Being A Woman of Faith In The Real World  
(A Message To All Christian Women)  
Genesis 16:1-6 (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION

I have learned over the years that preaching a traditional Mother's Day sermon puts a preacher in a very precarious position. On the one hand there are some women who love to hear Mother's Day sermons. But then there are other women who find Mother's Day sermons to be more painful than delightful.

Mother's Day sermons can be especially hurtful to the married woman who can't have children........and single mothers........and women whose mothers have died........and women whose mothers were abusive. And believe it or not, Mother's Day Sermons can be painful to Christian men whose mothers have died or whose mothers were abusive.

While some of you ladies here this morning always look forward to Mother's Day, there are others who just try to get through the day and pray for Monday morning.

But there is one message that is always appropriate on Mother’s Day and that is message of hope and encouragement that will challenge every Christian woman here, regardless of your “motherly status.”

I have entitled my message this morning: “Being A Woman of Faith In The Real World.”

Our scripture text comes to us this morning from the Book of Genesis, chapter sixteen. And let’s read VERSES 1-6.
Genesis 16:1-6 (NKJV)

1 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar.

2 So Sarai said to Abram, “See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.

3 Then Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.

4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

5 Then Sarai said to Abram, “My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The Lord judge between you and me.”

6 So Abram said to Sarai, “Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please.” And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

One of the GREATEST WOMEN OF FAITH in the scriptures is SARAH.

*Sarah is mentioned more times in the scriptures than any other woman, including Mary, the mother of Jesus.

*Sarah is the first woman mentioned in “The Faith Hall of Fame” in Hebrews chapter eleven.

*In I Peter Sarah is held up as “the model” of the kind of woman every woman of faith should strive to be.

But when we carefully examine Sarah’s life, we learn three valuable truths about WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A WOMAN OF FAITH IN THE REAL WORLD.
Here is truth number one:

**Truth #1: Women of Faith Are Not Always Perfect**

1. Perhaps one reason why so many women don't like Mother's Day sermons is because they are made to feel as though if they are not the perfect Christian mother and wife they are a “miserable failure.”

   Ladies, just to set your mind at ease, you don't have to be perfect to be a good Christian mother and wife.

2. Women of faith who live in a real world are NOT always perfect, and this truth is very evident in the life of Sarah.

3. In his book, “**Twelve Extraordinary Women**” John MacArthur says this about Sarah:

   “Let's be honest: there are times in the biblical account when Sarah comes off as a bit of a shrew. (ill-tempered woman) She was the wife of the great patriarch Abraham, so we tend to think of her with a degree of dignity and honor. But reading the biblical account of her life, it is impossible not to notice that she sometimes behaved badly. She could throw fits and tantrums. She could be impatient……temperamental…..canniving……cantankerous……cruel……flighty……pouty….jealous….erratic……unreasonable……a whiner……a complainer…..and a nag. By no means was she always “the perfect model” of godly grace and meekness.”  

4. The first time we see Sarah reveal her “glaring imperfection” was when she was about 65 years old. Turn back just a few pages in your Bibles to GENESIS 12.

Before we read these verses let me briefly set the stage:

As you know, God had called Abraham to “pull up stakes” in his homeland back in Ur of The Chaldees and go to a land that He would show him. Of course we know that land was the Land of Canaan, but Abraham didn’t know that.

When Abraham arrived in Canaan it wasn’t the beautiful, plush land that flowed with “milk and honey,” that the Israelites would later inherit. It was a land inhabited by the godless Canaanites. And on top of that, when Abraham arrived, Canaan was in the midst of great famine.

So Abraham and Sarah continued southward to land of Egypt. It is here, Sarah becomes complicit in a lie with her husband, Abraham. Let’s read VERSES 10-13.

Genesis 12:10-13(NKJV)

10 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.

11 And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, “Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance.

12 Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.

13 Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.”
Now get the picture here. SARAH is sixty five years old, but she is still stunningly beautiful. We must remember in those days the lifespans of people were about double what our lifespans are now, so at the age of 65, Sarah would have looked like a woman in her mid-30's.

ABRAHAM sees his wife's beauty as a great liability in EGYPT. He fears that SARAH will turn some EYGPTIAN MAN'S head, and kill him so the man can have SARAH. So Abraham concocts a deceitful plan to save his own hide. And SARAH is “all in” on the plan, making her complicit in the lie. The plan was to tell everyone that SARAH was his SISTER, not his wife. We do learn in GENESIS 20, when Abraham and Sarah pulled this same scheme with Abimilech, that in reality SARAH was ABRAHAM’S “half-sister.” They both had the same father, but different mothers.

So when they told people they were “brother and sister,” they were partially telling the truth. But in the eyes of GOD a “half-truth” is a whole lie.

Now I'm sure you are wondering how passing himself off as Sarah's brother, rather than her husband, could save Abraham's hide. Well, in those days if a married man found himself in enemy territory, he could be killed for his wife. But if he were known as “Sarah's brother,” then by Egyptian custom someone wanting to marry Sarah would have to go through Abraham to do it, because in their society a woman's brother gave his sister in marriage.

Perhaps Abraham thought if someone did want to marry SARAH he could “stall the wedding” long enough for the famine to end in Canaan and he and Sarah could get out of Egypt before the wedding.
To make a long story short, Abraham's fears were soon realized. The Egyptian men were captivated by Sarah’s stunning beauty.

