

# What You Need to Know About ABRAHAM:

## “God Is Faithful to Keep His Promises”

### Study Number Four – Genesis 16:1-16

This particular study is the low point. We had the high point in our last study. It's a very difficult time and yet there's some powerful lessons that come out of it.

One of the very first things that we learn when we get into exposition of scripture and dealing with biographies, is that there are no instant heroes. There are no giants made overnight.

They all have those things in their lives that they are vulnerable to. And we are going to see spiritual warfare in our passage.

Here are The Devil's Beatitudes. These certainly help us understand why we are in the mess we're in as we look at this passage of scripture.

1. Blessed are those who are too tired, too busy, too distracted to spend an hour once a week with their fellow Christians—they are my best workers.
2. Blessed are those Christians who wait to be asked and

expect to be thanked—I can use them.

3. Blessed are the touchy who stop going to church—they are my missionaries.
4. Blessed are the trouble makers—they shall be called my children.
5. Blessed are the complainers—I'm all ears to them.
6. Blessed are those who are bored with the minister's mannerisms and mistakes—for they get nothing out of his sermons.
7. Blessed is the church member who expects to be invited to his own church—for he is a part of the problem instead of the solution.
8. Blessed are those who gossip—for they shall cause strife and divisions that please me.
9. Blessed are those who are easily offended—for they will soon get angry and quit.
10. Blessed are those who do not give their offering to carry on God's work—for they are my helpers.
11. Blessed is he who professes to love God but hates his brother and sister—for he shall be with me forever.

12. Blessed are you who, when you read this, thinks it is about other people and not yourself—I've got you too!

(Received via email April 16, 2006)

We've watched Abram in that great moment of faith and trust leaving Ur of the Chaldees, not knowing where he was going. He was to be separated from his family, but he started out with quite a few of them.

They got to Haran and stayed there for six years until Terah the father died. Then they resumed the journey to the land of Canaan.

When they got to Canaan there were two surprises:

1. There were Canaanites already living in the land and
2. The economic collapse had already taken place and so he leaves without any instructions from the Lord and goes down to Egypt—a 250-mile trip south.

On the way he asks his wife to lie and say that she is his sister so that Pharaoh will treat them kindly. And of course, Sarah is taken into Pharaoh's harem once she gets there. But God miraculously delivered her from that situation. They were deported without any honor and went back to Canaan.

And then our next episode was a long trip back to the will of God, wasn't it? It was a very painful trip indeed. And then

there was the instant conflict between the cowboys of Lot and the cowboys of Abram.

And out of that came the separation that God wanted in the first place, because He's continually separating us unto Himself.

Lot chose for himself. Abram let God choose for him.

Lot selfishly took the well-watered plains of Jordan where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located. And there in that city, because of a battle shortly thereafter, he and all of his family and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were taken into captivity by four other stronger kings.

Abram was using that situation to deliver them and set them free. So in chapter 15 it was like we started with this horrible sense of fear on the part of Abram. He's a foreigner in this land and yet he's done all this. Are they going to retaliate?

And the Lord just tells him, "Look, don't worry. It's all in My hands. I've got it under control. Everything is going to be just fine."

And then just to help Abram realize that God is at work, He makes it clear:

1. "There is going to be a SEED that's going to come from you."

And it's going to be greater than the "stars in the sky." Remember that illustration? And the "dust of the earth" back in chapter 13.

2. "Abram, this LAND is all yours by title D."

And it's kind of like God knows our hearts. So many times, when God makes promises like that, we want something visible to show us that it's really going to happen.

It's like Gideon, "I'll go fight the Mideonites if You'll make the fleece wet one day and the ground dry. And if You'll make it dry the next day and the ground wet, then I'll believe You and I'll go."

We almost feel that way about Abram. God understood that. So what does He do?

In our last study we could practically sense the Spirit of God as we talked about, He alone walking between the pieces. Just the awareness that God loves us so much that He obligates Himself to an unconditional covenant. Cutting those animals in half, putting Abram to sleep, and He alone walking between the pieces saying, "This is what I'm going to do. It's going to involve your seed and it's going to involve your land."

