

Genesis Ch16v1-16 - A God Solution

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[0 : 00] Welcome to the Apple Stocks So Genesis chapter 16.

If you miss any of the talks, they're on the website. You can find them there. And I do commend to you again the opportunity to study further, to engage with God's Word.

Consider MBC. It's a bank holiday. What else would you be doing? Come along. It'll be great for you. Genesis 16, we're going to read verses 1 through to 16.

Let's hear God's Word together. Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children.

But she had an Egyptian slave, named Hagar. So she said to Abram, The Lord has kept me from having children. Go sleep with my slave.

[1 : 36] Perhaps I can build a family through her. Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan 10 years, Sarai, his wife, took her Egyptian slave, Hagar, and gave her to her husband to be his wife.

He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, You are responsible for the wrong I'm suffering.

I put my slave into your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.

Your slave is in your hands, Abram said. Do with her whatever you think best. Then Sarai ill-treated Hagar, so she fled from her.

The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert. It was a spring that is beside the road to shore. And he said, Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from?

[2 : 48] Where are you going? I'm running away from my mistress Sarai, she answered. Then the angel of the Lord told her, Go back to your mistress and submit to her.

The angel added, I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.

The angel of the Lord also said to her, You are now pregnant, and you will give birth to a son.

You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man. His hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand against him.

And he will live in hostility towards all his brothers. She gave this name to the Lord, who spoke to her. You are the God who sees me.

For she said, I have now seen the one who sees me. That is why the well was called Beer-lehai-Roi. It is still there between Kadesh and Beret.

[4 : 00] So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had born.

Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael. Well, we get all the nitty-gritty of life, don't we, in Scripture.

Let's hear what God has to say to us, and we're going to ask for his help as we pray. Father, you are the God who sees us.

You see each one of us individually. You see us together as your body. You know our hearts. You know what we're feeling, what we're thinking.

You know where our minds are tempted to go. And you know what is right and best for us.

[5 : 07] And so we pray that your word would penetrate deep into our life and would give to us what we most need.

That we would hear from you today that would cause us to be at peace and at rest with you. So help us, we ask.

In Jesus' name. Amen. One of my first jobs on leaving school was working on a barge with a friend called Bart.

Now what you must understand is there was the harbour wall, the harbour area, and next to that was the pontoon which was in the water.

And if you know anything about pontoons, they rise with the tide and they'll go down with the tide. Now connecting the land side, the harbour, to the pontoon was a series of electric cables.

[6 : 20] And designed in such a way with a certain amount of length that when the tide went down, the cables would stretch and when the tide came up, they would be all okay.

Well, Bart couldn't help himself, could he? He had to make things better. He looked one evening and saw that the cables going from the harbour to the pontoon were slack.

And he thought to himself, I could tighten these and it would make it better. And it all looked really well until the tide began to fall.

You could imagine what happened. You see, sometimes things are better left alone. Our interference is exactly that, an interference.

And it seems that in our text this morning, Sarai and Abram just couldn't help themselves. They had to interfere.

[7 : 25] They had to try and make things better. Well, before we get to that particular incident, let's first see the difficult situations that lead to testing times.

Difficult situations that lead to testing times. God's promise has been clear. Childless Abram and Sarah would become a great nation and in turn, they would be a blessing to the nations of the world.

But the great expectation soon becomes a difficult situation. Look at verse 1. Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children.

Things were getting increasingly difficult for this ageing couple. In fact, verse 3 tells us that 10 years have passed since God had made the promise.

Now I don't mind how strong you think your theology is. That's just painful. Husbands and wives want to graduate to being dad and mum.

[8 : 45] Not having children is always going to be hard. And many couples have sleepless, tearful nights. And what makes this particular situation worse?

Look at verse 2. She said to Abram, the Lord has kept me from having children. God who had promised us children is keeping us from having children.

Now in our medical orientated world, we tend to put these disappointments and heartaches down to biology and our DNA. But behind it all, Sarai knows that the pitcher-patter of tiny feet ultimately lies in the hands of God.

So what's going on here? Well, not only is it painful, the pressure is beginning to build.

