

GREAT LESSONS FROM THE LESSER KNOWN

Week 2: This Makes No Sense: Hagar
Genesis 16 & 21

Written by Pastor Steve Norman
October 5-11, 2020



Heroes often emerge from **unexpected places**, teaching us **important lessons** about what to do, and sometimes, what not to do. Many of these characters seem larger than life — overcoming unbelievable odds on their path to victory. However, some of the best lessons come from less prominent stories — people that appear, at first glance, easy to discount. **Great Lessons from the Lesser Known** looks more closely at these obscure characters. Learn how **God can use anyone** to accomplish great things. You don't need to be a powerful and wealthy leader **to have influence**. **Obeying God**, even in the small things, can impact history.

A significant life is not always the most noticed life or the biggest life but it is a significant life. It is a meaningful life. With this series, we'll look at some of the lesser known people in the Old Testament and what we can learn from them. In the Old Testament there's the Big Three. There's Abraham, there's Moses, there's David. We talk about these guys. **But there are many other men and women mentioned in the Bible who can help teach us some very significant lessons.**

This Week's Memory Verse:

**"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed;
perplexed but not in despair;
Persecuted, but not abandoned;
Struck down, but not destroyed."
2 Corinthians 4:8-9**

GREAT LESSONS – Day 50

“The Lord replied to Moses, ‘I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will call out My name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose. But you may not look directly at My face, for no one may see Me and live.’ Exodus 33:19-20

HOLY GROUND

THE idea of Holy Ground was a foreign one to God’s people Israel. When Moses saw the burning bush, God told him to take off his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. Again, when Moses cried, “Show me your glory!” to God in Exodus 33, God had to hide Moses in a rock and shield him from seeing His face so he wouldn’t die at the sheer sight of His goodness and glory. It was too much, too glorious, to behold.

But now, because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, when we, as followers of Jesus, cry “Show us your glory!” we find that it’s a cry of remembrance of all that He has done for us, and He changes everything. Scripture tells us in 2 Corinthians 4 that “God, who has said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’” has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The face Moses couldn’t see has now been revealed, and all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge are now found in Christ.

When we lock eyes with Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, it changes us. Again in 2 Corinthians 3, Paul tells believers that we all with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory and are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory. Our lives become worship back to Him as we respond to the glorious truth of “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

TODAY'S PRAYER

Father, Thank You that You have made known to us who You are in Christ, who is the “radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His being.” Thank You that Holy Ground is not a place but a position – being found in You, Jesus, and You in me through the Holy Spirit. Let my heart daily be in awe of You, burning for You, and changed by You. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

GREAT LESSONS – Day 51

“For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.” 2 Chronicles 16:9

HEART ABANDONED

IT is amazing how an ordinary boy with a less-than-glamorous job of tending fields for his father (read: shoveling sheep poop and fighting lions off in his spare time) was chosen by God for His extraordinary purposes and specifically commended as being one “after God’s own heart.” Our stories are the same! God has called us by name and, through Jesus, brought us into His family. He has made the ordinary extraordinary and given us a new heart, a heart freed from captivity to sin and death and one which can now choose instead to follow Jesus with abandon. Scripture says in 2 Chronicles 16:9 that, “the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” In another translation, it says He strengthens hearts “that are completely His.”

The world tells us to abandon our hearts to other things, and our flesh beckons us back to a life of sin. We may have our hands balled up around something which we have not given to God. It may be something we compartmentalize: God, you can have it all...except one thing. What is the thing: the relationship, the addiction, the money, the area of life you want to control? Are there any walls in your heart toward God? What would happen if our hearts were “completely His?”

God gives a strength that encourages us, gives courage to us, and sustains us. We lose our false semblance of control, but gain the protection and loving leading of God

in our lives and peace that passes understanding. Let it be said of us, the Church, this generation, you and me, that we are a people with hearts abandoned, hearts that are completely His, hearts that are ever after Him alone.

TODAY'S PRAYER:

Father, Give me a heart abandoned, ever after You alone. All the things of this world pale in comparison to You. If they don't, awaken me to the reality of Christ, open my eyes to see You, and surely, everything else will fade into the background. I know You're the one who gave me a new heart in Christ, so please shape it and guide it into Your ways. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to You." (Psalm 19:14) In Jesus' name, Amen.

