

Hide and Seek: Why We Need to Be Found

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Date: 27 July 2025

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[0 : 00] When you sing, you're singing truth back to God, the One who wrote it. And you're letting Him know, this is what I want my life to be.

This is what I want to be defined by. And so when you sing, I hope that you'll sing enthusiastically because you get to tell God, you're amazing, you're wonderful, and you're wonderful to me.

That's, what a privilege. When you think about the life you were living prior to you doing this and think of the difference, it's a wonderful blessing of God's heart that you can come and do this, isn't it?

It is. It's a tremendous privilege that we have each Lord's Day to come together and worship Him. Well, this morning we're continuing line by line and chapter by chapter in the book of Genesis, the title, Hide and Seek, why we need to be found.

Why we need to be found. We're in Genesis chapter 16. I'm going to go ahead and read the entire chapter. It's not very long at all, just 16 verses.

[1 : 11] We're going to pick up where we left off last time when I covered verses 1 through 6. We'll pick up in verse 7 today and move down through the end of the chapter.

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go into my maid. Perhaps I will obtain children through her. And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. After Abram had lived 10 years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.

He went in to Hagar and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress, that is Sarai, was despised in her sight.

And that word there for despised means disdained, slighted. She was looking at her with contempt now. And Sarai, because this is happening in her life, said to her husband Abram, May the wrong done me be upon you.

[2 : 25] And it's interesting, the word wrong there is the word hamas. And that word in Hebrew means violence. May the violence done against me be upon you.

I gave my maid into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the Lord then judge between you and me.

And she's talking to her husband Abram. Strong words. But Abram then responded to Sarai, Behold, your maid is in your power. Do to her what's good in your sight.

So Sarai treated Hagar harshly. And she fled from her presence. Now the angel of the Lord found Hagar by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.

He said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from? And where are you going? And Hagar responded, I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress, Sarai.

[3 : 32] Then the angel of the Lord said to her, return to your mistress. Submit yourself to her authority. Moreover, the angel of the Lord said to her, I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.

The angel of the Lord said to her further, Behold, you are with child, and you will bear a son, and you shall call him Ishmael, because the Lord has given heed to your affliction.

He will be a wild donkey of a man. His hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him.

And he will live to the east of all his brothers. Then she called the name of the Lord, who spoke to her, You are a God who sees.

For she said, Have I even remained alive here after seeing him? Therefore the well was called Ber-Lahai-Roi.

[4 : 36] Behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered. So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him. What a series of happenings in the lives of these people.

All of this coming on them because they did what was right in their own eyes. Took matters into their own hands, pursued what they wanted. And now they're living in the consequences of that. We'll say more about this as we go forward. What we've been studying in Genesis was written by Moses to instruct the nation of Israel and how to live in relationship to God as His covenant people. That should be no surprise to us. God wrote the new covenant for us. God wrote the scripture for us so that as His new covenant people, we would know how to live in relationship to Him in that covenant, in those promises.

[5 : 39] We live by the promises of God. We are defined as God's people by the promises of God. Can't escape it. Don't want to escape it, do we?

This is the same with the people of Israel. As God's chosen prophet, Abram then, is the central figure in Israel's history.

Moses is bringing this out. He is considered the father of Israel according to the fulfillment of God's promises to make a great nation from Abram's own body.

In other words, your descendants, Abram, will be too many to count and too many to number. Well, we think about that in terms of the Jewish nation. The Jewish nation claims Abram, Abraham, as their spiritual father so that they're all descended from Him.

All right, true. True. In that sense. But now think about the fact that we're going to have all of these other people, millions and millions and millions of people that are coming through Ishmael.

[6 : 46] And so, they're going to be too numerous to count. You add that to the Jews and now look, the promise of God being fulfilled even in the sin that these two people have committed by taking Hagar into themselves in a way that was forbidden by the Lord.

This is the miracle working power of Almighty God. Genesis 16 is teaching the Israelites about the dangers of adopting the world's ways and wisdom for dealing with the issues of life.

Now, you've heard people say, man, you know who believe that the Bible is sufficient for everything we need for life and godliness. You know, the Bible doesn't tell us how to do brain surgery.

The Bible doesn't tell us how to heal cancer. The Bible doesn't blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And in all of those cases, I say, no, you're right. It doesn't. It wasn't written for that purpose. But the Bible has given us everything we need for a life of godliness, a life of leading to please God, being defined by pleasing the Lord.

And so, that means if you're a brain surgeon, the Bible will help you understand how to be a godly brain surgeon and do it to the glory of Almighty God. If you're a plumber, He will teach you how to be a plumber or a fix-it man or whatever it is you are, a nurse, whatever you are, He will teach you through His Word how to live in covenant relationship with Him so that your life is about bringing glory to Him, showcasing the character of God.

[8 : 23] When you encounter the issues of life, the matters of life, the sufferings, trials, challenges of life, when you're feeling down and discouraged, when life is slamming up against you, when you're struggling to grasp any hope, this is when the truth of God ministers to your soul through God's people.

So we provide that care for one another. You see what I'm saying? Soul care, the care that we need when we're facing the most difficult issues of life, comes through God ministering to our soul through the truth of His Scripture.

He ministers the wisdom of His own heart so that we see with greater clarity, perceive with greater clarity, and we learn to hope, not cope. I am not interested at all in helping you cope through life.

