



Sarah and Hagar

Unusual Women in the Bible Zoom Bible Study

May 24, 2022

What do we know about Hagar?

She was an Egyptian girl who was a slave in the household of Sarai. She may have been acquired as part of the generous price paid to Abram by Pharaoh in Egypt.

Hagar is now forced to become a surrogate mother.

Genesis 16:4 – 6

When she (Hagar) knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.”

“Your slave is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

Do you think Sarai informed her that if she bore a son, it would be her son? Did Hagar understand this arrangement?

And Abram’s comment “Do with her whatever you think best”—what does that tell you about Abram?

Why is Sarai shifting the blame of this to Abram? Do you think she is accusing Abram of treating Hagar too kindly, too lovingly?

Hagar “despises her mistress.” What do you think that looked like? Sarai got what she wanted—a child to be born by Hagar that would be her son—her’s and Abram’s—so they could produce the great nation God had promised.

Neither woman is willing to admit her mistake and reconcile and make the best of it.

Romans 12:16, 18:

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

All three people in this sordid situation bear some blame. There’s plenty of blame to go around.

When will we learn this truth—trusting God is always the right thing to do? Trying to do God’s job is always disastrous. There’s only one God and it’s not you and me!

Imagine what would have been the outcome of this sordid mess if instead of Hagar despising Sarai and Sarai treating her badly and demanding she be sent away, they had simply agreed to make the best of this situation. How could that have changed the outcome?

“Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.” (Genesis 16:6b). She decides that she can no longer endure Sarai and her mistreatment, so she runs away.

What are your feelings toward Hagar? Can you imagine that you might have made the same decision in her place?

Genesis 16:7 – 16

The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered.

Then the angel of the Lord told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.” The angel added, “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.”

The angel of the Lord also said to her: “You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.”

She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.” That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered. So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

If you’ve ever felt abandoned, alone, on your own, you can empathize with Hagar. But she was not abandoned. God sent an angel to her.

“She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.” (Genesis 16:13)

Hagar gives God a name: “El Roi,” the God who sees. God saw her, and then she sees God! Now life truly changes for Hagar. She is not alone; she is not abandoned. God is on her side. HE SEES HER!

Do you know that God sees you? Do you believe that he never takes his eyes off you?

Psalm 34:15: *The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry.*

1 Peter 3:12: *For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.*

We have a seeking God! We may think that we found him, but the reality is, he found us.

Luke 19:10: *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

Jesus finds us in our very lost condition, just as the angel found Hagar. Even a lowly Egyptian servant girl is not too lost for God to see her and come to her.

Some believe that the angel who spoke to Hagar was a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice in verse 13 it says, *“She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her.”*

Notice the questions that the Lord asked Sarai:

And he said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?” (Genesis 16:8).

Why did God ask Sarai what God already knew?

He did it to get Hagar to think about two things:

1. Where have you come from?
2. Where are you going?

Those are two good questions to ask yourself when you’re ready to run away. Where have you come from? Did God allow the trial for some reason? What is God trying to do in your life? And where are you going? Did you seek God’s plan first; did you ask his permission to run?

Our escape plans just don’t work.

Psalms 55:1 – 8:

Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught because of what my enemy is saying, because of the threats of the wicked; for they bring down suffering on me and assail me in their anger. My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen on me. Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me. I said, “Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. I would flee far away and stay in the desert; I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm.”

Then notice what the Lord tells Hagar to do:

Then the angel of the Lord told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.” The angel added, “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.” (Genesis 16: 9-10).

- Bad News: Hagar needed to go back and submit to Sarai.
- Good News: God would bless her there.

This all happened when Abram was 86. Now as Genesis 17 begins, we are told Abram is 99 years old. So, 13 years have passed and Ismael is a teenager. Then God appears to Abram and makes a covenant with him—that he will be the father of many nations. And he changes his name to Abraham. He tells Abraham to circumcise every male as a sign of the covenant between him and God. Then he said:

Genesis 17:15 – 22:

God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!” Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.” When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

So, God says Sarah will have a baby by this time next year. Shortly after this Abram is sitting by his tent, and three men appear to him. This is most likely another appearance of Jesus before his incarnation.

Genesis 18: 9 – 15

“Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.

“There, in the tent,” he said.

Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.”

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.”

But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

Then Abraham moves into the region of the Negev where he again lies about Sarah and tells Abimelek king of Gerar that she is his sister. So, when the king sent for her and took her, God came to him in a dream and told him that he had taken a married woman.

Then Abraham moves again.

Genesis 20:1 – 18

Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar, and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.

But God came to Abimelek in a dream one night and said to him, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.”

Now Abimelek had not gone near her, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister,’ and didn’t she also say, ‘He is my brother’? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.”

Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her. Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die.”

Early the next morning Abimelek summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid.

Then Abimelek called Abraham in and said, “What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done.” And Abimelek asked Abraham, “What was your reason for doing this?”

Abraham replied, “I said to myself, ‘There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’ Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife. And when God had me wander from my father’s household, I said to her, ‘This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”

Then Abimelek brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham, and he returned Sarah his wife to him. And Abimelek said, “My land is before you; live wherever you like.”

To Sarah he said, “I am giving your brother a thousand shekels of silver. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated.”

Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again, for the LORD had kept all the women in Abimelek’s household from conceiving because of Abraham’s wife Sarah.

Why does Abraham keep making the same mistake over and over?

Why did God speak so strongly to Abimelech? Suppose Abimelech had taken Sarah and God had not intervened? What could have happened?

Then Abimelech confronted Abraham and asked why he did this. It is sad to see that Abimelech – the pagan king – was in the right, and Abraham – the man of God – was in the wrong, and Abimelech told Abraham so.

How do you explain how Pharoah and now Abimelek responded to Abraham when they discovered he lied to them and allowed them to have his wife—giving him many gifts?

So, now Sarah and Abraham settle down to wait for the birth of Isaac.

1 Peter 3:5-6:

For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

How did Sarah submit to and obey Abraham? First, she obeyed him when he asked her to tell a “white lie” for him – twice! And at least in one verse, we have a record of her calling Abraham “lord.”

Genesis 18:12: *So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”*

Notice how Sarah is remembered in the Hebrews Faith Hall of Fame:

Hebrews 11:11: *And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.*

At what point did Sarah begin to believe that God would give her a son? She laughed when she heard the prophesy that she would bear a child in her old age.

One of the many proofs that the Bible is the inspired Word of God is that none of the failures or foolishness of people is covered up. But God doesn’t disqualify them just as he does not disqualify us. He uses unqualified, weak, foolish people to do his will and his work. Be encouraged.