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GREAT LESSONS – Day 52

*“You will keep in perfect and constant peace the one whose mind is steadfast [that is, committed and focused on You—in both inclination and character], because he trusts and takes refuge in You [with hope and confident expectation].”
Isaiah 26:3 (AMP)*

PERFECT PEACE

HOW is your week going? If you are like most people, you began your week with a plan, a plan to accomplish something, perhaps one job each day or a larger job all week, but a plan to accomplish something. Often, however, our plans get sidelined by the unexpected. The degree of the unexpected is often what determines our response. A small, rather insignificant interruption to our day is often much easier to take in stride than a very big, sudden, out-of-the-blue event or piece of news. Simple interruptions can give us a momentary pause. Large ones can shake us to the core and reach deep to our foundation. In moments of great frustration or unexpected change, we can cry out, looking for an answer.

Fortunately, the Bible gives us the answer. When talking with His disciples just before a huge, earth shaking event was about to happen to them - His betrayal, trial, and subsequent death on the cross - Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." Isaiah 26:3 tells us the way to keep holding onto that peace is to keep our mind on God. Further, it says that God will keep us in perfect and constant peace when we focus on Him - who He is, His unfailing love, mercy, and grace, and the many ways He has already proven Himself faithful to us. Then, when we

focus on God, we will often find clarity for how to handle the unexpected interruption.

Want to start your day in peace today? Look to Jesus. Want to keep that peace throughout the day? Focus on God. Want to live out that peace with others? Work today to respond to God's promptings to bring His peace to those who need to hear the good news that true peace is found in God!

TODAY'S PRAYER

Father, Thank You that You didn't leave the way to find true and lasting peace a mystery to me. Your Word tells me that my peace is found in You! I know unexpected, surprising moments may come and disturb that peace. When that happens, Your word says You can be trusted and promise to be a place of refuge for me, so whenever the unexpected comes, may I look to You, call out to You, and run to You. Help me today to purposefully keep my mind on You so I may experience Your perfect and constant peace and cause others who see me to want Your peace in their lives, too. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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GREAT LESSONS – Day 53

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:2

THIS WE KNOW

SOME days, we’re just not “feeling it.” We wake up and feel a sense of general apathy toward others or even in our relationship with God. Fortunately for us, scripture tells us what to do when our emotions rebel against us or don’t let us feel anything at all. Romans 12:2 says, “Don’t be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but transformed by the renewing of our mind.” How do we do this? By knowing the Word of God, not just to be hearers only, but as James says, but to also do it. We have to know the truth found in God’s Word so that when these times come, we can remind ourselves of the truth, every day, every hour, every minute, until our heart follows suit.

This we know to be true: we have victory in Christ! When it seems there is no way, He is our way. When we remember this, we will see the enemy run, even if it feels like we are constantly in battle, and we will see the victory come because, thanks to Jesus, we already have the victory! No matter what your emotions say to you today, the love of God in Christ is unfailing and you can hold on to His love with all that you are. Hebrews 10 says to hold unswervingly to the hope you possess, because God is faithful. He is who He says He is.

Psalms 20 is a beautiful reminder of this truth. David writes: “This I know: The Lord gives victory to His anointed.” Those God has called, you and me, and all

who call on the name of the Lord, have received victory today in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Let our trust reflect the truth we believe.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Father, This I know: You are who You say You are – faithful and true, loving, redeeming, saving. You have given me victory in Christ, both now and forever. In the midst of brokenness on a sin-filled earth, hard circumstances, or an unknown future, let me remember that my life is secure in You and in Your promises. Thank You for Your promises and for showing me the truth in Your Word. I hold on to You today. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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GREAT LESSONS – Day 54

“For this is contained in Scripture: “Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a PRECIOUS CORNER stone, and he who believes in Him shall not be DISAPPOINTED.” This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, “The stone which the builders REJECTED, this became the very corner stone,” and, “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.” 1 Peter 2:6-8

UNWAIVERING TRUST: THE SEARCH BEGINS

I sensed something was different about this particular morning. Little did I realize that this day would open a whole new avenue of truth which would help shape my future in a way very few other things have ever done. As I was preparing my breakfast, I barely noticed the thought that floated quietly for the first time through my mind – “those who trust the Lord will not be disappointed.”

