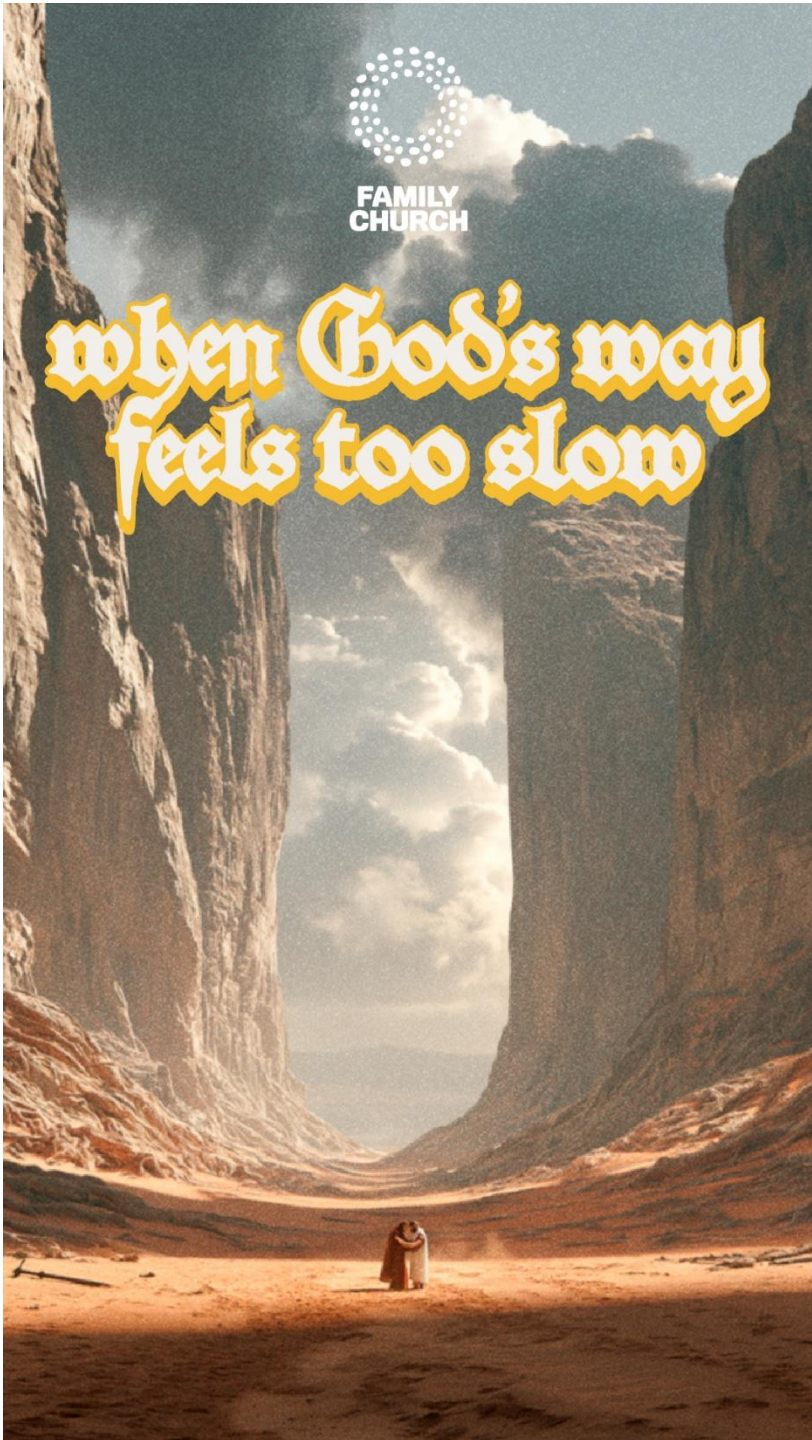




FAMILY
CHURCH

when God's way feels too slow



When God's Way Feels Too Slow

**Trusting His Timing When You're Tempted to
Take Control**

Introduction

The Dangerous Space Between Promise and Fulfillment

Some of the most difficult moments of faith come after God has given enough reason to trust Him but before life gives any evidence that everything is going to work out.

It is one thing to believe that God is faithful when the answer has arrived. It is another to believe He is faithful while the prayer remains unanswered, the situation appears to be moving in the wrong direction, and time continues passing without explanation.

That space between promise and fulfillment can become dangerous.