So we're singing, "Glory, glory, hallelujah!" because our hero was at the altar, he's in his tent, he's worshipping with God, he's where he needs to be at the Oaks of Mamre, he's right in the center of God's will. But how quickly it changes.

Where in Genesis 15 we have GREAT FAITH, in chapter 16 we have GREAT UNBELIEF.

In chapter 15 we had the HIGH POINT, in chapter 16 we have the LOW POINT.

In chapter 15 he's listening to GOD, in chapter 16 he's listening to his WIFE.

In chapter 15 he's walking in the SPIRIT. In chapter 16 he's walking in the FLESH.

It shows us how close they are together.

The main thought is we have a man endeavoring to help God fulfil His promises, which have already been made to him. And God made them unconditionally and God never told Abram—in fact He put him to sleep to get him out of the way while He made the promises. They will be fulfilled. And God has never failed to fulfil a promise that He's made.

So why are we in the mess we're in? Why is Abram and Sarah vulnerable? We always try to find an excuse in the flesh when there is an involvement of submission and obedience. Those are words that are hard for us to accept. And yet God is expecting this of his heroes, that they'll be submissive to His plan, that they'll be obedient to His word.

Then there are two other words that just constantly hound us:

1. PATIENCE—willing to wait for the process, for God to do what He's going to do and not to mess it all up by fouling it all up by getting involved in it.
2. SURRENDER—letting God be God and doing it His way.

Now those words, all four of them, could culminate in what's getting ready to happen as our team fails.

So the big question that is laid before us is:

Would Abram take matters out of the hands of God and act in the energy of the flesh to the accomplishment of God's promise for a son?

That encapsulates it all.

When we're honest about it we realize there have been times in the flesh that we've been a horrible embarrassment to God. And that each of us in our spiritual journey realize that that's so painful, we don't ever go there again. And so it's motivation to walk closer to Him than ever before.

Just remember, there is no experience that's all of a sudden going to make us a spiritual giant. It's a daily walk with God in the word, in prayer, disciplined to be faithful, that progress is made, and then Christlikeness begins to reveal itself.

D. L. Moody put it this way:

God never made a promise that was too good to be true.  
(source unknown)

God never made a promise that was not fulfilled.

In Genesis 15 God walks between the pieces. Their faith is soaring off the charts and we're thrilled to death as we close the curtain. But now here we are.

Vance Havner described it well:

The detour is always worse than the main road.  
(source unknown)

And we're going on a detour.

One of the commentators called this chapter:

Beware of Detours!  
(source unknown)

Let's get into the text now—verse 1.

**v. 1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar;**

“Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar;”

Well the first thing we have is she has borne no children. She is 75 years old as the study opens and her husband is 85.

“Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar;”

He probably picked up Hagar when they were down in Egypt and Sarah just blew a fuse. When she got back, she probably said, “Do you realize you stuck me in Pharaoh’s harem and I had to literally tell him that I was your wife to get out of that mess?” I think any good husband would reward his wife by giving her a maid, because I’m sick and tired of cooking and cleaning the tent.”

And so the negotiation was, “Hagar’s going to go back with us and become the maid.”

But now, let’s put ourselves in the position of a 75-year-old woman who realizes that she’s probably past child-bearing years, that is unless they’re going to make history and have a geriatric ward with a baby in it. And the husband is no spring chicken either at this point.

Many times this is the way we think, and this is not right, okay? We have the unconditional promises of God that it’s going to happen. Okay, we’ve got that. But then how do we interpret that?

1. Stage 1—How are YOU going to give us a seed?

That's a legitimate question. "How are You going to do this God, considering our age and the fact that I've not had a child yet?"

And then that changes with time:

2. How are WE going to get a seed?

Not "You." "God, obviously the delay means it's a joint venture so how are WE going to get a seed?"

3. How am I going to get this promise fulfilled?

In other words, "It obviously all depends on ME. So how am I going to get it fulfilled?"

Someone wrote:

There are times when God asks nothing of His children, except silence, patience and ears.

