

# Abraham and Abimelek

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Preacher: Tom Campbell

[ 0 : 00 ] Okay, so we're going to turn to God's Word. So if you have a Bible, we're going to turn to Genesis chapter 20. If you'd like a church Bible, there's some at the back, so feel free to stand up, stretch your legs, and you can go and get one.

If you don't want to do that, you can wave madly in the air, and someone might come in and give you one. So it's Genesis 20, and we're going to read the whole chapter. Here, so Genesis 20, and we're going to start from verse 1 all the way down to the end.

Okay. Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar, and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, she's my sister.

Then Abimelech, king of Gerar, sent for Sarah and took her. But God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, you are as good as dead. Because of the woman you have taken, she is a married woman.

Now Abimelech had not gone near her, so he said, Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? Did he not say to me, she's my sister? And didn't she also say, he's my brother?

[ 1 : 19 ] I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands. Then God said to him in the dream, yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me.

That is why I did not let you touch her. Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die.

Early the next morning, Abimelech summoned all his officials, and when he told them what had happened, they were very much afraid. Then Abimelech called Abraham in and said, what have you done to us?

How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done. And Abimelech asked Abraham, what was your reason for doing this?

Abraham replied, I said to myself, there is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father, though not of my mother, and she became my wife.

[ 2 : 32 ] And when God caused me to wander from my father's household, I said to her, this is how you can show your love to me. Everywhere we go, say of me, he is my brother.

Then Abimelech brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham. And he returned Sarah, his wife, to him. And Abimelech said, my land is before you, live wherever you like.

To Sarah he said, I'm giving your brother a thousand shekels of silver. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you. You are completely vindicated.

Then Abraham prayed to God and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female slaves so they could have children again. For the Lord had kept all the women in Abimelech's household from conceiving because of Abraham's wife, Sarah.

So we'll finish reading at the end of the chapter and let's just pray and ask for God's help as we look at his word together. Father, we pray for help as we think through what your word means, what it says, what we can learn, and how we can hear your voice through it this morning.

[ 3 : 48 ] Lord, help us when we read about things that are so foreign to us, so obscure culturally, so far away in time. But Lord, help us to be conscious that these words are for us, that though they were written such a long time ago, they are written for us.

So we pray that you'd help us now by your spirit to open our eyes and open our hearts to you. Amen. Well, I'll never make that mistake again.

Famous last words, aren't they? We all fall into the trap of making the same mistakes over and over again. Are there mistakes that you make that you keep making?

You can't seem to stop. When we lived in Bandon, I always forgot to put out our bins. So in the morning, when the bin truck came really early and I was still in bed asleep, I could hear the beeping of the bin truck.

So I would have to leap out of bed, quickly get dressed, run downstairs, and put the bins out. But this happened time and time again. Even though I might have said, I'll never make that mistake again.

[ 5 : 04 ] Maybe you always make the mistake of doing something last minute. I'm definitely a culprit here. You end up really stressed, you're rushing around, you're running to get ready, getting something done just at the last minute, and you think, I really need to change.

This is the last time. Only to find yourself in the same situation the following week. Or maybe it's a struggle or a sin that you have in your life that you fall into temptation and you fail.

And you turn to God in sorrow and despair and you cry out to Him for forgiveness and for help. Only to find yourself there again not so long after.

We all make mistakes and we all tend to repeat the process. And Abraham, in our passage, is no exception to that.

We see him using his she's my sister, not my wife, technique once again. This is his favorite strategy when traveling abroad.

[ 6 : 14 ] Abraham makes the same mistake. So the first thing I want you to remember from this morning is that deception never has a good outcome.

Deception never has a good outcome. Can you think back to a time when you deceived someone in some way? I'm not going to ask for a show of hands or voluntary answers.

But can you look back at a time where you did something like that and think that was the right decision? That was a really, really good thing to do.

