



An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham

1. We're into our 6th week of our study on: **An Adventure of Faith: Walking with Abraham**
 - remember, this study isn't really so much about Abraham as it is the GOD of Abraham
 - we're going to learn a lot from Abraham's life, but we want to focus on the hand of God at work through the life of Abraham
 - Next week we'll study *Genesis 17: "Sometimes We Just Don't Get It" or "How Many Times Does God Have to Tell You?"* - God tells Abraham he'll be father of Isaac
2. For a bit of a review – let's consider the following question:

Input: What lessons have you learned so far from the life of Abraham? [You can divide your answer up into 2 categories:

#1: What you've learned about God AND #2: What you've learned about man & our faith

Lessons a/b God	Lessons a/b man & faith
✓ Faithfulness	✓ Inconsistent – up & down, back/forth
✓ Patient	✓ Impulsive – want it NOW
✓ Control/Sovereignty	✓ Wants control – lacks submission
✓ Gracious	✓ Sometimes demanding
✓ Dependable	✓ Unpredictable

3. A Key Verse that we've been focusing on is:
 - ❖ **Romans 15:4** For whatever was written in earlier times [reference to the OT] was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
4. Last week we studied **Genesis 15 – How Big Is Your God?**
 - based on the GREAT things that happened in chp. 15, you'd expect the chp. 16 to begin with something like, "And Abraham GREW in his faith & confidence in what God had told him . . . "
 - > but much like our UP & DOWN lives, Abram didn't do so well in the next chapter of his life!
5. Our focus today in **Genesis 16: God Has a Plan – subtitle: [The High Price of Impatience]**
 - > stop and think about the times in your life where you were impatient and tried out 'jump the gun' on God and get it all figured out instead of listening the Word of God!

[READ Gen. 16]

I. God Has a Plan . . . in our RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE

- look again at 16:1:

Hagar = 'flight' [NOT *flighty*, like she was an 'air-head' – but rather *flight* – i.e. she tends to run from things – that becomes evident later in the text

- Hagar probably entered the picture back in chp. 12 when Abraham went down to Egypt

- It's possible Pharaoh gave her to Abram (1) in exchange for his "sister" Sarai OR (2) Pharaoh included Hagar in the goods he gave when Abram departed from Egypt [Gen 12:16]

2. So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her."

- From archeological records from ancient Nuzi, it is clear that Sarah had proposed something that was very *common* in society – but it was NOT from God

> Culturally: surrogate mothers were permissible and encouraged if a wife was barren.

- But God made His view of marriage very clear in Genesis 1 & 2

> Sarai had no confidence AND no confirmation from the Lord that this was going to work!
(Note: 'perhaps I will . . .').

- Most likely the rationale for this was that large families were often economically necessary to the agriculturally based society // the more human resources one had meant more wealth and productivity could ensue (even in our day, many farmers have lots of children)

- Sarah and Abraham were real people immersed in the worldview of a real Ancient Near East culture // yet, *Yahweh* was reaching into their lives to ultimately create a different worldview.

- Remember: It had been 10 years since *Yahweh* promised "seed" to Abram (16:3) – so let's not be too hard on them

✓ Sarai was still barren – *Yahweh* had not opened her womb yet

✓ He had taken Lot away *twice* (when they first separated and then by the 4 kings).

✓ He had explicitly said that a seed would come from Abraham's body NOT his servant's.

- We understand their impatience, but not in view of God's character!

Point: Short of believing in a miracle, Sarah may have then thought that *Yahweh* wanted their family to be built through a common practice of that day.

- **So we have a couple of options in interpreting this situation:**

1) In the plan of God, Sarah may have thought that *Yahweh* wanted her to take the initiative to provide a child through Abram's body but not her own body

2) Or, more critically (and more likely) she may have thought that *Yahweh* *failed* her, so she is taking matters into her own hands.

- This is where the subtitle for our study enters into the picture: *The High Price of Impatience!*

- Instead of submitting to the plan of the LORD, they decided to do it their way!

> **Q: Why there is not an explicit condemnation in the text? Keep Reading!**

- While Moses does not explicitly condemn the action, there is CLEAR EVIDENCE in the text that this action as NOT RIGHTEOUS (nor recognizing the place of *Yahweh*).

#1: Sarah's response is a normal HUMAN response to the problem of childlessness in that culture.

Q: Where's the faith? Why not ask the Lord what to do first?

