



**GENESIS**  
*Grace from the Beginning*

**14/15 April 2018**  
Vol. 40, No. 14

## Understanding Promises and “Unanswered” Prayers

*Genesis 21:1-7*

### **English Services**

*(8 & 10:30 a.m., & 5:30 p.m.)*

Prelude  
Call to Worship  
Worship through Praise  
Worship through Fellowship  
Worship through Giving  
Testimony  
Scripture Reading  
Anthem  
Worship in the Word  
*Pastor Larry Pabiona*  
Benediction

### **Filipino Service**

*(3 n.h.)*

Paghahanda  
Tawag sa Pagsamba  
Pagsamba sa Pag-awit  
Pagkilala sa mga Bisita  
Pagsamba sa Pagbibigay  
Patotoo  
Pagbasa ng Salita ng Diyos  
Natatanging Bilang  
Pakikinig sa Salita ng Diyos  
*Pastor Jojun Loanzon*  
Pangwakas na Panalangin  
at Basbas

*See inset inside for the **Traditional Service (Sat., 6 p.m.)** program.*



# Understanding Promises and “Unanswered” Prayers

Today's Message (14/15 April 2018) /  
*Genesis 21:1-7*

IT PAYS  
THEREFORE  
TO REMEMBER  
THAT WHILE  
GOD SOMETIMES  
DOESN'T SHOW  
UP EARLY, HE  
IS NEVER, EVER  
LATE.

Keeping a promise after 25 years is almost unbearable for us to imagine, much less actually go through. But when God finally allows the medically impossible to occur, you realize that the One who made the stars and the skies can bend the laws of nature whenever He wants, just to keep His word.

We often struggle with understanding God's promises, and in relation to that, seemingly unanswered prayers. But God is much more gracious, loving, giving, and protective of His children than we realize. Even Abraham and Sarah struggled badly awaiting the fulfillment of His promise. They probably sent numerous prayers to heaven for the promised son. But when he finally arrived, all the painful waiting and errors done while awaiting, seem suddenly forgotten in one glorious moment.

Let us learn again about the character of God and the ways of our God in this narrative:

## 1. GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS PROMISES, THOUGH NOT ALWAYS IN THE WAY AND TIME WE EXPECT (VV. 1-2).

- Note the redundancies in verse 1: “as He had said,” and “the LORD did... what He had promised.” These are intentional. The Lord inspired the Biblical writer (Moses) to write this way, for us to realize that this is all in keeping with the unwavering faithfulness of God: “the LORD was gracious to Sarah.”

He **always** keeps His promises, and will change or bend the laws of nature if need be, and move heaven and earth if need be, but He will keep His word. His graciousness isn't limited to Sarah—you are no less precious to Him.

- Not only does God always honor His promises, but He has a specific, unalterable time table to do so (verse 2, “at the very time God had promised”).

We often struggle with God's timing, because we are time-bound creatures trying to understand an eternal Being who sits above the circle of time, for

### Traditional Service

*(Saturday, 6 p.m.)*

Prelude  
Call to Worship  
Worship through Praise  
Worship through Giving  
Worship in Music  
Doxology  
Worship through Fellowship  
Scripture Reading  
Preparatory Hymn  
Worship in the Word  
*Pastor Larry Pabiona*  
Response Hymn  
Benediction

*There will be no Traditional Service on **May 12, 2018.** Please be guided accordingly.*



# Understanding Promises and “Unanswered” Prayers

Today's Message (14/15 April 2018) /  
*Genesis 21:1-7*

whom time is no master, but a servant to His will. It pays therefore to remember that while God sometimes doesn't show up early, He is never, ever late.

## 2. GOD'S PROMISES OFTEN REQUIRE OUR COOPERATION AND OBEDIENCE FOR THE PROMISES TO BECOME BLESSINGS (VV. 3-4).

- Abraham had been given two specific commands a year prior to the birth of his son: to name his son Isaac (*Genesis 17:19*), and to circumcise every male in his household (*Genesis 17:10-12*) as a sign of being God's covenant people.

Failure to comply would have been an act of rebellion to God, and the only thing certain in that case is the judgment of God. The blessing would have become a curse without the requisite obedience.

- Similarly, there are times when God answers our prayers but also mandates our cooperation. Make sure that you do your part so that what is requested or expected turns out to be a blessing, and not otherwise.

## 3. GOD'S PROMISES, WHEN FULFILLED, MORE THAN MAKE UP FOR THE YEARS AND TEARS OF THE PAST (VV. 5-7).

- Years of pain, 25 at least, and tears along the way were forgotten in the joy of one moment.

It is said that placing a newborn infant into its mother's waiting arms is more effective at pain relief than any postpartum anesthesia. Nothing matters more than the gift of life snuggled on its mother's breast. Multiply that by 25 years of waiting, and you get a picture of Abraham and Sarah's joy: "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me."

- Mistakes were made along the way, driven by impatience or wavering faith—Hagar and Ishmael, both Abraham and Sarah laughing in amusement rather than the joy of belief. Yet in the very same event, we see how patient God can be with his fragile and often faltering children, when He shows us He never gives up on them when He could or should. Praise God for that!