I want better for you than that. Jesus wants better for you than that. He has made us more than overcomers, conquerors, in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we can't do any of that apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. What we're saying here is that this is an example to the nation of Israel and to us.

[9 : 34] When we slide over to the side and start to do what's right in our own eyes and adopt the wisdom of the world to face the issues of life, we're in trouble. It's a slippery slope down.

And it doesn't end well. This is what's being taught here. You can see this lesson and why this is so important. If you're a student of the Scriptures and you've read ahead, you know that Israel looking

to God in times of trouble, don't marry yourself to the wisdom and ways of the world. Stay the people of God and look to God's wisdom to guide your life. He said, don't marry these people. Don't intermarry with them because you'll adopt their ways. They'll have that kind of influence over you.

And it will begin to sour the relationship you have with me. Don't adopt their religion, their worship. And what did Israel do? They intermarried and they did all of that, didn't they? And what happened to them? Do you see the decline? This is the warning that we're receiving here. So I'm calling it the dangers of cultural capitulation.

[10:42] Giving in to the culture. Giving in to the fads. The church does this. Pastors are tempted to do this. This is stressing the vital importance of learning to wait on the Lord.

Now you've heard me preach several messages leading up to this about waiting on the Lord. I can't re-preach all that today. It's teaching these people hope in God. Hope in the Lord. Trust God's promises. He is faithful. He knows what He's doing. He's wise. The dangers of cultural capitulation seen in how this couple abandoned God's wisdom and adopted worldly wisdom.

So they traded God's design of what, Jeff? Of monogamous marriage. One woman, one man for life. That's God's design. And are you going to suffer in that design?

Yep. You know why you're going to suffer in that design? Because of you. Can I say that to you? He's not leaving because I said that. He's got to go to work.

[11:51] Give me a thumbs up, PJ. Amen. He's going to work. Thank you for being here, brother. So, you suffer in your marriage and I suffer in my marriage and you suffer in life and I suffer in life because of sin.

And that starts in my camp with me. Dealing with my sin. This is the same issue. Polygamy was not God's will for Abram and Sarai.

They were not supposed to adopt the culture's ways for bringing Hagar into this mix and looking to her to be the solution. When they looked at her, they looked at the things of earth and took their eyes off of heaven.

That's the problem. This proved disastrous for them in many ways. And while they will suffer the consequences of their sinful choices, no doubt, they are not beyond the sovereign grace of God. That's the message of this, the central message of this sermon. We are never living beyond the sovereign grace of Almighty God. If it were, we might as well just cope and not hope because there wouldn't be any hope.

[13:04] Now, the outline that I used for verses 1-6 of this chapter just in the way of throwing this up there for you. The world's wisdom deceives our hearts. This was all previous messages.

The world's wisdom deceives our hearts, defiles our relationships, and demands our allegiance. And that's what it does. Genesis 1-6 ends on a down note.

Doesn't it? Sarai treats Hagar harshly. That word harshly there means to seek to humble or mishandle, to afflict. So this was bad.

Sarai's being really mean to Hagar. Hagar's despising of Sarai once she knows she's pregnant and despises Sarai who's been barren all of her life, that backfires on Hagar.

She isn't elevated to equal status with her mistress. And so what does Hagar do? She runs away. She's not running away just because she's being treated harshly.

[14:06] She's running away because she's not getting her way. She does it out of pride as one who's been denied something she thinks she deserves. Does that sound familiar? She does it out of fear for herself.

She does it out of fear for her unborn baby. That's true. But a lot of this is just pride. How do we know that? Well, what does God tell her to do? Go right back. If her life was in danger, the Lord wouldn't have told her to do that.

So this is something that Hagar's going to have to deal with in her life and the latter half of the chapter sets that up for us. So what we're going to deal with in verses 7-16, I'm going to call three acts of God that highlight His sovereign grace, His sovereign power, and His sovereign providence. And all of this in the mess that these people have made for themselves by taking on the world's wisdom and ways instead of looking to the Lord. Now, let me pause right here and say, Jeff, do people who are unbelieving never come up with anything worthwhile, helpful, or useful?

Are we just supposed to never listen to anything they say? Listen, I've only had one surgery in my life and it was carpal tunnel, right? Because my hand got to where I couldn't use it and it was going to sleep all up and down.

[15 : 35] So I went and I couldn't ride a bike and that was like the end. Okay, you've got to get this thing fixed now. So I did. The only thing I've ever had. When I went to that guy, I didn't interview him and ask him, do you love Jesus?

Are you into the Lord? Can we talk right now? I didn't do any of that. You know what I did? I listened to him and asked a lot of questions and you're going to do what next and then when and how long is the, all that kind of stuff, right?

I was very, very thankful that this man had this kind of knowledge whether he was a Christian or not and this kind of surgical skill and I don't, I don't look down on that.

I'm very thankful to God for it, right? That I talked to this guy about my faith and I don't know his faith. I'm glad when I need a plumber, I can call a plumber and my first question in my mind is when he comes in and starts working is not, all right, I'm going to talk to this guy about the Lord but what good does it do to talk to him about the Lord if he doesn't know what he's doing and I'm going to have water all over my floor.

Now we got another problem, right? So now I'm going to talk to him about his soul. You see what I'm saying? Yes, they can contribute. People, people who are unbelieving have all kinds of things that they can contribute in terms of what we're doing in life.

[16 : 48] Here's the issue. The issue is none of that is being done to the glory of God. Not any of it. And so none of it is going to be considered by God to be good.

