

February 16/17, 2002

**Study Questions**  
*By Faith We Live: A Study of the Life of Abraham*  
**Faith and Patience**  
**Genesis 16:1-16**

**Opening Discussion**

1. Have you ever run out of patience and acted prematurely, only to regret it later? Share what happened and the result.
2. Describe the difference between walking by faith and walking by sight? Which is harder? Why?
3. Do you ever feel insignificant to God? Do you ever feel like God doesn't see you or hear you? Why do we sometimes feel this way? What is the potential risk when we are feeling this way?
4. Often when we take matters into our own hands and make a mess of things, our temptation is to flee or to try to "fix it." What is the better option? Why do we sometimes struggle to do the right thing after we've blown it?

**Bible Study**

1. Take a moment to review Abram's journey of faith. It is true Abram has had his ups and downs, but certainly we left him on a high note at the conclusion of chapter 15.
2. Read Genesis 16:1-6. What must it have been like for Sarai to know of the promised son now for 10 years, but remain barren? Whom did she blame (v. 2)?

Could her barrenness have made any sense to either Abram or Sarai?

3. In Genesis 3:1-6 the serpent convinced Eve that God isn't good, which set her up for his temptation. Do you believe Sarai was struggling with those thoughts? Why or why not?
4. In Genesis 3:1-6 Adam responded passively to Eve's suggestion. How does Abram respond to Sarai's suggestion?

How should both men have responded?

What does this teach us about responding to friends or family members when they are making choices out of alignment with God's will?

How much harder is it when the person we're concerned about is in such emotional pain? It's in those moments when a quick fix seems like the loving thing to do. Is it?

5. Whom did Sarai blame for her pain in verse 5? Was this fair?

What does Sarai teach us about ourselves when we get in her state of mind?

Was her solution making things better or worse? Once again, did Abram respond wisely to his wife's pain in verse 6?

Do you see patterns in your own life that resemble Abram and Sarai in this passage?

6. How did Hagar respond to her situation?

Had she been allowed by God to flee, she would have been lost forever in Egypt. Instead God found this poor Egyptian slave girl and brought her back to the people of promise. How does this line up with the parable of the lost sheep in Matthew 18:12-14?

7. The Angel of the LORD is believed to be God Himself. It is worth noting that the first time the Angel of the LORD appears in the Bible, it is to Hagar. What does this teach us about who has access to the covenant of promise from chapter 15?

What does this teach us about the heart of God?

8. The name Ishmael means "God hears." Hagar calls God "El roi"—which means "the God who sees." Go back to how Abram, Sarai and Hagar must have felt in their hour of pain. When we are suffering and our emotions are intense, we often feel like God doesn't see or hear us. Ishmael would forever be a reminder to all three people that God does indeed hear us and see us even when it doesn't feel like it.

## **Application**

1. In practical terms, when are we vulnerable to making disastrous choices like Abram, Sarai and Hagar made? What can you do to make sure, in those moments, that you walk by faith and not by sight? List 3 very practical things.
2. Based on this story, how should we respond lovingly to those who are in pain and on the verge of making poor choices? How should we respond when poor choices have been made and people are fleeing the consequences?
3. What can we do to remember God is "El roi"—the God who sees when it feels like we're forgotten by God?
4. Close by praying for people you know who are hurting and vulnerable to making poor decisions right now. Pray for those who are "fleeing back to Egypt" and need to experience God's faithful love.