

Introduction

In May of 2000, Kathleen was going through chemotherapy and I was living at the Children's Hospital of Atlanta. I had resigned from the prison and laid down the church that I was pastoring. I had lots of expenses and no income. A number of family members, not Karen, gave me counsel to become a day trader. They gave me a book and a set of videos to watch. They said it was very easy to follow the principles in the book and make an excellent living. I ran it by Karen and she was okay with me doing it. So, I moved forward and became a day trader. I was doing bull put spreads, calls, and all kinds of options. It looked like a good plan, but... My background was not in trading stocks, bonds, and options. I had taken a college class in investments, but that was not my background or passion. My internet was poor and erratic in the hospital. I did not have access to all the information. My first priority was taking care of Kathleen. We had a couple of close calls. Even though our other children came and visited and some of them stayed with us at the hospital, most of the time I was Kathleen's companion as she went through all the treatments, doctor visits, etc. I did not have the time to devote to being a day trader. Furthermore, the dot coms had done very well for many years. But, by 2000, they had reached a bubble, and that bubble decided to collapse while I was in the hospital. Stocks like JDSU went from \$200.00 to \$3.00. My investments went south in a hurry, and I was not able to wisely manage the turbulent times. This was what we call an Ishmael in our life. It was not born of the Spirit, but was born of the flesh. I should have rejected the strong suggestions and counsel of well-meaning family members. Even though most of you have probably not become a day trader, most of us can identify with doing something out of the flesh, rather than the Spirit.

In our text today, Abram and Sarai were promised children ten years earlier. God said that He was going to make a great nation out of Abram. He said He was going to bless him so that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him. Abram had left his people and gone to this foreign land, not knowing where he was going. God showed him the land that would be for his DESCENDANTS. And, he did not have any descendants yet. He was 75 years old when he left his home to go to this promised land. Now, he was 85 years old and he was not getting any younger. He and Sarai took matters into their own hands. Sarai gave her maid, Hagar, to Abram so that she could have a child through her. That plan did not work out so well. The chemistry between Sarai and Hagar changed after she conceived. Sarai began to treat her poorly and Hagar fled. The angel of the Lord meets up with Hagar and tells her to go back to her mistress, which she does. Finally, Hagar gives birth to a son name Ishmael, which means that God hears.

Abram and Sarai took things into their own hands. They grew impatient and tried to force things. Consequently, they had a child born out of the flesh. Today, when we speak about things born of the flesh, we call it an Ishmael. When churches start programs because other churches are doing it, or because they think it is a good idea, but it is not born of the Spirit, we call it an Ishmael. You and I do not want things born out of the flesh; we want things born out of the Spirit.

Our text today is broken up into three sections. In the first section, Hagar conceives. In the second section, Hagar meets with the angel of the Lord. In the final section, Hagar bears Ishmael.

Hagar Bears Ishmael

1. Hagar Conceives. (Gen 16:1-6)
2. Hagar Meets The Angel Of The Lord (Gen 16:7-14)
3. Hagar Bears Ishmael (Gen 16:15-16)

1. **Hagar Conceives** (Gen 16:1-6)

(Gen 16:1-6) “Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. {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.’ And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. {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. {4} He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight. {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.’ {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 fled from her presence.”

Our text begins by saying that Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. We do not know how long they have been married, but my guess is that they have been married close to sixty years. Karen and I will be celebrating our 40th anniversary in August. We stopped bearing children eighteen years ago. In verse three we see that they had now lived in the land of Canaan for ten years. In verse 16 we find that Abram was eighty-six when Ishmael was born. In Genesis 12:4, when God spoke to Abram about leaving for the promised land, Abram was seventy-five years old. Sarai was ten years younger so she was sixty-five when they left. It has been ten years since that time, and she has still not born Abram any children.

(Gen 16:16) “Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.”

(Gen 12:4) “So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.”

It has also been ten years since God had promised them in Genesis 13 that He would make his descendants as the dust of the earth, and that there would be so many that they could not be numbered. God reiterated that promise in Genesis 15, telling him that Eliezer would not be his descendant, and that he would have a son from his own body. Furthermore, God told him that his descendants would be like the stars in heaven. Again, God mentions that he will not be able to count all of them. God had made a promise to Abram, but he had not seen any sign of that promise coming to be. Abram and Sarai are past the age of bearing children, and it is only natural to think they were not going to have children. In the natural, time has already run out.

(Gen 13:14-16) “The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; {15} for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. {16} "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered.”

(Gen 15:4-5) “Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." {5} And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be.”

Our text also says that Sarai had an Egyptian maid named Hagar. She is not what we would call today a maid. A maid today is someone that you employ to do house cleaning. Hagar was not an employee doing housework; she was Sarai's slave. Sarai was probably given this slave when Pharaoh took her to be his wife. When he found out that Sarai was more than a sister to Abram, that she was his wife and belonged to him, Pharaoh gave Sarai back to Abram, and made them leave the country. Sarai probably kept Hagar with her.