Not because God has stopped working, but because waiting has a way of exposing what is happening inside the human heart. Eventually, the temptation arises to move from trusting God to trying to manage the outcome ourselves.

That is what makes the story of Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau so painfully relevant.

Their family carried an extraordinary promise from God. Abraham had been told that God would make a great nation from his descendants and that through his family the nations of the earth would ultimately be blessed. Isaac was the miracle son through whom that covenant promise continued.

Then Isaac married Rebekah.

Their story began beautifully. Rebekah had demonstrated courage, generosity, initiative, and remarkable faith. When asked whether she would leave everything familiar and travel to marry Isaac, her answer was wonderfully simple: "I will go" (Genesis 24:58, CSB).

Yet faith demonstrated yesterday does not eliminate the need for faith tomorrow.

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Isaac and Rebekah soon encountered something painfully familiar to Abraham and Sarah: they could see God's promise, but they could not see how it would be fulfilled.

Rebekah was childless.

Isaac prayed.

And eventually God answered.

“Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The LORD was receptive to his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived.”

—*Genesis 25:21, CSB*

But the answer brought another question.

Two children struggled within Rebekah, and she went to God asking why. God revealed that she was carrying twins and that something unexpected would happen through them: “the older will serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23, CSB).

God had revealed where the story was going.

He had not revealed every step He would take to get there.

And that distinction would change everything.

God often gives enough light to trust Him without giving enough information to control the outcome.

Chapter 1

When Knowing God's Promise Is Not Enough

Rebekah knew something about her sons that they did not yet know about themselves.

Before Jacob and Esau could speak, walk, hunt, cook, deceive, succeed, or fail, God had already spoken concerning their future.

The younger son, Jacob, would occupy the unexpected place in God's unfolding purposes.

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Rebekah knew that.

But knowing God's promise did not mean understanding God's process.

Years passed.

Esau became a hunter and his father's favorite. Jacob was quieter and remained closer to home, becoming his mother's favorite.

Genesis describes the fracture with remarkable simplicity:

“Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.”

—*Genesis 25:28, CSB*

Those few words reveal a household quietly dividing into teams.

Dad had his son.

Mom had hers.

And the children were growing up breathing that atmosphere.

Then time added pressure.

Decades passed after Rebekah had received God's word concerning Jacob and Esau. Esau made choices that brought grief into the family. Isaac grew old, his eyesight deteriorated, and eventually he called Esau to prepare a meal so that he could give him his blessing.

Rebekah overheard the conversation.

Suddenly everything she had been carrying collided in one moment.

She remembered what God had said.

She saw Isaac moving toward Esau.

She saw her husband growing older.

She knew the history of Esau's choices.

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And she could have concluded that unless she acted immediately, what God had promised might never happen.

That is the moment when faith is tested most severely.

Not when someone stops believing that God exists, but when someone still believes in God while quietly becoming convinced that God needs help.

The temptation sounds remarkably reasonable:

Something has to be done.

Sometimes something does need to be done. Biblical faith is not passivity. Obedience often requires courageous action.

But there is a line faith must never cross.

God never requires disobedience in order to accomplish His will.

Rebekah crossed that line.

She knew the promise, but she stopped trusting the process.

Chapter 2

The Illusion of the Shortcut

Rebekah constructed an elaborate plan.

Jacob would prepare to impersonate Esau. He would wear his brother's clothes. Goat skins would disguise his smooth skin. Food would be prepared the way Isaac liked it.

Jacob entered his nearly blind father's room pretending to be his brother.

Isaac became suspicious.

The voice sounded like Jacob.

But the clothing smelled like Esau.

The hands felt hairy like Esau.

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When Isaac asked his identity, Jacob lied.

When Isaac wondered how he had obtained the food so quickly, Jacob went even further and brought God into the deception.

One compromise required another.

That is one of the hidden dangers of shortcuts. The first compromise rarely remains alone. It often creates circumstances requiring another compromise to protect the first.

Eventually Isaac blessed Jacob.

The plan worked.

At least it appeared to.

Jacob received what Rebekah wanted him to receive.

And that is what makes shortcuts so deceptive: sometimes they work.

The door opens.

The person agrees.

The deal closes.

The desired outcome arrives.

For a moment, manipulation can look remarkably similar to success.

But obtaining the desired outcome does not necessarily mean the method was right.