(source unknown)

And someone said:

You're never late when you wait on the Lord.

(source unknown)

We think that it's late but we never are when we wait on Him.

So, it's one thing to commit our way to the Lord and it's another thing to trust in Him, and it's a third thing to wait until He brings it to pass.

Now we can add one additional word to this verse.

“Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children YET.”

If they could have just seen that, known that God’s aware, the time clock is ticking. God has to get them beyond the age of being able to produce anything so that God will get all the glory for everything that happens. That’s all He’s waiting on. And obviously they don’t understand that.

Isn’t it interesting how when adversity happens in our lives, we have a tendency to get God in the middle of them and blame Him for them?

In Genesis 30 we have another graphic illustration of a barren woman. Rachel was much loved by Jacob and it seemed like the seven years that he worked for her was only a few days. But then a tricky father-in-law put Leah in the bed instead of Rachel.

So it’s seven more years out of love—that’s fourteen years he’s invested in this woman. And now on top of all that, she can’t have kids.

Leah, she’s got four right out of the box—Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. Judah means “praise the Lord” so she’s

saying, “praise the Lord for number four, I want some more.” She’s just blowing Rachel away.

Finally when we get to Genesis 30, we read:

Genesis 30:1, 2

When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, “Give me children or I’ll die!” Jacob became angry with her and said, “Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?”

In other words, it was the patriarchal statement of theology that if there weren’t children being born, it was an act of God against the mother who was barren.

**v. 2 so she said to Abram, “The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.” Abram agreed to what Sarai said.**

“so”— because Hagar is there—“she said to Abram, ‘The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps’”

Look at the next statement:

“perhaps God can build a family through her?”

See where the focus is? We've gotten to the "I":

"perhaps I can save God's reputation and keep the promise and fulfill it."

"perhaps I can build a family through her.' Abram agreed to what Sarai said."

And this is where he should have prayed a lot and neither one of them prayed at all about this situation.

Now what's so bad about that? Just looking at her on the surface, it's patriarchal privilege. It's acceptable behavior, even though it's not biblical.

Genesis 1 made it very clear when Eve was created. It was till "death do us part." You leave your father and your mother and you cleave to your wife. (see Genesis 2:24)

All Biblical mandates, but because of the patriarchal change of things, this is acceptable behavior.

Now what's wrong with that?

1. It's wrong against GOD because He's already given the promise that He's going to do it.
2. It's wrong against ABRAM. He's now leaving the pathway of the will of God in what he's doing.

3. It's wrong against HAGAR. It's not right to use her in this way.

4. It's wrong against SARAI. It's robbing her of the high privilege and it's leading to definite disobedience.

In His time, it's already ours. God is going to make the provision.

The covenant said, "Sand and stars Abram. You've gotten your eyes on the circumstances and off of the promises. And the worst thing of all is that right now your faith is in a free fall and the ground is coming up fast! And it's going to be a mess."

There are two things here:

1. We are vulnerable to PRESUMPTION.

We assume that to properly relate to those circumstances, in order to vindicate God we have to do something. We don't have to do anything.

2. There's DISTRUST or UNBELIEF.

He just said, 'It's all Me. I'm doing this as a promise to you.'

God alone walked between the pieces. "Abram, get your mind on the sand and the stars and off of the Egyptian maid."

Galatians 3:3

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

God wants to do it His way. But Adam listened to Eve and Abram listened to Sarai.

Three things converge to build a case for Sarai, okay? Now remember God said to Abram, “out of your body the seed is going to come.” But He never mentioned the woman.

In a marriage relationship, the man and the woman are one flesh. So what’s said for him involves her. But because Sarai was not mentioned specifically now they are assuming that this could be a possibility that God would bless and accept.

Okay, what are the **THREE THINGS** that converge here to make her so vulnerable?

1. Sarai is barren—we know that,
2. Hagar is at hand, and
3. Sarai is urging him on what is about to be done.

And neither one of them pray about this. There is no altar, there is no tent, there is no fellowship with God asking Him if this is right.