When we look at Paul's letter to the Galatians, he writes that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman, that is Hagar, and the other by the free woman, that is Sarai. There is a contrast between being born of a bond woman and being born of a free woman. We will talk about that this a little later. The main point is that Paul understood that Hagar was not a free woman, she was Sarai's slave.

(Gal 4:22) "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman."

Next, we read that 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." If Hagar was just a servant of Sarai, Sarai could not have said this to Abram. However, since Hagar belonged to Sarai, and she was free to give her to Abram.

Then, we read that Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. Husbands are wise to listen to their wives. I try to listen to Karen. I also run things through my wife. She is a wise and discerning woman of God and she gives me excellent feedback and counsel. Karen also runs things through me. We try to listen to one another with discerning ears. When I told Karen that I sensed God wanted us to plant the East Mountain Vineyard, she wanted a prophetic confirmation, which we got. For two years before planting the Connection Church I was getting prophetic confirmation that we were in a time of transition and God was going to do something new with us. For months I expressed a desire to have church in our home, which we ended up doing when we left the Vineyard. We had confirmation from other people about the church plant. We need to listen to one another, and we need to ask for those confirmations. We need to listen with discernment.

When Adam listened to his wife, he did not listen with discernment. God had commanded him not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. When Eve offered it to him, he ate. Men to listen to their wives, but they need to listen with discernment. It seems like most of the times our wives are right, so we really need to listen to them. However, this is one of those few times that a wife was not right. Abram should have heard what his wife said, but he should not have followed her counsel. So, Abram did what his wife suggested and took Hagar as a second wife.

After Abram took Hagar as his wife, she conceived. After conceiving, Sarai was despised in her sight. God never intended marriage to be between two women and a man, or even four women and a man. In Iran, where I grew up, the men were allowed to have up to four wives. The first wife had to give permission to her husband to have a second wife. Unfortunately, if a woman did not agree, it was going to be very bad for her. A woman really does not have much say about things in the Moslem world. The first place that we lived in Iran was Agha Jari, and we had a servant named Ali. He had two wives. The apartment that went with the home had two bedrooms and each of his wives had a bedroom. There was lots of fighting between those wives.

In the book of 1 Samuel, Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. Elkanah loved Hannah more than Peninnah so there was a fierce rivalry between the two women for Elkanah's affection. Peninnah, Hannah's rival, would provoke her bitterly to irritate Hannah, because the Lord had closed her womb. Hannah would get so provoked that she would weep, and would not eat. Marriage was never intended to be between a man and several women. Marriage was defined in Genesis 2 as a man and a woman leaving their parents and cleaving together. There are problems when we violate God's principles, and there were problems at home when Abram took Hagar as his wife and she became pregnant.

(1 Sam 1:1-7) "Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah....{2} He had two wives: the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children....{6} Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. {7} It happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she would provoke her; so she wept and would not eat.

Because Sarai was despised in Hagar's sight, she went to Abram and said, "may the wrong done to 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." Abram told her that Hagar belonged to her, and to do to her what is good in her sight. So Sarai treated Hagar harshly. She treated her so harshly that Hagar fled. Notice that what was good in her sight was to treat Hagar harshly. When people are offended, their sense of what is right gets warped. Sarai's discernment of good and evil was gone.

Before moving to the next section of our passage, I want us to learn from their mistakes. to make one more point. Paul uses this example in the New Testament to talk about walking in freedom. We were all under the bondage of sin and the law. The church in Galatia had stopped walking in freedom, and had returned to the law. They wanted people to get circumcised and to follow the various laws. In responding to them, Paul wrote about Abraham's two sons. The first son was from a bondwoman and the other was by the free woman. The son of the bondwoman, that is Ishmael, was born according to the flesh. The son of the free woman, that is Isaac, was born through the promise. Paul writes that there are two covenants, and two Jerusalems. The present Jerusalem is in slavery to the law, while the heavenly Jerusalem is free. Paul is encouraging the Christians in Galatia to walk in the freedom we have in the New Covenant. God does not want us walking in the flesh, but in the Spirit. In Galatians 5, Paul tells us to set our minds on things above so that we will not carry out the deeds of the flesh. He tells us what the deeds of the flesh are and also what the deeds of the Spirit are. We are to learn from Abram and Sarah that we are not to walk in the flesh, but to walk in the Spirit, so that we do not produce Ishmaels in our lives.

(Gal 4:21-27) "Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? {22} For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. {23} But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. {24} This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. {25} Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. {26} But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother."