God had already announced His purpose concerning Jacob. The promise did not need goat skins. It did not need deception. It did not need manipulation.

It needed trust.

This principle reaches far beyond Rebekah's family.

There are moments when dishonesty seems faster than integrity. Manipulation appears more effective than prayer. Control feels

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safer than surrender. Forcing an opportunity appears wiser than waiting for God to open the right door.

But God's purposes never require the surrender of godly character.

A shortcut that requires disobedience is never God's path forward.

Proverbs expresses the principle simply:

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight.”

—Proverbs 3:5–6, CSB

Trust does not mean understanding every turn in the road.

Trust means refusing to leave God's way simply because another road appears faster.

Chapter 3

The Hidden Price of Taking Control

Shortcuts usually advertise their benefits before revealing their costs.

Rebekah's plan succeeded in obtaining Isaac's blessing for Jacob.

Then the bill arrived.

Esau discovered what had happened and was devastated. His grief became anger, and his anger became a desire to kill Jacob.

Isaac had been deceived.

Esau was furious.

Jacob became afraid.

Rebekah's family fractured.

Trying to protect Jacob, Rebekah sent him away to stay with her brother Laban. She expected the separation to be temporary.

Instead, Jacob remained away for roughly twenty years.

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Scripture never records another meeting between Rebekah and the son she loved so deeply.

There is painful irony in that outcome.

Rebekah attempted to control circumstances because she was afraid of losing what God had promised. Her attempt to secure Jacob's future contributed to losing his presence in her own life.

Sometimes the thing people grasp most tightly is the very thing their grasping pushes farther away.

Jacob then entered another household characterized by manipulation. The deceiver discovered what it felt like to be deceived. He worked seven years expecting to marry Rachel, only to discover that Laban had substituted Leah.

The patterns continued.

Favoritism.

Competition.

Manipulation.

Resentment.

Deception.

What happened in one generation did not remain neatly contained there.

This is why Scripture's portrayal of family life is so valuable. The Bible does not sanitize its families. It shows homes filled with extraordinary faith and extraordinary dysfunction, sometimes within the same people.

The message is not that faithful families are perfect families.

It is that choices create atmospheres, and atmospheres influence generations.

Parents teach even when they are not speaking.

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Children notice how disappointment is handled. They observe how spouses speak to one another. They learn what happens when conflict enters the room. They discover whether anxiety produces prayer or panic, whether mistakes produce grace or shame, whether success produces gratitude or pride.

A home is always teaching something.

The question is what.

The atmosphere repeatedly created in a home can become the emotional language the next generation learns to speak.

That does not mean anyone is destined to repeat the dysfunction of previous generations. Grace can interrupt patterns that have existed for decades.

A family history can explain where someone came from without determining where that person must go.

Through Christ, a new pattern can begin.

Chapter 4

God Is Still Faithful in the Mess

If Genesis were primarily a story about exceptionally good people accomplishing God's plan, much of the book would be confusing.

Its families are far too complicated for that.

Abraham failed.

Sarah became impatient.

Isaac played favorites.

Rebekah manipulated.

Jacob deceived.

Esau despised his birthright.

Laban manipulated Jacob.

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Yet through all those twists, God's promise kept moving.

That does not make the sin insignificant. The consequences were painful and real. God's sovereignty never transforms disobedience into obedience.

But human failure did not make God unfaithful.

After Jacob fled from home, God met him.

Jacob was not standing at the high point of his life. He was running from the consequences of a broken family and his own deception.

And God spoke:

"Look, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

—*Genesis 28:15, CSB*

Notice where the emphasis falls.

I am with you.

I will watch over you.

I will bring you back.

I will not leave you.

I have promised you.

Jacob's future ultimately rested on God's faithfulness rather than Jacob's cleverness.

That is extraordinarily good news for anyone who has ever taken the wrong road.

There are consequences to wrong choices, but a wrong turn does not place someone beyond the reach of God's grace.

There may be a marriage carrying the consequences of years of unhealthy patterns.

There may be a relationship damaged by control.

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There may be a child who watched things a parent wishes could be erased.

There may be a decision that seemed wise at the time but now looks painfully foolish.

The gospel does not offer a time machine.

It offers something better.

Grace.

God can meet people on roads they never should have taken and begin leading them toward Himself.

God's faithfulness is greater than the detours created by human failure.

Chapter 5

Surrender the Outcome

The deepest issue in this family was not merely deception.

