



## The Nourishing Vocation Project Near and Now:

*Values: What are they, and why do they matter?  
Sarah*

### Warm-up Question

*When have you experienced a joyful surprise?*



[Laughing old woman](#) by [Andreas Stephan](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

### Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

## Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?

Read [Genesis 18:1-15: 21:1-7](#)

### Bible Story Reflection

*Any consideration of the biblical stories of miraculous birth must keep in mind the tender implications for people who face the challenges of infertility. Holding space for this personal pain while engaging with the themes of these stories is essential.*

Of course, Sarah laughed. How could she not? She is old. Years and years have passed since God promised that she and Abraham would have as many descendants as there are stars in the sky. It had to have seemed that perhaps God had changed God's mind. But then YHWH comes with news of a son, and the thought that she will be a mother at her age, doubles her over in laughter – laughter of both absurdity and joy.

Sarah is the first in a company of women in the Bible through whom God's miraculous promises are fulfilled in childbirth. Sarah is old, and yet she bears Isaac. Rachel is unable to have children and then both Joseph and Benjamin are born. Hannah agonizes over her inability to conceive, and then as God promised, she gives birth to Samuel. Elizabeth is well-advanced in years, and yet she becomes the mother of John the Baptist, and Mary, a young, unwed woman, becomes the mother of Jesus.

As the first in these powerful stories of women bearing God's promises – both literally and metaphorically – this part of Sarah's story reminds us that God values God's promises. When God makes a promise, God is true to His word.

Sometimes, amid the challenges and difficulties of life, it can be hard to see how God is working toward the fulfillment of all that God has promised, especially when it feels like our values are compromised. We can be tempted to put our trust in ourselves and value our own abilities over God's. There are other parts of Sarah's story that reveal that she too had a hard time trusting God, and like us, Sarah sometimes put more stake in herself than in God. This part of her story, however, is an invitation for us to seek God's guidance amid our own unique callings to value what God values and trust God's word for our lives.



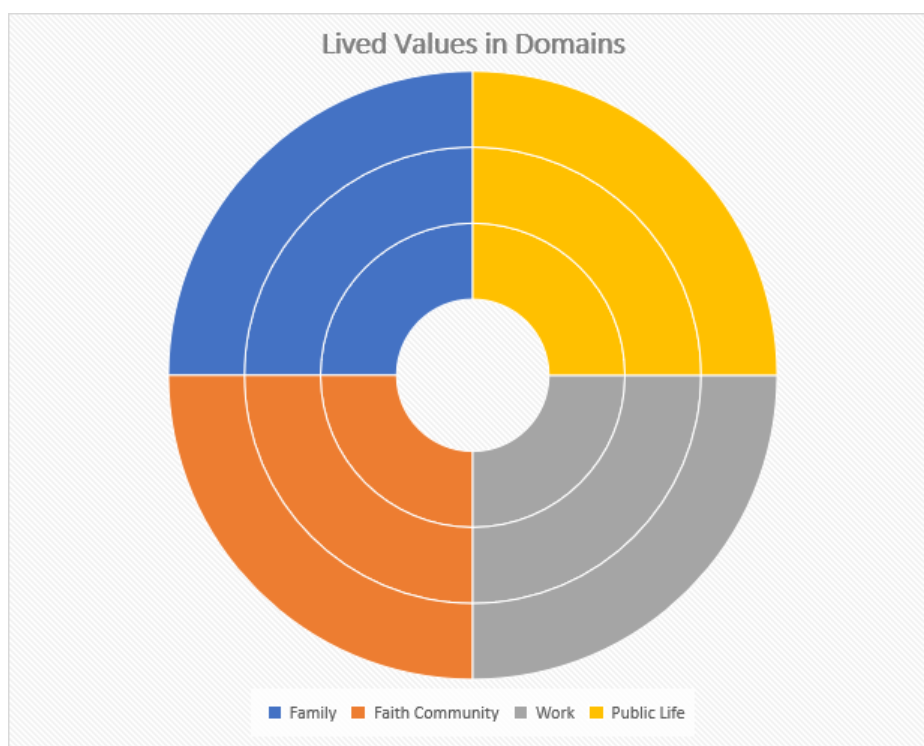
## Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you identify with Sarah?
2. Talk about a time it was hard for you to trust God's promises for you.
3. Talk about a time when you felt like your values were compromised. What did you do?
4. How do you think Sarah would tell her own story?
5. When have you felt like exclaiming, "is anything too wonderful for the Lord?"
6. What makes it difficult for us to value what God values?
7. How can we live lives that value what God values?
8. What does it mean for you that God keeps God's promises?

## Activity Suggestions

Create a collage from magazine clippings of both words and images that represent your values.

If you have not already done so, make a comprehensive list of values. Choose your top 20, then top 10, and finally to rank your top five values. Place your top five values in the domains below. The more actively a value influences a domain, the closer it will be to the center.



Create a deck of “values cards” by writing one value on each card. Place the cards face down in the center of the group. Taking turns, each person describes a challenging personal experience. After the experience is described, draw the top card in the deck. Discuss the impact of that value on the circumstance described. Continue until each person has had a turn.

### **Prayer Concerns**

Those struggling with infertility, those whose values are compromised by circumstance, those facing unfulfilled dreams of any kind

### **Closing Prayer**

Guide me to value what you value, O God, and to trust in your Word for me. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