That was a good call. That built that relationship that I had where I deceived my friend. Or that gave me great satisfaction and fulfillment afterwards. Or that really helped me to grow in my love for God. Deception is something that is clearly counter to Christian living in the Bible. In fact, deception is the very first sign of rebellion against God that we see in the Bible.

[ 7 : 19 ] Isn't it we see the serpent coming to Adam and Eve and deceiving them? Lying to them? Deception never has a good outcome.

Whether that's something seemingly small like not telling the truth or a half-truth or something enormous like Adam and Eve causing all of creation to fall into sin, deception never has a good outcome.

Deception is not what God has called us to. It erodes trust. It creates bitterness. And it can lead to disaster.

And we can see that Abraham is at it again. It wasn't too long ago that while Abraham was hanging out in Egypt, he used this same technique to keep himself safe.

Look at verse 1 and 2. Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shor. For a while he stayed in Gerar, and here it is, and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, she's my sister.

[ 8 : 31 ] And it seems like it was a tactic that he liked to use as we can see later on in verse 13 that everywhere we go say of me he is my brother.

Maybe he even got away with it a few times. But the thing about deception is that it has me at the center. Not God, not others, it's self-serving.

Deception keeps me safe. Here, it was to make sure that Abraham stayed alive. He was fearful of his life. Verse 11, I said to myself, there is surely no fear of God in this place and they'll kill me because of my wife.

He took matters into his own hands to save his own skin. Not trusting God to keep him safe. Not trusting that God would uphold his promise that he made to him.

for us, deception may be to save us from embarrassment or maybe to save us from trouble in school or disappointing a friend or maybe from having to part with more money than we want to.

[ 9 : 45 ] Deception is all about me and it never has a good outcome. we can see in this passage that as a result of this deception Sarah is taken from Abraham.

Abraham might be thinking well at least I didn't get killed. Sarah's taken away but instead of them staying together as husband and wife verse 2 Abimelech king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her. He saw here's another eligible woman I can take to be another of my wives. Well why not says Abimelech? Abraham fails to explain that Sarah is his wife.

Something seemingly at the time was held sacrosanct. You can't take another man's wife. So the king likes the look of Sarah sends for her and takes her.

And for fear of his own safety Abraham repeats the deception. He doesn't trust God to protect him. He's not thinking straight. Abraham and Sarah were promised a son and they've already tried scheming haven't they when things weren't going as they planned.

[ 11 : 05 ] And that didn't go so well with Hagar. And now the woman Sarah who's due to conceive and give birth to the promised child through whom God's promise will come is now taken away to be the wife of Abimelech the king.

The promise now is in danger. What if Abimelech has a son through Sarah? What of the promise then? Well this deception has negative consequences on Abimelech's household as well.

Barrenness. We see at the end of the passage in verse 18 that the Lord had kept all the women in Abimelech's household from conceiving. And even though Abimelech was deceived his actions would ultimately have led to death as he's warned by God in verse 3.

I'd say that was a scary moment. The Lord visits Abimelech in a dream and says you are as good as dead. I don't think I'd ever want to hear those words from anyone let alone God.

Deception never has a good outcome. Are we people who try to deceive others? Maybe not very obviously or overtly but do we sell half-truths to people like Abraham did?

[ 12 : 37 ] Do we cover things up or not quite tell the whole truth because if you knew the whole truth well then I'd be really embarrassed very ashamed. Do we cover things up?

Do we try to save our own skin or our own reputation? Maybe within a context of church or with our friends we like to pretend that we have it all together when actually sharing how we really are with a close friend or someone who we trust in church is what we need to do.

Well it's tax time this year isn't it? This time of year? Maybe failing to declare something on your tax return that needs to be paid. It's very easy. Will revenue really come checking?

Maybe dodging around your faith or what you believe or what you're really doing on Sunday morning just to avoid embarrassment or an awkward moment in conversation.

Well let's not fall into the same mistakes of deception and trust God as we live honest and truthful lives. We can trust Him.

[ 13 : 50 ] and not get stuck in deception. So that's the first thing. Deception never has a good outcome.

