

MATRIARCHS

A 13 Week Study of Mothers of the Bible

*Discover the Power of Motherhood
through the Lives of Those Who Have
Gone Before Us*

Week: Two

Author: Beth Bergren

Biblical Mom: Sarai (Sarah) meaning 'princess'

Title of Lesson: It's No Laughing Matter

Key Influence: Mother of Nations

Key Verse: Hebrews 11:11

Lesson Learned: God always has our best interests at heart!

Video Link: <https://youtu.be/-KByYAJTmB8>

SARAI (SARAH)

Have you ever had to wait for an answer for something you really wanted?

Our biblical Mom today did.

Meet Sarai, a biblical matriarch, wife of Abraham, mother of Isaac and household manager described in the Bible as beautiful, righteous and faithful.

She *had* character and she *was* a character!

PONDER FOR A MOMENT:

Do you think this is a valid statement? *Our character determines our conduct.* _____

When has your character determined your decisions or direction? (Positive or Negative) _____

Sarah's story is woven throughout the book of Genesis in chapters 11 through 23. She is also mentioned in *Genesis 49:31; Isaiah 51:2; Romans 4:19; 9:9; Hebrews 11:11; I Peter 3:6; Galatians 4:26*.

1. BEAUTY

The biblical account of Sarai's life doesn't begin in scripture until she was 65 years old. (*10 years younger than Abraham*) Sarai was beautiful. Even at that age, her physical beauty was remarkable.

Abraham used her beauty for protection. Once with a pharaoh and once with a king. Read chapters 12:10-20 (Pharaoh) and 20:1-18 (King Abimelech) in Genesis to see what resulted from it.

Pharaoh and King Abimelech had designs on her, not realizing Sarai was Abraham's wife. Abraham was afraid that if they knew she was his wife, they would kill him and take her. Therefore he presented her as his sister, not just his wife.

Genesis 20:12 New Living Translation (NLT)

"And she really is my sister, for we both have the same father, but different mothers, and I married her. When God called me to travel from place to place, I told her, 'Do me a favor. Wherever we go, tell the people that I am your brother.'"

Scripture remarks how stunningly attractive and extraordinarily gorgeous she was. It seemed that wherever she went she received favor because of her good looks.

Sarai gave up a life of luxury and extravagance to follow along with her husband Abram as he listened to God's voice.

1 Peter 3:5-6 (NLT)

“⁵ This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They put their trust in God and accepted the authority of their husbands. ⁶ For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do.”

Sarah was completely devoted to her husband. At this stage of her life I believe she willingly submitted to him in his decision to follow God and move.

They moved “out in faith” from Ur to Haran and finally to Canaan. It was then God established a covenant with Abram telling him that he would found a great nation. (*Genesis 11:31; 12:4-5, Isaiah 51:2*)

Isaiah 51:2 (NLT)

“² Yes, think about Abraham, your ancestor, and Sarah, who gave birth to your nation. Abraham was only one man when I called him. But when I blessed him, he became a great nation.”

2. BARREN

From the time Sarah became Abraham's wife she desired 'one thing' – to have a child. She was barren during her normal childbearing years.

Genesis 11:30 (NRSV)

“Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.”

Years and years and years went by and still no child to be born. That had to be a very difficult, painful and emotional road to travel. When a woman desires to become a mother and that desire is not met, it can be devastating. Sarai was tortured by her childlessness. It ate at the core of her soul.

Sarai's biological clock was ticking. Ten years had passed since the promise and Sarai was tired of waiting! So, like many of us, she took matters into her own hands.

3. BITTER

Often women cope with unanswered prayer by beginning to **assist God** to get His plan into action, to get the ball rolling! That's exactly what Sarai did.

Sarai's barrenness caused much strife in her household. She was frustrated, depressed, angry and bitter. She concluded that God was restraining her from having children (*Genesis 16:2*).

She wanted Abraham to have an heir so badly that she concocted a scheme that was unrighteous and utterly self-serving and foolish. She convinced Abraham (*who was 86 years old at this time*) by the art of persuasion to father a child by her own housemaid.

