. Reflect on how fear takes shape in your life, and consider its powerful influence on your relationship with the Divine. How does it drive you closer to faith, or perhaps pull you away? Embrace the journey of understanding your fears as a pathway to a deeper connection with God.

Here are some specific questions to ponder:


Understanding the Nature of Fear and God's Role:

- What does it mean to "fear God"? Is it a healthy respect and awe, or a form of anxiety or worry?

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- How does the Bible describe the "fear of the Lord" and what are its positive and negative implications?
 - What are some specific areas of your life where you experience fear, and how might that fear relate to your faith?
 - How can you differentiate between a healthy fear of God and a fear that hinders your relationship with Him?
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- How does God's love and grace address the fear you might experience?

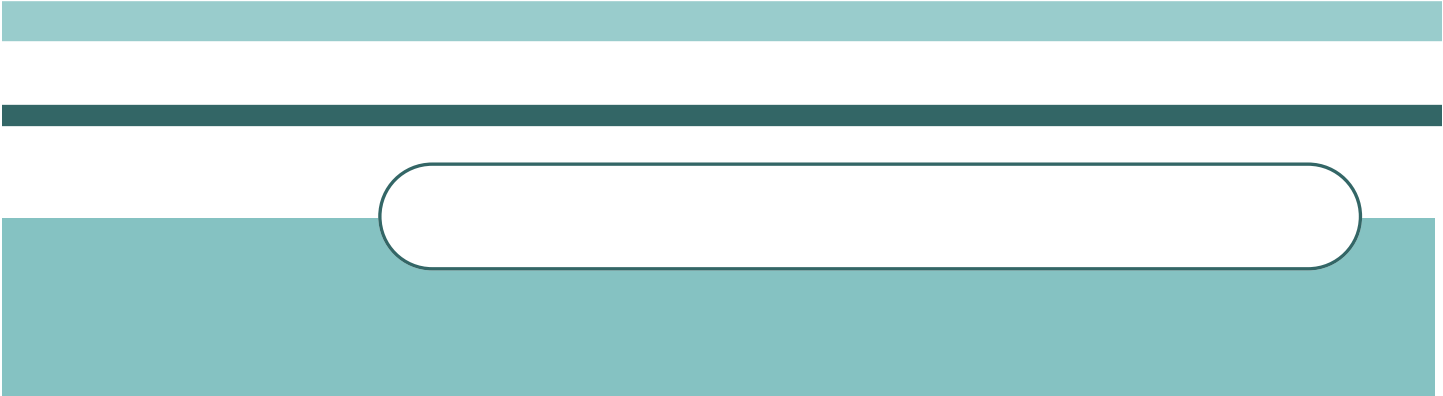
Exploring God's Character and Presence:

- How does the concept of God's greatness and power relate to the idea of "fear of the Lord"?
 - What specific passages in the Bible speak to God's presence in the midst of fear?
 - How does your understanding of God's character influence your experience of fear?
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Addressing Fear and Trust:

- How can you overcome fear and trust in God's promises, even when facing difficult circumstances?
- What specific steps can you take to cultivate faith and reduce the influence of fear in your life?
- How can you cultivate a sense of peace and security in God's presence, even when you feel fearful?

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- How can you learn from those who have overcome fear in the past and apply their lessons to your own life?
 - How can you share your fears with others in a way that builds trust and encourages growth?

GODLY FEAR LOOKS TO HIS PROMISES

Praise God that His promises stand firm. They are not swayed by our shortcomings. Instead, they are anchored in the perfect and ultimate sacrifice of His Son! Just imagine the miracle: Sarah experienced motherhood in her impossible old age. It wasn't because she summoned enough faith. It happened because our faithful God kept His word! She laughed at His promise. Then, she tried to deny it. However, God lovingly reassured her that nothing is too challenging for Him! (Genesis 18:14-15)

God's promises endure unwaveringly. This is true no matter how heavy our worries, doubts, and fears may loom. They are anchored in something far more certain: the precious blood of Jesus! When we find ourselves trembling in fear, where do we cast our gaze? Do we let our eyes linger on the turmoil of our lives? These include the rebellious child and the relentless agony. We also face the fractured marriage, the waterlogged basement, and the empty bank account. Do we lift our eyes boldly to God's unshakeable and everlasting word? His magnificent and incredibly vast promises are secured for us in Jesus. Fear beckons us to live by sight. It urges us to weigh our circumstances against the chaos unfolding around us. We are also urged to consider the shadows of what might be. Yet, true godly fear calls us to walk by faith, embracing the unwavering truth of God's trustworthy promises!

This means we dive deep into God's Word with fervor!

39 You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me. 40 But you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life.

John 5:39-40

We scour the Scriptures. They lead us straight to the Savior. His character and promises ignite our trust like never before. Where else can we possibly turn? No news feed, political party, or self-help book can compare to Him.