The second thing is listen to God. It's the only way back. Listen to God. It's the only way back. So what do we do if we are caught in the middle of deception?

If you're tangled up in it, maybe you didn't even realize like Abimelech got caught. He didn't realize. What do we do? We listen to God. It's the only way back.

We see in this passage that Abimelech gets tangled up in this deception. He has taken the wife of another man and God confronts him in this dream.

Look at verse 3. God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said, you are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken. She is a married woman.

[ 14 : 55 ] Abimelech pleads with God as he had been told that he is as good as dead. Look at verse 4. Abimelech had not gone near her so he said, Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation?

Did he, Abraham, not say to me she's my sister? And didn't she, Sarah, also say he's my brother? I've done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.

God said, yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience so I've kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her. Now, return the man's wife for he is a prophet and he will pray for you and you will live.

But if you do not return her you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die. Sure, this would have been incredibly distressing for Abimelech to find out what he has done.

But God provides clear instruction for how Abimelech can get out of this mess. Return Sarah to Abraham he will pray for you and you will live.

[16:05] But if you don't return her you can be sure that you and all of your household will die. God shows Abimelech how he can turn around and get out of the mess.

God tells Abimelech how he can repent. That's what repent means. It means reversing what you are doing. It means turning away from what you have been doing and turning towards what God has called you to do.

But here Abimelech has gone down this path of taking Sarah and God says you need to stop. You need to turn around and give her back. You need to reverse what you've done.

And here that's exactly what Abimelech does. He listens to God and he gives Sarah back to Abraham. We see it in verse 14. Abimelech brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham and he returned Sarah his wife to him.

Now interestingly we don't see Abraham being pulled up in this passage on what he has done. Sometimes scripture is simply descriptive of an event or story.

[17:29] Abimelech's in deep trouble with God here but we don't see the same of Abraham. And it seems that this is a pattern that Abraham follows may be a blind spot for him just pretend we're not married and I'll be safe.

12 and 13 Besides she really is my sister the daughter of my father though not of my mother and she became my wife and when God calls me to wander from my father's household I said to her this is how you can show your love for me everywhere we go say of me he is my brother.

Sarah So it seems he is telling a half truth after all as Sarah really is his half sister. I'm not going to get into this but just a quick comment on this to say that God specifically condemns marrying your sister in the law given to Moses but those laws came after Abraham so Abraham wasn't yet under this law from God so while it was God's plan and intention that this was not acceptable it had yet to be established for Abraham culturally at the time it would have been a common practice but you can ask me more questions on that afterwards if you like but this deceptive behavior by Abraham isn't specifically condemned in the passage and neither is it condoned we are more interested in the outcome of what has happened so if we find ourselves in a situation where we have not acted truthfully or we have tried to deceive or cover up or tell a half truth the only way back is to listen to God to repent to turn just like Abimelech had to do and listen to God we must stop turn around and turn towards God's ways of doing things speaking truthfully acting with honesty and living with integrity now I'm not sure if God will visit us in a dream but we certainly will hear his voice in his word we need to hear his voice so that we can listen to him so let's try more and more to be in his word because if we're not in his word we won't hear his voice and if we're stuck in deception or in a mess we want to hear his voice we won't unless we're in his word he calls to us and he helps us to stay on that path of righteousness so listen to

God it's the only way back the third thing I want to say this morning I want you to remember is that God brings blessing in the midst of mess and mistakes God brings blessing in the midst of mess and mistakes we see through this passage through this story in the midst of these mistakes and the mess and the deception God is working God was at work then and he's at work now he doesn't get surprised by things like this he doesn't get caught out when we don't act rightfully his plans are not thwarted by our bad decisions God is working to bring blessing to his people and to accomplish his purposes through the complexity and the mess of human history well we see

