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*He just
wants me*



When God Orchestrates a Family

>PART 4

*“Make the tent you live in larger. Stretch wide
the curtains and don’t hold back your vision.
Lengthen the ropes and reset your stakes.”*

Isa. 54:2, The Clear Word

And what is faith? Believing God is going to do exactly what He says He's going to do.

WHEN GOD FILLS our empty seasons, He does it on His own timeline. First we lost our first pregnancy, then I lost the ability to have children forever, and then our adopted baby, Nicole, was taken back by her birth mother. As Christians we're often tempted to search for the perfect promise to fill our desires, to earmark it as our very own, and then to assign our schedule to it. We've been struggling with *faith* since the beginning of time.

And what is faith? Believing God is going to do exactly what He says He's going to do.

In the Old Testament, Abraham was called the "father of faith." But he kept assigning timelines to God. And when God didn't deliver "on time," Abraham did things his own way.

It's perfectly understandable. Abraham was taunted by titles he could neither live up to nor give up on. Abraham was known as a "father of many nations," but the whole nation knew he was childless. The nursery in his tent was empty. He had prayed for a child, waited patiently—and was left humiliated. He and his wife, Sarah, discussed their emptiness and agreed their lineage had been blank for long enough. God's time was up.

Sarah decided her servant Hagar should be the vessel to deliver God's promise, and Abraham invited Hagar to bed. This was quite an offer: for a maid to become the first lady, "the mother of all nations." And Hagar said

yes. She chose another woman's husband to fulfill her dreams. She accepted what was not hers, to receive what belonged to another.

And God painfully heard and saw each step His chosen people took, just as He does with you and me.

As the child Ishmael grew, so did the misery, until separation seemed to be the best of bad options. One morning Abraham gave Hagar food and water; then, like so many fathers today, he said goodbye as she and his son walked toward the desert full of unknown dangers.

With emptiness beyond despair, Hagar was keenly aware that death was looming. They were homeless, starving, and dying of thirst. As her son wilted in the desert heat, all she could do was make him as comfortable as possible under a tree, so that his last breath would be in the shade.

This was a moment of uncompromising honesty for Hagar. In the hot, scorching sun, she longed to hear from her Creator. She began to take inventory of her choices. Starting at the beginning, she realized:

1. *Faith is bigger than life, and it determines eternal life.* If I don't believe God will deliver what He promises, then I live on watered-down wishes and not faith at all. Without faith, I run ahead of God or lag behind Him in order to please myself. Yet as my pride dissipates, I inevitably run back to Him.
2. *There are no secrets with God.* What happens in a bedroom, in the desert, behind a curtain, or anywhere else is seen, known, and recorded by angels. Putting my life in God's hand and trusting His plans is the only prescription for oozing sores and empty voids. When I try to fill these voids on my own, I fail miserably.
3. *Everything man offers me has limits.* Whether it is a bottle of water to quench my thirst, a relationship to provide security, or a title to support my self-esteem, it will someday end. I may look up to my husband,

a protector, or a spiritual leader, but if my admiration isn't aimed at God Himself, I'm not looking high enough.

God heard Hagar's prayer. When she had given up on herself, her friends, her theories, on everything she once valued—she finally gave God permission to do something. It was at this moment that God “opened her eyes and she saw a well of water.”

It was only when she was willing to take inventory—and see herself for who she really was—that she could hear the voice of God.

God replaced Abraham's bottle of water with a well of water, a well of Living Water that forever quenched her thirst and filled her emptiness (see Gen. 21:14–19).

This old story whispers new beginnings. When God fills our emptiness, He does it with eternity in mind. Fullness is best achieved when we trust God's timing. Don't abandon the promise just because its fulfillment has been prolonged.

After our devastating losses, God delivered tiny Tawnya into our arms. Rocking her was like sitting beneath a rainbow, knowing the storm had passed, the flood of tears was dry, and His promise had been delivered. But miracles don't begin—or end—when we think they should.

One Sabbath when Tawnya was three months old, a doctor rushed up to us, the same doctor who had delivered our first adopted baby girl, whose mother had taken her back. “Rod and Donna, we have a baby for you!” We looked at Tawnya in our arms and said, “Doc, we already have a baby!”

“Well, you need another one,” he said.

A few weeks later we stood in the hospital as little Tyler was transferred from delivery room to nursery. It took all of two minutes to love him for eternity. Falling on my knees, I wept.

God took this childless couple with a broken womb and transformed us into a family, and then when we thought we had enough, God said, “We're just getting started!” For when God enlarges a family, He enlarges His kingdom! **7**

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empty

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Do you battle broken dreams?

Has your faith gotten misplaced along the way?

There *is* a way to radically refocus your direction and identity.

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Donna Willey writes contagiously encouraging messages for “ordinary” people.

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