Sarai is getting desperate. What are they going to do? Now we're not immune to these painful testing times, are we?

[10 : 01] Life has the habit of throwing us curveballs and they hurt. They knock us down. The pressure gets to us. Maybe you're a single person and you've come on your own and you would love the idea of getting married.

But nothing's happening. God's not providing. Perhaps you've witnessed and prayed for a friend or a family member over many years and, well, nothing seems to change.

And you think, God's not working. You see, we can write our own disappointments into this. Maybe you're thinking of them right now.

Perhaps it's a struggling marriage that you would just love to be different. Maybe it's an ongoing illness. Or maybe an unfulfilled dream.

And yes, you know that behind it there's reasons for the reason why things are like it. There are explanations. But behind it all is our sovereign God who is in control of all things but yet nothing seems to happen.

[11 : 18] And the years roll by. Five years. Ten years. Twenty years. And nothing's changing. What's going on?

Well, we don't always know what is going on. But as Christians, we know how we should respond. Patient obedience. We don't always understand God's ways but we know we can trust him.

It's not that God is making things as difficult as they possibly can be just to see how we're going to respond. No, God's ways are just simply not always clear to us and that means it tests our faith.

Difficult situations lead to testing times. And the danger is as we'll see in a moment we can begin to take things into our own hands can't we?

Well, we don't have a husband so we'll marry an unbeliever in the hope that they will become a believer. Maybe we just adjust the gospel message slightly so that it becomes more accessible in

the hope that our friend or family member will believe.

[12 : 44] We begin to turn to other things and people to somehow fulfil what we all desperately want and God doesn't seem to deliver. But maybe these hard and difficult situations can also be used to pull us deeper into God and realise that well, he is sufficient.

he is enough. The writer of Psalm 16 understood this.

Listen to his words. Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, you are my Lord.

Apart from you I have no good thing. I could have everything else but not have what I most desperately need.

Those who run after other gods will only suffer more and more. So difficult situations can lead to testing times in our life.

[13 : 59] well, second, sinful solutions can lead to disastrous consequences. Sarai and Abraham's situation is difficult.

God had promised them a family through whom the nations of the world will be blessed but they don't have a child. well, simples.

Let's give God a hand. Let's help things along a bit. God seems to be in a bit of a mess and he just needs some of our help. Isn't that true?

God helps those who help themselves? Who says that? Is it Jesus or Paul? No, it's not in your Bible.

Don't go looking. It's not there. playing God is always rebellious. It's sin and sinful solutions always lead to disastrous consequences.

[15 : 04] Let's look at the three characters involved in this account. First, there's Sarai and the sin of taking what you want.

Sarai wants a child so she takes matters into her own hands. I know maybe Hagar could help. Verse 2, so she said to Abram, the Lord has kept me from having children.

Go sleep with my slave. Perhaps I can build a family through her. Now, given the reality of the situation, we might have some kind of sympathy for Sarai.

After all, God's blessing on the world depends on them having a child. I mean, what could possibly be wrong with her plan? Well, nothing's wrong with the plan except Genesis 2 tells us that a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh.

Marriage is permanent, exclusive, and isn't open to other partners. others. You see, when we desperately want something, we begin to disengage with what God says and respond with what I want.

[16 : 31] So, there's Sarai and the sin of taking what you want. Then there's Abram and the sin of ignoring what is right. How's Abram going to respond to such a suggestion?

Well, look at the rest of verse 2. Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So, after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai, his wife, took her Egyptian slave, Hagar, gave her to her husband to be his wife.

He slept with Hagar and she conceived. Well, it's understandable, isn't it? I mean, they've been waiting so long.

It's been ten long years. Surely God doesn't want it to take that long. I mean, what else am I supposed to do?

And it will keep the missus happy. Sarai wants, Sarai gets. Well, it might reflect many a sad marriage, but this isn't going to do.

[17 : 40] The author wants us to see this. It's underlined for us. If you look at the middle of verse three, Sarai, his wife, took her Egyptian slave, Hagar, and gave her to her husband to be his wife.

Sarai has a husband. His name's Abram, and Abram has a wife. Her name is Sarai. No, none of them. Abram can't plead ignorance to God's good design.