68 Simon Peter answered, “Lord, to whom will we go? You have the words of eternal life.



John 6:68

Only Jesus holds the words of eternal life — the very words we can cling to when everything else crumbles around us. Growing in godly fear doesn’t demand perfect faith, but rather the unwavering assurance of a perfect promise and a faithful Promise Keeper.

24 He who calls you is faithful; he will do it.


1 Thessalonians 5:24

“He will surely do it”. We fix our eyes on Jesus. We embrace His promises as revealed in His word. Then, we will flourish and thrive in godly fear!



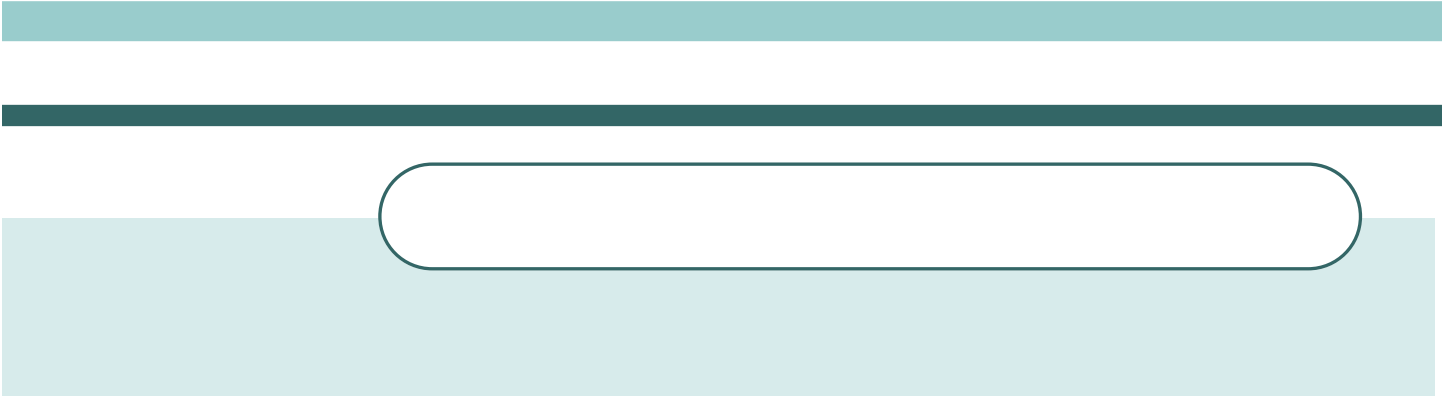
Questions about God's promises and doubt surge with intensity when we encounter hard times or wrestle with profound theological ideas. The heart cries out for clarity: How can I truly be convinced that God's promises hold weight? What if my faith feels fragile and I'm struggling to believe? And what if the answers I so desperately seek remain elusive?

Here are some key thoughts to remember when doubt looms in our hearts concerning the promises of God:

- **How can I be sure God's promises are true?** Dive deep into the unwavering truth of God's promises! Embrace the reliability of Scripture and witness the powerful testimonies of believers who have experienced His faithfulness in miraculous ways!
 - **What if I don't see God's promises fulfilled in my lifetime?** Embrace the profound truth that God's timing transcends our understanding! Let your heart pulse with the assurance of His unwavering faithfulness. Even in silence, He is orchestrating a masterpiece beyond our imagination. Trust fervently in His divine plan, for every moment shapes our journey toward celestial fulfillment!
 - **What if I am unsure of what God's will is for my life?** Dive into the depths of your soul through fervent prayer and immerse yourself in the transformative wisdom of Scripture. Seek the counsel of the wise who have walked this path before you. They can illuminate the way your heart yearns to understand God's magnificent plan for your life!
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- **What if my circumstances make it difficult to believe in God's promises?** In the midst of despair and uncertainty, let your heart roar with a fierce faith! Remember, it's not about understanding every twist and turn of life's journey, but about embracing a bold trust in God. Stand firm! Even when the storms rage, let your spirit cling tightly to His unwavering promises. He is with you through every trial!
- **How can I overcome doubts about God's promises?** Dive deep into the well of His past faithfulness, where every testimony stands as a beacon of hope! Surround yourself with passionate believers who ignite your spirit. Earnestly pursue growth in your faith. This journey is a powerful testament to His unwavering promises!
- **Is it okay to doubt?** Absolutely! Doubt is not merely a shadow cast on our beliefs but a vibrant spark igniting our quest for truth. Embrace your doubts! They signal an insatiable thirst for deeper understanding and a profound yearning for connection with the divine. You Heavenly Father has big shoulders! He desires for you to come to Him to show you truth.
- **What does my doubt say about my relationship with God?** Doubt can ignite a fire within us, illuminating the shadows of our faith. It can emerge from our struggle with sin or stem from a heart yearning for a deeper trust in God's unwavering promises. Embrace your doubts as passionate whispers calling you to a closer relationship with the Divine. Let them challenge you, transform you, and draw you nearer to the heart of God!
- **How can I overcome my doubts?** Turn to God with fervent prayer and




immerse yourself in the wisdom of Scripture! Find unwavering strength in the embrace of your community. Fellow believers stand beside you in faith and encouragement. They empower you to rise above doubt and soar in confidence!