Now there are **TWO THINGS**:

1. They did not call on the Lord and
2. Sarai says, “perhaps I can build a family through her.”

“It’s not for you to do sweet Sarai! I love you but it’s not your prerogative to put your hand to an act and a promise of God as though you’re going to fulfil it.”

“Sarai, in the flesh you’re going to build one alright. But some of us in the future are going to remember that and the suffering that we’re going through right now over in the land of Israel is a result of your act of the flesh.”

It’s a very serious matter when we don’t take God at His word and we try to do it on our own.

Eve fell into it, the fruit looked attractive, she shared it with her husband, and plunged a whole human race into sin that brought Christ to Calvary.

“Abram agreed to what Sarai had said.”

R. Kent Hughes says in his commentary:

There is also an ironic reversal here. Down in Egypt, trustless Abram had given Sarai over to the Egyptian Pharaoh. Now in Canaan untrusting Sarai gave Abram over to her Egyptian servant. Abram’s fiasco in Egypt was costly indeed.

(source unknown)

We wish that just like we heard from Joseph's lips when Potiphar's wife solicited him, that he would have refused. He'd just said, "This doesn't fit. This doesn't smell right. This is not the way God fulfils His promises."

We wish he would have the courage to say, "No Sarai, just back off." And be willing to wait for another period of time. But all of this together causes him not to act like Daniel who "purposed in his heart" he wouldn't do this. Joseph refused. Abram says, "Okay, whatever you say! I want you to be happy. And so, let's go for it."

Alexander MacLaren on Psalm 1-37 says the following:

(The Expositor's Bible: The Book of Psalms-Volume I- Psalms I-XXXVIII by A. Maclaren, D.D.)

Hands, lifted empty to heaven in longing trust, will never drop empty back and hang listless, without a blessing in their grasp.

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In other words, a hand lifted toward heaven will never return empty and listless without some blessing.

And here God has made it so clear that now they are focused on the immediate situation.

**v. 3 So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.**

“So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.”

Okay there’s no seed for ten years. Time has run out on the clock. We’ve got to take action.

There’s one thing that’s disregarded here. Who is Hagar? She’s part of the cursed seed of Ham—Noah’s son that was cursed by God because of his disobedience in seeing the nakedness of his father in the tent.

This woman is a part of the curse not the blessing. This is not the way God works. And how hard it’s going to be from here on in because of the seeming act of obedience which is very much disobedience.

Don’t make the mistake of saying that God has to do something, because it means that we are dictating to God what He has to do. We don’t ever, ever, ever want to do that. He is sovereign, He’s made promises, He has a plan and a purpose. We’re not locked into it, we don’t know what it is. And together we’ve got to discover it. No matter what it is, it will turn out in the way that God wants it for His glory and honor. And we must never be in a place of telling God what He

has to do to make us happy.

Never say God must do something. He must not. God will fulfil His own word and it is not our business to dictate to Him.

Why did they do it this way? Some verses in Proverbs 3 fit well here.

### Proverbs 3:5-7

Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Be not wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord and shun evil.

And here our hero has limited God by the fact that they feel like they have the answer.

John Ortberg makes this observation that God is probably shouting right now in the passage:

(God Is Closer Than You Think by John Ortberg)

When Jesus says your name twice, watch out! Often he calls someone's name when he is especially trying to get their attention:

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. . . .”  
But I have prayed for you. . . .”

“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” [on the Damascus Road]

We sometimes do the same thing. The single most repeated line from an old television show called *The Brady Bunch* featured a frustrated sister, named Jan, who was always complaining about her sibling: “Marsha, Marsha, Marsha. . . .”

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And we can almost hear the Lord as He’s sitting in the home at Bethany of Mary and Martha saying:

“Martha, Martha, Martha. . . .”

“Martha, Martha, Martha, you’re in a royal snit and Mary has chosen the good part. She’s sitting here before Me and listening to My word. We’ll get the other done later.”

We can just hear God saying, “Abram, Abram, Abram, please not again! Yes, you went to Egypt out of the will of God! Yes, you lied about Sarai! Now please, not again.”

“Sarai, Sarai, Sarai, whatever you do, don’t take the cursed handmaid Hagar and place her with your husband because I’ve got a far greater plan for your life.”