2. **Hagar Meets The Angel Of The Lord** (Gen 16:7-14)

(Gen 16:7-12) “Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. {8} He said, ‘Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?’ And she said, ‘I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.’ {9} Then the angel of the LORD said to her, ‘Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority.’ {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.’ {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, because the LORD has given heed to your affliction. {12} He will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, and everyone’s hand will be against him; and he will live to the east of all his brothers.’ 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?’ {14} Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.”

Because Sarai began treating Hagar harshly, she fled. The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness on the way to Shur. This is a desert region East of Egypt. The name Shur comes from from shur, Strong’s H7788, and means a wall (as going about). Isn’t it interesting that Hagar comes to a place called the wall and the angel of the Lord meets her. I saw lots of people come to Christ in the prison that I worked in. Men came to a wall in their life and they couldn’t run any more. And, God met them in prison while they were at the wall. If you feel like you are at the wall in your life, with no place to run any more, you are in a good place. God meets people at the walls.

The angel of the Lord asked Hagar two questions. “Where have you come from and where are you going?” I often ask those same two questions when people visit our church. I want to know where they are coming from. I also want to know why they are leaving. If they are running from an unresolved conflict, they usually don’t know where they are going. If God was leading them somewhere, they usually know where He is leading them. It is good for all of us to know where we have come from and where we are going. Knowing who we are is part of vision, and knowing where we are going is our mission. Individuals, businesses, and churches all need to know who they are and where they are going.

Hagar does not try to hide anything from the Lord. She tells her that she is fleeing from the presence of her mistress Sarai. Notice that she did not know where she was going. She just knew that she was fleeing. The angel of the Lord tells her to return to her mistress and submit to her authority. The Hebrew word that is translated as submit is not really the word for submit. It is anah (Strong’s H6031) and it is normally translated as afflicted. It is used 84 times in the Old Testament and this is the only time it is translated as submit. It is translated as afflict* 50 times. The word for authority that is used is yad, which means hand. This is one of the reasons that you lay hands on someone. You place authority on them. God is telling Hagar to return and be afflicted under Sarai’s authority.

The purpose of authority is not to afflict people, so I am not really fond of the way that the translators have translated this. Listen to what Paul said about his authority 2 Corinthians 10:8, “for even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you....” God gives authority to build people up, not afflict them.

Paul repeatedly said that he had authority as an apostle. In 2 Corinthians 13:10, he wrote, *“For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I need not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down.”* And in 1 Thessalonians 2:6, he wrote, *“nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.”* Paul had authority as an apostle, but it was not to afflict people or tear them down; it was to build them up.

There are a number of purposes that authorities serve. One of the primary ones is to establish order. The New Testament word for submit is *hupotasso* (Strong’s G5293), which means to be under proper order and arrangement. Wives are commanded to submit to their husbands, which means to come under proper order. The opposite of submit is rebellion or insubordination, which means not being under proper order. Notice what Samuel tells Saul in 1 Samuel 15:23, *“For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.”* Not being under proper authority is as the sin of divination or witchcraft. That is a serious thing.

There are so many Christians that are not under proper authority. They do not think that they need to be part of a church. Many have been hurt in church and do not want to be involved in a church. However, God is a God of authority, and in Hebrews 13:17, He commands us to be submitted to our church leaders. Pastors have to give account to God for those that God puts under their authority. There are many Christians that are not part of a church, and not under any spiritual authority.

(Heb 13:17) *“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”*

Christians that not members of a church, and submitted to the leaders of that church, are not under spiritual protection. When James talks about spiritual warfare, he said, *“Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Part of resisting the devil is submitting to God. Part of submitting to God is submitting to the spiritual authorities in your life. If you are not a member of a church and submitted to your pastors, I encourage you to find out where you belong and submit to their authority. In looking for a church home, it is important to trust your spiritual authority. If you cannot trust the leadership at your church, you should look elsewhere. God expects us to be properly submitted to the various authorities in our lives. He told Hagar to return to her mistress and submit to her authority.”*

(James 4:7) *“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”*

God is a God of authority. He expects all of us to be submitted to our authorities. There are various authorities in our lives. There are governmental authorities. We are to obey our policemen. We are to obey our governor. We are to obey the laws that the Congress pass. Notice what God says in 1 Peter 2.

(1 Pet 2:13-15) *“Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, {14} or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. {15} For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.”*

We are to submit to every human institution, whether to a king or to a governor. Paul gives a very similar teaching in Romans 13:1-7, Ephesians 6:5-8, Colossians 3:22, 1 Timothy 6:1-2, and Titus 2:9-10. Peter also gives some instructions for servants. He tells them to submit to their masters, even if they are not good and gentle, but are unreasonable. God says that when we are harshly treated and endure with patience, it finds favor with Him. That is not the message we usually hear today. This is exactly what the Lord tells Hagar. Even though she was being harshly treated, she needed to get back under proper authority, which is why the translators translated *anah* as submit.

