

Women's Devo Study: Hagar Devo #3

Theme: Identity in the Lord

Text: Genesis 17 & 21

By Larissa Lima Delgado

Welcome back to our devo series on Hagar! In our last devo, we touched on Hagar starting a relationship with the Lord after he met her and saved her. We even saw her name God as the one who sees her. We connected this to how the Lord is the one who knows us, and who wants us to know him. As we get to know him, we discover who we truly are in him. So in this devo we're going to dig deeper into the topic of identity. The Lord is the one who establishes our identity, and he is also the one who redeems any harm imposed on our identity. For example, Jacob would be redeemed by the Lord, and become Israel. His name meant deceiver, but Israel means Prince With God, and the one who struggles with God. His name would be a reminder of wrestling God for his blessing and winning. Because, as we'll see in Hagar's case, there's power in names, and it can impact our understanding of our identity.

"But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.'" Isaiah 43:1

In Genesis 17, Abram & Sarai's names change as well, in order to reflect the covenant that the Lord had made with them. They are now Abraham and Sarah, because Abraham would be the father of many nations. The name of their son, (through whom the nation will come out of,) is Isaac. Isaac means "he laughs." This is interesting because in Genesis 21, Sarah says that the Lord has brought her laughter because of Isaac's birth. (It's also personally funny to me because at one point Abraham & Sarah laughed at the idea of bearing Isaac in their old age.) Hagar's name in turn, has a weight to it. Her name means abandoned. But how beautiful is it that the Lord didn't leave her abandoned? He didn't give her a new name, but he still redeemed her identity, by doing the opposite to leaving her abandoned. He delivered her, cared for her, and blessed her. The Lord met her, rescued her, and his relationship with her brought redemption to her identity. He is with her. And in her redemption, she acknowledges who he is, and glorifies him by naming him as the God who sees (and essentially knows her.) Another way that the Lord redeemed her was through the identity of her son. He instructed her to name him Ishmael, which means "The Lord has heard of her misery." Imagine being reminded of the Lord's care every time you call your son. Ishmael was born in a different context than his mother. It's likely that Hagar's mother didn't know the Lord, but Hagar now did. And so the Lord promised to bless Ishmael, beginning with his name. This blessing in his name was a reminder of the Lord's goodness, and likely aided in the healing that both Ishmael and Hagar would need, because of all of the chaos that would come before they got to the fulfillment of their blessing. Because Ishmael's birth was due to Sarah & Abraham working outside of God's will, there was hurt and confusion produced for all involved.

"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." John 15:15

Lets go further back into the story and look at the hurt & confusion, that came about to the other character's identities, because of sin. Remember how Hagar likely came into the picture? Abram and Sarai passed through Egypt before going to Canaan. Abram, out of fear, sinned by lying to Pharoah about Sarai's identity. He said she was his sister. So then Pharoah took Sarai as his wife, and gave gifts to Abram. (This is likely where he was given Hagar.) Pharoah finds out the truth because harm came to him, and he returns Sarai. But Sarai probably suffered trauma from this incident. And later when Sarai becomes impatient for God's promise for a son, she sins, by convincing Abram to to give her a son through Hagar. The sin wasn't in just Abram sleeping with Hagar, but also in not consulting the Lord, and not waiting for his promise. Here we see the first introduction of confusion over identity. Who is Hagar to Abram now that he's slept with her? In the text, it says Sarai gave Hagar to Abram as a wife. But Hagar is never referred to as a wife again. The Lord himself does not call Hagar Abram's wife. The Lord calls her by her name, and maidservant. Sarah in turn, reveals hatred for Hagar by not even bothering to call her by her name at all. Instead she calls her "slavewoman." For example in Genesis 21, Sarah caught Ishmael mocking Isaac. Afterward she asked Abraham to cast Hagar and Ishmael out. But she didn't say Ishmael, she said "*the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.*" And by Sarah referring to them as slave woman & slave woman's son (instead of their name,) we can interpret that, in doing so, she's trying to limit their identity. And in limiting their identity, she's trying to limit their blessing, especially that of Ishmael's. This is ironic because originally Ishmael was Sarah's means of trying to reach a blessing.

