

Women's Devo Study: Hagar Devo #2

Theme: The God who sees me

Text: Genesis 16: 11-16

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When we last left off on Hagar, she had finished receiving an instruction from the Lord to return & submit to her mistress Sarai. The Lord had also promised to bless her son, by increasing his descendants beyond what she could count. As far as we know this was the first time that Hagar had met the Lord, especially because of what she says next. She gives the Lord a name as "the one who sees hers," and declares "I have NOW seen the one who sees me." In the first devo I raised the question of why does Hagar listen to the Lord? Returning back to the place of your abuse would require real trust in the Lord & strength from him. I think her reason isn't just that she believes in the blessing, but that she believes in who the blessing comes from. It comes from the Lord, who has shown her that he saw and cared for her pain. Sarai had "seen" Hagar despise her, but instead of alleviating Hagar's pain, Sarai inflicted more pain in return. Abram sees Sarai's pain by permitting Sarai to do what she wishes to Hagar, but he takes no action on comforting Hagar for her pain. God was the only one who showed Hagar that he saw her pain, and that he cared enough to rescue her from it. Scripture says that justice belongs to the Lord, and I believe that in God promising to bless Hagar, he is in his justice, giving a recompense for what she has suffered.

Hagar says "I have NOW seen the one who sees me." This is interesting too because we can guess that she probably had already heard of the Lord before, because her masters serve him. But we don't know if she believed in him. She could've thought "they have their God and I have mine." And even if she did consider that they served the one true God, it doesn't mean that she knew that God cared about her. So when Hagar meets God for herself, and has an encounter with his love, it probably impacts how she sees her reality. She wasn't alone and she wasn't without purpose. We were all created for a relationship with God, & He cares about his creation. And in God revealing his heart to Hagar, He shows that God didn't agree with the mistreatment/suffering inflicted on her by his servants. Here we learn a very valuable lesson. Not everything that a servant of the Lord does to people is reflective of God's character/heart, even though it normally should be. Jesus teaches us to love the Lord our God, and to love our neighbor as ourself. We are supposed to reflect the heart of God to others. But whenever evil is done to us, we need to like Hagar, separate that from God. God loves righteousness & hates evil. God meets Hagar in her pain, and promises to bless her even as she goes back to the place of her affliction. There are many people who are believers who don't congregate in church because of church hurt. To you God is saying, go back and submit to the community I will lead you to. And even if someone hurts you there, trust that God will bless you even in your affliction.

Another thing to remember is Hagar is Egyptian. Egyptians worshiped many gods & goddesses (technically idols, because they were not the one true God, creator of heaven and earth.) These idols can't see or hear. There can be no relationship

between them & people. Psalms 115 addresses this when it says the idols people serve "have eyes but cannot see, and ears, but cannot hear." And that all who trust in these idols will be like them. So imagine how significant it was for Hagar to meet a God who could see, who did hear, who did act, who wanted to relate with, in who she can put her full trust in? Now only did she meet her creator, but she learned his heart for his creation. He has created her, he cares for her, and he has plans for her. While serving Abram, she must've heard of the promise/plans God had for him. And it's always great to hear how God is working in someone else's life. But it's different when we see him work in our own lives. Nothing compares to personally knowing God for ourselves.

This is what we see with Hagar. Upon her learning who God is, her words and actions show that she now has 1) a relationship with him. I believe her saying "I have now seen the one who sees me," is akin to an expression of 2) love for the Lord and of her 3) faith in him. Her love is accompanied with obedience. Jesus teaches "if you love me obey my commands." Furthermore Hagar's willingness to obey God's instruction without hesitation, shows evidence of her 4) trust in the Lord. She has faith & trust in his promise, and in Him himself. Scripture is filled with countless blessings for those who trust in the Lord. Psalms 115 says "he will bless those who fear the Lord small and great alike." Even though Hagar is a gentile, she's receptive to the Lord, and by obeying him, she is showing she fears him. And for that she will be blessed. So I believe that from this meeting on she's counted as a servant of the Lord. And how beautiful is it that she opened her heart to God, despite the mistreatment of her master? She may have felt like her pain was invisible to them, but it wasn't to God. He uses this moment of pain to reveal his love and goodness to her firsthand in the desert. She is able to go back in confidence because the Lord has shown to her that he is good, that he is with her, and that he is for her. So when she returns to the source of her affliction, God's love and goodness will be there also.

