



# **THE BEGINNINGS!**

**The Book of Genesis**

**Helping God Keep His Promises!**

**Genesis 16:1-16**

**Message #17 of 50 – S916**

**Sermon given on October 11, 2020**

**@ Hawk Ranch, Murrieta, CA**



**Sunday Morning Service**

**Pastor Rick Lancaster**

# Helping God Keep His Promises!

## *Genesis 16:1-16*

### Opening Comments

- Good morning – turn to **Genesis 16**
- Today we continue our journey through **Genesis: THE BEGINNINGS!**
- One of the hardest tests a believer can face is the test of silence
- We know and believe in God – We have and trust in His promises
- But then there is a delay
- And if that delay persists, we might start to doubt God’s promise – maybe even doubt God’s goodness
- And it might feel like we have to do something, or else God’s promise won’t be fulfilled
- Every believer will face the test of silence
- As with all tests God gives us, He wants us to succeed
- In today’s text we will examine someone’s failure of the test of silence and try to learn from it how we can succeed when it is our turn to face this test, because you will
- Let’s pray and ask the Spirit to open our spiritual eyes and ears
- **Pray**

### Teaching

- **Helping God Keep His Promises!**
- We are in the section of Genesis that focuses on God’s calling of Abraham - Abraham is considered the father of our faith
- A study of his life shows both successes and failures
- We see one of those failures today
- It shouldn’t surprise us when a believer makes a poor choice
- But we should try to learn from our mistakes or the mistakes of others and not repeat them
- First, we are presented with the problem
- **Genesis 16:1a**
- Sarai, though a woman of incomparable beauty, had a major flaw, she was barren.

- There was a cultural stigma attached to barrenness.
- She was seventy-five years old at this point – time was running out.
- **Genesis 16:1b-2a**
- Sarai comes up with an idea – actually, not an original idea
- For over a thousand years this custom was practiced
- If a wife was incapable of bearing children, she could give her husband one of her slaves to bear children for her
- All children the slave woman bore, would be claimed by the wife as if the wife had bore them
- This was the natural thing for her to do – therein lies the problem
- She has come up with a natural solution to a spiritual problem
- She knows it is a spiritual problem – ‘the Lord has restrained me’
- Listen, if the Lord is restraining you, there is a reason
- **Genesis 16:2b-3**
- We can’t know with any certainty how much time, passed between chapters 15 and 16
- But they have been waiting for God to keep His promises
- All the while Sarai struggling under the burden of being barren
- The language here is very similar to another account we studied
- Adam and Eve in the Garden
- Eve took the fruit – Sarai took her maid
- Eve gave the fruit to Adam – Sarai gave her maid to Abram
- Adam listened to the voice of Eve – Abram listened to Sarai’s voice
- Abram and Sarai are making the same mistake Adam and Eve made
- Maybe it will turn out better for them, right?
- Hagar is an Egyptian – she was the fruit of Abram’s failure in Egypt – when he lied about Sarai
- Egypt is used in the Bible as a symbol for the world and its ways
- Hagar is a worldly solution to a spiritual problem
- When the world is telling you how to fix your spiritual problems, you might not want to listen, right?
- **Genesis 16:4-6a**
- In Egypt, Abram failed to stand up and act like a man and bravely claim beautiful Sarai as his wife

- And here in Canaan, after recently defeating four kings to rescue his nephew, he fails to act like a man again
- First, he should have declined Sarai's offer of Hagar – but he didn't
- And after the deed was done, he should have taken responsibility
- He should have reassured Sarai of his love and then corrected Hagar's bad behavior himself
- Instead, he wimps out and tells Sarai to handle it herself
- Things are going from bad to worse – on a worldly path - destruction
- **Genesis 16:6b**
- Sarai treated her Egyptian slave harshly
- 'dealt harshly' – this same Hebrew word would be used to describe how the Egyptians would treat the Hebrew slaves
- And then Hagar does what is natural – she flees
- This is where the account gets interesting
- **Genesis 16:7**
- 'on the way to Shur' – Hagar is headed home to Egypt.
- On the way she is found by the 'Angel of the Lord'
- This is the first occurrence of that phrase in the Bible
- Notice the 'A' in angel is capitalized – the Bible translators interpret this to be an appearance of God
- This is believed to be the first occurrence of a preincarnate appearance of the Son of God, Jesus Christ = Christophany
- He appears the first time in the Bible, not to Abraham, the patriarch of God's chosen people and the possessor of the promises of God, but to a woman, a slave, an Egyptian. Not to someone seeking Him but to someone running away to the world.
- Many of us might be able to relate to a similar experience
- When Christ found me, I wasn't seeking Him, I was running after the things of the world **Luke 19:9-10**

