



Genesis: The Book That Started It All

Weekly Devotionals | October 26

OPEN with prayer.

Find a quiet place where you can set aside distractions. Ask the Lord to meet you in His Word. Pray that the Holy Spirit would give you wisdom and insight as you reflect on this sobering but hope-filled account of God's judgment and mercy.

In Genesis 12 and 15, God makes covenant promises to Abram: innumerable offspring (like the stars in the sky), in other words, that he will be a great nation (Genesis 12:2; Genesis 15:5); the possession of the land of Canaan (later called Israel) (Genesis 12:7; Genesis 15:7); and a blessing from his family line that will be for all the peoples of the earth (Genesis 12:3).

This week's passage highlights Abram and Sarai's anxiety about the first of those promises.

READ Genesis 15:5-6.

- What was Abram's response to God's promise that Abram would have offspring like the stars in the sky?

READ Genesis 16:1-4.

- How does Abram's attitude toward God's promise of offspring appear to have changed?

There is a ten-year gap between Genesis 12 (when God first called Abram) and Genesis 16. Abram is now about 85 years old and Sarai is about 75 years old.

- Can you think of a time when you've waited for years for an answer to a prayer or promise of God? What was that like for you? Are you still waiting or has that prayer been answered? Reflect on that journey and its impact on your faith.
- If you have struggled with infertility or childlessness, Sarai's plight may feel particularly personal. You may wish to take some time to sit before God and share your pain with Him. We are reminded in this story that He is a God who *sees* and *hears* when we suffer.

When Sarai proposes using Hagar to have a child by Abram, she's doing something totally normal and even proper by the standards of ancient near eastern culture. But it was not in line with God's plan to fulfill the promise He had made to Abram. Sarai, understandably desperate for a child, was no longer willing to wait for God's timing. She took a shortcut.

- Prayerfully meditate on any places in your life where you tend to (or are tempted to) take shortcuts rather than waiting on God's timing. Invite the Spirit to reveal those places to you and explore with God what it would look like to obediently trust Him.

READ Genesis 16:5-6.

Sarai and Abram's actions have predictable consequences. By attempting to solve a problem outside of God's plan, they create relational tension and brokenness.

- What conflicts or relational brokenness in your life could be attributed to someone (you or someone else) walking in disobedience to God?
- How is God inviting you to respond? Perhaps there is something you need to repent of. God may ask you to gently confront a sin pattern in someone else. Or He may want you to more intentionally pray for a situation of relational disunion.

READ Genesis 16:7-16.

- How does God respond to Hagar's distress?
- Notice that God tells Hagar to name her son Ishmael, which means "God hears," and that Hagar responds to the message with, "You are the God who sees me." If you are in a time of hardship or distress right now, consider

meditating for a moment on what it means that God *sees* and *hears* you in your distress.

READ Psalm 34:17-18.

- How do these verses speak to Hagar's encounter with God?
- What truth about God do you want to hold on to from your study of Genesis 15?