



## ***LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LADIES***

### **Hagar: Outcast but not forgotten: Lesson 10**

Hagar has always had a very special place in my heart, but I'm not sure why I've always been so drawn to her. Maybe it's because she was victimized and cast out, which breaks my heart and makes my justice-meter rise up inside of me like a lion. Perhaps it's because of how tenderly God meets her in her place of despair. Maybe it's because of the name she gives to God that makes me cry whenever I hear it. Or maybe it's because a few friends of mine and I rode (cycled) for two weeks through Cambodia and Vietnam about 3 years ago to raise money for an organization called *Hagar* that ministers to men and women who have been trafficked and exploited. Their motto is: *Whatever it takes for as long as it takes to restore a broken life.* I'm thinking all those reasons play a part in my love for Hagar, and I can't wait to give her a voice through this lesson. To be honest, everything I read about her doesn't seem to do her justice. Some even blame her for the incident we'll be discussing. (You'll have an opportunity to weigh in on that debate as well!) Proverbs tells us to be a voice for the voiceless and I'm taking that on this week! I plan to look at Hagar as her own person, with her own story, not only through the lens of Sarai but also the part she played in her story with Abram. We obviously need to read the story in context to get a grasp of what was happening, but our focus will primarily be on Hagar.

I think it's interesting to know that her Egyptian name means "flight" or "stranger," which certainly describes her plight. May you be blessed this week as you learn about her life and how much God cared about her, knowing that God cares for you in the same way. Hagar may have been Sarai's PLAN B, but not God's! She showed an amazing amount of faith and trust in a God she wasn't raised to know. Although in the New Testament, Paul uses her as an allegory of "the flesh versus the Spirit," she was used as a major part of God's plan. Sometimes she is only looked at by what she represents, rather than who she was. I pray we can change that this week!

## **First Day**

We will begin today by looking at the Abrahamic covenant before we even meet Hagar. Please read the following sections of Scripture to get a better understanding of the times and the circumstances facing her.

1. Read Genesis 12:1-10. What promises were given to Abram by God?
2. Now read Genesis 13:14-17 and 15:1-6. What promises are reiterated?

Abram was told to move to a place God would show him. Scary, right? He starts out with his wife, nephews, and servants, and moves from the river into the desert. The next stop was Sichem which was over 300 miles away. I'm sure the only thing that kept him going was God's promise in 12:1, "I will show you a land." God was now forming a national blood line for His people and Abram was chosen as the head of that nation, the Hebrews. "The chosen nation was born in faith, and was sustained by faith – the faith of its head, Abraham (Hebrews 11:6, 8-12). The covenant is found in Genesis 12:1-3. God promised to make Abram a great nation, make his name great, and bless him. Abram was determined to have that blessing from God so we read, 'Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him' (Genesis 12:4). Abram was obedient to God and thus became a blessing to all generations as his descendants provided the human bloodline through which Jesus Christ was born." (Doris Greig) This is referred to as the Abrahamic Covenant. It's a national, personal, and universal covenant. It's important to remember that Abraham was one of the great men of faith, chosen by God, not because he was perfect, as we'll soon see, or that he never made mistakes. (He made some doozies.) He was great in the sight of God because he believed God (Romans 4:20-22).

3. Now read Genesis 16:1-16. Observe the facts of this story. Who are the main characters? What is happening? Why is it happening? Where is it happening? You don't need to do a lot of research at this point, simply try to understand the facts of the story.

4. What's your first impression or initial thoughts about this story?

That's all for today. I'm glad you got to at least meet Hagar. Spend some time today pondering her plight and how she must have been feeling. How would you have felt?

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "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?" Genesis 16:13

### **Second Day**

**Work on your memory verse. Isn't it wonderful?**

1. Read Genesis 16:1-4. Abram had been promised a heritage, yet ten years had gone by, and still no baby. Whose idea was it to use Hagar as a surrogate?
  
2. What do we know about Hagar?

The Bible doesn't give us any information about her genealogy, although legend has tried to portray her as the daughter of Pharaoh, the King of Egypt. The legend also adds very colorful details of this story, but most scholars believe that she was simply an Egyptian slave girl whom Sarai secured for her household while she and Abram were in Egypt. If she was a slave girl, then her mistress was legally entitled to do as she pleased with her. Giving her to Abram was a custom consistent with the moral standard during the patriarchal times. Although it was legal, it was still not God's plan for them. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that Abram or Sarai ever went to the Lord to ask Him whether their plan was His way of fulfilling His promise to them. They were to wait for the promise, but instead, Sarai ran ahead of God and gave a Gentile idolater from a pagan country to Abram to bear the promised seed. Hmmm, not a good idea, Sarai.