All men are vulnerable, but Abram got his mind off of sand and stars and he focused on sex. This is the way to get it done,

obviously. Sex—that will get it done right now. We will make this work. And so she comes into the picture.

Fénelon writes the following:

(Fénelon: Selected Writings – The Classics of Western Spirituality Edited and translated by Chad Helms)

They ran after these things at the expense of innocence and virtue. They became agitated, tortured even, in grasping at the vain, chimerical illusion of happiness, and they ended up losing both their tranquility and peace of mind. They were all unhappy because they wanted too much and because they did not know how to put up with anything or wait for anything.

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That’s where they are now. And when we’re most eager to act is when we’re going to make the most pitiful mistake.

Verse 4 tells us what happens.

**v. 4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.**

“He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.”

A lot of people would be surprised and say, “See, that’s God’s plan. We were successful in this. She’s going to have a baby so we’re on the way.”

Those are the initial thoughts here.

“When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.”

That’s something that we didn’t talk about before. When we take a marriage designed for two and make it a triangle and get three in it, there’s nothing but verbal abuse, jealousy, hatred and all the ugly things of the flesh. And the sad, sad picture of God’s original design was one man and one woman in the marriage relationship.

Well, they’re in a total free fall now. The fruit of sowing to the wind is a whirlwind. And whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

There’s an interesting relationship between the flesh and the spirit, and what happens as a fruitage of the flesh and what happens in the fruitage of the spirit.

In Galatians chapter 5, beginning with verses 19 down to verse 21 we have fifteen manifestations of the flesh over on one side. Then at verses 22 and 23 we have nine manifestations of the Spirit and the Spirit is in control.

It’s just like the difference between day and night here. Hagar is so happy to get out of Egypt she is now the handmaid of Sarai, the mother of all living. What a privilege to cook and to clean and to be a part of this family here in the land of

Canaan.

Now she becomes pregnant and everything changes. Eight of those fifteen words that are manifestations of the flesh have to do with interpersonal relationships.

Here are the eight:

1. “enmities,
2. “strive,”
3. “jealousy,”
4. “outbursts of anger,”
5. “disputes,”
6. “dissensions,”
7. factions,” and
8. “envyings.”

All of them ugly words. But don't get surprised. We see them constantly among believers who are walking in the flesh. And watch out if we see it in our own life that we are personally not for a time walking in the flesh rather than in the spirit.

Robert Dingley said the following:

Sin puts chinks in the creatures, whereby very much of their sweetness and goodness leaked out.

(source unknown)

What is a chink? That's a bad can. There's a hole and much of the sweetness and the goodness leaked out in the process.

Sin does that to us. Sin activates the flesh. And these things begin to happen.

David Jeremiah says it so well:

(Sanctuary: Finding Moments of Refuge in the Presence of God by David Jeremiah)

When we try to live our lives in our own strength, we ultimately fail. And we don't fail, we fall very short of God's purposes for us. When we operate in the flesh, three things are always true: [now pay attention to this] (1) we will always lack the power of the Spirit, and we'll suffer from fatigue [is number one]; (2) we will always lack the vision of the Spirit so we'll suffer from frustration; and (3) we will always lack the sustaining ministry of the Spirit so we'll suffer from failure.

Do these consequences sound familiar? You will always suffer these results when you tackle life in your own strength.  
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And that's where we find Abram and Sarai and what they have done.

**v. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.”**

“Then Sarai said to Abram, ‘You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering.’”

Who suggested this in the first place? All of the men are laughing.

“I put my servant in your arms,”—What a sad thing. We never needed to do that—“and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.”

Now of course, what’s she thinking? “Here I am promoted! I am now going to be the mother of the child of my master.”

“You know something else? I’m too cool to cook and I’m too cool to clean tents anymore. I am now the future mother of the seed that they’ve been looking for for so long.”

Abram is probably quoting Proverbs here:

Proverbs 21:9

Better to live on the corner of a roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.

Sarai is just making it clear that the wrong is on the part of both of them. There's wounded pride and there's jealousy, and this leads to cruelty.