## FINAL THOUGHTS

May this picture of God's graciousness, faithfulness, and patience remind you that when waiting for God's time seems too long, the wait is always worth it. And when God honors His promise, obedience guarantees the blessing.

When you feel your strength to wait for God's time is running low, then ask help from the One who "knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust" (*Psalms 103:14*). Ask Him to renew your strength because "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak... those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (*Isaiah 40:29-31*) ■

When we talk about Mission with a capital 'M', we are referring to the Mission of God. On the other hand, small-m *missions* refer to the activities of the church that contribute to the Mission of God. God is on a Mission and He has revealed this Mission to us through the Bible. He is at work from the beginning in Genesis, to the climax of the crucifixion, and even to the end as the Mission is consummated in the book of Revelation. As a local church here in Ortigas Center, we praise God for the privilege to be invited as participants in what He is doing. Through our mission activities we do our small part in the grand narrative of redemption from creation to new creation.

## OIKOS MOVEMENT

One of the key things that we have been emphasizing in our activities as a church is the intentional reaching out to our *oikos* (personal communities). We are praying that our church will start a movement of each one reaching one from his or her *oikos*. In the previous months, we have had three consecutive Sundays of Oikos training where we learn together about praying for our *oikos*, relating to them, inviting them, sharing to them, and discipling them as well. Almost 400 people attended the trainings where we used meta-cards that they can use also to train others. In relation to this, almost 700 sets of Oikos meta-cards were distributed in the past weeks.

Our desire is that many more will be trained to reach their *oikos*. Please let us know if you would like to be trained and mentored. If you are part of a Growth Group please let us know also so that a facilitator can visit your GG and share the material. If you have been journeying with your *oikos* please let us know how we can pray for you by emailing us your story at [oikos@gcf.org.ph](mailto:oikos@gcf.org.ph).

## MCARE

Along with the Oikos movement our church also desires that we actively participate in God's Mission by caring for missionaries. If you're in a Growth Group, you may already have been visited by an MCare member. For the next few Missions Sundays, you will also be hearing testimonies on MCare. Through these testimonies, we will be introducing to you what MCare is. As you hear these stories, please pray about how God can use you and/or your Growth Group in His mission through missionary care. If you are interested, please let us know by filling out the cards inserted in your bulletin. You may leave filled-out tear-offs at the booth downstairs after the service.

## HARVEST MISSION TRIP

Another way that we, as a church, can participate in the Mission of God is by learning more about what He is doing outside of our own comfort zones. That is what our Harvest team will be doing as they go to Japan this June 27 to July 10. They will be going there to assist in the ministry of Ken Taylor, one of our supported missionaries. As they go there, we as a church can also learn more about being a more effective sending church by intentionally partnering with them. We can be involved in what they will be doing first of all through prayer. We encourage you and your Growth Groups to get to know them and pray for them. You may also invite them to visit your group so they can share about their Wetfoot journey to Japan. If you want to partner with them, or you want more information, please call or text 0921 024 4782, or e-mail them at [gcf.harvest@gmail.com](mailto:gcf.harvest@gmail.com). Hopefully as they go there, we together can make a small contribution to what the Lord is doing here beyond the borders of our country ■

# Ablaze Devotional

**“Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”**  
- Mark 1:2,3 (ESV)

## GCF PRAYER GATHERINGS AT THE CHAPEL:

**The GCF Hour of Prayer**  
*Tuesdays, 6-7 a.m.*

**Midweek Prayer Service**  
*Wednesdays, 7-8:30 p.m.*

In the creation narrative, we see the beginning of the world and of humanity. We see how God spoke everything into being out of chaos and emptiness. Out of these, God created an orderly, harmonious, and self-sustaining world. Every created living and non-living thing called forth by His voice. And from the ground, He created humans bearing His image. This story establishes our place and role on earth. From chaos to order, from emptiness to fruitfulness, we bear God’s image to nurture and multiply what He deemed very good. We are to continue what God called into being and what He called good.

But we know what happened after a few verses. Humanity went amiss, and went on living from the narrative of creation and sustenance to a life of rebellion and destruction. It seemed that they are reverting back to chaos and emptiness. But God continues to speak amid our chaos. Whenever humanity chooses to rebel, God’s presence hovers over their troubles, speaking order and harmony to it. God is not just our Creator, but He is also our Redeemer. When man and woman hid from the Lord, He asked, “Where are you?” And that image of God seeking His image-bearers rings true throughout Scripture.

Creation and redemption continues whenever the the story is told and lived again. From Israel’s sojourning in the wilderness, from Jews exiled into Babylon, God as Creator and Redeemer provides a living hope to God’s chosen.

The gospel narrated in Mark paints a picture of a voice speaking in the wilderness—the chaos and emptiness of human life. “Something is about to happen! Prepare the way of the Lord!” it cries. God is about to create something new. His redemption is here.