Genesis 16:1-3 New Living Translation (NLT)

“¹ Hagar, an Egyptian slave girl became, a trusted servant to Sarai. Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, “The LORD has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her.” And Abram agreed with Sarai’s proposal. ³ So Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife.”

(This happened ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan.)

It was custom (*and acceptable*) in those days to allow a maidservant to become a surrogate mother for a childless couple. Abram went along with the plan and Hagar became pregnant.

Sarai’s ungodly response to God’s promise harvested seeds of discontent, jealousy, bitterness and anger as she watched Hagar carry a child that should have been hers. For years Sarai behaved poorly due to a situation she engineered and manipulated the course and its events. Her actions reaped consequences. I imagine she may have become mean, impatient, conniving, feisty, temperamental, cantankerous, cruel, crabby, jealous, erratic, moody, untouchable, unreasonable, unreliable, unrelenting, unforgiving, a complainer, a whiner, and a nag – simply NOT A JOY to be around!

Do you see a much needed scheduled appointment with a mental health professional here?

Also, note that Abram’s eagerness to sleep with Hagar showed his ungodly response and lack of faith to trust that God would bless their union as He had promised.

They both showed their humanness and pushed God’s timing. Because they both felt this was right, they missed out on God’s original plan of blessing.

Sarah was losing heart.

PONDER A MOMENT:

Have you ever wondered how differently things might have turned out in a personal situation if you hadn't taken matters into your own hands instead of trusting God's timing? _____

Hagar was not completely innocent in this scenario either. As soon as Hagar conceived she became haughty and contentious towards Sarai. Hagar knew all too well how much it meant to Sarai to have a child of her own. It was like Hagar was purposefully pouring salt on Sarai's open wound.

Genesis 16:4 New King James Version (NKJV)

“When she (Hagar) saw that she had conceived, her mistress (Sarai) became despised in her eyes.”

Because of her jealousy Sarai treated Hagar with cruelty and vengeance. So much so she insisted that Abraham throw her out, along with the son he had fathered with her. Hagar and Ishmael ran into the wilderness as they feared for their lives because of Sarai's ill treatment. (*Genesis 21:8-21*)

Women can be so mean can't they?

4. BLESSED

Time passed, and God fulfilled his promise to Sarai (*now called Sarah*). It was at this point that God changed Sarai's name – “*contentious*” to Sarah – “*woman of godly faith*.”

She became pregnant when she was 90 years old and bore a son called Isaac. (*Meaning: laughter*) Abraham was 100 years old at this time.

When Sarah heard she would have a son she *laughed!*

A group of men were talking to Abraham in **Genesis 18:10-15 (NLT)** and we read,

“¹⁰ Then one of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!” Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. ¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. ¹² So she laughed silently to herself and said, “How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?” ¹³ Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”¹⁵ Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, “I didn’t laugh.” But the LORD said, “No, you did laugh.”

When God speaks “it’s not a laughing matter.”

PONDER FOR A MOMENT:

Ask yourself – why do you think Sarah laughed? _____

Could it have been from doubt or fear; disbelief or not enough faith; or disobedience by using her free will to take matters into her own hands?

Has there been a time in your life where you have uttered a quick, short, almost inaudible laugh of doubt? _____

Have you ever shrugged your shoulders or rolled your eyes thinking - “**this is too hard for the Lord?**” _____

God beckons us to trust. To wait in expectation for His good will in our lives. To know, understand and accept HIS timing is always perfect.

Sarah and Abraham were called to trust the Lord. And so are we!

KEY VERSE

Hebrews 11:11 (NLT)

“¹¹ It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed^[a] that God would keep his promise.”

Through Abraham and Sarah’s family tree Jesus Christ was born to save humanity. Through Christ you can have a personal relationship with God and be blessed beyond measure here on earth and for eternity.

PONDER A MOMENT:

Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? _____

Share about how you came to know Jesus here: _____

If you are not sure feel free to contact:

The Mom Initiative at: info@themominitiative.com

or visit our website at www.themominitiative.com

We *will* get back to you.