He knows what's right. And then there's Hagar, and the sin of running from her guilt.

we don't need to be marriage counsellors to guess what's going to happen next, do we? Look at the end of verse four. When Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.

What's the matter, Sarai? Can't give what your husband wants? Well, Sarai repaid the compliment, didn't she? Look at the end of verse six.

[18 : 50] Sarai ill-treated Hagar, so she fled from her. No, Hagar isn't an innocent bystander in all of this.

She knows the deal, and she's quite happy to go along with it. Maybe it will kind of get her up the pecking order a bit. But when it all gets a little bit messy and too close to the bone, she ups and leaves.

Rather than face the sin and the trouble, she runs away from it. You see, all three, Sarai, Abram, Hagar, they're all responsible for playing God.

They all take matters into their own hands. And what seemed to be a clever solution turned out to have disastrous consequences. They all begin to start fighting.

Verse five, Sarai said to Abram, Hagar, you're responsible for the wrong I'm suffering. Verse six, no, your slave is in your hands, Abram said.

[19 : 59] Do with her whatever you think best. And Sarai ill-treated Hagar, and Hagar fled from her. Playing God is all so familiar, isn't it?

It's how the first marriage in the Bible that we come across started out. remember Adam and Eve? All this is yours. You can enjoy all this fruit, but not this.

Well, Eve wanted and Eve got. And she gave some to her husband and he took. Just as Sarai gave Hagar to Abram and he took.

And when it all just got so messy, Adam and Eve hid and ran from their sin. And then the blame game started.

Her, him, no, Satan. Of course, the actions of that first marriage in the Garden of Eden had disastrous consequences, and it seems our sinful solutions to it all are not much better.

[21 : 11] think about our own lives for a minute. I want to be happy. I'll make myself happy. I want to live as I like.

I'll do as I like. I want to... You fill in the blank. What are you desperately wanting right now? I want and I'll have.

And we just ignore God's word. We twist the truth. We reject what's right. And like it always does, well, it just goes from bad to worse. Instead of confronting our sin, we begin to run and hide from it. We blame others. It's not me, it's them. We blame our past. It's my parents. It was my education. We blame our childhood. We blame the church.

The only thing we're absolutely certain of is it's not my fault. Hagar did have a child but life was not going to be easy.

[22 : 20] Look at the end of, look at verse 12. God said that her son would be a wild donkey of a man. His hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him and he will live in hostility towards all his brothers.

others. The children of Hagar and the children of Sarai would be in conflict all their years. In fact, if we know anything of our history, it's still going on today, isn't it?

It's being played out in the Middle East every single day. You see, sin has this disastrous consequence. It's like the first flick of a domino.

One push and there's no end to its destruction. So we have sinful solutions that lead to disastrous consequences.

But then there's a God intervention that leads to redeemed lives. God interventions lead to redeemed lives.

[23 : 36] I mean, the account is such a terrible mess, isn't it? How do you begin to untangle it all? Well, the point is you can't.

Sin has deep consequences that you and I can't undo. However, there is one who can deal with our past and give us a future, one who redeems and restores broken lives.

Now, before we look at how God redeems, we've got to ask this question, who is the angel of the Lord? He appears in verse seven, the angel of the Lord.

In verse nine, the angel of the Lord told her. Verse eleven, the angel of the Lord also said to her, well, it's not just any angel.

It seems to be that the angel of the Lord, and if we find this out more as we go through the Old Testament, seems to be a manifestation of God himself.

[24 : 47] That's what Hagar points to if you look at verse thirteen. so she gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her.

You are the God who sees me. The angel of the Lord is a manifestation of God himself who comes in person to deal with Hagar.

So let's look at God's personal and gracious intervention into the life of Hagar. We're going to see three things that relate to our lives as well.

First, God seeks the lost. Look at verse seven. The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert.

It's a beautiful picture, isn't it? We can picture Hagar wandering around in the desert trying to find some respite by a spring lost and alone and God calls her by name.

[25 : 56] Verse eight. Hagar slave of Sarai where have you come from? Where are you going? You see this is the kind of God we have.