After everyone else left the house for the morning, the thought became a little stronger – “Those who trust in the Lord will not be disappointed!” All day long I found myself almost subconsciously quoting that phrase over and over – “Those who trust in the Lord will not be disappointed.” By the afternoon it was no longer simply a subconscious thought but a conscious one, and I realized something very unusual was happening. I recognized God was sharing with me something important that He wanted me to hear!

I began to search through my Bible until I found the passage from 1 Peter 2:6. At that point I was completely hooked, and I soon found myself in the middle of a full-

fledged Bible search. The King James said, “he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded,” but when I looked up that verse, I found the word translated *confounded* also meant *ashamed* or *disappointed*. The Lord was obviously dealing with me in the area of disappointment.

I would not have considered myself a person who wrestled with disappointment. However, over the next few days, the Lord began to show me that most Christians never find total victory in any area because at some point, they get disappointed. Even though they may never consciously realize it, deep down most disappointments are disappointments in God, subconsciously thinking God didn’t come through for them or that He let them down in some area. Any time disappointment is allowed in and we get offended with someone or something, we begin to stumble. Choosing not to be disappointed keeps us anchored in trust, and trust is the state of being that keeps us from stumbling.

TODAY’S PRAYER

Father, Thank You for revealing Your wisdom and lessons to us each day. I know that disappointments will happen. When they do, keep me from stumbling in disappointment. Instead, help me to choose to put my trust in You and remember that You can be trusted in every area of my life, even in my disappointments. Thank you for being completely trustworthy! In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

GREAT LESSONS – Day 55

"As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame." Romans 9:33

UNWAIVERING TRUST: IT STARTS WITH TRUST

TRUST in God takes in more than our eternal salvation. Godly trust starts with the new birth experience when we trust Him as our Savior. If we do not learn to trust God in every area of life, we will eventually become subconsciously disappointed in God and when that happens, the Rock becomes a Rock of stumbling. In other words, the Word becomes a stumbling block.

Having long been determined to guard myself from stumbling in my walk with God, I was ready to hear everything that He had to show me about disappointment. I found this truth about disappointment reiterated over and over: those who trust the Lord shall not be disappointed – *shall not stumble*. This truth is paraphrased throughout the Old and New Testament, and in several places it was a direct quote: those who trust in the Lord will not be disappointed. Very few promises are repeated this many times.

Trust and disappointment are exact opposites. Just as fear and faith cannot operate at the same time, trust and disappointment cannot operate at the same time. Those who trust (present tense) shall not be disappointed (future tense). This is a promise with a condition. If we trust and continue to trust (now), every single time we won't be disappointed (future).

It does not say that opportunities won't present themselves. Temptations to doubt the Lord will come. When those opportunities come, the ball is then in your court. The decision is yours, and it becomes your choice either to:

1. Fall for the opportunity to be disappointed or
2. Continue to trust God no matter what things look like at the moment, trusting that the time will come when you are truly not disappointed.

I have found this to be absolute truth. But, trusting is the prerequisite before we see the outcome.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, Your Word says You are completely trustworthy. I ask You for Your help so that I can develop a new level of trust in You for every area of my life. I want to trust You now for a future without disappointment. Thank You for this promise from Your Word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!

GREAT LESSONS – Day 56

"Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal Rock. " Isaiah 26:4

UNWAIVERING TRUST: YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEEL LIKE IT!

HOW can I know if I'm operating in trust? The Lord showed me that I should turn around and look at it from the opposite direction. If I found myself wallowing in feelings and disappointment, then I would know that I was not operating in trust. We try to make trust an emotion. We struggle and strive to try to muster up feelings of trust, yet that is not true trust! Trust, like faith, starts by simply making an irrevocable decision to believe God's Word, then reclining in His arms and leaving the rest to Him.

Saying something similar to this to the Lord – from your heart – when you really mean it, will change your life:

I'm trusting You, and I don't care what the situation looks like. Even if it looks like You didn't come through, or if there are negative reports, and no matter what my emotions are dictating, I have made up my mind that from this day forth, I am going to steadfastly trust what you have said. When feelings of disappointment try to crowd in, I will make that my warning signal, and I will stop and renew my choice to trust in You. Then, Lord, the rest is up to You.

TODAY'S PRAYER

Lord, Trust is a choice and Your Word tells me I can make that choice. I want to be obedient to do what You tell me to do. Help me not be moved by my feelings, but to make Your Word my final authority. I want to develop unwavering trust and want to rest in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Love the way Jesus loves!