It's not good because it's not grounded in bringing honor to God. Now as a Christian, have you ever done or lived anything that didn't bring honor to God as a Christian?

Yes! We continue to struggle with that. What's the difference? The difference is we have a conscience that is settled in the Lord that warns us, hey, Jeff, you're not making this about Jesus right this minute.

We're back to making it about you. And you know that's not going to end well for anybody. And so we repent. So please don't hear me dissing on unbelievers.

We pray for unbelievers and our hearts go out. I know, I have people that are very close to me who are unbelievers. And we pray for them. So I'm not saying that.

[17 : 46] I am saying that unbelievers like Psalm 36, they don't make it about the Lord. They don't live in the wisdom of the Lord. And if you're not careful, you align yourself with unbelieving people, you're going to start finding yourself drifting in the wrong direction.

Because that's our default. We like to be around people who tell us what we want to hear. Well, if what you want to hear is tell me what honors Christ so that I can live in personal holiness, you're going to hang out with God's people.

If you want to find people that tell you what you want to hear because right now you want to do what you want to do, you're not going to hang out with God's people. Right? That's what we have to be concerned about.

And then we have to be concerned about what that looks like to others. Alright, I'm off script. I need to get back to my script. So let's do that. Now I want to give you several things to look at in terms of these three major ideas that I've got up here.

So the first one is God seeks. God seeks. That's what we're going to see in the text. And what we're talking about here is God's sovereign grace, His undeserved favor, seen in God seeking whom He chooses.

[19 : 03] This is God seeking. You didn't find God if you are saved, if you're born again, if you're living in... You didn't find God. Nobody finds God because nobody's looking for Him.

It says the Scripture. No, not one. God finds you. He knew where you were. He made you. He knows where you are all the time. He never lost you. You're lost in your sin.

And God finds you in that sin. And God seeking you causes you to stop running away from Him. Because in my prior days to being saved, I didn't even know that I was running from God.

I was just pursuing Jeff and my own life and what I wanted. I didn't realize that in doing that I was running away from God. I needed the truth of God's Word being brought to me.

Somebody to sit down and show me and say, Jeff, this is really all about God. And I'm thinking, no, it's not. No, it's not. He does His thing. I do my thing. I'm not bothering Him. He's not bothering me.

[20 : 00] That was my attitude. But I didn't realize that all of life is lived before the Lord because God made my soul. It's His world and I'm living in it. It's not my world.

I needed somebody to show me this. God seeks. Problem is, we've got this issue with fleeing. This is what we see in Hagar.

The first thing that we're going to note is that God seeks because we are lost. God has to find us and He has to overtake us because we're rebelling and we're running away from reality.

Running away from reality, Jeff? Yes. Jesus is reality. What did He say? I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. In other words, I am reality.

I am meaning. I am purpose. I am clarity. I'm reality. We chase everything else, don't we?

[20 : 59] The same God of Ephesians 2 where it says that God saves us by the gift of saving faith according to His undeserved favor, grace, now reveals Himself to Hagar.

I want you to notice what He says here. Now the angel of the Lord found her. See, that's the way it works. The angel of the Lord, verse 7, found her.

Now this is likely, just to save a little time, this is most likely a pre-incarnate Jesus. What does that mean, Jeff? Pre-incarnate. You may not be familiar with that word.

It simply means that this is probably a time when Jesus appeared to her before He took human form in the Jesus that we know from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Alright? This is probably, most scholars, most commentators feel like this is what's going on.

Scripture refers to this person as the Lord who spoke and the God who sees.

[22 : 05] Do you see that in the text? The Lord who spoke and the God who sees. This is not any ordinary angel. It's not any archangel or anything like that.

I believe and many others believe this is the Lord Jesus in pre-incarnate form. There are many, many passages that lend themselves to speaking like this and identifying this angel as the Lord Himself.

And so, I've got many of those listed. You can see them in your margin notes in any study Bible. A good study Bible would have that as well. Now, fleeing from Sarai was the same as fleeing from God's design for her life.

We need to hear that. Running away from difficulty to try and control our circumstances is not a helpful substitute for waiting on the Lord.

Waiting on the Lord means staying in the trial. Trusting God in the suffering. In the pain. Sarai is trying to solve her trial and relieve her suffering by her own wisdom and design.

[23 : 13] That's why she cooked up this idea with Hagar. Her plan seemed right in her own eyes. That's the weird thing, isn't it? You read this and you see the train wreck coming and you think, how could people think this was a good idea?

You'd be surprised. Or maybe you wouldn't. When people are in pain and they want what they want, they find ways to get there. And some of it is bizarre. Now, we need to remember something in all of this that Sarai and Hagar are experiencing as they do what's right in their own eyes.

We need to remember, God designs our trials. It's not chance. It's not bad luck. It's not karma.

God designs our trials to reveal our hearts to us. He squeezes and then we see what comes out.

And then, all of this is to conform us to Himself.

To make us more like Jesus. It's a way that God refines us and helps build us into the character of His Son so that we show more and more of the life of Jesus in us.

[24 : 21] How we speak, the tone, our face, the demeanor, the purposes, how we use our resources, it all starts to reflect the goodness of God.

Now, folks, here's what I'm saying. If we fight against or flee from the trial, we are fighting against and fleeing from the Lord because He's the one that has us in it wanting to accomplish His purposes.

That is pure folly and it will bring negative consequences to your life. And the suffering will compound, not get better. You may feel a little bit of relief in the moment, but then you're going to find out it's going to snowball on you.

