

***Lesson: Signs of God’s Covenant (Gen 16:1-17:27)***

In these chapters, we draw closer to the birth of Isaac and we encounter Abram and Sarai’s doubt over God’s promises. The lack of evidence for a having a child led them to try to make something happen. Instead, Abram and Sarai’s action did not meet their intended aims. God still used them in spite of them for the sake of his creation.

**Biblical Takeaways (Gen 16:1-17:27)**

**1. *Abram, Sarai, and Hagar make something happen (16:1-6)***

- a. In verses, 1-6, Abram is offered an opportunity to **make** the promise of God happen by sleeping with Hagar, the Egyptian servant of Sarai. Sarai made the suggestion on the basis of her belief that God was stopping her from getting pregnant. So, Abram assented to her plan and slept with Hagar to bring a child of promise into the world. We must always be careful when we are trying to **make** God’s will make sense. God’s will often defies human logic; it will not make sense to us. When we try to make God’s will make sense, that amounts to putting our will over God’s will.
- b. Hagar had contempt for Sarai because of her pregnancy which led to conflict and Hagar’s escape.

**2. *The God who sees us (16:7-16)***

Hagar ran away from Sarai and encountered an angel who foretold the birth of her son. This meant that despite the conflict with Sarai, God would still provide for her even in the mess of these entangled relationships and her son would become influential. Her divine encounter caused her to give God the name, El-Roi, which means “the God who sees me.” Hagar went back to Abram and Sarai and birthed Ishmael when Abram was 86.

**3. *The Promise of Isaac and the Sign of the Covenant (17:1-27)***

- a. In verses 1-22, God appeared to Abram and gave him a vision of what he intended to do. Abram was 99 at the time, meaning this appearance was 13 years after the birth of Ishmael. In making the promise, God changed Abram’s name to Abraham, “father of many nations.” And Sarai’s name was changed to Sarah, which means “princess.” God will change our name to match our future in him. Their legacy would be the King of kings and the Lord of lords, their names had to match what God was bringing through them.
- b. In verses 9-14, God gave the “sign of the covenant,” which is circumcision, to Abraham. From this point forward, men in his family and the community surrounding would have to get circumcised to show their fidelity to God’s great promises of life and an inheritance. On the 8<sup>th</sup> day, all boys were to be circumcised to keep their side of the covenant. Abraham does this in verses 23-27.
- c. But the evidence of God’s faithfulness would be Isaac (vv. 15-22). In verse 17, when God made his promise to Abraham about his plans, Abraham fell on his face and laughed. He could not see how Sarah (90 years old) and he could have a child. While God would bless Ishmael, God confirmed *His* covenant would be with Isaac. For all of the laughing going on, God told Abraham to name the boy Isaac which means “laughter.” God’s will is joyful to those who believe it and God laughs at those who choose to go against it.