We can almost hear her triggering this. Hagar says, "You know, I think I'm beginning to show. You're going to have to bring out the maternity clothes because I am going to be momma of your husband's child."

Now we think all women wouldn't talk like that. Here's one more illustration of that so we don't think this is isolated.

Remember when Hannah was barren and Elkanah was frustrated by it because he was married to Peninnah too? Peninnah is the wife kind of like Leah who's having all these kids and Hannah can't have a baby. And every time he'd go up to worship she'd beg God for that.

### 1 Samuel 1:6-8

And because the Lord had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. Elkanah her husband would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

Why? Why? Why?

“You know the answer to all of them! I’m barren, I’m barren, I’m barren! And I don’t have a baby!”

In the saga, she can’t stand the sight of Peninnah. All of that brought these horrible feelings.

Proverbs 30 describes this passage so graphically. We almost think that it was written before, but it’s really written hundreds of years later.

### Proverbs 30:21-23

“Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up: a servant who becomes king, a fool who is full of food, an unloved woman who is married, and a maidservant who displaces her mistress.

There it is! Described by Solomon many years later but the picture fits the text.

“May God judge between you and me.”

**v. 6 “Your servant is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.**

“‘Your servant is in your hands,’ Abram said. ‘Do with her whatever you think best.’ Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.”

When someone is filled with jealousy, anger, rage, hurt and pain, we're not only going to have verbal abuse, but probably a little bit of physical abuse. We see that in the word "mistreated."

Jerry Bridges wrote the following:

(The Gospel for Real Life: Turn to the Liberating Power of the Cross . . . Every Day by Jerry Bridges)

We evangelical believers generally abstain from the grosser sins of society; in fact, we tend to sit in judgment of those who practice such things. But beneath the surface of our own lives we tolerate all kinds of "refined" sins such as selfishness, covetousness, pride, resentment, envy, jealousy, self-righteousness, and a critical spirit toward others.  
pp. 25-26

That's convicting. We see the manifestation of the flesh, not only in Abram and Sarai, but we see it now in the outbursts that are coming from this.

When we get to verse 7, the Lord shows up. The angel of the Lord is the pre-incarnate Christ and so we're going to see him now dialoging with Hagar and making everybody aware of the fact that he's fully cognoscente of what's going on.

**v. 7 The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road**

**to Shur.**

“The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.”

Now where is that? She is heading back to Egypt as fast as she can. Shur is in Egypt. And as soon as she leaves the house she’s heading south.

She’s going to have her baby down in Egypt and live in Egypt for the rest of her life and take this child with her.

It’s almost like the Lord met the woman at the well, isn’t it? In John 4. He has a way of meeting women at the wells because here is Hagar in this situation trying to run away.

**v. 8 And he said, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?” “I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered.**

“And he said, ‘Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?’ ‘I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,’ she answered.”

Now we’re asking, isn’t the Lord omniscient and omnipresent? Yes. But many times He gives us the opportunity to verbalize the dilemma so that we’re aware that He knows it.

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

And she says:

“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,”

These questions are already known to the Lord.

**v. 9 Then the angel of the Lord told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.”**

“Then the angel of the Lord told her, ‘Go back to your mistress and submit to her.’”

When circumstances get bad, we don’t like that. Go back and take some more and submit.

Now since we know the story ahead of time, what’s involved? That’s thirteen more years, as the scene of the study opens in our next passage, that she’s going to have to live in this situation—besides bearing the child.

We feel as spiritual individuals that when things get rough, we take a reading on circumstances and we can’t be found anywhere. When it gets hot, we get out of the kitchen. When it gets tough, we look for more pleasant pastures.

The theology has got to be that when things get rough God’s got His hand on us and He’s getting ready to bear greater fruit through us than ever before. So we need to stay, many times, where we are and wait for God’s voice to say it’s time to rise

and go.

But for now, in His purpose and His plan for her, “You go back and you submit to her.”

“Yes! I am aware of what you’re going through.” And the flesh does like to run away and the flesh doesn’t like to submit, they want a change of circumstances, they want to get out of the fire. They want to go to some other wonderful place. But the scripture says, “That which is not cured must be endured.”