Now, some of you understand what I'm saying because you've lived enough life to see this happen, right? And then we've got some younger people in here that are listening and going, really? Yes, really.

Trust us. This is the way it works because this is the way God designed trials to be. Not only is fleeing an issue, but look at this. Found.

[25 : 28] The Bible tells us that the angel of the Lord found her. Thank God that He seeks us. He found her. They didn't have to do that.

What a beautiful depiction of God's grace and mercy toward this unbelieving, prideful, and very needy woman. She's very needy. We cannot run from, hide from God.

We cannot willfully, willfully, or ignorantly alter His purposes for our life. Aren't you glad? That even at your worst, you can't undesign the designs of God for your life?

And this is what we're seeing in the lives of these people. Now, granted, we can make our situations worse through our negligence, through our disobedience, through our rebellion.

Yes, you can compound the issue. But notice what the verse tells us Hagar is putting her hope in because this becomes helpful to us. She's putting her hope in fleeing.

[26 : 30] Fleeing from reality. Fleeing from the abuse. Fleeing from the hardship. You think, well, that's not necessarily a bad thing, is it? I mean, well, she flees to a spring of water.

She's looking to this well to provide life in the desert. And so she's all focused on her physical situation. Everything that she's doing right now is being defined by her physical problem in life. That's all she sees. Sure, here in the text, she's fleeing to Egypt. Egypt. This is much south of Israel, this area.

So she's on her way back to Egypt most likely, even though the text doesn't tell us that. She's fleeing to her old life. She's fleeing to what is familiar.

She's defaulting to what she knows. And there she goes. Now, all these references suggest to us that Hagar was focused on her physical life and the life of the future of her child.

[27 : 35] That doesn't have to be a bad thing. In this case, it is. Why? Because all of this is being done to the exclusion of facing off with reality. Running away, the well, the land of sure, all of that speaks to her complete preoccupation with solving her problem of injustice and physical distress in her own way.

And this is exactly where we get to when we decide we've had enough of the pain. I've had enough of the suffering. This cannot be God's will for my life.

And I would say to you, friend, with all love in my heart, read the Bible. People died under these circumstances being faithful to God.

Not everybody gets to be delivered from suffering until the ultimate deliverance comes and God takes them to heaven. People die suffering.

People die in pain. People die in disobedience and rebellion. Is that not life? The Bible doesn't sugarcoat that.

[28 : 48] It tells us the truth. And we have a choice. If you've ever lived through something difficult and that difficulty continues to go on and on, you've got one of two choices.

You can look to God's wisdom in ways and find hope and joy in Him through that difficulty. Or you can make it about you and you'll be miserable. You'll flit and jump from one thing to the next. Shallow, insipid. and you'll find that your life isn't what you want it to be. Look at these scripture references here.

Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, it will stand. So seek His counsel and walk in it because it's going to stand. Period. Man's steps are ordained by the Lord.

You see that? Your steps in life are decreed, ordained by the Lord. How then can man understand His way? He can't apart from the Lord.

[29 : 54] It all seems random. It all seems chance. It all seems luck. I make my own luck. I'm a self-made man or person, whatever. So her personal discomfort, her feelings of inadequacy stemming from how Abram and Sarai treated her, her sense of wounded pride even in being thwarted in her plan.

Her plan was, I get pregnant, now I'm going to be at least equal with Sarai, if not elevated, because now I'm the one with the baby.

She can't even have a child. And so that puts me superior. And when all of that backfired, that pride welled up, her plans not working out like she wanted, and that makes her even more determined in her desperation.

Now she becomes bitter about it. And that bitterness and resentment increases in her life. She has fear over how her child is going to fare in Abram's household.

All of this stuff working in her soul comes together to rule her heart and to cloud her mind. It's ruling her. It's putting her in a wrong perspective.

[31 : 09] The problem and its solution became her life. Now folks, again, does any of this sound familiar? Does any of this challenge you in terms of, wow, I've been here.

Or maybe I am here. The Bible is so relevant if we'll just preach the truth. Preach the text. We don't have to make all this stuff up and be clever.

We just preach the truth. Now take a moment. Reflect with me, friends, in carefully noting the way this kind of thing evolves so often in our lives. Look at it with me again.

Now the angel of the Lord in verse 7 found her by the spring of water in the wilderness on the way to Shur and he asked her, Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from?

Where are you going? Well, I'm fleeing from the presence of my mistress, Sarai. And then he's going to give her instruction. But right now, it's not because the angel doesn't know the answers to these questions.

[32 : 12] He's getting her to out loud speak the reality of what is in her heart. Putting it right out there. That's what she's doing. Now reflect with me on what's going on here.

First, first of all, there is something that irritates us, hurts us, brings suffering of some kind into our life like it is with Hagar. In Hagar's life, it's nearly like it is with us.

It's a relational problem. A relational problem. Just like with us. And so, she seeks a way that she can create a change in her circumstances and it backfired on her.

Which, this is what it does. When we seek these changes apart from the Lord, if it doesn't happen in the moment, it will catch up with you. Because you're doing what's wise in your own eyes and it's not for the Lord.

And it's going to catch up with you. So don't go there. This was the same kind of false reasoning Sarai applied to her situation. I know what I'll do. I'll get my maid.

[33 : 15] I'll have my maid marry my husband and then go in to be with my husband and she'll get pregnant and I'll take her baby to be mine.