#2: The way Sarah initiates to solve the problem instead of waiting for Yahweh's intervention smacks of Abraham's folly in Genesis 12:10.

- Sarai hadn't learned the lesson that God tried to Abram: LET THE TRUTH OF LORD guide you in the decision making process!

#3: This text has strong similarities to Genesis 3:

Genesis 16	Genesis 3:17
v. 2 ". . . and Abram listened to the voice of Sarai	"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife . . ."
v. 3 "Sarai took"	. . . she took
v. 3. "Sarai . . . gave"	. . . she gave
v. 4 "He went in to Hagar . . ."	. . . and he ate

- These actions indicate that there is unrighteousness taking place and they are about to "fall"

IMPORTANT PART: 'Abram listened to the voice of Sarai' – **What a/b the voice of the LORD?**

- From chp. 12 through 15 – 9 times the phrase is used "*the LORD said*" or "*the word of the LORD came to Abram*" or "*He (the LORD) said*"

> there is a total of 20 verses recording what Yahweh had said – and now the transition: "Abram listened to the voice of Sarai" – what a contract in one's source of truth!

[Apply this to times husband should NOT listen to his wife – and to the wife giving godly advice that matches up with the Word of the LORD!]

#4: (most significantly) Sarai takes on a similar role of God in Genesis 2:22

3. After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.

- Compare this to Genesis 2:22

❖ **Genesis 2:22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.**

- God had already brought Sarai to Abram – he didn't need another wife, he needed a godly wife to exercise her faith in the promises of the LORD!

Pause Button: Abram (as Adam) should have said NO to his wife when presented w/ a sinful option – and for that, Abram is equally, or more so responsible for the choices/consequences that follow

5: Look at the way each woman treated the other

– **16:4 [Hagar's response to Sarai: despised her]**

4. He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she [Hagar] saw that she had conceived, her mistress [Sarai] was despised in her sight.

- in one sense, you could say, Hagar started this 'fight' – but not really – who's idea was this to begin with? (Sarai's) – but that doesn't justify Hagar's pride and selfish response when she found out she was pregnant!

– **16:5-6 [Sarai's response to Hagar: harsh treatment]**

5. And Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the Lord judge between you and me. (notice that Sarah is shifting blame here just as Eve did in the garden)”

- the fact is, BOTH were wrong – Sarai to suggest it, Abram to agree with it!

6. But Abram said to Sarai, “Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight.” So Sarai treated her harshly, and she [Hagar] fled from her presence.

Harshly = the idea of looking down or browbeating

Note: If Sarai really believed Yahweh was really “IN” this [involved] – she would have treated Hagar with an incredible amount of GRACE – instead, she was ‘harsh’

- Abraham’s attempts to pacify his wife simply encourages Sarah to treat Hagar more harshly.

- We need to ask some questions:

Q: *Where is the man who ‘believed in the Lord’ (from 15:6)?*

Q: *Where is the man who fought for Lot against 4 kings, but now won’t stand up to his wife?*

Q: *Where is the LEADERSHIP of this home? Whose wearing the pants now?*

Q: *Where’s the leadership that will say “Do what is right IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD” instead of ‘do to her what is good in your sight’?*

> her sight was already messed up to begin with – that’s how they got in this mess!

Point: We see a passive husband and a contentious wife – a package that robs God of His glory and leads to the mistreatment of others!

- Parallel to another sinful family that led to tragic consequences (Adam/Eve)

- God’s plan was NOT followed and the results became evident: Damage to the relationships

- just as God has a plan for our relationships with other people

II. God Has a Plan . . . for SOLVING PROBLEMS

A. God intervenes on our behalf – He comes to help us!

7. Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness by the spring on the way to Shur. (Hagar is probably fleeing toward her homeland so she goes south. Initially she probably does not recognize to whom she is talking.),

B. God reminds us of our relationship to others.

8. He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid (the angel of the Lord clearly identifies Hagar as belonging to Sarah – in short, the angel is re-establishing the relationship, beginning restoration),

C. God asks questions to make us think.

. . . **where have you come from and where are you going?”** (Notice the similarity in questions that Yahweh asked Adam, Cain, and Hagar—“Adam where are you?” “Cain, where is your brother?” “Hagar, where did you come from and where are you going?” While these questions would be understood very naturally from Adam’s, Cain’s and Hagar’s perspective, they seem rhetorical to us since we understand that God knows everything. The point of the questioning is to get the individuals to think about their actions. This is the first “questioning” of an individual by Yahweh since Cain’s questioning.)