[21:39] Abimelech gets through this unscathed he was in danger of death all his household were kept from conceiving God he brought blessing to Abimelech we see in verse 17 Abraham prayed to God and God healed Abimelech his wife and his female slaves so that they could have children again for the Lord had kept all the women in Abimelech's household from conceiving because of Abraham's wife Sarah God healed Abimelech his wife and his female servants so they could have children again we see the promise God made in Genesis 12 in action that as Abimelech and his household are cursed as he has acted against Abraham and then when he blesses Abraham he and his household are blessed God said in Genesis 12 I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you well as for

Abraham he was the architect of this deception actions which were self serving and not a model for us to follow yet in the midst of these mistakes and mess God blesses Abraham and Sarah he ensures Sarah's safe return guarding that promise that he made for the son that they are soon to have and in returning Sarah Abimelech didn't hand her back just as she was he brought sheep and cattle and servants and silver all to give to Abraham we see in verses 14 and 15 verse 15 even says my land is before you live wherever you like Abraham entering this land was fearful of his life

that he would be killed so that his wife could be taken but the end result through God's blessing is the king saying take all my wealth and live wherever you want amazingly not only did God protect Abraham's life but he blessed him abundantly God showed his amazing grace towards Abraham even though he acted with self interest God still protected the promise and showered Abraham with this material blessing from Abimelech that's what grace is isn't it it's not something that you deserve actually we deserve the opposite God is acting towards Abraham in a way that he didn't deserve that is God's grace God showing favor toward Abraham in the midst of mistakes and mess and this is the same God that we worship and that we follow and who loves us today he hasn't changed he still shows grace to us in the midst of mess and mistakes maybe you've experienced this yourself when we've made bad decisions in life maybe we've unknowingly found ourselves in a mess

God shows us grace he promises to be with us and help us to live for him God is constantly working to achieve his purpose in history and to bring blessing to his people and to all nations and in his grace he does this even through our mistakes and mess maybe we lose our tempers with our friends or with our kids but yet friendships are restored and relationships thrive by God's grace or maybe in the mess of life an illness maybe has given you opportunity to share your faith more or if you're tired from life your exhausted realism has made the people around you realize that this faith stuff isn't just happy fluffy stuff it's real life and we see the most wonderful example of blessing and grace in the midst of mess and sin in the cross of

Christ sinful humans making this decision to put Jesus to death to have him executed on a cross yet this was the very means by which God would bring blessing and grace to the world Jesus died on that cross like we remember this morning taking the punishment for deceptive hearts for people who repeatedly make mistakes known mistakes unknowing mistakes so that we can be shown immense blessing and grace by being welcomed into his family simply by faith so we can trust God in the midst of mess and mistakes in our lives trusting that he is in control let's learn from something like this in Abraham's life where he didn't trust

[ 27 : 23 ] God to protect him and to guard the promise let's walk into our week into our month trusting God that in the midst of mess and danger or fear he is in control and is at work to bring blessing to his people and if you are caught up in mess even if you have acted righteously we can trust God for his help and strength to endure it or if we make mistakes we can turn back to God and trust that he will help us back to him and we can rest knowing that we haven't messed things up for him remember his plans are not thwarted by us they're not wrecked by our bad decisions but in his sovereignty he works for his purposes to bring this amazing blessing in the midst of mess and mistake he shows us his amazing grace let's pray father we thank you for your word and how you speak to us through it we pray that we would be attentive to your voice that as we hear on Sundays as we read your word ourselves maybe we listen to it as we drive or walk or work we pray that you be speaking to us in the midst of our deceptions our mistakes and our mess that we would hear your voice and trust you we thank you that you work and bring blessing in the midst of our mess help us to trust you in that and to rest in you to run back to you when we realize where we have come to to keep walking righteously before you we thank you lord for your amazing grace that you show to us time and time again not just when we live as we should but actually when we live as we shouldn't and you still show us grace thank you for the lord jesus who has welcomed us into your family that we can rest in him and look forward to an eternity of blessing with you we pray in jesus name amen it's just like we may be you the ■■■ OFE viene

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