

October 27, 2019

Series: "Who Are the Heroes?"

"That Don't Make No Sense, Neither"

Here's a brief recap from last week. Hagar was a servant of Sarah. Sarah and Abraham were really old. Sarah arranged for Abraham to father a child through Hagar. In other words, Sarah and Abraham went rogue. God had promised children for them, but they were done waiting. They didn't trust God's plan, so they did their own thing. Here's a Biblical principle we looked at:

**IN HIS LOVING GRACE, GOD WORKS OUT HIS SUPREME PURPOSE**

**WITHIN AND IN SPITE OF OUR CORRUPT HUMAN NATURE.**

Hagar was pregnant. She was banished by Sarah. So Hagar left a horrible situation. But God determined to send her back there. She had to face Sarah again. She didn't know if the dynamics would get better or worse.

But God gave her a promise. *Your child will birth a great nation because it is Abraham's seed. So go back and submit to Sarah.*

And that's where we ended. Hagar turned around. She went back. She made things right. She served in the dysfunctional household. She had the baby. And she named him "Ishmael," which means "God sees you." Hagar named the baby Ishmael.

So Hagar had Ishmael. Ishmael grew up in that household. For years Abraham treated Ishmael as his one and only son. For years, Abraham had it in his mind that Ishmael was going to carry on God's promise to make Abraham the father of many nations. For years Hagar had happy thoughts of her son's future, heir to Abraham and God's promise.

If you remember your Bible stories, you know what happened next. Sarah conceived. Next to the virgin birth, this was the most miraculous conception in the Bible. Sarah was in her 90s. Not only was the pregnancy a surprise to Sarah, it also threw Hagar for a loop. She thought things were settled. Now that Sarah was pregnant, there was no way Ishmael was going to be the heir-apparent. Sarah was pregnant with the promise God gave to Abraham and Sarah.

So Sarah had a baby. They named him "Isaac," which means *he laughs/will laugh* because Abraham laughed when told he and Sarah would have a child. The irony isn't lost on us as we learn that Ishmael, when we was a teenager, made fun of young Isaac. He laughed at him.

Ishmael laughed at Isaac and Sarah saw it. She saw her opportunity to drive a wedge between Abraham and his surrogate family. So she went to Abraham and said *these two have got to go*. She didn't care what Abraham did. She simply wanted him to make them go away.

This confused Abraham. He had raised Ishmael as his own. Have you ever had one of those rock-and-a-hard-place decisions to make? It doesn't seem like any decision is a good decision. Abraham was wedged right there.

Then God said to Abraham, "Do what your wife says. Send them away."

We need to pause at that instruction. As I like to say, "That don't make no sense." Why did God do that to that poor woman and her son? Why did God tell Abraham to send her out? To help us understand, remember what we said last week. God didn't condone slavery or Sarah's behavior or

Abraham's behavior. God didn't instill this type of culture or situation. God works within and in spite of our corrupt human nature. Abraham and Sarah created this mess. And God wasn't going to come in and wave a magic wand and make it all go away. If God acted the way we sometimes wish He would act, we would not have free will and would be merely puppets on a string. God said to Abraham and Sarah, you made this mess. Here are the steps you now need to take.

I hope that makes sense. If it doesn't, you will always be frustrated and angry and confused when bad things happen.

So Abraham sent Hagar out. He gave her a container of water and off she went into the desert. That's all he gave her. For she and her son. You know Abraham had to figure they would die. Hagar knew that, too. As they walked the desert, eventually they ran out of water.

Genesis tells us that Hagar took Ishmael and propped him under a thorny bush. After all the garbage she had to put up with in her life, she couldn't face the death of her own son. She knew it was going to happen. So she

propped him up under a tree. As she walked away, Ishmael began to cry out to God and Hagar cried out to God. And God said to Hagar, "I have heard your cries. I have heard you son's cries." Then...then God showed her a well. A well she hadn't seen before. And they drank and were supplied for the rest of their trip. They moved on, and then we don't hear from them again.

Inside their story...all the hurts and the wrongs and the difficulties...inside their story there are a few lessons for us when we're dealing with things that don't make sense.

## **1. REMEMBER GOD'S PROMISES**

In Genesis 16:10, God came to Hagar and said, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." God gave her a promise. That promise was enough for her to pull herself up and finish the purpose God placed into her life.

God saw the big picture. Hagar didn't. But God's promise was enough to

keep her going.

When things don't make sense, remember the promises of Christmas.

Remember the glory of Christmas Eve worship. Remember the songs, the friends, the soaring way God is praised for the gift of a Savior. Remember.

