

We are introduced in Genesis 16 for the first time to a person who has no stature in the world's terms. She is a woman. She is a slave. And yet she is the clear object of God's love and provision.

**What nationality was the slave?** Egyptian. **How did she come to be in Abram's home?** When Abram failed in his faith and went to Egypt, he acquired servants (Genesis 12:16). She was probably one of them. Abram was blessed while in Egypt but he has to pay the consequences of his actions in going to Egypt and not waiting on God. There are huge, far reaching consequences!! Because of Egypt there is Hagar, Ishmael, and some Arab nations today.

Did you notice that God is strangely absent from the first six verses? Just like He was absent from the verses that describe the Egypt foray. No one had consulted God or sought His will. No one had called to remembrance His promise to provide a son. No one asked God to provide in the middle of a famine. Everyone used common sense and did what seemed right in his own eyes.

**Application: What lessons can we learn from these first 6 verses?**

- Faith never tries to force God to act, is never manipulative.
- Faith learns to rest in the sovereignty of God. Sarai seems to have considered it her responsibility to produce a son for Abram when God said He would take care of it. (Genesis 15:4)

**In verse two, Sarai said, "The Lord has kept me from having children."** She was blaming God. Was that true/justifiable? Yes

**What does that mean for us today?** The Lord still opens (or closes) the wombs of women today.

**Why did Hagar begin to despise Sarai?** She considered herself to be in a privileged position (carrying Abram's child) and resented submitting to Sarai.

**What do you make of Sarai's statements in verse 5 concluding with "May the lord judge between you and me?"** Sarai is playing the blame game. With anger in her voice, she said, "The Lord judge between you and me. This is your fault—not mine!"

**Was she right? Was it Abram's fault?** She was right; it was ultimately his fault. You cannot read this story without seeing Abram as the responsible party.

**In what ways was Abram responsible/at fault?**

1. Abram was a passive husband not a loving leader. What a time this was for Abram to lead, stand firm on the basis of Genesis 15:4, but instead he passively followed the instructions of his wife. Abram did as he was told. He got the heir that Sarah wanted but not the heir that God had in mind.
2. What an opportunity for Abram to love his wife. He should have taken his wife in his arms and presented her before the Lord, asking Him to meet her needs and to help them both to understand what God had promised. Abram should have promised security and leadership when she was living with her heartache and sickness of spirit, but he did not.
3. Sarai cried out in her heartache to Abram. She laid her burden before him and made what seemed like an excellent suggestion under the circumstances. She made it to the right person, not just because he was her husband but because he was Abram, the man who spoke directly with God.

**Application:** Abram obviously failed in his relationship with his wife, what ways do we fail our spouses?

**What character qualities do we see in Abram and Sarai in verses 1-6?**

- Abram is avoiding confrontation with Hagar—one of the worst mistakes a leader can make.
- Abram is passive and not intentional. He follows the lead of his wife (as Adam before him had followed the suggestion of Eve), and he stumbles badly.
- Instead of patiently waiting for God to fulfill the promise in His own way and in His own time, they took matters into their own hands—a faith failure.
- While Sarai was angry with Abram, she must have known that it was she who had made Hagar's bed. She wanted an heir. She planned the honeymoon. No confession or repentance of sin is found as yet on Sarai's lips—only bitter remorse.

- Abram did not change his course. He should have learned that his passivity was not piety. He was the accomplice to sin by refusing to resist it or to rebuke Sarai. Sarai's stinging rebuke served only to cause Abram to retreat further. He did not acknowledge his sin, nor did he confront Sarai with hers. Instead he persisted in allowing Sarai to have her own way, relinquishing his leadership.

**Application:** Family life is the most difficult arena in which to be godly. "You see me as \_\_\_\_, but my spouse sees me as \_\_\_\_." Why?

It was perfectly lawful according to social custom of the day, that when a woman could not provide her husband with a child, she could give her female slave as a wife and claim the child of this union as her own. So it was socially acceptable for Abram to get an heir through Sarai's maid, but what does that tell us about Abram's attitude toward God? At this point, Abram could choose either to make the promise happen himself or to continue to wait for God, seeking His approval, understanding, and direction. He had the opportunity to either replace God or to follow Him. That is why Abram's decision was such a great tragedy. This was clearly not God's way of providing an heir even though it was an acceptable custom of the day. It is written in Galatians 4:22-23 that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

**Who would Hagar's descendants eventually become?** Some of the Arab nations of today. Once grown, Ishmael, according to the Bible, (Genesis 21:21) married an Egyptian woman. But the Arabs say he also married a daughter of Sheik Mudad, who bore Adnan, the ancestor of Mohammed, the founder of Islam, the religion of the Arab state.

**What are the implications/consequences for today?** Continued hostility between Arabs and Jews.

**Why was Hagar, an Egyptian maidservant, so important to the Lord?** She was a child of God. God loved her as He loves everyone. God chased after her just as He does with each one of us. She was a recipient of God's grace.

**Did the angel of the Lord give Hagar an encouraging message?** Yes and no.

- He told her to go back and submit to Sarai—though the situation wouldn't get easier.
- He told her she was bearing a son—and even named him.
- He promised lots of descendants but also lots of hostility.

**Application:** In Verse 13 Hagar gives the Lord a name—"the God who sees me"--and she states that she has now seen the One who sees her. What comfort can we draw from this verse?

**Note:** This is the first mention in the Bible of "the angel of the Lord."

**Is God's plan in danger here? Is He going to have to improvise because of Abram's decision? Is the heir the wrong heir??** No, God's plan is not in danger. Remember Abram's trip to Egypt and giving away Sarai the mother-to-be of the heir. God's plan has always been in place and will not be thwarted. But it was complicated by Abram having another son.