**And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."**

- Just as Jesus found Hagar, He found me and you, and He is seeking all who will believe
- **Genesis 16:8-10**
- Angel tells Hagar to go back and then makes a radical promise to her

- From the child she is carrying, a great multitude of people will come
  - He then tells her about the child she is carrying
  - **Genesis 16:11-12**
  - ‘wild man’ = ‘wild donkey of a man’ = “used in the OT as a figure of an individualistic lifestyle not restricted or hampered by social convention.”
  - Basically, this guy will be out of control for his entire life
  - **Genesis 16:13-14**
  - Something radical happens in Hagar.
  - She has an encounter with the living God and believes.
  - Her faith resulted in obedience – she returned as she was instructed.
  - This account ends with the casual description of the birth of Ishmael
  - **Genesis 16:15-16**
  - A casual reading of that text might lead you to say that didn’t turn out so bad
  - Even though Ishmael will grow up to be an obnoxious teenager, that still isn’t the end of the world
  - Ishmael will not just be a wild man – he will be the father of one of the largest religions in the world – Islam
  - Who have as one of their basic tenets that there is no place in the world for the Jews
  - And that the world must submit to Islam or perish
  - This all began because Sarai thought God needed help keeping His promises
  - It was a human effort to accomplish the supernatural – a mistake
  - Thankfully, with God there is grace and mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation
  - God will forgive us for our mistakes but that doesn’t prevent the consequences of our mistakes **Galatians 6:7-8**
- Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.**
- The whole world has had to reap the consequences of Abram and Sarai’s mistake in this account
  - There has been four millennia of conflict and an ocean of blood

- And it won't stop until Jesus, the Prince of Peace comes back and establishes His kingdom on this earth
- All because Abram and Sarai failed the test of silence
- God made a promise and then wanted them to wait until He fulfilled it
- We will all face the test of silence – I have experienced many of them in my faith-walk – times when God was silent as I waited for Him to act
- It is hard to wait – it is human nature to try to do something to fulfill God's promises to us
- Human ability is incapable of fulfilling God's promises and all we accomplish is either delaying the fulfillment of God's promise or creating a consequence that we might have to live with for the rest of our lives
- It would be another 13 years before God fulfilled His promise to give Abram a son through Sarai
- When God makes a promise – He always keeps it – when the time is right, and we are ready to receive it
- So, when we are confronted by a test of silence – what should we do?
- When God is silent, we will be tempted to help God keep His promise
- Does God need our help – to do anything?
- How do we help God keep His promises?
- First – **Wait!**
- Sarai was seventy-five at the beginning of this chapter and barren – time was running out – she had to act
- True faith trusts God when it becomes humanly impossible for God to keep His promise
- That was hard for Sarai
- Thirteen years later, the Lord is going to tell Abram that the time has come for the promise to be fulfilled
- Sarai overhears the Lord **Genesis 18:10b-12**  
(Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"
- Sarah says, that's impossible – Lord responds, 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' – rhetorical = NO!

- Trust the Lord and wait, even when it becomes impossible
- Second – **Seek!**
- Waiting for the Lord to keep His promise should never be done passively – we need to be doing something
- But what? Start with the basics – prayer and Bible reading and study
- Ask God to tell you through prayer and show you in His Word what you should be doing to prepare for the fulfillment of His promise
- Get involved in discipleship – get spiritual counseling
- Depending on time – share about preparing to be a pastor
- Third – **Obey!**
- As you seek the Lord, He will tell you to do something – do it
- Even if it doesn't seem to make sense
- The first ministry position God put me into was Children's Ministry Pastor
- God used that position to change my heart in a way that prepared me for what He was doing next in my life
- You don't have to understand what God is doing to obey Him
- All you have to do to obey is to trust Him
- And He is worthy of our trust
- All of us were wandering in the wilderness of this life, and Jesus came and found us, and He called us to Himself
- He cleansed us of all our sin by His shed blood on the cross
- He gave us exceedingly great and precious promises
- And all He asks of us is that we love God and each other
- He is worthy of our trust – wait for Him to act, seek Him with your whole heart, and do whatever He tells you even if it doesn't make sense to you or those around you
- And when the time is right, something radical is going to happen!
- **Pray!**