

# SERMON GUIDE

## Genesis: Sin, Surrogacy, & the God Who Sees Us

### Genesis 16



3.17.2024

#### SERMON NOTES:

I love documentaries. But reality tv is different from documentaries. Reality TV shows are where real people play games or are recorded doing certain things. Reality TV exploded over the last 20 years (The Real World, Cops, Survivor, etc.) and there are new show ideas launching all the time.

One show in particular, I don't know the name of it, has existing couples going to a place with other existing couples, and the whole context is to put them in situations where they would be tempted to cheat on each other. Now...here's the deal...I can tell you this won't go well. If you are with someone even willing to go on the show, there's a great chance you're going to get your feelings hurt. But shows like the Bachelor and Bachelorette are the same thing. A gazillion people fight over one person, going on dates with them, and we're shocked when these people fight, get jealous, and the relationships never work out.

All these could be classified under the heading of: things we should have seen coming or times when we should have known better.

Our passage today is that kind of story. We read it in disbelief. But the truth is, the mistakes of those in our passage are repeated by us all the time.

#### Genesis 16 Exegesis:

Genesis 1-15 recap

- Creation
- Adam and Eve fall
- Progressive worsening of world from sin
- Great Flood and recreation
- Tower of Babel and spreading of nations
- Establishing of Abraham and covenant
- We've followed Abram's journey, marked by ups and downs, faith and faithlessness, yet God counts Abram as righteous and establishes His covenant with Him that will ultimately be fulfilled in Jesus

**VS 1-6 -- 1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. 2 And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. 3 So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife.**

**4 And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. 5 And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!" 6 But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.**

We haven't had a lot of interaction with Sarai up to this point in Genesis. We're introduced to her and know that Abram convinces her to pose as his sister, but that's it. But in our text today we get a closer look.

The first notable sentence is that Sarai still hadn't borne any children. This not only reminds us that the promise God made hasn't been fulfilled yet, but it points us to the burden Sarai has probably felt for most of her adult life. She had no children. This had to have weighed on her. Couple that with the promise from God to provide one, and the years that have now passed, and still no child. Abraham was 75 when God promised a child, Sarah 70. Now Abraham is 85/86 years old and Sarah 80/81.

Sarai has a female servant, Hagar, who is Egyptian (likely someone that came with them out of Egypt). We don't know Hagar's age, but it is assumed she is much younger. Sarai proposes the idea to Abram, not as a point of discussion, but with a definitive push, to take Hagar and have a child with her. Notice Sarai mentions the LORD has prevented her from bearing children. So she takes matters into her own hands. The idea is that Abram and Sarai will have a child through Hagar acting as a surrogate.

What in the world could possibly go wrong with this idea?

The text says, *"And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai."* I bet he did. By the way, what does this remind you of? What does it remind you of when you hear, *"And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai?"* Adam and Eve. In many ways, this is a second fall. It parallels the Genesis 3 account of the fall. Eve eats the fruit and takes some and gives it to her husband who was with her. Sarai concocts a plan to make Hagar the vessel for bringing the promised child and Abram accepts it.

Abram's track-record is one of being active one moment and passive the next moment. He takes the reins and leads sometimes (rescuing Lot, giving to Melchizedek, believing God's promise). And then other times he cowers (passing off Sarai as sister in Egypt, accepting Sarai's plan for surrogacy). Interestingly enough, Abram tends to be active in most environments except with his wife. There he is mostly passive.

Let me hit on this for a moment with the guys. Abraham is known as the man of faith. He was not a man of perfect faith. This is evident in his failings. He seems to take charge and be active when he's outside the home, but passive at home with Sarai. I've seen this with many men over the years. It is not an uncommon thing in the culture. Passive men who let their wives lead them or say nothing if their wives are pushing something that's the wrong direction. I've seen guys one day be in a meeting where

everyone arrived at a conclusion on a direction, strategy, or conclusion about something, and then the next day or week they come back with a totally different tone or opinion because they went home and their wives talked them into a different direction. Now listen, there is an important role women and wives play in helping give feedback. I'm not nullifying that. I'm talking about men who can't or won't make decisions with their wives and default to her view to avoid conflict. This is not how men and husbands are supposed to lead.

Now let me say something to set up where I'm going next. If I stand up here and really press the men on the sins that they are more prone to commit (like I just did), I'll get "amens" and nodding heads. It's almost as if it's expected. If I tell men to fight against laziness and excuse making, and tell them to take personal responsibility for themselves and their actions, people will "amen." If I talk about the importance of leading well in the home, spiritually, emotionally, and physically, everyone will nod. If I warn against sexual sin (lust, pornography), nobody bats an eye. We're totally fine with preaching that targets the sins of men. But if I stand up here and address the particular things women need to be on guard against, and sins they must fight against, it's almost like a taboo, like you're not supposed to acknowledge the sins women commit. But this is simply unbiblical, unloving, and unhelpful. Women need to be exhorted, warned, and challenged just like men. But our culture today has made this feel politically incorrect. So...standby ladies...I'm about to come to you on this text too.