May our prayers be filled with joyful anticipation of God’s creative and redemptive work ■

## Ministry Opportunities + Other Announcements

### S.H.E. PHOTOWALK FELLOWSHIP

*S.H.E. is a ministry for God’s single women*  
April 21 (Sat.), at the Pintô Art Museum  
Time: 7 a.m. to 12 nn. | Entrance fee: PhP 200.00  
Contact **0917 532 7794** to register/for more info

### TO-DO: MANAGING LIFE PRIORITIES

*YA Talk 2, presented by the Young Adults Ministry and featuring Kuya Aleks Tan*  
May 5 (Sat.), at the 4/F Assembly Area  
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.; **Everyone** is welcome  
Contact **0917 532 7741** to register/for more info

### SHIPWRECKED: RESCUED BY JESUS

*GCF Daily Vacation Bible School (DVBS) 2018*  
May 28 to June 2 (Mon.-Sat.), 8 a.m. to 12 noon  
here at GCF | **For kids ages 3-12**  
Registration is online: <https://vbspro.events/p/events/dvbsshipwrecked2018>

### CAMP LIVE: VERIFIED

*Youth camps for high school and college students*  
at the Batangas Country Club  
HS: May 31-June 3 | College: July 19-22  
For more details, please visit the Youth L.I.V.E.  
Camp booth at the lobby.

### STEWARDSHIP REPORT:

*April 2018*

	March Budget	Received, Apr. 1-11
General	7,659,315	2,949,550
Missions	927,000	342,685
	Jan. - Apr. Budget	Received, Jan. - Apr.
General	36,611,426	24,195,554
Missions	3,708,000	2,961,593

### Flower Ministry

*The flowers this week are given with praise and thanksgiving to our loving God by an anonymous donor and the Messiah College. The flowers are also given in loving memory of Joseph Mari Tomas.*

Please call 632 1354 to 56 for inquiries on how to participate in this ministry.





**This May 2018,  
know what it means  
to love God  
with your  
total self.**

**Who are Rev. Edmund  
and Ann Chan?**

The husband and wife team of Edmund and Ann founded and currently lead the Global Alliance of Intentional Disciple-Making Churches (IDMC), which is based in Singapore. This alliance champions best practices in intentional disciple-making.

**Unlock  
the door to  
abundant living  
promised by  
Christ.**

This coming May 11 and 12, join us in learning the wonderful journey towards the foundation of discipleship—love for God.

As part of our year-long 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, we invited Rev. Edmund and Ann Chan to be speakers in **Loving God: A Discipleship Conference.**

We believe that foundational to our discipleship journey, and to the full life Jesus promised, is our own love for God, and Edmund and Ann will talk about loving God with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength. They have commendably served their

local church in Singapore, and has blessed the global church, including GCF in the past years, with their experience and wisdom, and will do so again in this upcoming conference.

**Conference Dates:**

May 11, Friday (6:00 to 9:00 p.m.) to  
May 12, Saturday (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.)

**Ticket Prices:**

800.00 pesos (live, in-person)  
400.00 pesos (live, video feed only)  
*Lunch is **not** included.*

**Only limited seats are available, and we encourage GCFers to avail of the Auditorium B seats (live, in-person). Please get your tickets as soon as possible—first come, first served! Don't miss this rare opportunity!**



*A Discipleship Conference*

# How may we SERVE YOU BETTER?

Fill-out this tear off form and drop it in an offering bag/box or at the Ministry Information Booth. Please check all that is applicable:

- ☐ I am a first-time guest.
- ☐ I prayed to receive Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord today.
- ☐ I would like to know how to become a Christian.
- ☐ I am interested in becoming a member of this church.
- ☐ **I want to join a Growth Group.**  
(Specify age group: \_\_\_\_\_)  
(Specify group composition: \_\_\_\_\_)
- ☐ I want to start a Growth Group.
- ☐ I want to host a Growth Group.

Please share with us some information about yourself:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_ Landline no.: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile no.: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Year of membership: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Growth Group (if you already have one): \_\_\_\_\_

*Today is **14/15 April 2018**, and I attended the 8 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 3:00 p.m., 5:30 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. (Sat) (encircle the time).*

Write below *any* inquiry or prayer item that you want to ask or share.

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For hospital or house visitation, dedication service, or funeral service requests, please call or text 0917 532 7794.

# God's Way to Heaven

## THE GOSPEL

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."  
(1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

## THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD

**God is holy and righteous:** "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). **He requires holiness of us as well:** "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

## THE TRUTH ABOUT MAN

**Man is sinful:** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).  
**Sin demands a penalty:** "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

## THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRIST

**Christ is the expression of God's love for us:** "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). **Christ paid the penalty of our sins and died for sinners:** "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (1 Peter 3:18). **Through Christ, God offers man reconciliation:** "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:18).

## WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

**Believe and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior:** "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

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**PRAYER:** Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I believe that you died on the cross in my place, to save me from my sins, and I accept you as my Savior, and the Master of my life forever. Amen.

## Need someone to talk to?

Visit the Emmaus Road Counseling Center at the GCF Mezzanine floor or contact 632 1354 to 56, 635 0078 to 80 or 0917 532 7794 for inquiries.