

Hagar: The Woman Who Wasn't There

Women of the Old Testament—part 4

May 29, 2016

Genesis 16; 21:8-21

DAY 1: Meet Hagar

1. Last week we studied Sarah. This week we'll study Hagar, Sarah's handmaid.

Genesis 16:1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar;

2. There are few things we know about Hagar. She is from Egypt, so she's living in a foreign land, away from her family. No husband or children are mentioned. Her job would be considered a menial job with no "job prospects" or "opportunities for advancement." Her prospects for marrying are slim, as there are no Egyptian men around. What kinds of things would you be feeling if you were Hagar?

Genesis 16:2 ...so she (Sarai) said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant (Hagar); perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

3. Sarah's plan was akin to what we call finding a "surrogate mother," but this plan also involved adultery. Apparently, when Hagar heard the idea, she was not in favor of this. Instead of becoming "just" a surrogate mother, carrying Sarah's baby, Hagar wanted something more. Apparently some negotiations occurred.

Genesis 16:3 So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.

4. What things do you think Hagar was hoping would happen through this "arrangement" of both adultery and polygamy?

Genesis 16:4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she (Hagar) knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress (Sarah).

5. What reasons can you think of as to why Hagar would despise Sarah?

6. A "plan" that *seemed* so simple would bring about disastrous results that would last at least four thousand years! When was the last time you were tempted to go outside God's boundaries to "secure" something you believed you needed?

DAY 2: The disaster of getting your way

1. Put yourself in Hagar's shoes, and in her brain. She went from having:
 - a. No husband to having a very prominent and wealthy husband,
 - b. Little financial "security" to "great" financial security,
 - c. A menial work position to the wife, pregnant with Abraham's child, a status she likely saw as clearly "ahead" of Sarah,
 - d. Dead hopes of marital affection to the likelihood of having Abraham's greatest affections.
 - e. Never being a mother to the joys of motherhood.
2. If you had been Hagar, what would you have imagined would have come from this new life?
3. The "plan" that *seemed* to be a "win-win" turned out to be a colossal disaster. Everybody lost, including two sons yet to be born!

Genesis 16:5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."

*Genesis 16:6 "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; **so she fled from her.***

4. There is a sudden shift in the marital pecking order! Hagar had imagined that she was now the "favored one," and instead, Abraham sides with Sarah. Abraham gives Sarah the right to make the final decision regarding what to do about this exploding drama.
5. Describe a life situation in which you have had such an awful turn of events.
6. If you had been Hagar what would you have:
 - a. Felt?
 - b. Done?
7. Taking matters into her own hands, without considering what God would say on her decision cost her dearly! It's easy to "run" God's "red lights" of commands. What's your takeaway from today's verses?

DAY 3: God meets Hagar at her lowest point

1. Hagar is devastated, and believes she's lost "everything." What she doesn't know is that the treasure she most needs is right in front of her.

Genesis 16:7 The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.

2. Where did Hagar flee to?

3. We have no record of Hagar calling out to God. Did Hagar find God or did God find Hagar?

Genesis 16:8 And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.

4. God asks Hagar some questions. What is the significance of these two questions?

5. How does God address Hagar? To what is God hinting?

6. When calamity strikes, you often hear young people cry out, "My life is over!" How close to these words do you believe Hagar is to saying them?

Genesis 16:9 Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." ¹⁰The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."

7. God gives her some painful advice—return to Sarah's rejection. But to this instruction, God adds a stunning promise! When she heard God's promise what do you think she realized?

*Genesis 16:11 The angel of the LORD also said to her: "You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for **the LORD has heard of your misery.***

¹²He 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."

*¹³She 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."*

¹⁴That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne.

¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

8. Hagar has some big epiphanies about God. What thing(s) do you think struck Hagar in this episode out in the desert?

DAY 4: Hagar hits bottom

1. Years have passed since the last recorded incident. Hagar had her son, named Ishmael, and he is about thirteen years old.

2. Sarah has given birth to Isaac, the long-awaited child of the covenant.

Genesis 21:8 The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast.

⁹ But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, ¹⁰ and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."

3. The “drama” between the two women has morphed to Ismael. Abraham is now very worried for the safety of young Isaac. Remember God predicting to Hagar that Ishmael would be a wild donkey, and dangerous to his brothers. The situation is now a crisis.

Genesis 21:11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.

¹² But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.

Genesis 21:13 I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring."

Genesis 21:14 Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba.

4. It’s the “end of the line” for Hagar. Fallen human nature in all of the parties has finally taken its inevitable toll. Without submission to God no one can get “self” out of the way enough to build anything significant. Drama, drama, more drama...

5. What kind of heartache do you think Hagar experienced? Jot down your thoughts next to these possibilities:

a. Loss of her husband:

b. Loss of Ishmael having a father:

c. Loss of financial well-being:

d. Alienation from all she’s known for over twenty years:

6. There are big consequences for sin. What does Hagar need to hear? What does she need to do?

DAY 5: God comes to Hagar, unasked, and again

1. Hagar and Ishmael leave and head out into the desert. This is the second time she's been in this dreadful situation. She's been rejected, abandoned, and alone.

*Genesis 21:15 When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes.
16 Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob.*

2. Is there any indication that Hagar turned to God, even in these desperate times?

3. Just like before, there is no indication that Hagar turned toward God, but after waiting until Hagar hit bottom, God takes the initiative to make Himself known, again!

Genesis 21:17 God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there."

4. This verse tells us a lot about God's care for Hagar, and His desire for her transformation. Jot down any thoughts you have about some of the ways God made Himself known to her:

a. God heard the boy crying:

b. The angel of God called to Hagar:

c. The angel engages in Hagar in conversation about her dilemma. (Is connection with God sometimes more important than advice from God?)

d. God reassures her not to fear. Why?

*Genesis 21:18 Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."
19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.*

20 God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer.

21 While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

5. Before God fixes her water problem, He gives her reason to go on. Why is that important?

6. What God does for Hagar and Ishmael in this passage is dreadfully important. What stood out to you about God?