That sounds like a wonderful plan, doesn't it? When you hear it like that, you think, what are they thinking? Now that's a couple sermons ago. Go back and listen to that and you'll find out why we do stuff like that.

That sounded good. That's a good plan. And what's Abram? Oh, okay. And you wonder, where's your head, dude? Where's your heart for your wife? You're train wrecking your wife here and that's not love.

She sought a way to change her circumstances and it all backfired on her. Well, what was her next step? Her next step was to reason in a selfish way.

Here's her reasoning. If I can't overpower my circumstances, I'll work to change and control them. I'm not powerful enough to overcome them in all the ways that I'd like.

[34 : 19] So I'll tell you what, I'll get in here and I'll try to manipulate this thing. I'll figure a way. Now that's the same kind of false reasoning that Sarai is doing.

She launched this whole fiasco like this. Both women did what was right in their own eyes. Abram, what about Abram, the husband? He takes a back seat. He neglects his spiritual leadership.

He neglects his influence to do good. Again, I can't re-preach this at this moment. I'm so tempted to. Like, what could he have done differently? That's in the last sermon. Where I talk about what he could have done differently.

How he could have handled this in a godly, good way for his wife. Alright, what's Hagar's next move? What's her next move? To change her circumstances and her idea of changing them was to run away.

Run away. In other words, escape reality. Now folks, without going into great detail here, you understand what it means to escape reality?

[35 : 24] Do we find ways to escape reality? What's, tell me, somebody shout out one way that people often turn to to try and escape their circumstances and reality. Alcohol.

That was the first one I thought of. What's another one? Drugs. You name it. Now guys, don't get mad at me for you motorheads. Cars. Cars. Right?

Collecting stuff. Cars. Don't say guns because that's going to offend me. TV. Escape into TV. Video games.

Escape into that. There are all kinds of things and look, the choices are endless out there. Anything that would distract you from reality and having to deal with what is happening in your life.

And so that turns into God with a little G. Because you're looking to those things to do for you what only God can do. God will never ever lead you to run away and escape reality.

[36 : 26] He will cause you to face it. You say, Jeff, what about that time when Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife when she was trying to get him into bed with her and she reached out and grabbed him to literally pull him into the bed to do immorality with her and he wiggled away and fled and she ripped his clothes off and he left.

Well, when you're trying to get away from something that could overpower you and dishonor the Lord and your last resort is to use your feet, then use them. Nothing wrong with that, right? This is not what we're talking about.

This is a different kind of fleeing. This is a fleeing from what is true and good for you. That God would hold you in those circumstances and continue to squeeze you and then whatever comes out in what you say, do, the kind of direction you take, God begins to reveal to you this is what's in your heart and it's how He begins to refine you.

Again, both women did what was right in their own eyes. In Hagar's case, she's going to drift into what was familiar and comfortable because she's going to run back to her old life.

Now, isn't that what we do? Aren't we tempted to do that as Christians? We drift and run back to what was familiar? Even though we know in the Lord that's not right, that's not part of who I am anymore.

[37 : 52] And it doesn't have to be something like alcohol or something like that. It can just be an attitude of your heart, a selfishness, a pride that you retreat into because it's comfortable.

Or if you're the kind of person that likes to control everything, instead of allowing the Lord to teach you about that, you kind of revert back into having your hands on everything.

You've got to manipulate and then you wonder why you're so strung out. This is not the way. By running from the problem, she ran away from God's provision of grace for her by God placing her in Abram's household.

That was an act of grace. Now she didn't see it like that. But it was God's will. How do we know that? Because God's going to tell her to go back. How would you like that?

You're in a terrible situation. You've ran away from the situation because you don't like it. You feel threatened. This isn't the life for me. And so you take a hike only to have God find you in the moment that you think you're going to get away and say, hey, you turn around and you go right back.

[39 : 00] How about that? That's what he does. Thank the Lord we can never ever out-distance the grace of our saving God.

So, at His appointed time when we're prepared by God to hear it, the Lord comes and He speaks His truth into our sinful, fearful, needful hearts.

At least you pray that's what He does do. Pray somebody in your life will be willing to speak the truth in love to you. We call it speaking sense into someone.

Well, we can say it better like the Scripture does. God speaks the truth in love to you. His truth. And this is what happens next to Hagar.

God speaks. Thank God He isn't silent. So, this is the sovereign power seen in His truth and wisdom to change you into godliness. Whenever we say godliness, we're saying godlikeness.

[40 : 01] God is making you like Himself in the sense of revealing and showcasing His character. The gentleness, the meekness, the love, the kindness, the gentleness, the self-control.

The aspects of Jesus' character that are shining through your life as you become more like your Lord. Now, God speaks that truth and wisdom into her life and it's a game changer.

God speaking truth into your life brings wisdom and clarity and that truth brings you to stop rebelling against Him. And that's when you find out this has all been about God.

I thought it was just about me getting my way. But it's all about God. Wow. Now, I want to show you the very personal nature of how God deals with Hagar.

So, look at what He does here in verse 8. He said, Hagar, Sarai's maid. Folks, I don't know if it's this way in your Bible, but what is the first word God says to Hagar?

[41 : 09] What's the first word? Hagar. Her name. The God of the universe speaks her name. He addresses her personally.

Hey, Hagar, I know you. I know who you are. I know where you're going. You don't even know where you're going. I do. I know everything about you.

And what does He say next? Sarai's maid. Sarai's maid. Now, what does that tell us? It speaks of Hagar's rightful, God-appointed place in life.