He never waits for us to come to him. God takes the initiative and moves out towards us. God loves to redeem sinners.

Isn't that what we see in the person of Jesus? The God man who comes into the mess and brokenness of our lives, reaching out to us, searching us until he finds us, looking for the prodigal, as Jesus himself reminds us, for the son of man came to seek and to save the lost.

Maybe you feel you're wandering in the desert. Maybe you're running from certain things in the past that have never ever been addressed. Well, God is seeking you because he loves you.

God seeks the lost and God hears the repentant. Look at verse 8 again.

[27 : 18] God said, Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from? Where are you going? Well, it's not that God doesn't know where she's come from or where she's going.

He knows. So why would God ask a question? Well, he asks the question because it's an invitation to Hagar to come and speak and engage with the living God.

God is a listener. He hears us. He's concerned for you and for me. Hagar responds, end of verse 8, I'm running away.

I'm running away. Hagar admits to what she's doing. She's on the run. She knows the mess she's left behind and she's turned her back and she's getting out of there.

So God in his grace calls her back again. Verse 9, then the angel of the Lord told her, go back to your mistress and submit to her.

[28 : 26] Of course, Hagar has no idea how she's going to be treated but, it's what she must do. She must obey what God says and she turns back.

You see, maybe there's stuff in your past today and you don't want to go back there. You're not wanting to face up to it.

But maybe there's relationships we need to deal with. We must obey and trust all things to him. You see, God hears your cry.

He hears your longings to change and be different. He hears about your regrets. He sees your failing. He knows your sin and in response, God is calling us back.

Go back. Come back to me. The Bible calls it repentance. We never ever stop repenting.

[29 : 34] And so that we know he hears us, look at verse 11, the angel of the Lord also said to her, you are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son.

You'll call him Ishmael. Ishmael means the Lord has heard of your misery. You see, we can come to God with all our misery and all our mess and he hears you and he will answer you.

So God seeks, God hears and then we know this next one, God sees the needy. Verse 13, Hagar gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her, you are the God who sees me.

For she said, I have now seen the one who sees me. So who's seeing who? Well, there's a double truth here that both encourages us and blesses us.

At one level, Hagar can say, God sees me. God sees me. Rather than her sin putting her out of sight of God, it's her sin that puts her in the direct vision and sight of God.

[31 : 01] You see, no one is so messed up that God cannot see them. Isn't that encouraging? with his piercing eyes, he penetrates beneath the facade and the masks that we carry with us and he sees our heart.

But at another level, Hagar can say, I have now seen God, the one who sees me. Hagar can now see God in the sense that she can know God personally and intimately.

Through her repentance, through her engagement, her encounter with God, she can now see the God who is holy and pure. That's the God we have.

The one who not only sees us, but invites people like us to see him, to know him and to enjoy him. You see, God doesn't need our interventions.

We need a God intervention in our life. God doesn't need Sarai and Abram to do his job. God had promised that he would bless the nations and he will continue to bless the nations.

[32 : 31] Even a woman from Egypt, an outsider called Hagar. And if he can bless her too, he can bless you and me.

You see, sin and its consequences may be deeply engraved in our lives. And we can't undo what's broken. But we have one who redeems and intervenes.

so even in our mess, even in the depth of our despair, when we give up on ourselves, when everybody else gives up on us, there is one who delights in saving wanderers like us.

The God who seeks the lost, hears the repentant, and sees the needy. Let's just take a moment to reflect together.

Let's just take a moment to reflect together. Lord God, we're sorry for the times we have rushed things along, taken things that aren't ours, trying to do your job.

[34 : 17] Father, please forgive us. Help us to know a fresh the God who comes to rescue us and redeem us, dealing with our past, and giving us a glorious future.

Thank you that through faith in Christ we can say we can see you and know you. And thank you that one day we will see you face to face.

We will be with you. and you will know us and we will know you in all its fullness. Thank you God. Amen. Amen. song we're going to sing.

I once was lost in darkest night. I thought I knew the way. There's only one way and that's always returning to Christ. He is enough.

[35 : 29] He is sufficient for all things. So I invite you if you're able to