(1 Pet 2:18-20) “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. {19} For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. {20} For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.”

After telling Hagar to return to Sarai and submit to her, He tells us that he is going to greatly multiply her descendants so that they will be too many to count. This is the same promise the Lord gave to Abram. Then, the angel of the Lord tells her that she will have a son and she is to name him Ishmael, which means “God hears”. It comes from Shama – to hear intelligently, and El – God. Then, the angel of the Lord gives her a prophetic word about her son. Ishmael is going to be a wild donkey of a man and his hand will be against everyone, and everyone’s hand will be against him, and he will live to the east of all of his brothers.

Some words are tough to swallow. I would not want God telling me that my son was going to be a wild donkey, and that he would be against everyone and everyone would be against him. I want my sons to have favor with God and with people. God also told Hagar that Ishmael would be separated from his brothers and live to the east of them. For me, those were tough things to hear.

I love how Hagar responds in verse 13, “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?’” She understood that the angel of the Lord was God and she had just had a visitation from God. She acknowledged that God sees everything. God saw her affliction. God saw the past and the future. He sees everything. In Hebrew, it is Elroi, which comes from El – God, and Raah – to see. You can use words like Elroi in your prayer and praise time. God, you are Elroi, a God that sees everything. Hagar goes on to name the well that she was at, Beer-lahai-roi, which means the well of the living One that sees me.

3. **Hagar Bears Ishmael** (Gen 16:15-16)

(Gen 16:15-16) “So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. {16} Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.”

Our chapter ends today with Hagar bearing Abram a son. Notice that Hagar is back with Abram and Sarai; she has done exactly what the Lord commanded her to do. She stopped fleeing and went back and submitted herself to Sarai. I am sure that it was humbling to go back and

apologize for fleeing. It was humbling to go submit to someone who is treating you harshly, but this is exactly what Hagar did.

And she bore Abram a son, and he named him Ishmael. Notice the communication about the name. God told Hagar to name her son Ishmael, which means God hears. Her son was going to be a constant reminder that God hears our prayers. He hears our heart. God is not only Elroi, a God who sees, but He is a God who hears our prayers. God told Hagar to name her son Ishmael, and then Hagar communicates that with Abram. It is Abram who gives Ishmael his name, but he received the word of the Lord that came through Hagar.

Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael. He was seventy five when he obeyed the Lord and went to the land of Canaan. He lived in Canaan for ten years before Sarai gave her maid, Hagar to him as a wife, and a year has passed, and he now has a son named Ishmael.

Conclusion

There is so much in our text today. There are so many applications. Perhaps you feel like you are up against a wall. It could be a wall in your relationship. It could be a wall at work. God wants you to know today that He sees where you are, and he hears your heart. Just as the angel of the Lord met Hagar at the wall, God wants to meet you at your wall. If that is where you are at this morning, we want to take a few minutes to pray with you. If that is you, I am going to ask you to come forward this morning.

It may be that you are having a tough time submitting to the authorities in your life. Know this, that God is the best King there ever was. He is the highest authority in the heavens and the earth. He rules over all. God is a righteous God, and He never treats people poorly. He is a God that desires to build you up, not tear you down. Men and women, like Sarai, can treat you harshly and let you down, but that is not of God. God will give you the patience and grace to get through these times. In fact, He gives favor to those who are treated poorly and remain submitted. If you would like prayer for His grace, strength, and patience, we would like to pray for you this morning.

Perhaps you are not under spiritual authority. Maybe you have never submitted your life to Christ and called Him Lord. Paul said in Romans 10:9-10 that if we believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead and if we confess Him as Lord, we will be saved. It is easy to get connected to God; we must believe and we must confess Him as Lord. If that is your desire this morning, I am going to ask You to come forward, and we would like to lead you in a prayer to receive Christ.

Perhaps God has led you here and you want to be a part of the Connection Church. It may be for just a season, but it is important to get under proper spiritual authority. If that is your desire, I am going to ask you to come forward and let me know that you want to become a part of this church, and to get under proper spiritual authority.

Introduction

1. **Hagar Conceives** (Gen 16:1-6, 16:16, 12:4, 13:14-16, 15:4-5, Gal 4:22, 1 Sam 1:1-7, Gen 2:24-25, Gal 4:21-27)

2. **Hagar Meets The Angel Of The Lord** (Gen 16:7-14, 2 Cor 10:8, 13:10, 1 Thess 2:6, 1 Sam 15:23, Heb 13:17, James 4:7, 1 Pet 2:13-15, Rom 13:1-7, Eph 6:5-8, Col 3:22, 1 Tim 6:1-2, Tit 2:9-10, 1 Pet 2:18-20)

3. **Hagar Bears Ishmael** (Gen 16:15-16)

My Application today: