

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: Eight

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Biblical Mom: Hagar

Title of Lesson: The God Who Sees...and...Hears

Text: Genesis 16 and 21

Key Verse: Genesis 16:13

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSC9bzgiRxQ>

HAGAR: The God Who Sees...and...Hears

It was one of the most painful moments of my adult life. Alone, curled up on my bedroom floor releasing the most guttural sobs I'd ever cried. It was the final straw. A culmination of dire losses in my life, and I was at the complete end of myself. Destitute physically, emotionally and financially. Alone. Rejected. Desperately wounded, and thrust into an unfamiliar despair of momentary hopelessness.

I wonder if that's how Hagar felt as she fled, all alone, into the wilderness to escape the cruelty of her mistress, Sarai.

She was a young, beautiful Egyptian servant girl who landed quite a prestigious position in the house of Abram. It was a position that was typically acquired through tried and true obedience and trustwor-

thiness. Yet, with the prestige of this position, she was stripped of all personal rights, required to be in complete subjection to her Master's house. Including the inconceivable demand of being beckoned to Abram's bed where the barren Sarai would offer her as a surrogate to bear her children.

In those ancient days, it was culturally acceptable for a barren woman to employ her handmaiden, or servant to bear her children. ***And, though it was culturally acceptable, remember that Abram and Sarai had been called out of their culture. God had set them apart from the cultural norm of their day.*** Yet, Sarai took matters into her own hands and offered Hagar to her husband. It's interesting that we don't see any objection from Abram. He willingly accepted Sarai's offer.

Ponder for a moment:

There are a lot of cultural norms that we live in today. But, as daughters of the King, we are called out of that culture! Today's culture continues to move at warp speed away from Truth and righteousness, so much so, that we have become desensitized to worldly, degrading images and ideologies. We must renew our commitment to vigorously guard our homes, our hearts and our minds from the cultural norms that have hijacked truth and righteousness. ***Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas in your life, or your home that have succumbed to the cultural norms of today.*** Write them down so you can take them to the Lord and work through them one by one. _____

As Hagar's pregnancy progressed the ordinarily humble, submissive servant girl suddenly felt superior to her mistress, and treated Sarai with a taunting pride.

Genesis 16:4 says, ***“when she [Hagar] saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.”***

Hagar was no longer merely a servant in their household. She now knew Abram in the most intimate of ways, and she now has something that her mistress, for years, has longed for...her husband's child.

It's a real-life drama that plays out like a Lifetime movie script!

Sarai responds to Hagar's actions by going to Abram and saying, ***“My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The Lord judge between you and me.”*** [Genesis 16:5]

In other words, Sarai is lamenting, “Why did you listen to me?!?”

She casts the blame on her husband. And, perhaps she is right in doing so. Even though she was the one who offered Hagar to him; ultimately, as the head of their home, he had the authority to say, “No!”

Instead, like it is with all sin, they now find themselves at a painful crossroad.

The ideal scenario would have been for Abram to take full responsibility for debacle in their home, and devise a plan to get his household in order, where he would provide for Hagar, and his son, while working on restoring his marriage relationship with Sarai. After all, it was Abram, not Sarai, to whom God spoke the promise of being the Father of a great nation. **And, instead of taking full responsibility for his actions, Abram responds passively to Sarai with, *“Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please.”*** [Genesis 16:6a]

There is great insight and wisdom for such a time as this, written in Proverbs 30:21-23: ***“For three things the earth is perturbed, Yes, for four it cannot bear up: For a servant when he reigns, A fool when he is filled with food, a hateful woman when she is married, and a maidservant who succeeds her mistress.”***

Sarai accepted Abram's permission to handle the situation, and chose to deal quite **harshly** with Hagar. **The word “harshly” is the same word that would later be used to describe how the Egyptian slave masters would treat the captive Israelites.** We're really not sure if the harsh treatment was physical abuse, or if she mistreated her by unrealistic demands, or withheld food or necessities from her, or all of the above. Whatever it was though, it was such maltreatment that the vulnerable

and pregnant Hagar ran away from the throws of Sarai.

And that's where we pick up Hagar's story....

Hagar runs away deep in to the wilderness. Here is a young, pregnant, run away servant girl, alone in a pretty treacherous landscape. And that's where her life changes forever!