- **What if my doubts are too strong to overcome?** Embrace your journey with compassion. Allow yourself the grace of time. Remember that seeking spiritual guidance is a strength, not a weakness. Trust in the divine light that leads you through the shadows of uncertainty, illuminating your path with hope and resilience.
- **How can I share my doubts with others?** Open your heart and reveal your uncertainties! Seek out a trusted friend or a wise spiritual mentor who will stand by your side, offering unwavering support and encouragement. And why not take a leap of faith and join a community where others share their struggles too? It's in these connections that we find strength and clarity!

Remember to allow the Holy Spirit to discern trusted mentors and those who would steer you the wrong direction. Not everyone who claims to walk with the Lord does.



The following are questions are challenges to our hearts to be open and honest about our doubts concerning God's Promises:

- How can I better understand God's character and will?
 - How can I grow in my faith?
 - How can I find peace in the midst of uncertainty?
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WHEN EARTHLY FEAR FALLS

6 Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and everyone who hears will laugh with me." 7 She also said, "Who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne a son for him in his old age."

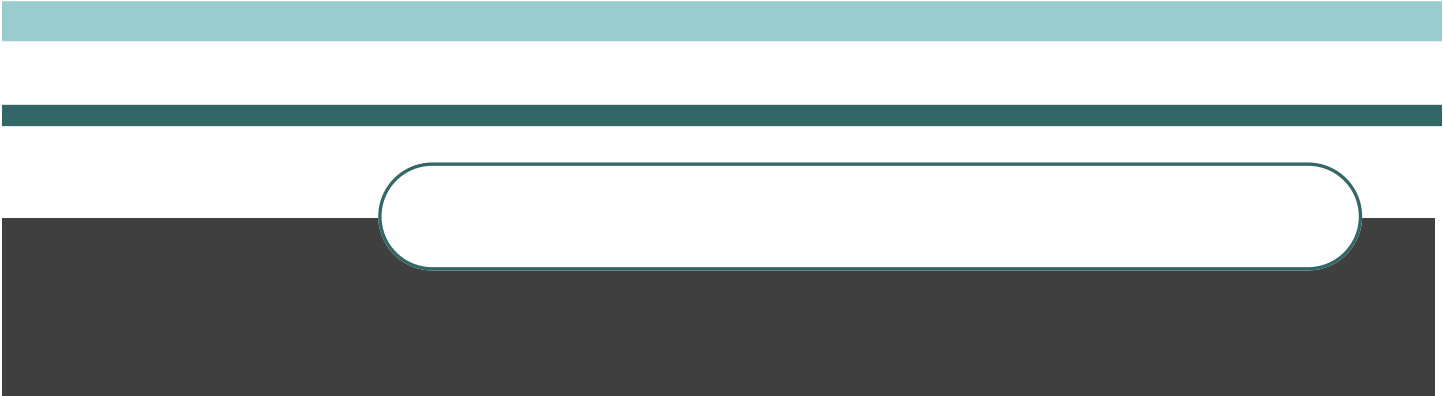
Genesis 21:6-7

What fierce emotions must have washed over Sarah as she felt her womb blossom? How intense must it have been when she held Isaac for the very first time? I can imagine her engulfed in tears of relief, bursting into joyous laughter that echoed the depths of her elation. It was all true — every word! Her husband doubted. She fought her own battles with bitterness and uncertainty. Through flickers of unwavering hope, God stood as a beacon of faithfulness. In each resounding heartbeat, He called forth Sarah's faith. He compelled her to trust in the promises that lay just beyond her sight.

And isn't that His invitation to us?

He longs for us to fear him above all else. He wants us to place our unwavering trust in his faithfulness, even more than what our eyes can perceive. We should embrace the truth that he is in control. He is tirelessly at work within his people. He is steadfastly fulfilling all his promises.

Unlike Sarah, we are absolutely certain of whom we're waiting for. She had only fleeting glimpses, but we possess the entire, breathtaking picture.



14 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14

On that magnificent day, the brilliance of Christ's glory will burst forth in its entirety. We will be drenched in tears of overwhelming relief. Our hearts will explode with joyous laughter. It was all true. Every earthly fear will dissolve, swallowed by the dazzling light of His eternal radiance.



God uses
IMPERFECT
people in
IMPERFECT
situations to accomplish His
PERFECT
will.





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