"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." -Isaiah 41:10

Another thing that strikes me about this meeting is that God goes after her first. It doesn't start with her crying out to God. Many times we see people in the bible going after God. There are many Psalms where David desperately cries out to God for help, and times where he asks why does God hide his face from him. God turning his face could mean David felt like God was distant, or it could imply unrepented sin that was keeping David from being close to God. Matthew 5:8 says "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God." But here before Hagar serves him, before she knows him, before she repents from any sin, God makes the first move in meeting her. This echoes the gospel because God sent Jesus to die for us, while we were still sinners. (Romans 5:8) And if we receive him we become children of God. (John 1:12) The text says that God wants her to name her son Ishmael because "The Lord has heard of her misery." So even without her calling he still heard. And he is intentional in meeting her, listening to her and then rescuing her with an instruction and a promise. Psalms says God precepts preserve our life. Here it is no different. In obeying God's instruction to submit to Sarai, God shows Hagar the way to life. That he would honor Hagar for that

by blessing her son's future. So 1) He meets her as she is, she 2) she is transformed from knowing his love, 3) and she receives him. And isn't that everyone's story? No one has ever been the same after a love encounter with God. In a way it's even more impactful to see God rescue her without her crying out to him. It shows that he is loving enough to reach out to rescue us even before we reach out to him. He is the Shepherd who goes after the lost sheep. God chases after Hagar's heart and she's receptive. This is convicting to me because it reminds me of my own hard-heartedness in the past towards the Lord. I had gone through a period where I abandoned the Lord, but I'm forever grateful that he never stopped chasing after my heart, and eventually he helped me come back to him wholeheartedly.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit-fruit that will last-and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you."
- John 15:16

Lastly, I think it's really cute and very Egyptian of Hagar to give God a name. In the story of Moses we see him ask God to introduce himself, and God says "I am that I am." And in the bible we can find many different descriptions & names for God, according to what God has revealed/said about himself. But this is the only character I know of that has given God a name herself, out of recognition for what God has done for her. I think it is one of the most beautiful, simple, & heartfelt descriptions/names of God in the bible. It's an expression of her love for God, in return for the love he has done for her. In saying "you are the one who sees me" she's recognizing him as creator, & as the one who has her justice, and as the Lord who KNOWS her. Her saying "I have now seen the one who sees me," is her sharing her testimony. She is poetically describing the life-changing experience of knowing the God who first knew her.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as a prophet to the nations." Jeremiah 1:5

Application:

The meeting between God & Hagar reminds me heavily of the gospel. God created us FIRST for himself. We fell short with sin, and that separates us from God. So God sends his son FIRST to live a sinless life on earth, die in our place for our sins, and resurrect, so that through him we have forgiveness, and can get back to a relationship with God. He loves us first, he chose us first, and oftentimes He reaches out first. Another aspect to reflect on is the God who knows us. When Christ came down to earth and lived in human skin he came to personally know all of our troubles. When he died on the cross, bearing the pain of all man-kind, he got to know the pain of every sin that was ever committed, and that will ever be committed. As you reflect on Jesus & the text of God & Hagar answer the following:

1) In what ways have you experienced God meeting you/comforting you in your pain? What pain in your heart can you bring before God to heal, now that you're reminded that there is no pain that he hasn't known and understood?

2) Write down your testimony in your journal, reminding yourself of how you began your personal journey with the Lord.

3) If you were to give God a name based off of your testimony with God, what name would you give him?

4) Intercede for people who don't yet have a relationship with God, and who have been hurt by believers who have misrepresented his love. Also intercede for believers who love the Lord but are not in community. May God lead them to the right one, and heal them of every wound.

5) Write down a couple of examples of desert seasons (periods of affliction,) that the Lord has rescued you from. If you're going through one right now, declare that the same God who was faithful to rescue you before, will rescue you again. In Hagar's case she will get rescued again in a few chapters. But we'll talk about that in devo 3.

Scripture to reference:

Psalms 139:13-16 "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed boy; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

Romans 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Exodus 3:7 "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows."

"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted."-Isaiah 53:4 (Talking about Jesus)

Isaiah 40:31 "Those who trust in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall fly on wings like eagles, they shall run and not grow weary, they shall walk and not be faint."

Prayer: I pray that you are being just as blessed reading these Hagar series, as I am writing it. I pray that you let the Lord search your heart, and heal every wounded area. I pray that you can come honestly before the Lord, and experience his hand meet you, rescue you, and bless you as you walk in beautiful relationship with him. In Jesus name, Amen!