3. Did Hagar have any say in this plan? How do you think she may have felt?
  
4. According to verse 4, what happened as soon as she got pregnant?
  
5. Did Abram try to dissuade Sarai from her scheme?

Many scholars try to blame all three of them for this situation. Sarai obviously grew impatient in waiting to be pregnant and thought she could hurry the process up a bit! This showed an extreme lack of faith and trust in God and His plan. Abram could have cautioned Sarai to wait for God's perfect time, but he didn't. He seemed to go along with "Plan B," ignoring the divine promise made to him, regardless of the custom of the time. This attempt to secure the child of promise by Hagar was the result of a lack of faith in God's omnipotence. Then Hagar is blamed for going along with the scheme, but personally, as a slave, I don't think she had any say in the matter. I don't think she could have refused to do what her mistress was telling her to do. She may carry some blame a bit later, but certainly not yet!

6. Have you ever rushed ahead of God and tried to "help Him" instead of being patient in "the wait"? What were the consequences?

Although their sin was still used by God to further His plan, they were still responsible and accountable for their actions. Waiting on the Lord and His perfect timing is crucial to "being and living" in His will.

7. Read the following verses on waiting and summarize the main point of each.
  - a. Psalm 62:1
  - b. Psalm 27:14
  - c. Psalm 69:3
  - d. Lamentations 3:25-26
  
8. Do you think waiting on the Lord is an easy thing to do? Why is it so hard? How are we to wait? What can we do while we wait? And how does the Lord work in us while we wait?
  
9. How are waiting and faith tied together?

10. Has God given you a promise of some sort or called you to “wait” in a particular situation right now? How does this story speak to your heart?

Sarai’s impatience brought pain and conflict to many people. I pray this story reminds us just how important it is to trust in God, His plans, and His Word. We also can’t “make up” promises that we simply “want” to happen and then blame God when they don’t come to pass. His promises are found in His Word, and then we wait, for Him, to bring them to pass. Tomorrow we’ll take a deeper look at the result of their lack of faith.

### **Third Day**

#### **What’s your memory verse?**

1. Read Genesis 16:1-6 again. When Hagar got pregnant, what happened? How did they each respond?
  
2. Who did Sarai blame? And why do you think Abram wouldn’t take any responsibility?
  
3. What happens to Hagar?

Some think that perhaps Hagar was fleeing back to Egypt, her homeland, but as a slave, this certainly wasn’t legal. But the situation at home had obviously become too volatile for her to remain. She should not have taunted Sarai, that’s for sure, but the fact remains, the jealousy between the two women must have seemed unbearable to Hagar, and she attempted to run across the desert, pregnant! How sad that it’s Sarai, the one who knew God, who was treating the Gentile, Hagar, with such cruelty. 😞 How often do we run rather than stay and face the music?

4. Read Genesis 16:7-16. Who did Hagar meet in the wilderness? Explain the encounter.

5. What promise is she given?
  
6. What did God ask her to do? Do you think that would have been easy?

Sarai had wronged Hagar, but God did not allow Hagar to wrong Sarai in return, asking her to go back. Hagar's pain caused her to run away, being true to her name, but because of God's great love for her, the Angel of the Lord meets her face to face. This is what is called a "theophany" or a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Lord Jesus Himself. (This confirms that Christ existed prior to the Incarnation as He says in John 8:58.) God went looking for her and showed her His manifold grace. I think we should call this angel the "Angel of Hope," don't you? He tells her what's ahead for both her and her unborn son. God tells her to go back because what He had planned for her was much greater than her pride, or even her freedom. He gives her a new understanding of her purpose in life. She decides to return and submit to God, by submitting to her mistress, Sarai.

7. What name does Hagar give to God in verse 13?

Have you ever felt cast out, forgotten, discarded, or abandoned? Hagar can feel your pain. She was only "Plan B" in someone else's scheme. Maybe you feel like you are only a Plan B, or an innocent bystander in a situation you find yourself in. Perhaps you wonder if how you feel or who you are matters to anyone. Take heart as you read Hagar's story. God loved her so much. He had eyes for her in her pain and loneliness. He SAW her. And God sees YOU in your pain and suffering as well. If you are reaping the consequence of someone else's sin, God is there for you as well. He has a future and a hope for you, and He will use everything to accomplish His will, even another person's sin. You are never God's PLAN B, I promise.

