

## **Abram's Great Mistake**

*Genesis 16*

### ***Impatience of Abram of Sarai***

*Genesis 16:1-3*

#### ***Abram and Sarai Reasoned Together: Genesis 16:1-2***

##### **Reasoned According to the LORD'S Word**

Abram and Sarai were required to wait on the LORD. The silence was not due to the LORD'S weakness or forgetfulness but part of His plan. At times it may appear that God delays, but He always works according to His will. While waiting, Abram and Sarai were to continue by faith.

Abram greatly desired a son and Sarai was frustrated because she was unable to provide him one. This combination produced an impatient decision. The desire for a child was not bad, but their means to acquire one was wrong and produced lasting effects. They did their best to hurry up God's work and in so doing went against His plan. God wanted them to wait and believing they found a shortcut, they acted hastily. Their solution to the problem involved sinful actions. Remember, no matter how sincere one may be; sin remains sin (1 John 3:4).

##### **Reasoned According to the World**

Abram and Sarai knew God's promise but were also aware of their situation, both were old and without a child. In their society, if a man's wife was unable to have children, he was encouraged to take another. The Code of Hammurabi stated a wife could give her husband a servant to marry in order to bear children. The child would belong to the husband and original wife, not the servant. To a frustrated couple this may have sounded reasonable.

It is likely Sarai had this in mind when she approached Abram and encouraged him to take Hagar as his wife. Nobody would disagree with them and it would fulfill their desire to have a child. They lived according to the world's standards and found themselves out of God's will (Colossians 2:8). Today, our society has reasoned God out and evolution in, abortion as a free choice, and homosexuality as a healthy lifestyle. Everyone may endorse and encourage sin but God will never accept it.

##### **Reasoned According to the Flesh**

Sarai began the conversation and suggested her handmaid as a wife for Abram, foolishly believing a child by Hagar would become theirs. Hagar was from Egypt and probably became part of the family when Abram unwisely went there during the drought. The effects of one bad decision became the temptation for another one.

Abram was tempted greatly.

1. *The temptation was appealing* – it would gratify the flesh, provide a quick result, and remedy the problem.
2. *The temptation was permissible* – Sarai encouraged it, society agreed, and he would be legally within his rights because they would be married.
3. *The temptation was deceptive* – it appeared to reach their goals of faith but it consisted of sins of the flesh that would produce lasting effects.

Abram agreed with Sarai and became a willing participant in the sin. Their lack of faith led to adultery and introduced hardship to the family. Abram withstood the temptation from the King of Sodom but fell to the temptation provided by Sarai. Women have a large influence over their husband (Proverbs 12:4). It is likely Abram would have never agreed to participate had someone else mentioned it. As John Butler appropriately said, "The source of temptation has much to do with the strength of temptation". That is why believers are to refrain from being stumbling blocks to others (1 Corinthians 8:9; Romans 14:13).

### **Abram Reacted in the Flesh: *Genesis 16:3***

#### **Abram's Lack of Leadership**

Sarai initiated the conversation, offered her solution to their apparent problem, and Abram followed. He did not seek God in the matter, perhaps he knew the answer he would have received, and he also ignored the established pattern of marriage, being between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:3-8). Instead of leading his family after God, Abram followed Sarai's advice and took Hagar as his wife. This poor decision changed the lives of all involved.

#### **Abram's Lack of Control**

Abram struggled with faith. The LORD made it clear they would have a son but Abram was unable to wait for Him to work. Instead, he acted in haste and stumbled into sin. Why, because he lost control of his home and failed to lead after God. A married man and woman are one before God, with the man as the established head or leader of the home (Ephesians 5:23). When a leader fails to lead, someone else will make the decisions, and in this case it was Sarai. Her advice was based upon the situation and not God's direction, so it was faulty. Abram followed Sarai's worldly advice instead of waiting upon God.

Abram took Hagar as his wife without much of an argument, if he made one at all. Abram's decision gratified the flesh. When our desires are on human pleasures we might do anything to attain them. If self-control is lost, sin has the advantage (Proverbs 25:28). Abram's lack of control led to a rash and foolish decision.

## ***Impact of Abram's Decision***

*Genesis 16:4-16*

### ***Produced a Troubled Home: Genesis 16:4-6***

#### **Conflict in the Home**

During this time, it was every woman's desire to bear her husband children, especially sons. Hagar was able to do this for Abram, while Sarai could not and the result took Sarai by surprise. Hagar despised or looked down upon Sarai, evidently believing she was better due to her ability to have a child. Be careful, events or situations can make us arrogant. Abram and Sarai's immoral actions produced pride and disrespect, filling the home with turmoil. Immorality always dishonors God and the results are burdensome.