We see here that this is ten years after coming to the land of Canaan. Abram follows Sarai's lead and takes Hagar as a second wife (this is descriptive, btw, not prescriptive, and you're about to see why). Hagar conceives. Is Sarai happy about this? Is she ecstatic that her plan seems to be playing out as she orchestrated? Noooooooo. She's upset. She looked with contempt at Hagar (who would have thought it?). But she says to Abram (not Hagar lol), "*May the wrong done to me be on you!*" She's mad at Abram! She turns against him for it. Like, how did Abram not see this coming? This is also a reminder that the ways men and women act are not socially constructed from our culture but have been happening for thousands and thousands of years. Because we are made distinctly and uniquely as men and women, our fallen natures make us more prone to certain kinds of sin (I'm going to hit on this in just a second).

Abram sees his upset wife and what does he do? He says, "Do what you want." "Just don't be mad at me or take it out on me." Passive. This is what we just talked about. So Sarai dealt harshly with Hagar and Hagar fled.

In Titus 2, 1 Timothy 2, and 1 Timothy 5, Paul gives specific instructions to Christians, particularly men and women, that vary from each other. He addresses the issues he believes men and women each deal with. So we shouldn't be surprised that there are certain kinds of sins men are more prone to than women. Right? One person put it like this, "Men are more prone than women to fight; and women are more prone to dress in a way that causes fights." We're different, and our sin inclinations manifest a little differently.

Okay, ladies, let's talk about it. I'm not going to disclaim this death. I know not all ladies commit the kinds of sins I'm going to mention (and I know some men commit these), but it's important to address the fact that women are more inclined towards certain kinds of sins that men don't struggle as much with.

We see in the text Sarai display characteristics of being:

- Controlling, lack of submission, critical spirit, kid-idolatry, nagging, comparison, and emotional manipulation. These are still things ladies must guard against. Ladies, these are still things in your flesh and nature that must be put to death. Let's take emotional manipulation as an example. Ladies, have you ever pouted or given the cold shoulder in order to get your husband to do what you want?
- Here are some other tendencies not in this particular text that must also be fought: gossip, possessiveness, using body to manipulate men, prioritizing your family of origin over husband, passive aggressive manipulation, untethered empathy. Let me unpack that last one. Untethered empathy is when you get emotionally sucked into someone's problem and you lose attachment to reality. Empathy is when we get in the trenches with people and feel with them (this isn't bad), but when it is untethered (from reality), you lose the ability to help them, and instead, you are controlled by their emotions. It's like jumping in the quicksand with someone rather than keeping a foot on the ground and a hand on the tree. By the way, let me go a step further and see if I can really cause some angst, this is why women, particularly young girls, are more prone to become allies with or embrace LGBTQ+ ideology. They get captured in the emotional storyline of oppression or rejection, rather than staying tethered to reality and/or what God says. Women are more prone than men to this.

My point in bringing this up is we see how the sin of BOTH OF THEM in this text sets up what will cause years and years of trouble. There are problems with the descendants of Hagar and the descendants of Sarai (Ishmael and Issac). Polygamy doesn't work. Never has. Never will. But there were immediate problems.

***vs 7-16 -- 7 The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." 9 The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." 10 The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." 11 And the angel of the Lord said to her,***

***"Behold, you are pregnant  
and shall bear a son.***

***You shall call his name Ishmael,  
because the Lord has listened to your affliction.***

***12 He shall be a wild donkey of a man,  
his hand against everyone  
and everyone's hand against him,  
and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."***

***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." 14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it  
lies between Kadesh and Bered. 15 And 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 Abram.***

Hagar fled Sarai and her harshness. An angel of the LORD finds her by a spring of water in the wilderness. The angel tells her to return and submit to her. Yes, you are in a bad position, but go back. Stay there. The LORD is going to multiply her offspring so numerous they can't be counted. This promise is to Hagar, but simultaneously to Abram. He is the father of many nations.

Then the angel says to her that she shall bear a son. This is the first time she's learning about gender. Just take note, despite how progressives try to argue today, and how the Democratic party tries to argue today, pregnancy involves a human being in the womb. Hagar is pregnant with a son. The gender is determined in the womb, not by the child at some time later in their life. God speaks through the angel about these realities, which is why we shouldn't let our culture's attempts to disciple us about abortion or gender move us off our marks. We know what reality is. Babies in the womb are more than clumps of cells, and gender is fixed in their biology.