The name she gives God, "El Roi," is a beautiful name, meaning "You are the God Who Sees Me." Hagar is the first person to whom the Angel of the Lord appeared; the first woman in the Bible to whom God directly made a promise, and she is the only person in the Old Testament to give God a new name. Jacob and Abraham name the place they saw God, but Hagar decided to give God Himself a name. How bold you are, Hagar! Way to go!

Elizabeth George wrote, "What did God do for this desperate woman? **God gave her instructions.** For her safety and well-being, God told Hagar to return to her mistress. In Abram's tent she would find food and water, shelter, and help during her pregnancy. **God gave her encouragement.** She would bear a son. All was not lost. However hopeless life looked,

however hard life was right now, Hagar would one day have a son; a family. **God gave her a promise.** He would multiply her descendants. Yes, Hagar was a slave, but she would become the mother of many.”

8. The God of all hope (Romans 15:13) wants to give you instructions, encouragement, and a promise. Are you willing to receive it? Which of these are you in need of right now?
  
9. Meditate on the name that Hagar gave to God. What does it mean to you? How does it minister to your heart?
  
10. When Hagar cried out, God heard her affliction. He is the God who hears, which is what Ishmael means, as well as the God who sees. She cried out in despair, helplessness, and hopelessness. He promises to hear us when we call, just like He heard Hagar. What do the following verses tell us about calling out in prayer?
  - a. Psalm 116:1-2
  - b. 1 Peter 3:12
  - c. Nehemiah 2:4
  - d. Psalm 56:8
  - e. Romans 8:26

I pray this story reminds you that God is a very present help in times of trouble. God is immutable, meaning that He never changes. This means that just as He heard Hagar, He also will hear your cries and see your pain. He wants to give you wisdom and instruction, as well as comfort and encouragement. Cry out to Him, ladies, that’s always the answer!

#### **Fourth Day**

**Meditate on your verse today and let its full meaning sink in!**

Hagar has an amazing encounter with the True and Living God who gives her the strength to go back and deal with Sarai. Did the Lord change the situation? Doesn’t appear so. But the Lord gave her the grace to endure the hardship. I love this outline that Elizabeth George writes in her book, *Women Who Loved God*. Using Hagar’s story as the example, she writes:

**Exactly what does God see? He sees:**

\*your affliction

\*your struggles

\*your mistreatment

\*your faithfulness

\*your needs

**And how does God respond?**

\*He is always at work

\*He is working out His purposes in your life

\*He provides for you

\*His help is on the way

\*He is moved with compassion

1. Which of these do you need to be reminded of today?

2. Read Genesis 21:1-21. Observe the facts and write a brief summary of the story.

In Genesis 17:5-19, God changed the names of Abram and Sarai to Abraham and Sarah. We see in chapter 21 that the promised son, Isaac, is finally born to the happy parents. Ishmael is about 14 years old when Isaac is born, and then about two years later, at Isaac's party, Ishmael, who is now sixteen, is making fun of the child. Why? Perhaps he is jealous? Perhaps he is just a rebellious teen? I'm not sure why, but it sure makes Sarah angry. And when mama ain't happy, nobody's happy!

3. According to verse 10, how does Sarah handle this situation?

4. Abraham isn't too happy about this, but what does the Lord tell him to do?

5. Hagar and Ishmael are expelled from their home and find themselves in a similar situation as before. Cast out, alone, feeling helpless, Hagar puts the boy under a shrub. Why?

Hagar obviously felt that her son was going to die from hunger and thirst and she didn't know what to do. I can't imagine how she must have felt. Her heart must have felt like it was being ripped out of her chest. As she's sobbing, Ishmael must have been crying too, or at least calling out for help. For the second time, the Angel of the Lord calls out to Hagar, this time from Heaven! God heard their cries again! I love this! I love that the name Ishmael means "God hears." His name will always remind her that God heard her cries in the wilderness. When she has nowhere to turn, she turns once again to the God whom, I hope, she's learned to love.