When we can’t cure it, God’s basically saying it must be endured. Return and submit.

We shall never get it right, never, if we do not follow in the steps of our Savior and do exactly what He says.

**v. 10 The angel added, “I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.”**

“The angel added, ‘I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.’”

Talk about grace!

In the face of disobedience and in the flesh, the Lord is going to recover a bad situation by giving her a little glimpse of the fact that this child is going to be a child that will have many descendants.

Now he doesn't describe it until we get here a little bit further

**v. 11 The angel of the Lord also said to her: “You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery.**

“The angel of the Lord also said to her: ‘You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery.’”

Ishmael means “God shall hear.”

So every time she calls him, she's reminded of the fact that God heard her when she tried to run away and told her to go back and to submit.

Doesn't this sound a lot like Matthew 1:21?

Matthew 1:21

And she shall bring forth a son and thou shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.

Here's God again saying to her, “This is going to be your child.”

But there are **FOUR THINGS** that make us realize that the Arabs haven't changed much. When we get to verse 12,

recognize all four of them as part of the portrait of the present Arab nation. We just can't miss it.

**v. 12 He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."**

"He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."

1. "He will be a wild donkey of a man;"
2. "his hand will be against everyone,"
3. "and everyone's hand against him," and
4. "he will live in hostility toward all of his brothers."

Every one of those describes the Arab nation.

So those four things are true, aren't they? We read statements like that and it's almost hard to believe.

Listen to what we're dealing with in our present time:

(Unveiling Islam: An Insider's Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs by Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fethi Caner)

Consequently, the Qur'an has much to say about who Allah

does *not* love:

For Allah loves not transgressors. (2:190)

For [Allah] loves not any ungrateful sinner. (2:276)

For Allah loves not those who do wrong. (3:57)

For Allah loves not the arrogant, the vainglorious. (4:36)<sup>3</sup>

3. For further discussion, see Tom Terry, “Does God Love Me?” at [aboutisa.com](http://aboutisa.com); accessed 26 November 2001.

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Allah’s heart is set against the infidel (kafir) [that’s us]. He has no love for the unbeliever, nor is it the task of the Muslim to “evangelize” the unbelieving world. Allah is to be worshiped, period. Any who will not do so must be defeated, silenced, or expelled. The theme is conquest, not conversion, of the unbelieving world. Allah has called the Muslim to make the name of Allah alone to be worshiped.

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On that basis, and in compliance with Allah’s order, we issue the following fatwa to all Muslims

*The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque [of course that’s the big one] and the holy mosque from their grip, and in order for their armies*

to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty Allah, “and fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together,” and “fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah.”

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Those kinds of statements are coming from guys that have grown up in this. And their research is so valid and yet it's so shocking.

An act of the flesh by our heroes have created the circumstances we're dealing with in present times.

**v. 13 She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”**

“She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me.’”

**v. 14 That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.**

“That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.”

**v. 15 So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the**

**name Ishmael to the son she had borne.**

“So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne.”

**v. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.**

“Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.”

**2 Samuel 11:27**

. . . But the thing David had done displeased the Lord.

That holds true in this situation.

There are ten lessons that come out of our passage.

Notice one other thing, there is a gap of thirteen years between this verse and the first verse in our next study. That tells us that nothing significant happens when a person is living in the flesh and out of fellowship with God.

The Bible is going to skip over those thirteen years and our heroes are going to be thirteen years older.

Lesson #1: Satan rushes men and God leads them.

Lesson #2: The Lord is always on time for the fulfillment of

what He has promised.

Lesson #3: It is one thing to commit our way unto the Lord and it is quite another to continue to trust Him in the delays and wait for Him to bring it to pass.

Lesson #4: The old nature within us has a desire to help God to keep His promises.

Lesson #5: The natural thing is not the supernatural thing to do in this circumstance.

Lesson #6: How much we need to seek God's guidance and direction before we make decisions that affect our future walk with God.