Do you see that? Hagar. Sarai's maid. He's speaking the truth to her. You're running from that role, that identity, that design, but I'm going to hold you to it.

Wow. Taken together, these serve to identify Hagar with the household of Abram. So she can try to wiggle out of that as she wants to, but that's exactly where God wants her and has designed for her to be.

[42 : 18] This truth about Hagar counters her idea that she can liberate herself from Sarai by running away. And God, He comes and He confronts her.

And what does He say? Go back. Go back. With those three words, Hagar, Sarai's maid, the Lord affirms her as a person.

So she's valuable to God. God's not denying her suffering or looking down on it. He's acknowledging it. Hagar, I get you.

I get you. And I've got your back kind of thing. And God ties her in her personhood to her role as a servant. Now folks, don't let that turn you off.

Look, that's exactly how I see myself. Jeff, Jesus' servant. That's how I want God to talk to me. Jeff, yes, Lord.

[43 : 19] Now I don't hear voices. I'm just doing this for illustrative purposes, alright? Jeff, yes, Lord. Jesus' servant. Yes, Lord. In everything.

I never step out of that role and if I try to do that, it ends badly. Every time. Guaranteed. Jeff, Jesus' servant.

Now can that be said about you? You name your name. Jesus' servant. Really? In the way you talk? In the way you live? In the way you go about your day?

In how you use the resources that God provides you in your life? Does all of that suggest you're Jesus' servant? Are you making your life about Christ? Because that's the Christian life.

If you're not making it about Jesus, don't claim to be a Christian. Get your heart right with God. Don't fool yourself.

[44 : 20] God. This is who Hagar is. Hagar. Sarai's maid. This is where she should be because this is what God's wisdom designed for her.

To chafe against it and argue and rebel and run away. That won't work. She's running away from the truth and the Lord's going to have her face that truth.

Again in verse 8. Where have you come from? Where are you going? This is so kind of God to ask questions He already knows the answers to. This is for her benefit.

Notice that she answers the first but she doesn't really answer the second. Do you see that? Did you notice that? I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai. But then she doesn't say where she's going.

She leaves that out. Now part of me thinks that she's probably thinking that she's headed toward Egypt. She has no idea. Who's going to take me in?

[45 : 23] Who's going to help me? What's going to happen? That is so often the case with us. We're so eager to get away from what's back here that we're not really thinking through what's going to be up here and how it's going to affect us.

Now I think that's a lot indicative of what she's facing right now. I am fleeing from is her answer. But I'm not sure where I'm going. I'm not sure where I'm going.

While it's likely she was headed to Egypt I don't think she's sure and it's the mindset that we can come to. In the end the Lord is going to prove the truth of His Word concerning the plans we make for ourselves.

He's going to prove this out. Look at this scripture I'll throw up here. The mind of man plans his way but the Lord directs his steps. You make your plans but if you belong to Him He's going to direct your steps.

And thank God for that. Then commands. Commands. I want to point this out to you. God's words telling her to return and submit to Sarai's authority are not suggestions.

[46 : 36] They're commands. They're commands. I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai. Then the angel of the Lord said to her return to your mistress.

He could have just left it there. No. He's saying and don't return with an attitude. What does he say? And submit yourself to her authority.

Oh! Could you imagine what that drove like? Think of the last thing you want to hear in the midst of your trial that you're having a hard time facing in the Lord.

The last thing you want to hear and God says, yep, that's the very thing we're going to do. We're just going to do that plan right there. And until you submit to that plan I'm just going to bring you right back here every time.

I've seen that in my life. And this is what God's doing with her. I tell you, this is, see this has been going on for a long time in human beings.

[47 : 39] This is kind of how we're wired. God is not reasoning with Hagar and He doesn't reason with you as if to say, now look, Hagar, let's you and I just weigh this out together and let's just see where it takes us.

Have you considered, that's not what God's doing. He cuts through the self-deception and the deception of worldly wisdom and He guides you and I in what is pure, worthy, and right and we need God to tell us straight, don't we?

Cut through all of the nonsense. Cut through all of the rationalizations and justifications that I would be tempted to make and show me this for what it is, Lord.

This is pride. Whatever it is in the other person's life, I need you to show me about my life because I can't change the other person.

I can only deal with me. I got to let you deal with me, Lord. And oftentimes, that is exactly what He does, isn't it?

[48 : 45] He doesn't change your circumstances, He changes you in your circumstances. God is bringing comfort to her by telling her the truth. Sometimes we can say this, God's truth can be hard, but it's never heartless because we serve a God with a big heart.

He speaks to her with such great tenderness. He calms her heart with His promises concerning her unborn child. Hagar, I know you're worried about your kid.

You don't have to worry anymore. Here's what I'm going to do for you and for him. So be at ease. Be at peace. And so He comforts her.

Look at verses 10-12. Moreover, the angel of the Lord said, I will greatly multiply your descendants. How did that strike her? There are going to be so many you can't count them.

The angel of the Lord said to her further, You're with child. You're going to bear a son. You're going to call him Ishmael because the Lord has given heed to your affliction. He's heard you.

[49 : 57] And then He does this prophecy I'll get to in a minute. He comforts her by saving her life. He promises that He'll protect and provide for them. He gives them many descendants through Ishmael.

The name means what? God hears. Ishmael. God hears. So this son and his descendants are going to be a sign of the Lord's salvation for her during her time of great affliction.