Ponder for a moment:

When has the greatest growth and change taken place in your life? Was it during your mountain top experiences? During a season when life was smooth sailing? Or, was it during the more painful, wilderness season(s) of your life? ***Describe a time when God used a specific season in your life to bring about great change in you:*** _____

If this were a Lifetime movie script about Hagar's life, this is a climactic point where we all would be swept away into the emotions, fears and unmet longings of Hagar's heart. As women, we likely would fight back the tears as we see some part of our own self in her story.

Can you visualize the scene?

A distraught, beautiful pregnant woman sitting alone in the wilderness by a spring of water. Tears streaming down her face, looking off into the distance contemplating her uncertain future, afraid, longing to simply be valued, protected, provided for, and loved.

And then, out of nowhere, the Angel of the Lord appears to her.

Genesis 16:7 says, He "found her!" [Exclamation point mine]. Oh, and it gets even better when he starts off verse 8 with, ***"Hagar, Sarai's maid ..."***

Did you catch that? He called her by her name! Up until this moment she was referred to as “my maidservant” or “your maid.” To Abram and Sarai, she was merely an Egyptian slave girl, and was treated as such. **However, in Hagar’s very first encounter with God He calls her by her name! Gently, lovingly, by her name.**

Precious friend, no matter how alone or invisible you may feel right now, make no mistake, He knows YOUR name!

God says in Isaiah 43:1-2, *“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.”*

Ponder for a moment:

Re-read Isaiah 43:1-2, but this time, personalize it by inserting your name; *“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; [insert your name], You are Mine.* Describe, if you can, how you feel when you read these verses: _____

Now, back to Genesis 16:8 ... after he calls her by name He asks her two very important questions:

“Where have you come from and where are you going?”

God often uses questions to get to the root of what is in our heart. He doesn’t ask questions because He doesn’t know the answer. He asks questions to give us the opportunity to ponder and be honest

with ourselves so that we can discover the answer.

Let's pause here for a moment and prayerfully ponder the questions God asked Hagar.

We know where Hagar came from. Originally from Egypt, given away as a piece of property to a wealthy, foreign family, only to be used and abused.

Precious friend, like Hagar, most of us have wounds in our past that need tending to. We've pushed them down, and put on our Sunday morning happy face, learning to cope while minimizing our pain, determined to not look back, but to do the "good Christian thing" of pressing on and through. ***While that sounds all noble and good, please know that God never intended for His daughters to just press on and through, and cope with life. He intended for His daughters to walk in freedom, and abundant life!***

The Prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 61:1-3, "***Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound ... To comfort all who mourn ... To give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ...***"

While we cannot physically go back in time, our Jesus is not bound by time and space. If we'll allow Him access, He can and will go back into those painful areas of our past to heal, redeem, and restore every one of our soul wounds.

So, where have you come from? What's your story?

Rejected.

Abandoned.

Loss.

Betrayed

Abused.

Lack of nurture.

Trauma.

Your own sin.

Linger for a moment:

Key steps to healing ...

1. **Ask the Holy Spirit to shine His light into every area of your heart and soul and reveal to you what needs tending to.** Anything kept in darkness cannot be healed. It must be brought out into the light so that it can be tended to. As He reveals these areas, write them down. Once you have your list, begin to work through each area, taking it into the presence of Jesus. _____

2. **Confess any area that needs to be confessed.** [1 John 1:9]
3. **Repent of specific sins including un-forgiveness, anger, bitterness and unbelief.** [Isaiah 1:18; Acts 3:19; Hosea 6:1-3]
4. **Receive healing as you forgive and pray to bless those who have so deeply wounded you. (You may have to do this daily).** *You'll know you are healed when it doesn't hurt any longer, and you can truly pray for them to be blessed.* [Mathew 5:44; Romans 12:14]
5. **Thank God daily for your healing, and choose to walk in His Truth by immediately capturing any negative, or damaging thoughts, and replacing those thoughts with Truth from His Word.** (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)
6. **Allow God to continuously transform you by the constant renewing of your mind.** You do this by reading His Word, talking daily with Him, and surrounding yourself with like-minded believers. [Romans 8:5-6; Romans 12:1-2, Galatians 5:16-25]

Where are you going?

Ponder for a moment:

If the Angel of the Lord appeared to you today and He were to ask you, “Where are you going?” what would your answer be? Are you running away-going back to Egypt-the place God delivered you from or are you running toward Him, pressing daily into His Truths, and soaking in His presence? Be honest. If you need to turn around, there’s no better time than now to make a U-turn!

Notice that Hagar only answered the first question. And she responded in quite a vague way by saying, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” She completely skirted the “where are you going?” question.

It didn’t seem to matter though, because the Angel of the Lord gently responded to her by instructing her to return back to her mistress.

Why would God send her back? Make no mistake, God did not send her back to continue to be abused. He sent her back so that she could ultimately receive the blessing that God had in store for her and her son.

As we see in Genesis 16:10, there was still much to come for her son Ishmael: ***“Then the Angel of the Lord said to her, I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.”***

We read on in verses 11-13, ***“And the Angel of the Lord said to her: “Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, and every man’s hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?”***

Hagar wasn't seeking God. God sought her out!

Living in Abram's house, surely Hagar had heard about God, but she likely thought that He was only the God of Abram and Sarai. Surely not for a slave girl like herself. He came to her, and He saw the inside aching of her heart.

As true as that was for Hagar, it is for us today!

He sees through your spoken words and hears the thoughts of your heart.

He sees through your smile.

He sees you in your darkness.

He sees the heartache of the woman betrayed by a trusted friend.

He sees the wounds that have pierced your heart.

He sees the toll that rejection has had on your tender heart.

He sees every injustice perpetrated against you.

He sees you in your loneliness.

He sees the unmet longings of your heart.

He is El-Roi, the God Who Sees You!

And He doesn't just see you, He understands you! He is intimately acquainted with every sorrow and pain you have or will ever experience. [Isaiah 53:1-5]

I can't help but wonder how Hagar looked as she began her long journey home to submit once again to her Mistress. She had just experienced God in a most supernatural way! **He knew her name!** He knew where she had come from, and He knew where she was going! It's hard to know whether she had a bit of a pep in her step as she returned home (having just experienced God), or if she meandered her way home, simply out of obedience to her God-Who-Sees. Either way, she did indeed re-

turn back to her Mistress where she would remain for about fifteen more years.

Finally at the age of 99, Sarah gave birth to the promised child, Isaac. We pick up Hagar's part of the story in Genesis 21 when Abraham throws a huge feast to celebrate the weaning of Isaac. At this time, Isaac would have been about three years old. But, the celebration would take a sharp turn when Sarah sees Ishmael scoffing (or laughing) at Isaac.

This enraged Sarah so much that she went to Abraham and told him to ***“Cast out this bondwoman and her son...”*** [Genesis 21:10]

No doubt, Abraham loved Ishmael and surely it pained him to have to do what Sarah asked. Nevertheless, early the next morning, Abraham took some bread and a skin of water; and put it on her shoulder and sent her and Ishmael away.

This would be another heart-wrenching, climactic scene in the Lifetime movie version of Hagar's life.

Imagine what the scene may have looked like ...

A dejected woman, and her teenage son being sent away from the only “love” and security they have ever known. They have no say in the matter, as they are thrown out with just the clothes on their back, a portion of bread and one container of water, to fend for themselves,

My heart aches as I can't help but wonder if every few minutes the boy turned around to look and see if his dad was still watching from a distance. Would he wave until he could no longer see his father? And Hagar ... was she even able to process the gut-wrenching pain of being abandoned and rejected, knowing she was in a fight for her and her son's mere survival?

It wasn't long before the bread was gone and the water bottle was empty. As a mom, I can scarcely imagine such a thing ... unable to provide physical sustenance for my child? It would be an unfathomable place to be as a parent. No doubt, without food or water, surely they would die.

Hagar saw no other option except to take her son and place him under some bushes, to keep him away from the elements for as long as possible. She likely thought in that moment that this is where their lives would end. The Bible says in Genesis 21:16 *that after she placed her son under the bush, she could not bear to watch her son die, so she walked about a bowshot away (about a half a mile), and sat down.* [paraphrase]. I can imagine her pulling her knees to her chest, rocking back and forth as she uncontrollably sobbed.

BUT ...

Just when she thought their life was over, the truth was, life had only just begun!

The Angel of God heard their cries and once again He asked Hagar a question:

“What ails you, Hagar?” [Genesis 21:17a]

Ponder for a moment:

Precious friend, what ails you? You can be 100% honest with God. Is something ailing you? You can talk to God about it!

The Psalmist says in Psalm 142:2, ***“I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare before Him my trouble.”***

The safest place you can go with what is ailing you is to your Heavenly Father. Go to a quiet place, where you can be alone with just you and God, and talk to Him as though you were talking to your best friend, because really, He is your Best Friend.