I love what commentary said: “It is no wonder the Egyptian men were attracted to Sarai, because their wives, according to ancient testimony were generally ugly and faded early.” (Keil and Delitzch)

Well word quickly reached PHARAOH about this beautiful woman named SARAI, and he brought her to his palace with the intentions of marrying her. However, GOD intervened and sent plagues upon Pharaoh and his household to keep him away from SARAI.

Here's the point: Sarah was a woman of great faith, but she wasn't perfect. She knew that she and Abraham were being deceitful by not telling people that she and Abraham were husband and wife.

Ladies, remember that time one of your kids colored a picture for you and you told them how beautiful it was, when in reality you couldn't tell if it was a PONY or a CHIHUAUA?

And remember the time you showed your husband those beautiful shoes you got for “FREE” at the store, but you left out that part about having to buy two pairs at full price to get that FREE pair?

Here's my point: Women of FAITH are not always perfect. Just because you falter in your faith sometimes doesn't mean you are failure, it means you are human.
Truth #2: Women of Faith Are Not Always Patient

1. Turn back to the scripture text I read at the outset of the message in GENESIS 16.

2. Abraham and Sarah have been living in Canaan for ten years now after they tried to pull off their deceitful scheme down in Egypt.

3. They are back in the land GOD had promised them, but there is one part of the promise that has yet to be fulfilled: They still don't have a baby.

4. Abraham is now 85 years old, and Sarah is 75. Humanly speaking, her child-bearing days have now passed. In verse 2, Sarah blames GOD saying, “the LORD has restrained me (prevented me) from having children.” So she decides to take matters into her own hands. She tells Abraham to father a child through her hand-maiden, Haggar.

5. Now we must understand this wasn’t considered a sin in that culture. In those days if a wife was not able to bear children and the man had no son as an heir, he was permitted to father a child through his wife’s favorite servant.

6. The real issue here is that Sarah had a lapse in faith. She decided to “help GOD out.” She rushed ahead of GOD. And that is always a very dangerous thing to do. The scriptures teach us “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it brings destruction.” Sarah thought her plan was perfectly logical, but she didn’t realize she would nearly destroy her marriage in the process.
7. After Haggar became pregnant, Sarah grew to RESENT Abraham and to DESPISE the very sight of Haggar. In fact, Sarah became so mean towards Haggar, Haggar fled to the wilderness to get away from her.

8. Ladies, do you ever get impatient with GOD? Have you ever prayed for something for a period of time and when GOD didn’t answer you decided to “help GOD out” and take matters into your hands. REMEMBER THIS VALUABLE TRUTH: God’s delays don’t mean GOD has failed. His delays are intended to strengthen your FAITH and TRUST in HIM. And if you will be PATIENT GOD WILL MAKE ALL THINGS BEAUTIFUL IN HIS TIME AND IN HIS WAY!

TRUTH #1: Women of Faith Are Not Always PERFECT.
TRUTH #2: Women of Faith Are Not Always PATIENT.

Now here is........

Truth #3: Women of Faith Are Not Always Pleasing To God

1. Let’s turn over to GENESIS CHAPTER EIGHTEEN. (Read: Verses 9-15)

**Genesis 18:9-15 (NKJV)** 9 Then they said to him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” So he said, “Here, in the tent.” 10 And He said, “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.” (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. 12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” 13 And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’ 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.” 15 But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh!”
2. Abraham is now 100 years old and Sarah is 90. One day while GOD was speaking audibly to Abraham, He re-iterated “the promise” He had made to Abraham many years earlier, and that was that his wife Sarah would have a son.

3. Sarah just happened to be standing outside Abraham's tent “eaves dropping” on this conversation between GOD and her husband. And when she heard GOD say she was going to have a child, she laughed. Not out-loud, but within. But even though she tried to muffle her laugh, GOD knew her every thought and intent. And later when GOD confronted her about “laughing at Him,” Sarah tried to deny it, but God boldly declared: “YOU DID LAUGH.”

4. Now in all fairness to Sarah, wouldn't you ladies laugh if you were ninety years old and your gynocologist told you that you were going to have a baby?

5. So why was Sarah's laughter not “a laughing matter” to GOD? It was because her laughter reflected her DOUBT and DISBELIEF in the PROMISE OF GOD. To laugh at God was the equivalent of calling GOD a liar. Women of FAITH are not always pleasing to GOD.

6. Ladies, do you ever have doubts about God's promises? Do you believe there is anything you have prayed for that is “TOO HARD” for the LORD? Do you have enough faith and trust that GOD can do the impossible or do you “laugh at the very thought?”
CONCLUSION

Despite the fact SARAH WASN'T PERFECT.......AND SHE WASN'T ALWAYS PATIENT......AND SHE WASN'T ALWAYS PLEASING TO GOD........this “Great Woman of Faith” eventually became ALL that GOD promised she would be. Listen to what GOD said about her in “The Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11:11.

“BY FAITH SARAH herself also received strength to conceive seed and she bore a child when she was past the age, BECAUSE SHE JUDGED HIM FAITHFUL WHO HAD PROMISED.”

To all you “WOMEN OF FAITH” (young and old alike) I leave you with these words of encouragement: You are NOT a completed masterpiece....you are “a work in progress.” Those times when you are hard on yourself for not being the perfect mother.....or perfect wife.....or perfect Christian, just remember GOD is more patient with you than you are with yourself. So KEEP TRUSTING.......KEEP BELIEVING......KEEP HOPING IN HIM WHO IS FAITHFUL!