Now look, I don't know what effect verse 12 had on her, but Moses is saying something very important to the Israelites in terms of the origins of the Ishmaelites.

The origins of the Ishmaelites. And so look at that with me. He will be a wild donkey of a man. His hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand will be against him and he will live to the east of his brothers.

What a prophecy. Now look, Ishmaelites. These people became the modern day Arabs and their respective nations. They follow Muhammad's teaching in claiming their own descent from Abraham.

[51 : 04] You understand that. The Jews say they descend from Abraham. So do the Muslims say they descend from Abraham through Ishmael. They get it.

You got that part right. Verse 12 is a prophecy. It is what will be. This is a fact. This is God speaking.

Now there are four characteristics that are going to define Ishmael and his Arab descendants until Jesus comes back. At least in this text, this is what's defined.

We could say many more things that are said throughout the Old Testament. The first one is this. Now pay close attention. You remember I promised to tell you several sermons ago, I said, folks, we're going to get into the chapter deeper and God is going to tell you this was at the time that missiles were falling all over Israel.

And God is going to tell you why those missiles are falling in Israel. In the Old Testament, thousands of years ago, He's going to tell you why we're suffering today in the way we are in the Middle East and why it's going to continue.

[52 : 15] Abraham Accords or not. I thought that was very interesting, that name. Here it is. The first thing that's prophesied about Ishmael, he will be a wild donkey of a man.

That refers to wandering and to a stiff-necked spirit, a spirit of unrestrained pride. Sometimes you listen and you look at what's going on in the Middle East and you think, how can they keep doing this?

It's like there's no end in sight. Stiff-necked pride. He and his descendants will be warlike or adversarial in nature.

That will be the nature of who they are. You can't get it out of them. Apart from saving faith and coming to Christ, this is who they'll be. Then they will invite and incite war and strife from their neighbors.

Not only will they be a warlike people, but all the people around them will constantly be in conflict in some manner or another with each other and with the Ishmaelites.

[53 : 25] And then the fact that they live to the east, there at the bottom of the screen, refers to what became known as Midian and the Midianites. The Bible's going to have a lot to say about that.

If you look at a map of the Middle East and you see Israel here, everything to the right. They're against the sea, aren't they? Israel is against the Mediterranean Sea.

So everything that happens east, all these Arab nations, this is going to be their issue. The Midianites became a powerful, powerful antagonist to the nation of Israel.

Today, Israel is surrounded by many Arab nations. Iran's efforts to form a coalition of these nations to destroy Israel is a testament to this prophecy.

If they're not fighting Israel, they're fighting each other. It's in their nature. This is what God said. The Ishmaelites or the Arab nations would be to each other and to God's people.

[54 : 32] Israel. And so you're going to see Hagar go back and you're going to see Ishmael start antagonizing Isaac. You remember that? It's common. And that's a foretaste of what's going to be for thousands of years.

And I don't know how many years to come. Until Jesus comes back, this is what will be defined in that region. I'm not saying we shouldn't try to get them to stop killing each other.

I'm just letting you know it's in their nature. Then we can say that God hears and saves in verses 13 and 14. She called the name of the Lord who spoke to her that you are a God who sees.

I've remained alive here after seeing you. Therefore, the well was called Bir Lachai Roy. Behold, it is between Kadesh and Barad. Just giving us a geographical reference to let us know these are real people, real places.

This really happened. This isn't some little story. I believe this tells us of God's gift of faith to Hagar, folks. I think he changed her life forever. Her response to God is proof of this.

[55 : 39] I have now seen and encountered the God. And so she obeys this God now. From her relationship with Abram, she knew enough to know that no one who sees Abram's God can live and tell of it.

If you see God, you die. Because of His holiness. So what happened? I think the Hebrew here can mean seeing the after parts. Seeing the after parts.

The idea is that Hagar was allowed to see God's back as He spoke to her. Apparently, it's similar to what God did with Moses. Do you remember when God hit him in the cleft and walked past and hit him there?

And then when he got past, he removed his hand and Moses got to see his back? I think that's what happened. I don't have any other explanation in Scripture because it says if you see the Lord encounter Him face to face like this, you die.

Well, she didn't die. So, maybe this is what happened. Anyway, she can't believe that God would take time for her and favor her with these blessings that go beyond her imagination.

[56 : 49] God seeks us in trials. He speaks to us in trials. God saves us in trials. We're just continuing the theme. The sovereign providence.

Providence means God's care for what He's made. His sovereign providence seen in Him giving you all you need to follow Him. She's going to get everything she needs to go and be faithful and obedient to what God says.

Return to your mistress in verse 9. Return to your mistress. In other words, folks, you know this is repentance. Turn and go the other way.

I am fleeing from Sarai. God says, halt. Now turn and now go the other way. That's repentance. You do a 180. That's what He's leading her to do because He knows there's no life for you apart from this, Hagar.

Look, the turning was physical and spiritual. Heading back to Egypt is a nowhere place for you. Egypt held a false hope. Egypt was based on a false religion.

[57 : 53] It produced a false life. It's godless. Egypt stood for everything empty and vain and that's what false gods produce.

And you feel that as you pursue it. She was returning to what was familiar but what was empty. It would offer only a facade of relief. It wouldn't resolve the issue between her and God.

Now, I've said a lot of things. I don't want that one to go by you. I said, Jeff, what's the problem here? What was this deal? She's got to go back. Here's why she's got to go back. Because leaving gives a facade of relief but it is not going to resolve her issue between her and God.

