

Abraham 7 “When God Weighs In” Genesis 18: 1-16

When Rabbai Kushner's 14 year old son died in 1997 it sent him on a journey to address the conundrum of why God seems to sit back and not intervene in the affairs of life. This resulted in his New York Times bestseller book '*When bad things happen to good People*'.

In this book Kushner says “**The problem with God** is really quite simple, there are only two reasons why God sits on his hands and does nothing and appears detached from the struggles and pain and suffering of this world – and they are these: (1) He is all loving but not all powerful; or (2) He is all powerful but not all loving.” And, as *Rabbi Kushner* considered these two options he chose option one.... That God is all loving but not all powerful. He cannot stop nor can he change life events, he is like a creator who sits separate from his creation and does not interfere with it – watches us commit mayhem, violence and is powerless to stop it. God is not in control nor is He sovereign so he is a kind of frustrated lover who wills and wants the best for us but does nothing to intervene indeed he is powerless to do so.

The Bible I read tells me Rabbai Kushner you are wrong. *God is in control, He does rule this world, he is not detached from world events, nor the events of your life, and He is sovereign and when He chooses to act he does so with surprising and sudden power.*

I want to sum up the first six messages in this series ... some of you might feel like you are getting the same message each week – but this is fundamental to your faith journey – get your thinking about this right and it will change your life.

*“When God makes a promise He will keep it, but He asks that we **wait his time** and **understand** that His ways are not ours. Our **foolish attempts** to scheme and manipulate life events to bring about His purposes often result in us living life with **unintended consequences**, that God will **not intervene** to stop. In our **brokenness and repentance** we find redemption as we turn again to God and release the possibility of Him ‘making good’ our pathways. Our role is to **watch** our choices and align them with godly principles, to **work** and offer ourselves to God and **wait** for*

*God's time to bring about what **He wants to do**. It is as we do this we discover in some mysterious way we walk into the **purposes of God**"*

A similar question to Kushner's is asked by Abraham and Sarah – where are you God? Why don't you act when you have promised to do so? How can you sit on your hands and seemingly do nothing? And in this chapter that great rhetorical question.... *"Is anything too hard for God?"*

- Is God in control of this world?
- Does he control the events of my life?
- How can He do so when he gives me the steering wheel and levers to play with?

Does God owe us an explanation for the way he runs this world? No he does not? Three things today - His plan is good, his purpose is clear and his programme is mysterious.....

1. God's Plan is Good – to give Abraham a land and a people – God asks Abram to **watch work and wait**....he asks the same of us. Did you know that God's plan for your life is a good plan? Is it so prescribed that I fear missing it? – no it is a plan which allows for your choice, reflects and respects you – but also has godly components in it that will challenge and fulfil you. The Bible speaks of 'good works' which God has purposed that we might walk in them.... God's desire is to give us a future and a hope. We don't always understand how this works, how can God give me a free choice yet have a plan for my life? Those two things seem on the face of it to be contradictory! Yet, talk to people who have walked with God – they will tell you there are moments when you know – you are in the centre of God's will...times also when you know you're not. Times when like Abram you have schemed your way – but you know the way home to the Father. God's plan for your life is good plan....

2. God's Purpose is Clear – to bless Abraham's family and descendants for all time – God **wants to bless your life also** – his intention is to do that. Purpose is something that is really close to my heart. Some years ago the book many of you have read became a best

seller – “*40 days of purpose!*” And what it did was to bring before people afresh the need for their lives to be purposeful....for people to know what those purposes are and live within the boundaries of those purposes. Purpose is different to plan because purpose means that I align my passions, gifting and skills to a specific goal which I believe God is asking of me. My life is going somewhere and I intentionally am steering it there. The greatest thing that spurs on personal spiritual growth is not what songs you sing – not how much money you give – but how well aligned your life’s purpose is.

Here’s a test for you – Go home today and write down what you believe the purpose of your life is.... Tell me in a few sentences – what your life purpose is (not vague but specific)...and what you are doing right now to fulfil and intentionally fulfil that. God’s purpose for Abram was that he become the father of a people and live in a land and he went there and stayed until it happened....and he waited.

3. God's Programme is Mysterious – to cause Abraham and Sarah in old age to bear a child – surprising and God like. God will move in mystery in your life also....sometimes the things we don’t understand – the times when Good appears to be absent – where are you God? The time of difficult experiences we face whether sickness, unemployment, financial strain, relationship breakdown, there is some mystery about the ways of God which we find hard to understand. These things either drive us closer to God or away from him.

And it is in the ups and downs of life where faith is tested.



Jesus loves me on the white keys ... bland, nice – ordinary Jesus loves me on the **black keys** ‘Sharps and flats’ in life bring out the colour, and growth.

It's the sharp and the flat things in our lives that shape and change us, they are the hard things that God uses, hard people, hard problems hard places where you find that **your extremity is God's opportunity**. A life that is lived in the blandness without sharps or flats is never tested; it's a spoiled life of ease. And the truth is into every life....some rain will fall.... Every life whether you're rich or poor, educated or not, whether you have faith or not; your life will be tested....

I think it was that wonderful Dutch saint **Corrie Ten Boom** – who hid Jews in her house during the height of the third Reich she and her sister Betsy were sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp where they held Bible studies – and they thanked God for the fleas – because they kept the guards away from their barracks and enabled them to endure hard times being the colours in her life tapestry.....in the poem she wrote.

Life is But a Weaving by Corrie Ten Boom (The Tapestry Poem)

My life is but a weaving Between my God and me.

I cannot choose the colors He weaveth steadily.

Oft' times He weaveth sorrow; And I in foolish pride

Forget He sees the upper And I the underside.

Not 'til the loom is silent And the shuttles cease to fly

Will God unroll the canvas And reveals the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful In the weaver's skilful hand

As the threads of gold and silver In the pattern He has planned

He knows, He loves, He cares; Nothing this truth can dim.

He gives the very best to those Who leave the choice to Him.

On one side it looks a mess, threads and colours all mixed, tassels hanging for here and there with no apparent pattern or design



... but on the other a beautiful picture is being sewn.



And when in our lives we see the underside – God looks from above with a perspective ‘not ours’ and reminds us ‘It looks OK from up here’ – and the very painful parts, where we wonder where is God – are the brightest colours where we truly undergo the greatest change of heart.

God’s plan is good, God’s purpose is clear, God’s programme is Mysterious...and these three are borne out well by this chapter.

Notice some things about this story

1. God comes to Abram in the **mundanity** of life.... Hot time of day...desert.
2. God comes in **disguise**.... He is not seen immediately.
3. God comes to do something **God like**... that is unmistakably God.
4. Abram – just **offers the best** of what he has – it’s yours!
5. Abram – **serves** his guests from under the trees...

6. God hears every 'sigh and every laugh' of our lives....

Is anything too hard for God? No – not when it's God's time and God's way. Hard people, hard places and hard problems....

So the question is not what I want to happen to this situation or this person? but what does God want to do? What is God doing? The focus is off us and onto God. Sometimes it looks like nothing is happening – just like for Abraham...years went by with no apparent answer. And then out of the blue on a day that started just like any other day... God weighs in and does a miracle. Have you got a hard person, hard place, or a hard problem this morning you're facing? From the side where you look today – the tapestry looks a maze of threads – God is weaving something, trust Him, trust His time, trust His ways....watch for what He is doing, work giving yourself and your best to God and wait for him to weigh in. ***Romans 4: 20-21***

God doesn't have problems only Plans! – Corrie Ten Boom