She's told what to name him -- Ishmael. The LORD has heard Hagar's cries of affliction. She's an Egyptian maidservant, but the LORD is compassionate and gracious to her. He's heard her. The LORD says through the angel that Ishmael will be a wild donkey of a man. Probably what no momma wants to hear. He's going to be wild, hard to tame. His hand will be against everyone and everyone against him. By the way, Ishmael's descendants would be the Arab people's, including Muhammad, the founder of Islam.

After the angel said these things, Hagar called the name of the LORD, "You are the God of seeing." I love that. She felt seen. She knew the LORD knew her situation and saw her plight. She said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me." The spring/well was called Beer-lahai-roi (well of the Living One who sees me). So Hagar has the son that was promised and names him Ishmael. Abram was 86 years old.

When we walk by sight instead of faith, we are prone to fall to our sinful inclinations. Both Abram and Sarai took their eyes off the promise and let their barrenness bring them to take matters into their own hands. This would cause them immediate problems, but would produce generations worth of problems.

Hagar looked at her situation at first with her eyes (Sarai hates me, I'm leaving), but the LORD meets her and promises blessing. She listens. And she walks away that day recognizing that God truly sees her. He knows her situation and sees her affliction. He is "the God who looks after me." If only Abram and Sarai would have remembered that He is the God who looks after me.

What about you? Are you living and looking at only what you can see? Are you living each day remembering the God who looks after you? You are seen. You are known.

We need to turn from our sinful patterns. The fallen nature of our flesh leads us toward sins uniquely tailored to our nature as men and women. Acknowledge them. Confess them. Turn from them.

In Christ, you are under the care of the God who looks after you. Find comfort in that today. Find peace in that today.

## LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?

## BUILD UP

- **REVIEW:**
  - Read **Genesis 16** and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
  - What big takeaways did you have from the teaching?
  - Additional Scripture:
    - Proverbs 3:5
    - Hebrews 11:6
    - 2 Corinthians 5:7
    - James 4:17
    - Galatians 5:16
    - Ephesians 4:32
    - Luke 14:28
    - 1 Samuel 16:7
    - 1 Peter 3:12
    - Hebrews 11:1

- Romans 1:17
- 2 Corinthians 4:18

- **REFLECT:**

- Why does Sarai tell Abram to take her servant?
- Where did Abram go wrong?
- What was Sarai's response when Hagar conceived?
- How does God minister to Hagar through the angel?
- What is Hagar's response? How does this contrast with Abram and Sarai's response to their situation?

- **RESPOND:**

- What sin(s) do you tend to tolerate in your life?
- Are you living and looking at only what you see?

- **MEDITATE:**

- Hebrews 11:1 -- *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

- **MEMORIZE:**

- 2 Corinthians 4:18 -- *As we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

**SEND OUT**

- **GROW:** How will you abide in Christ this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **GO:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER:**
  - Pray over any request from your group members.
  - Administrative Ministry Assistant - **Amanda Bayes**
  - Ministry - **Deacons**
  - **Pray for our long-term units on the field:**
    - The Wilsons
    - The Grays
    - The Starks
  - **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
    - Kaesi
    - Ethan & Dustin (May 16 - June 30)
  - **Pray for our short-term teams:**
    - Central Asia Team #1 returning March 15
    - Southeast Asia Team #1 returning on March 17
    - Indonesia Team departing on April 27
    - London Team departing June 30

- Southeast Asia Team #2 departing on June 15
- Central Asia Team #2 departing on September 27
- **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG):** Bosniak in Bosnia-Herzegovina



- **Population in country:** 1,615,000
- **Global population:** 3,158,500
- **Christian Adherent:** 0.03%
- **Evangelical:** 0.03%
- **Primary Religion:** Islam
- **Primary Language:** Bosnian
- **Summary:** Bosniaks are typically characterized by their tie to the Bosnian historical region, traditional adherence to Islam and common culture and language. Once spread throughout the regions they inhabited, various instances of ethnic cleansing and genocide have had a tremendous effect on the territorial distribution of their population. Partially due to this, there is a notable Bosniak diaspora in a number of countries.
- **Prayer Focus:** There are a few followers of Christ among the Bosniaks. Pray they would be bold in their witness for Christ, yet loving and tactful. Pray they would live holy lives, zealous to know and serve Jesus Christ. Pray the Bosniak people would understand that Jesus desires to bless their families and communities. Pray that the Bosniaks would hunger to find out more about Jesus (whom Muslims call Isa al-Masih), referred to in the Koran. Pray the Lord would open their eyes to his true nature and would draw many Bosniaks to himself.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>