Sarai lashed out and immediately accused Abram of the problem. Yes, Abram was wrong but Sarai was also guilty, however like many she refused to acknowledge it. Keep in mind Sarai had endured Hagar's haughtiness, so her attack on Abram may have been an emotional reaction. Immorality will weaken and even destroy marriages. Because of the improper and unscriptural relationship between Abram and Hagar, their home was threatened with destruction. The results of their sin appeared immediately and the effects remain today. The problems produced by immorality are great and far reaching. It is no wonder that immoral societies are plagued with numerous problems.

#### **Cruelty in the Home**

Abram apparently refused to intervene, reminding Sarai that Hagar was her handmaid. He removed himself from the situation and once again became a spectator with the affairs of his family. Abram never recognized Hagar as his wife, he chose to ignore the relationship, and the problem became worse. Immorality produced sorrow – nobody was happy or filled with joy.

Sarai treated Hagar harshly, how is unknown but it was bad enough for Hagar to flee. Sarai, due to her poor decision, acted mean, spiteful, and vengeful. Immorality produces cruelty and leads to hypocrisy. This entire affair began with Sarai, but she appeared to be the most irate afterwards. Many who promote immorality will be the first to speak against the negative impacts. It is also possible that Hagar became easily upset because she felt mistreated. She remained Sarai's handmaiden and was never exalted as Abram's wife.

### ***Produced a Troubled Heart: Genesis 16:7-16***

#### **Hagar Greatly Hurt**

Abram and Sarai treated Hagar like an object. She was taken into their home and bitterly ran away due to their sinful behavior. Instead of teaching her about God and His ways they involved her in their carnal plan and let her flee. Abram and Sarai never considered Hagar's feelings and selfishly mistreated her. Immorality produces injustice, and the fact we murder innocent unborn babies confirms this. Abortion is a direct result of immorality, people choosing to live in sin while not wanting to deal with the results of their actions. Immorality promotes selfishness and disregards the rights of others.

Hagar fled to the wilderness and waited, perhaps to die. She traveled until she could go no further, and settled by a fountain in the middle of nowhere, on the way to Shur. Apparently, she was attempting to return to Egypt. Immorality produces discontentment. Like Hagar, few in this world are content with their situation in life and immorality is often the cause. Only God is able to provide the peace that our soul desires (Philippians 4:7).

There in the middle of nowhere, Hagar met the angel of the LORD. It is evident from the passage that the angel was God and probably a pre-manifestation of Jesus Christ (Colossian 1:15; Hebrews 1:3). The angel referred to Hagar as Sarai's handmaid and not Abram's wife. The LORD is not bound to recognize our decisions. He gently reminded Hagar of her humbling situation. She was asked where she came from and where she planned to go. Hagar answered the first question but not the latter one. She knew where she came from but had no idea of where to go or what to do. It was an honest answer and offered without excuse for her actions. Hagar was directed to return and submit to Sarai's authority, which would be an act of great humility.

### **Hagar Given Comfort and Direction**

If Hagar returned, her life would be difficult because servitude is never easy. Why should she return, what was the benefit? The LORD provided the answer; Hagar could find strength knowing God had a plan for her. The LORD was aware of her affliction and would bless her with a son.

1. *Ishmael would be a wild man* – bold, fearless and untamed. He would be wild in his conduct with other men and in his heart before God.
2. *Ishmael would be warring man* – his hand would be against every man, signifying a life of sin and every man's hand would be against him, signifying a life of hardships.

Though he would be reckless, Ishmael would dwell with his brethren. The Arab nations are Ishmael's descendants. They remain free and together, though not necessarily united. Today, they continue to threaten Israel and world peace. They are considered reckless, that's why the world is concerned with their knowledge of nuclear power, and they have united, to a degree, under the religion Islam. The LORD knew what would transpire between Isaac and Ishmael's descendants.

Hagar's life was changed; the LORD healed the heart that was broken due to sin. The well is called Beerlahairoi, meaning well of life. Hagar accepted Him as her LORD and returned to Abram and Sarai. Hagar received God's word, trusted Him, and was obedient. The LORD of grace and mercy appeared unto her and she was never the same. Evidently Hagar informed Abram of the event, and her baby boy was named Ishmael. Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born and still without the child God promised.

## Conclusion

God blessed Abram with the promise of a great family but Abram had to wait for the fulfillment. The impatient Abram, along with his wife Sarai, chose to meddle in God's business and made a decision that affected himself, his family, and the entire world. Today, it is important to wait upon God as you live by faith. The LORD is aware of tomorrow's events and He knows what is needed in your life. Allow God to lead and live like the psalmist, *I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.* Psalm 130:5

### Point to Ponder

Temptations are often strongest after great blessings.

### Quote

"Man must not only leave the end to God, but also the means." John Lange

### Questions

Why did Abram choose to live by works and not faith?

How could Abram have avoided his mistake?

How did sin affect the lives of all involved?

How did the LORD bless Hagar?

What new truth have you learned from this lesson?