And that's what God's doing. Hagar, you're going back. And you're not going back primarily for Sarai or for Abram. You're going back because this is how I'm going to deal with you.

And that's kind. Have you ever looked back on a trial to see what God did and tell yourself, I wouldn't have done it that way.

[59 : 06] You ever done that? I have too. I have too. And so thank God He's wiser than you and me. And He keeps us where we need to be doing what we need Him to do.

The issue of our heart toward the Lord is what we should be most concerned about. But too often in the midst of these trials taking in the world's wisdom in ways trying to find a fix.

Too often we're more focused on the problem and finding a way out of our pain and suffering to the exclusion of humbling our heart to God and His will in the trial.

Saying, God, as hard as this is, I'm in it for as long as you decide I need to be in it. Help me find joy. Help me live in your wisdom.

Help me to make it about you. Help me to get up every day and deal with my grief, my sadness, my pain, whatever it is. God opened a different way for Hagar and it was the way of a servant of God.

[60 : 20] So it's no surprise the next element of Hagar's obedience to her saving God is submission. What does He tell her? And submit yourself to Sarai's authority. For her to accomplish this is going to require something that she can't produce for herself.

Do you see it up there on the screen? Humility and death to self. That's the work of the Holy Spirit in a human being's heart. I don't want to be humble in and of myself.

I want to pursue my pride. Do what I want to do. I don't want to do death to self. Deny myself. My bent is just like yours. I want to exalt myself in some way.

But thank God the Lord delivers us from that. In the power of the Spirit, Hagar can choose to do these things. Look. Look up here. Obey the Lord. Put off pride.

Repent of her fear of man and put on the fear of the Lord. And folks, please hear this next comment. Amazingly, Hagar does all this in God's power without psychology, without therapy, without self-help books, and without anxiety medication.

[61 : 37] How did she pull that off? Does that bring some clarity to what it's like to walk with Jesus and trust that He is all-sufficient and His truth is all-sufficient for ministering to a hurting soul?

I wouldn't do counseling back in that room the way that I do it if I didn't believe that with all my heart. Part of the reason I believe it, it's not the main reason, part of the reason I believe what I just told you is because I'm like you.

I'm a human who suffers. And in turning to the Lord, I have found the peace and the joy that God can bring in the truth. But the main reason that I do it is because God has given me saving faith to believe that He is sufficient and that His Word is sufficient.

If we will minister the truth to people's souls, it will help them navigate the issues of life. I don't care if they're two to two hundred. If we don't believe that, we won't turn to the truth and we won't turn to the Lord of the truth when the thing gets really hard.

Well, I can say this, I'll hurry through. He brought belief to her heart. Trust God. Obey God. Wait on the Lord. The things that you hear people well-meaning say to you in the midst of a trial and you walk away and go, I am so sick of hearing that.

[63 : 05] That's not changing anything. Worship. The last thing a person in these situations wants to hear most of the time is you need to make this about your worship to the Lord.

You're so fixed on the problem, it's like you're worshiping the solution to the problem. Your whole life is being defined by you not being comfortable or something being hard or not the way you want it or your expectations aren't being met or this person or that person isn't doing what you want them to do or what you think they're supposed to do.

So you hear all that? All of your life is being defined by that. That's worship folks. That's a worship problem. So renaming in this case, renaming the well to be the well of the living one who sees me. Isn't that beautiful? The well of the living, he's my well, he's my living water, he sees me, he gets me, he knows me, and he meets me in the hour of my need.

That all reflects a change of heart and perspective, I think, in her life. And so she met the Lord. All of this is akin to saying that Hagar too needs to learn to wait on the Lord.

[64 : 30] Folks, God overcomes what we would run from and run to without him. We don't want to be there, so here's how I'll end.

Scripture teaches us that God cannot be thwarted, his design for your life will be accomplished, and in his wisdom he wastes nothing, so that all things do indeed work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

That message is how we started this chapter whenever. I don't know how long it's taken to get through it. But that's the truth, isn't it? He works all things together for good in conforming you to his son and he leaves out nothing.

His timing is perfect, the intensity of the trial is perfect, it's all about conforming you to Jesus. So I want to pray for you now that you'll let that be the case in your life.

Will you join me in prayer? Well, Father, we have turned our hearts to you and spent some time here unpacking this situation with Hagar and we're thankful, God, that we can look to you to teach our hearts what it means to wait on you because the last thing that we want to do is wait in the midst of something that's hurting us.

[65 : 57] We don't want to wait, we want to act. Help us to be faithful, to wait on you and to understand the Bible's teaching of what wait means. Help us to be faithful.

I pray for your people now. I pray for these friends of mine, these precious, precious souls who are here today. Some of them are here, possibly, and they don't know what it means to have a relationship with you through Christ.

They don't know what it's like to have their sins forgiven. They don't know what it's like to get up every day and breathe your air and be thankful to you for their life. And I pray for them.

I pray that you will help them turn to Jesus and look only to Him for the forgiveness of their sins. For those of us who are here walking with you, Christians, struggling against sin, striving in personal holiness.

I pray that you'll help us to realize our vulnerability in times of trial and that we'll guard our hearts with extra diligence and we'll look to you, God, to fulfill what you've told and promised.

[67 : 01] You will be our God and you will meet us in our time of need. Thank you for your sufficient word and thank you for our sufficient Savior who is Jesus Christ the Lord.

It's in His name that we pray. Amen.