

Self-Sabotage & God's Gifts

Life sometimes gives us what we always longed for, prayed for, hoped for, and thought would never come to be. It almost feels too good to be true. We are given relationships, family, opportunities, jobs, education, titles, positions, and possessions. It's exactly what we had hoped for. We are truly given a small slice of heaven on earth.

And then, for whatever reason we self-sabotage. We tank the project. We ruin the relationship. We push away what we have been given. We do things that aren't consistent with our long-term goals, with what we say we've always wanted. We've been shooting for the moon, but then when we realized that we might actually get exactly what we dreamed of all these years; we quickly turn and shoot ourselves in the foot. Why? Do we feel we are undeserving and unworthy? Do we carry feelings of shame and guilt from our past actions that cause us to feel that we don't deserve these blessings? Do we fear being out of control? Rather than watch a miracle unfold would we rather grab the steering wheel of life and jerk it towards the ditch because at least then we have control of the situation? Do we feel like imposters? Do we envision everyone saying that we aren't deserving of this position, opportunity, status, or relationship if they really knew us? Is it easier to purposely fail than to really give it our all and realize that we can't hack it, that we don't have what it takes? Do we simply fear the unknown?

On top of all of these thoughts and feelings, what do we think God wants for our life? Do we think that God would never actually give us the things we truly long for deep down? Do we think about all of the ways we have failed and sinned and feel undeserving of those good things? Do we see God as someone whose is always keeping our dreams out of reach, pushing us down, off balance, and making us uncomfortable in life? Do we fear loving anything or anyone because God simply takes them away? Do we fear attaching or enjoying anything truly wonderful because in the background we see a God who won't let us have nice things? Do we see a boot about to drop on us?

In the book of Genesis, Abraham has two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael's mother is the slave woman Hagar who had no choice in the matter of being impregnated by Abraham. Isaac's mother is Sarah, Abraham's wife. Abraham is deeply distressed because his wife Sarah wants him to get rid of his other son, Ishmael and his mother Hagar. So, Abraham sends Ishmael and Hagar into the desert with meager provisions. They would have died without God intervening. Now, Abraham has only one son left who he loves deeply. But, it seems God wants him to offer up his only son who he longed for all those years, his miracle child. Two sons offered up in the desert.

Read the story of Abraham and Isaac. Genesis 22:1-14

3-5 minutes: Find yourself in the picture. What is this picture showing you about yourself? What was it that you thought you had to give up, or couldn't have? How have you been unable to imagine what God's good gifts and deliverance might look like? What is this picture showing you about God?

Open Reflections: Share about your experience of listening to God through this picture.

The Angel Preventing Abraham from Sacrificing His Son, Isaac. Rembrandt van Rijn circa 1634-1635. British Museum, London.