When things don't make sense, remember the promises of Easter.

Remember the joyous sound of people's voices as we worshiped on Easter morning. Remember singing "In Christ Alone." Remember.

God's Word is full of promises:

- 2 Corinthians 4:8 - "Yes, we are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed."
- Romans 8:28 - "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."
- Isaiah 41:10 - "Don't be afraid, for I am with you; don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and I will help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand."

Those are strong promises. When we're facing storms we don't understand; when we have to carry scars and weights we don't understand, those are strong promises.

## **2. RELY ON GOD'S PLAN**

Genesis 16:9 says, "The angel of the Lord said to her, 'Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.'" You know that's the last thing Hagar wanted to hear. But it was God's plan.

As **Proverbs 14:12** reminds us:

*"There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death."*

In other words, my way may seem to make sense, but it usually just leads to more trouble. Even though they don't always make sense in the moment, God's plans are good and full of hope. That's why we can be perplexed without falling into despair. We can be confused but not defeated. How many times are you perplexed or confused? A week doesn't go by when I'm not feeling one or both of those. But it's okay. Because you can be confused and perplexed without feeling defeated or despairing.

Here's something you might want to write down:

**Hagar didn't have an explanation; All she had was a directive.**

You don't have to have every bit of detail in order to follow God's plan and purpose for your life. You don't have to grasp every known fact in order to trust what God is revealing to you in His Word.

Here's how that plays out. Someone wrongs you. Someone has done something to you that you don't deserve. What does the Bible tell you to do? Forgive them. Love them. It doesn't make sense. But God says to love your enemies. Forgive those who have wronged you. It doesn't make sense. But we have the directive. And God always gives you the strength to pursue His directive.

Here's what Hagar did. She acted on the directive. She didn't understand the fullness of it, but she acted.

**James 1:22** says, **"But don't just listen to God's Word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves."** We are going to trust God's directives over and above our wisdom.

### **3. RECOGNIZE GOD'S PROVISION**

At her greatest moment of desperation, **Genesis 21:19** tells us:

*Then God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.*

Remember, it's God's plan, not ours. It's God provision, not ours. How many times in our lives have we been hard-pressed to see God at work but then, looking back, we see things we missed? We couldn't recognize it in the heat of the moment, but God was there.

Make no mistake. God's going to provide what we need when we need it. It's not always what I want or think I need. But God's provision is exactly what we need when we need it. As Paul says in **Philippians 4:19**, "And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus."

When life doesn't make sense, I:

**1. REMEMBER GOD'S PROMISES**

**2. RELY ON GOD'S PLAN**

### 3. RECOGNIZE GOD'S PROVISION

Finally:

#### 4. REST IN GOD'S PRESENCE

I know some of you are carrying scars that no one knows about. Some of you are carrying a weight no one sees. In **Genesis 16:13**, Hagar says, **"You are a God of seeing...for truly here I have seen him who looks after me."**

Hold on to that promise. Hagar was not alone. No matter what happens to you, you are never alone. God sees you. No matter what you experience in life, you are never alone. God sees you.

There have been times in my life as a pastor when I have felt alone. It's rare, but it happens. I've had lonely times where I wondered where God was leading me. Do I really want to be doing this? Yet even in those times, God was there. And what would happen would be, we'd have one of these gripping and moving times of worship. Or one of the lovely, wonderful people of Covenant Church would share a kind word or we'd have a serendipitous moment, and I'd remember God's presence. Or someone

would share how God is working in their lives. Stories of faith and encouragement. I hope you know what I'm talking about. I want you to know what I'm talking about.

Of course we get knocked down, but not destroyed. We know this because as we saw in John 15:5, "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

Stay connected to Jesus. He is always with you. You are always in the presence of your Lord and Savior. So you are never alone. Here are three big implications of that promise:

- **In God's presence, I find peace in the midst of the chaos.** In other words, everything doesn't have to make sense in order for me to be at peace.
- **In God's presence, I find perspective that overshadows the questions.** In other words, I am so focused on God and His glory that unanswered questions are not a joy-killer.
- **In God's presence, I have power to overcome the pressures, the expectations, and the responsibilities.** In other words, even

when the weight on my shoulders doesn't make sense to me, I know  
God is working His good and perfect will for my life and in my life.

So here's the last thing you might want to write down:

**Just because it doesn't make sense doesn't mean it's senseless.**

We all hurt. We all carry pain with us. We don't understand it all. We never will. But what we do know is that God can take your hurt, your pain, your misery, and in the grand scheme of His purpose for your life, use it to bring glory to His Son, Jesus Christ.

What an amazing adventure our lives in Christ are.