

Faith and Failure

Abraham—part 7

July 19, 2026

Genesis 16:1-16

DAY 1: The proposal of the flesh

1. We've seen God's vision of Abraham's future through a son as many as the stars in the sky, the dust of the earth, and the sands of the sea. While those promises become Abraham's anchor, he still has to live out his life daily with **no sign of movement** toward those promises.

2. When we are not getting the life we thought we'd get in following the Lord, we panic. Our secular world calls this a "mid-life crisis."

Genesis 16:1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children....

3. Ten years have passed from God's first promise of a son. Abraham and Sarah are aging.

4. When we start to panic we are tempted to **take matters into our own hands**. It is there that we **get a clearer look at the self-life still alive in us, a self-life fraught with danger**.

*Genesis 16:1 But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; ² so she said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³ So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her **to her husband to be his wife**.*

5. What strikes you about Sarah's proposal?

6. My mentor used to say, "People do what makes sense to them. It may not make sense to you, but it makes sense to them." How do you see Sarah trying to make sense of this fiasco?

7. "I know better." Our human nature has a master's degree in justifying almost anything, that "aids and abets" our foolishness. This is what Sarah does, and Abraham follows her.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Abraham's wickedness

1. Sarah's proposal was incredibly stupid, foolish and wicked. The results of her proposal would bring incredible and unending misery upon Abraham, herself, her eventual children, her family, and misery upon untold millions of people for endless generations as we will see. The Arab nations arose from this proposal and the hatred between Jew and Arab has never ended.

2. Unfortunately, Abraham agreed with Sarah's proposal.

Genesis 16:4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

3. Abraham had first-hand knowledge, experience, and conversations with God about the epic drama playing out in WORLD history, the great story of God redeeming a lost and rebellious world. He KNEW better.

4. Why do you think Abraham agrees to Sarah's proposal?

5. What went wrong? What should we learn from this?

a. Abraham took counsel on a HUGE matter from someone not nearly as spiritually seasoned as he was. Those younger in the faith generally speaking have more zeal about their opinions but don't have much wisdom, life experience, nor experience in walking with God.

b. Abraham had a godly longing for a son, heard an idea that could "make that happen," AND it coincided with his evil human desires regarding the pleasures of sex outside of marriage.

c. When seeking to do God's will we must all consider God's ways.

6. When you are faced with not having the life we want AND are presented with temptations to (apparently) get the life we want, what goes through your mind?

7. Abraham's decision would open Pandora's box of misery for world history, extending right up to the present moment.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: Raw human nature displayed

1. If you wanted an inside look at **what hell will be like**, these three verses give you an opening preview. **You wanted a life free of God's moral law and God's moral restraints?** You wanted a life to do what you want and live the life "you deserve" with yourself as captain of your soul? Good luck with that! When self is unleashed, untethered from God's leash, this is what you'll end up with.

*Genesis 16:4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to **despise** her mistress. ⁵ 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."*

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

2. We see the raw human nature of all three of our characters!

3. Abraham: What observations about raw human nature do you see in him?

4. Hagar: What observations about raw human nature do you see in her?

5. Sarah: What observations about raw human nature do you see in her?

6. This is how sin operates. At the moment of temptation, sin seems so harmless, so reasonable, so justified, but when the dust finally settles everyone is worse off than before—by far!

7. What strikes you most from the three characters?

8. Do you resonate with one of them more than the others?

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Raw human nature analyzed

Genesis 16:4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.⁵ 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.”

*⁶ “**Your** slave is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.*

1. How do you see each of the following characteristics of raw human nature displayed in these three characters?

a. **Lust:**

b. **Despised:**

c. **Blind unreasonableness:**

d. **Blame-shifting:**

e. **Irresponsibility:**

f. **Harshness:**

g. **Rebellion:**

h. **Desire for revenge:**

2. Which characteristics of raw human nature stands out to you?

3. How does this episode in their lives resonate with you?

4. This is a sobering episode. You expect someone like Hagar to act in an ungodly way, but Sarah? And especially Abraham???

5. What is your biggest take away from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: Provision of God's grace

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. ⁸ 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.

Genesis 16:9 Then the angel of the Lord told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her."

¹⁰ The angel added, "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count." ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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."

¹³ 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." ¹⁴ That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

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

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

1. God meets her through the angel of the Lord. He tells her four things.

a. The angel asks two rhetorical questions to get Hagar to reflect on what she's doing.

b. The angel tells her to "return and submit." Though this will be humiliating, she will find grace here. There is no future for her or her son anywhere else.

c. Her descendants will also multiply, as will Abraham's.

d. A prophetic word on Ishmael's nature.

Genesis 16:12 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.

2. A donkey is a metaphor for stubbornness, a stubborn mule. And no one will be able to get along with him, nor he be able to get along with his own brothers.

Genesis 16:13 Hagar 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." ¹⁴ That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

3. She recognizes God's presence with her, and names Him, "The God who sees." Omniscience is God's attribute that sees everything. In the midst of her rebellion and heartache, she is not alone. God is with her. And God doesn't just see her generally, but specifically, as indicated by the personal interaction and knowledge of her circumstances.

4. What strikes you from today's devotional?