In this sentence Sarah also fails to recognize Ishmael as Abraham's son or as hers. But in her original plan, Hagar was going to birth Ishmael to be Abram & Sarai's son. Sarai had said of Hagar "*perhaps I can build a family through her.*" Genesis 16:2 But after Isaac comes around, it's clear that although Ishmael is still considered by Abraham to be his son, he isn't considered Sarah's. And in Sarah's statement, where she identifies him solely as the son of a slave woman, she almost orphans him. Imagine the rejection that Isaac could've felt? He could've felt like he had two moms at one point, and then one, and even felt abandoned by Abraham and Sarah. If he felt abandoned, then he would have experienced the same pain that his mom had experienced, and carried in her name. But even if he did, his name still carried hope, because in his name he carried "The Lord has heard of my misery." So even when the enemy tries to place an old identity/hurt on you, and tries to prevent you from reaching God's blessing, you can claim the new identity God has given you, live in God's freedom, be healed by God, and hold fast to the blessing that he has for you.

"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12

Beyond not recognizing Ishmael as her son, Sarah is considering Ishmael & Hagar as slaves first, instead of people. And she certainly isn't considering them children of God. But her vision of them is opposite to God's vision. Even before she was redeemed, God called Hagar by name. And God even picked out her son's name. Once God redeems Hagar, and they have a relationship, she and Ishmael are children of God. (Just like we become children of God once we accept the redemption offered through Jesus.) And God has blessings for his children. Genesis 21 starts off by saying that the Lord was gracious in fulfilling his promise to Sarah. And he would certainly do the same for Hagar. So even if other people try to misinform, or diminish our identity, we need to hold onto God's truth about who we are in Christ, and trust that he will pull through for us. The only thing that matters is who God says we are. He is the one who heals & redeems damages done to our identity. He is the one who can restore us, and give us a new identity. He is the creator, and the one with the power, authority & ability to make all things new. So it is he who has the final word on our story. The most that Sarah can do is attempt to influence Ishmael & Hagar's understanding of their identity, and kick them off her land. But as we'll see in Devo 4, ultimately, Sarah can't stop the Lord from fulfilling his promise to Hagar & Ishmael, and blessing them.

"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived- are the things God has prepared for those who love him." 1st Corinthians 2:9

Application: In this devo, we see how God can redeem & restore even the most broken of stories, and even the most confusing of identities. One incredibly damaging aspect to sin (besides the fact that it separates us from God,) is its' potential to misinform/damage our view of our identity. But through Christ, we have forgiveness for our sins, and total redemption. Through him, we are reconciled back into a relationship with God as God's children, and made into a new creation. The Lord can transform our heart, give us a new name, and a new blessing. He has the power to rewrite our story. So whenever sin, or a person, tries to confuse, misinform, attack, or hurt our identity, don't accept it. Stay rooted in your identity in Christ, and in who God says you are. You are chosen by God and deeply loved by him, and he has beautiful plans for you. He is the one who knows you, who formed you, and who can give you clarity over your identity & calling, and who can strip away every false identity put onto you by the world. May you find your true identity hidden in Christ, as precious daughters of the most high King.

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." 1st Peter 2:9

1) Do you want to learn about who God says you are? Do a quick search on verses that talk about what the Lord promises to those who fear him and love him. Look up verses on what God promises to the upright, righteous, the obedient, and the pure in heart. Through Jesus we are made pure, righteous, children of God, and he helps us obey him. So these promises are true for you too.

2) What is the meaning of your name? How do you perceive it connected to your purpose? If it doesn't have a good meaning, ask God to reveal to you what your purpose is, and to give you revelation on who he created you to be.

3) Write in your journal about an experience you had where the Lord met you, and redeemed a part of your story. What does this teach you about God's character? And how does it encourage you now with whatever you're going through, and trusting in the Lord for now?

4) Is there any promise you're actively waiting on the Lord for? Wrestle with him for your blessing. But don't take action outside of his will. Cry out to him, consult him, but also wait for him, believing he will answer, guide you, and act in his perfect timing.

5) Where are you struggling to have faith in God for? Write down one example of how he has pulled through for you before. Look up verses about his faithfulness, and ask him to help make you steadfast on him. Ask him to strengthen your faith to believe that he will pull through for you again. Consider keeping a testimony book, or a prayer journal where you reflect on how the Lord has worked in your life.

6) In what ways have you been deceived about your identity, because of your attachment to sin? Ask God to reveal this to you, and to set you free from any sin that is misinforming your identity, and hurting your relationship & view of God.

Scripture to reference:

"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."

Proverbs 19:21

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance to the race marked out for us." Hebrews 12:1

"For we are God's craftsmanship, created in Jesus, to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10

"She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future."

Proverbs 31:25

Song suggestion: Listen to "You Say" by Lauren Daigle :)

Prayer: It is my prayer that the Lord ministers to you who he is, who he created you to be, what you are to do, and how precious and valuable you are in his sight. As you grow in knowing him, may you reflect him, and intimately know the intentionality & care that he had, and still has for your life. May you reach, and live out every blessing that he has for you, and glorify him! In Jesus name, amen <3