

Sermon Discussion - 25 June 2023

Read Genesis 16:1-15

Getting Started *Sharing from personal experience*

Abram and Sarai felt pressure from their life stage and surrounding culture. Abram, whose name meant “The father of many,” had no children. According to the worldly culture of Abram’s day, he was due to take a concubine and raise up an heir through her.

What are some of the pressures our culture puts on our family that didn’t exist 100 years ago? What are some ungodly values and customs we need to challenge?

Observation *Discovering the context*

Consider some of the themes found in this chapter of Genesis: Submission in circumstances of affliction, when to wait, marriage boundaries, how to assess the question - “Where have you come from and where are you going” in life.

- Do Abram’s and Sarai’s actions in v. 1-6 pose a threat to God’s plan? Is the plan ever in serious danger? Why or why not?
- Abram and Sarai take things into their own hands. Have you ever tried to do God’s job for Him? Perhaps you can think of an example to share with the group.

Interpretation *Discovering the meaning*

1. Abram and Sarai had trouble waiting on God. After 10 years they had trouble with impatience and distrust. Sometimes we are eager to see events unfold and grow weary of waiting for God to act. So, they took a short cut. Unfortunately, shortcuts don’t always take us where we intend to go. Can you recount a time when you tried to “shortcut” God’s plan and it turned out disastrous?
2. What should you do when the promises of God seem slow in being fulfilled? What should you do when you seem to be stuck at a dead end in life with no apparent prospect of seeing your hopes and dreams realised?
3. Consider v. 7-13. How does the Lord treat Hagar? What does He tell her to do? What does He promise? Why was Hagar sent back to Abram and Sarai?
4. Have you ever had to trust the Lord in moments of submission? How did it turn out? Be prepared to share an example with the group.

5. In v. 11 and 13, we come across the name "Ishmael" which means, "God hears." We also encounter the name, "El-Roi" meaning "the God who sees." What comfort or conviction does it bring to think about a God in terms of the One who sees and hears?

Application *Putting knowledge into practice*

- Even in Hagar's doubt, the Lord went out into the wilderness and looked for her. He found her by a well and promised blessing if she would trust Him. It reminds us of another woman at a well centuries later in John 4. The Lord came to her too and offered eternal blessing if she would only trust Him.

Do you doubt God? Perhaps through this story you are learning about the God who loves you and longs to bless you if you will simply trust in Him. If you have questions about this, surface them with your group.

- Try memorising Genesis 16:13...
So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me."
- How has God blessed you and answered prayer this week?