It was control.

Control grows from the belief that peace will come when circumstances finally cooperate.

When the child changes.

When the relationship improves.

When the opportunity arrives.

When the money appears.

When the prayer is answered.

When the future becomes clear.

But if peace depends upon controlling the outcome, peace will always remain fragile.

Biblical trust offers another way.

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“Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.”

—Psalm 37:5, CSB

There are things that belong to human responsibility.

Truthfulness belongs to human responsibility.

Obedience belongs to human responsibility.

Prayer belongs to human responsibility.

Wisdom belongs to human responsibility.

Love belongs to human responsibility.

But outcomes ultimately belong to God.

Much anxiety grows when people attempt to assume responsibility for both.

There is enormous freedom in learning to say:

God's way will be followed even without knowing how this ends.

That is not resignation.

It is surrender.

Surrender does not mean caring less. It means trusting more.

It means raising children faithfully without attempting to control every decision they will someday make.

It means working diligently without believing an entire future depends upon personal performance.

It means speaking truth without manipulating another person's response.

It means praying boldly while allowing God to choose the timetable.

It means refusing to sin even when compromise appears to offer the desired result.

Faith does not require knowing what God will do next. Faith requires trusting Him enough to obey while the outcome remains unknown.

Chapter 6

Jesus Never Took the Shortcut

The story of Jacob's family eventually moves far beyond Jacob.

Jacob would have sons.

From his son Judah would come a family line that eventually led to David.

And ultimately, through that line came Jesus Christ.

Generation after generation, through faithfulness and failure, triumph and dysfunction, God's redemptive purpose continued moving forward.

Then, at exactly the right moment, Christ came.

“When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

—Galatians 4:4–5, CSB

When the time came to completion.

Not early.

Not late.

God's timing had not failed.

And Jesus demonstrated the trust humanity repeatedly fails to demonstrate.

When tempted in the wilderness, He refused the shortcut.

When obedience became costly, He remained faithful.

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When the cross stood before Him, He surrendered Himself to the Father's will.

Where human beings grasp for control, Jesus trusted the Father.

Where human beings compromise to protect themselves, Jesus obeyed.

Where human beings take shortcuts around suffering, Jesus walked faithfully through suffering to accomplish redemption.

That means the message of Rebekah's story cannot simply be, *Try harder to be patient*.

The gospel offers far more than better behavior.

There is grace for people who became impatient.

Grace for those who manipulated.

Grace for parents who created an atmosphere they now regret.

Grace for people who took the shortcut.

Grace for people who made life more difficult through their own choices.

Jesus died and rose again not merely to forgive the past, but to create a different future.

The pattern can change.

Control can become surrender.

Manipulation can become trust.

Favoritism can become grace.

Fear can become faith.

Impatience can become dependence.

And the person who has spent years trying to control everything can finally release what was never theirs to carry.

Conclusion

Let God Be God

There will always be a temptation to believe that God's way is taking too long.

Waiting can make obedience feel inefficient.

Silence can make manipulation feel necessary.

Uncertainty can make control feel responsible.

But the story of Genesis offers a better perspective.

God does not lose His way when people lose theirs.

His purposes are not dependent upon human cleverness.

His promises do not require sinful shortcuts.

And His grace is not exhausted by human failure.

The great question, then, is not simply, "What does God want?"

Sometimes that is already known.

The harder question is:

"Will God be trusted to accomplish what He wants in His way and in His time?"

That question reaches into marriages, parenting, careers, finances, relationships, dreams, unanswered prayers, and uncertain futures.

Perhaps the next faithful step is not to make something happen.

Perhaps it is to pray.

To obey.

To tell the truth.

To release control.

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To remain faithful while God works beyond what can presently be seen.

Isaiah gives this invitation:

“But those who trust in the LORD will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not faint.”

—Isaiah 40:31, CSB

God's way may sometimes feel slower.

But the shortcut is rarely shorter once its consequences are included.

And when past shortcuts have already created a complicated road, the answer is not despair. The God who remained faithful to His purposes through the brokenness of Genesis remains the God of grace today.

Jesus is still able to redeem what human beings have complicated.

So release the timetable.

Release the outcome.

Release the need to know exactly how everything will work.

Then take the next obedient step.

God never needed the manipulation. He never needed the shortcut. He never needed the lie. He was always capable of keeping His promise.

And He still is.

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