As you pour out your heart to Him be sure to sit still and wait. Wait for the Holy Spirit to minister to you. Ask Him for an awareness of His presence. Ask Him to hold you close. As you wait, read through some of the Psalms. Among my favorites are Psalm 31, 40, 46, 77, 91 & 139. Listen for His voice as you read His Word. As you pour out your heart to Him, He'll fill up your empty places with more of

Himself. **Write down what the Holy Spirit is showing you through His Word. How will apply what He is showing you?** _____

We go on to the second part of verse 17, the Angel of God tells Hagar, ***“Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.”*** [Genesis 21:17b]

Oh, precious friend, not only is He the God who sees, but He is also the God who hears!

Do you remember back in Genesis 16:11 when the Angel of God told Hagar that ***“she would have a son, and his name will be called Ishmael.”*** The name “Ishmael” is a combination of two Hebrew words: *shama* which means, “to hear,” and “*e/*” which refers to God. **So, Ishmael means “God hears.”**

What an amazing gift from God, that every time Hagar said or heard Ishmael’s name, she was reminded of the truth that God heard her!

And, God hears YOU!

He hears your painful affliction.

He hears a mother’s agonizing cries that are poured out over her ailing or prodigal child.

He hears the cries of the infertile woman longing to fill her empty arms.

He hears the silent prayers of the abused or neglected wife.

He hears the mother’s grief over the loss of her child.

He hears the sobs of the abandoned, single mom.

And, if ever there was a verse for MOMS, this is it! Genesis 21:18 is of particular importance for you!

[The Angel of the Lord said, “**Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.**”

This very important instruction to Hagar literally means, “strengthen your hand in his, hold him firmly.”

This is referring more to their future than it is to the immediate. As moms it is our responsibility to walk with courage, and strength as we guide our children to adulthood. We must never lose sight of the fact that we are the parent. They are the children. They need us to lovingly but firmly lead and guide them. Aside from our role as a wife (if you are married), God has endowed us with no greater ministry than that of motherhood, and then, ultimately grandparenthood.

Determine today to parent your child(ren) with a godly courage and strength! Refuse to buckle to today’s cultural norms.

It really is okay to monitor what they watch on TV and where they go on the Internet. It is more than okay to insist on knowing your child’s friends, where they are, and whom they are with. It’s really okay to insist they put their phones away during dinnertime and while others are speaking to them. It’s really okay to insist they respect authority. And it’s really okay to discipline and administer consequences when necessary.

Moms, we must determine to parent with courage and strength!

Finally, in Genesis 21:19 we see the happy and miraculous ending to this part of Hagar’s story.

“Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water...!” [*Exclamation point mine*].

Abraham sent her away with a mere bottle of water but God provided a life-giving well...a near limitless supply of water for her and her son!

It's a beautiful glimpse into God's heart for His people. One that would be repeated for generations to come as we see in Isaiah 43:19, ***“Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.”***

No doubt, Hagar's story is one of limitless treasures!

Hagar's identity was a slave girl in a foreign country, and by worldly standards, she was a nobody, bound by cultural laws, affording her no personal rights. She was an unwed, unwanted pregnant woman who was used, abused, rejected and abandoned.

But, God sought her out, and found her, and gave her a brand new identity!

And, YOU are His daughter today, because He sought you out and found you! Yes, He loves you that much!

You are a daughter of the King! –Psalm 45:10-15

You are chosen by Him! –John 15:16

You are forgiven! –Ephesians 1:7 & Colossians 1:14

You are free! –2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:1

You are His royal treasure! -2 Peter 2:9

You are delivered! –Colossians 1:13

You are empowered by His Spirit! –Acts 2:17-19

* Note: All verses in this study are from the NKJV.

WHAT GOD'S WORD IS SAYING TO ME THROUGH HAGAR'S STORY:

HOW I WILL APPLY IT TO MY LIFE:

PRAY ABOUT IT: *Father, thank you that You are El Roi, the God who sees me. When I feel alone, and hurting, help me to remember that not only do you see me, but you also hear me. I know that mothering is much easier than parenting! Please strengthen me with courage as I lovingly, but firmly take hold of my children's hand, and guide them against the cultural norms of today. I confess that I can't do this on my own, Lord! Strengthen and fill me please, with the power of your Spirit, in Jesus Name, AMEN.*

MEMORY VERSE: *“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.” –Isaiah 43:1b-2*

For Note Takers
