



Do the circumstances of our lives reveal God's faithfulness?

READ **GENESIS 15:1-6** IN THE MESSAGE BIBLE

God has promised Abraham that he will have many descendants, and become a great nation. But much time has passed, Abraham is growing old, and Abraham's wife has been unable to have a baby. So Abraham questions God. God takes Abraham outside and asks him to look up, proclaiming that Abraham will have as many descendants as there are stars in the night sky.

REMEMBER: Genesis 15:5a

The Lord took him outside and said, "Gaze into the sky and count the stars."

FURTHER READING

Read Professor Sara Koenig's commentary at workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1730

What do you think of the dialogue between God and Abraham? Do we question God with the same urgency as Abraham? Why, or why not?

Near the end Koenig writes: *"Abram must have a level of faith to even register disappointment that God has not yet done what God said God would do. That is, Abram expects – and believes – God will keep God's word, which is why Abram speaks in the way he does."*

Does any sense of disappointment we feel about our circumstances or the state of the world right now actually reveal a deep belief that it could be, *should* be, different? Does it reveal hope? What do we do with that? How are we called to live in the gap between the promise and the fulfillment? What part do we play?

NEXT WEEK: Genesis 37:3-8, 17b-22, 26-34; 50:15-21

WONDER

DAY 1: Have the circumstances of your life ever gotten so dark, so out of control, that you wonder if you can trust God? Have your circumstances ever left you wondering if God is real? What do you do in those moments?

WONDER

DAY 2: Is it okay to have those doubts and concerns? Is it okay to ask God pointed, even heated, questions? Is God offended when we engage with God in this way, seeking answers? Would God prefer silence and trust? Why?

WONDER

DAY 3: What do you think about God's promises to Abraham? Would you believe them, or do they seem implausible, impossible, outrageous? Does any sort of promise for peace and reconciliation in our world today seem equally impossible? Why?

PRESENCE

DAY 4: Do the circumstances in which you live either prove or disprove God's faithfulness or love for you? Is it a sign of God's favor when things are going well? Is it a sign of God's disapproval when things aren't going well at all? Can God be with and for all people, even in a broken, violent world?

SURPRISE

DAY 5: When you're facing dark and difficult circumstances, does a change in perspective help? Is that what happens here as God leads Abraham out of the tent? Does Abraham need to adjust his eyes to take in the bigger picture? Why?

WONDER

DAY 6: When you look up at the stars, do you feel assured that the long game is in God's hands? That somehow God's got this? Or does that sound a bit nonsensical or naive? Why? How do you know what God's promises are, and how can you live fully when those promises seem out of reach? Is it hard to trust in something that you can't see?

PROGRESS

DAY 7: Is the moral of this story that we'll eventually get what we want? Is it that God pays out if we wait long enough? Is it that faithfulness is rewarded? Is it about God's presence throughout the scope of human history? Or something else? Does this story relate to us today? Why do we still tell it? Is this old story both universal and current? How?