6. What did God say and do for her?
  
7. According to verses 20-21, did Ishmael survive? What details are we given?

God's words to Hagar came with a two-step exhortation. One of encouragement: **Fear Not!** And the next was a call to action: **Arise!** Faith must be active; we must never give up! Keep on going and do something! God told Hagar not to worry because He was there, and to move forward in His promise. The Lord does the same for us. He reminds us not to be afraid, yet expects us to also move out in faith, fueled by the power of the Holy Spirit. I recently read that action conquers depression, staves off defeat, shakes off despair, and vanquishes discouragement. I agree. I think God does too!

8. Are you presently sitting in a pit of despair, feeling unable to move forward? God is telling you not to be afraid, and to get up and walk. God sees you in your pain. What may happen if you choose to stay in the wilderness?

God became her source of hope once again. Although she was Sarah's Plan B, the Lord never saw her as that. No matter how mistreated she was, Hagar hung on to the Lord. Hagar chose to rise above her "victimization" and embrace the promises of God, which were a bit

similar to Sarah's and Abraham's. Hagar got to live to see Ishmael grow up, get married, have 12 sons, and become the ruler of a great nation (Genesis 25:12-18). Kathy Collard Miller wrote, "The impatience of Abram and Sarai brings generations of grief to their descendants. Hagar's son, Ishmael, becomes the ancestor of the Arabs, who have always been hostile to the Jews. Ishmael is the ancestor of Mohammed, the founder of Islam. Sin doesn't affect just the person who sins, but it often has far-reaching effects. Even when we are forgiven, we may still suffer the consequences of our incorrect choices. In the case of Abram and Sarai, a lack of trust in God resulted in sin. This sin created conflict between Sarai and her servant Hagar, tension between Sarai and Abram, and future generations of strife between Jews and Arabs."

Twice God meets Hagar in her "wilderness of trouble." The Lord opened her eyes in verse 19 and she saw a well of water that she hadn't seen before. God showed her something she couldn't see. Even when it appears there is no blessing, it was right there.

9. "Just because we can't see the water doesn't mean it isn't there." How does this speak to your heart? What does it mean?

That's it for now. Tomorrow we'll look at an interesting analogy Paul uses in the New Testament regarding Hagar. See you then!

### **Fifth Day**

**Write out your verse from memory.**

Many years later, Paul uses Hagar to represent the Old Testament belief that salvation was obtained through good works. He contrasts Hagar with Sarah, whom he used to represent salvation through God's grace.

1. Read Galatians 4:21-31. Explain the contrast between the bondwoman and the freewoman.



we are called to be His hands and feet. We are the ones called to speak up and help the voiceless, the poor, and those in need.

4. Are there any people “without a voice” in your life? Any poor and needy? How can you speak up for them? Is there a Hagar crying in the desert that needs your help?
  
5. Hagar shows us that all lives are priceless to God. She must have felt like she was just an Egyptian slave who was running away from her trouble, yet God showed her that her life was extremely valuable to Him. How does that encourage you? Who can you encourage this truth with today as well?

Have you felt hopeless lately? I must admit I have. The world is falling apart and it’s easy to become afraid. And when “life” touches us personally, it’s even easier to lose hope. In fact, today I found myself staring in the face of despair for a lot longer than I should have. I have never experienced the pain and terror of being in the middle of a real terrorist attack, but sometimes the trials the enemy throws at us feels like an attack on our hearts. I found myself calling out to God, like Hagar, asking Him to see and hear me! I simply needed to know that He sees the pain in my heart. He encouraged me with the same words He said to Hagar long ago; “Fear Not, my daughter! I See YOU. I hear YOU. Now arise and go! Fear not Kelly, I will walk you through this, and give you grace to endure.”

6. How about being as bold and audacious as Hagar, and giving God a name. Any thoughts?

When Abraham died (Genesis 25:8-18), both Ishmael and Isaac were present to bury him next to his beloved Sarah. I wonder how the brother’s relationship was at that time. (How could Ishmael not be jealous of Isaac?) It’s also interesting to me that verse 11 tells us that God blessed Isaac who dwelt in “Beer Lahai Roi,” the same place where the Angel of the Lord originally found Hagar. The name means “The well of the One who Lives and Sees Me.” What a blessing to see that both brothers are “seen by God”, at the very same place. I’m not sure why I find that so significant, but I do!

**May the very name “Hagar” remind you of God’s precious, personal love. Spend some time reading Psalm 139. I pray that the words of David would be like a balm to your very soul.**