Lesson #7: We must learn how to not lean on our own understanding and to recognize that many times our thoughts are not His thoughts and our ways are not His ways.

Lesson #8: Disruptions in personal relationships often accompany works of the flesh.

Lesson #9: Many times the flesh wants to run away when it is the Spirit's desire that we return and submit to the authority.

Lesson #10: The consequences of operating in the flesh can affect generations which follow us as well as ourselves. This is seen in the birth of the Arab nation.

R. Kent Hughes said:

Christian, are you contemplating an expediency to obtain what you imagine to be God's will in your most treasured relationship—in a friendship—in a professional pursuit—in your career—in your education—in your ministry? If so, take a deep breath.

Stand back.

Take some time.

Read God's Word.

Think.

Pray.

And obey the revealed will of God.

(source unknown)

Spurgeon said:

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon)

Having made Jesus his all, he shall find all in Jesus. His soul shall be as a watered garden, and as a well of water whose waters fail not.

p. 705

Ken Blanchard said there are five disciplines that we must attain consistently in our life:

(The Servant Leader: Transforming Your Heart, Head, Hands & Habits by Ken Blanchard & Phil Hodges)

SOLITUDE — *Spending time alone with God*

PRAYER — *Speaking with [the Lord]*

STORING UP GOD'S WORD — *[that's by memory]*

FAITH IN UNCONDITIONAL LOVE — *[that He loves you that way and you can trust Him]*

INVOLVEMENT IN ACCOUNTABILITY  
RELATIONSHIPS — *[is number 5]*

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Father, teach us from Your Word how to walk effectively with You in the power of the Spirit. Lord, we know the gauge to that is our interpersonal relationships. We realize that when the Spirit is manifesting His fruit in our lives, there is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, discipline, self-control. Lord God, produce that more and more in our lives daily because we are clean, empty vessels for You to work. Lord God, we realize that time is running out and the pains of the final drama are all about us. Enable us to look up and to be focused on You and wanting to please Jesus more than anything else in the world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

# What You Need to Know About ABRAHAM: “God Is Faithful to Keep His Promises”

## Study Number Four – Genesis 16:1-16

### NOTES

v. 1 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar;

v. 2 so she said to Abram, “The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.” Abram agreed to what Sarai said.

v. 3 So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.

v. 4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.

v. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.”

v. 6 “Your servant is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

v. 7 The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.

v. 8 And he said, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?” “I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered.

v. 9 Then the angel of the Lord told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.”

v. 10 The angel added, “I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.”

v. 11 The angel of the Lord also said to her: “You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery.

## NOTES

v. 13 She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”

v. 14 That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

v. 15 So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne.

v. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

## QUESTIONS:

1. Read Genesis 16:1-16 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. What proposal does Sarai give to Abram in verse 2?

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3. How did Abram respond in verses 3 & 4?

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4. How did Sarai feel about her proposal after the plan had been carried out?

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5. How does the angel of the Lord respond to Hagar in verses 7-12?

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6. What is Hagar's response in verse 13?

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7. Describe what happened in verse 15.

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8. How many years transpired in Abram's life from this event until he heard again a word from the Lord? The answer to this question can be seen by comparing the last verse in chapter 16 with the first verse of chapter 17.

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9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

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10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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**LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Satan rushes men and God leads them.

LESSON #2: The Lord is always on time for the fulfillment of what He has promised.

LESSON #3: It is one thing to commit our way unto the Lord and it is quite another to continue to trust Him in the delays and wait for Him to bring it to pass.

LESSON #4: The old nature within us has a desire to help God to keep His promises.

LESSON #5: The natural thing is not the supernatural thing to do in this circumstance.

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LESSON #7: We must learn how to not lean on our own understanding and to recognize that many times our thoughts are not His thoughts and our ways are not His ways.

LESSON #8: Disruptions in personal relationships often accompany works of the flesh.

LESSON #9: Many times the flesh wants to run away when it is the Spirit's desire that we return and submit to the authority.

LESSON #10: The consequences of operating in the flesh can affect generations which follow us as well as ourselves. This is seen in the birth of the Arab nation.