All information will be kept CONFIDENTIAL.

We need to remember that overall Abraham and Sarah obeyed God and kept his commandments. But in their humanness, they sinned. When they realized their sin, repented and then asked for God's forgiveness; He forgave them. They will be in God's Kingdom (Heaven) and, we, who believe in Jesus Christ will meet them. *(Hebrews 11:39-40)* . . . Personally I can't wait!

Nothing more is said about Sarah after Isaac's childhood. We only know that she lived for 127 years and is buried along with Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah.

PERSONAL REFLECTION ON SARAH STUDY

WHAT IS GOD'S WORD IS SAYING TO ME?

WHAT LESSON (LESSONS) DID I LEARN FROM SARAH THAT I CAN APPLY TO MY OWN LIFE?

PRAY ABOUT IT:

Dear Father,

Every day we as women, wives, mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, grandmothers and friends are faced with decisions. Guide us to not take matters into our own hands when we become impatient – waiting! Help us TRUST YOU for answers IN YOUR TIME.

I lift my current insecurities, difficult situations OR lack of faith up to you. Help me to use discernment and make wise decisions based on your Word, prayer, and counsel with others when needed.

We thank you that you ALWAYS have our best interests at heart!

MEMORY VERSE:

Hebrews 11:11 (NLT)

“It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Walking with the Women of the Bible (formerly titled Women Who Loved God)

Author: *Elizabeth George* www.elizabethgeorge.com

Available at www.amazon.com in Kindle and Paperback formats

Discover delightful company, practical truths, and powerful encouragement in this book by one of my favorite authors, Elizabeth George. Written in a devotional format that shares with readers the lives of women in the Bible. Through their roles as wives, mothers, friends and women of God we learn practical, profound and solid biblical truths that can be applied to our lives as women of today. You will be challenged daily as you receive inspiration and be guided to make right choices in your life. I highly recommend this book, I have used it for years and your heart will be blessed. I see so much of me in the women of the past.

2. Women of the Bible: A One Year Devotional Study of Women in Scripture
Women of the Bible: 52 Bible Studies for Individuals and Groups
Prayer through the Eyes of Women of the Bible

Authors: Ann Spangler and Jean E. Syswerda – a series of three books
Available at www.amazon.com in Kindle and Paperback formats

Special features in Women of the Bible include:

- A list of all the women in the Bible
- Timeline of the women in the Bible
- A list of women in Jesus' family tree
- A list women in Jesus' life and ministry

Vital and deeply human, the women in this book encourage you through their failures and successes. You will see God acting in surprising and wonderful ways to draw them – and YOU – to Himself.

This year long, weekly devotional offers you a unique method to slow down and savor the story of God's unrelenting love for his people and for you as a woman of God.

3. What's In The Bible For Women

Authors: Georgia Curtis Ling and Larry Richards, PhD
Available at www.christianbook.com or on Kindle at www.amazon.com

Got questions? The Bible has the answers. Snapshots of the lesser known women in the Bible are introduced to us and help us interact with God's Word in a whole new way. Each page in this series offers amazing helps to enhance your knowledge of the Bible and your personal situation. A resource for Godly wisdom to become your best in every area of your life.

A PERSONAL NOTE FROM BETH



Ladies – it is my prayer as you walk with us at the Mom’s Initiative by getting to know the 13 women of the Bible that you desire to learn more in your own personal or group study. These biblical Matriarchs who went before us were women that blazed a trail of God’s goodness, guidance and grace.

May you be blessed as you study God’s Word!



Beth Bergren, founder of **At Mom’s Table**, a TMI Mentor Mom, speaker, teacher, writer and friend. Her passion is to mentor women in the areas of Practical Living (*Homemaking Skills*) and Intentional Life (*Biblical Womanhood*). As a lover of God’s Word (the Bible) she delights in helping women discover the value of becoming a godly woman by digging into scripture for daily guidance and wisdom. Check out her website www.bethbergren.com and connect with Beth. Invite her to speak or teach at your women’s event. She welcomes the opportunity to encourage others to find JOY walking with God in faith.