D. God wants us to be honest about our spiritual condition

And she said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” (unlike Adam and Cain, she is not evasive but rather humbly honest)

E. God wants us to be humble and obedient to His commands (He has a plan!)

9. Then the angel of the Lord said to her, “**Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority.**”

- Again, the angel clearly indicates that Hagar “belongs” to Sarah.
- (in the Hebrew) the angel of Yahweh is commanding Hagar to return to the “affliction” of her mistress’ “hand” // the purpose is spelled out below.
- Go back to place where you fell off the track – and do what you should have done in the first place (remember your role – you’re a servant, and submit to your authority!)

III. God Has a Plan . . for the **CONSEQUENCES OF OUR CHOICES**

A. Because He is gracious, He demonstrates grace.

10. Moreover, the angel of the Lord said to her, “**I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.**” (In Genesis 3, the “fall” resulted in “greatly multiplied” pain – the “Fall” here ironically results in God’s “greatly multiplied” blessing—ultimately because of His promise to Abraham. Ishmael is the seed of Abraham--just not the promised seed. Also, just as Abraham would be told that his descendents would suffer, so also here Hagar is told that she must endure some suffering, but she would be included in the promise that Yahweh made to Abraham.

MAJOR NOTE: * To be connected to Abraham is to be connected to the blessing of Yahweh, because Yahweh promised it in His covenant with Abram!

B. Because He is holy, He allows the ‘law of the harvest.’

- Paul put it this way in Galatians:

❖ **Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.**

11. The angel of the Lord said to her further, “**Behold, you are with child, And you will bear a son; and you shall call his name Ishmael** (lit. “God hears”), **Because the Lord has given heed to your affliction.** (“Ishmael” is a reminder that God takes note of suffering) 12. “**He will be a wild donkey of a man,** (He will enjoy the independence and freedom that Hagar desired) **His hand will be against everyone** (His radical independence would bring him into conflict with everyone) **and everyone’s hand will be against him; and he will live to the east of all his brothers.**” (Gen 25:18; Some Muslims claim Ishmael as their ancestor. Regardless of the precise ancestral relationships, clearly Abraham’s act of not waiting for the Lord would ultimately cause harm to his own descendents. While it is true that Hagar’s descendents would be numerous because of God’s promise to Abraham, the act of Abraham would result in conflict among “brothers. Today we still see “brothers” fighting over the same land that God promised Abraham.)

C. Because He is loving, He is patient with our growth.

- nothing the Lord continues the relationship with Hagar – this could be the time where she expressed faith in Yahweh – she certainly recognizes His nature and power!

13. Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “**You are a God who sees**”; for she said, “**Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?**” [a potentially better translation is “You are El (God), who sees me, for she said, “Truly here I have seen Him who looks after me.” However, this is notoriously difficult Hebrew to translate. Hagar recognizes the divinity of the messenger, at this point, His mercy for her. For who is it that see the future? Who is it that can see where she came from? Who is it that can see who she belonged to? Who is it that can see what her offspring is? Who is it that can see her affliction? Only the God who sees!]

Conclusion: Are you following God’s plan – exercising faith and patience?

Study Notes
An Adventure of Faith: Walking With Abraham
#6 God Has a Plan [The High Price of Impatience]

Introduction:

What's Next? *Genesis 17: "Sometimes We Just Don't Get It" or "How Many Times Does God Have to Tell You?" - God tells Abraham he'll be father of Isaac*

Input: What lessons have you learned so far from the life of Abraham?

Lessons a/b God	Lessons a/b man & faith

❖ Romans 15:4 *For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

I. God Has a Plan . . . in our _____

Hagar = *'flight'*

*** So we have a couple of options in interpreting this situation:**

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– 16:4 [Hagar's response to Sarai: _____ her]

– 16:5-6 [Sarai's response to Hagar: _____ treatment]

Harshly = the idea of looking down or browbeating

II. God Has a Plan . . . for _____

A. God _____ on our behalf – He comes to help us!

B. God reminds us of our _____ to others.

C. God asks questions to make us _____.

D. God wants us to be _____ about our spiritual condition

E. God wants us to be _____ and _____ to His commands (He has a plan!)

III. God Has a Plan . . for the _____

A. Because He is _____, He demonstrates _____.

B. Because He is _____, He allows the 'law of the harvest.'

C. Because He is _____, He is _____ with our growth.

Conclusion: Are you following God's plan – exercising _____ and _____?

