

Week 1- Hagar

Connect: choose 1 *Connect* question and discuss for 5-7 minutes.

Introduce yourselves:

- Your name, where you are at Calvin
- 1 hobby of yours

Read these passages aloud:

Genesis 16 – Hagar & Abraham and the birth of Ishmael; Hagar in the wilderness.

Genesis 21:8-21 – Hagar and Ishmael sent away

Engage the text:

1. What do you **observe**? What is happening in the text?
 - Who can you relate to here? Who is the most foreign to you?
 - What do you think is happening emotionally for Sarah, Abraham, Hagar?
2. What **questions** do you have of the text?
 - What is happening with Sarai that she takes matters into her own hands?

Why does Hagar matter?

Hagar is the first person in the biblical account to name God – *El Roi*, “the God who sees.” Hagar is a foreigner and of low status as a servant or slave. Hagar didn’t have power or agency over her own life and she suffers abuse from Sarah and is cast out by Abraham. She is referred to by Sarai and Abram only ever as Sarai’s “slavegirl,” never by her own name. But when the angel of the LORD encounters her, she is called by her name, Hagar. And in turn, Hagar calls God by a name—*El Roi*. There is power in being named, being recognized as a person beyond your role or status.

Hagar is also a foreigner—one who doesn’t belong by blood or marriage to the family that the LORD chose to bless in order to be a blessing to the world. Still, she plays a part in the story of this family (of Abraham) whom God chose to redeem all families. The LORD still blesses her son, Ishmael and the descendants that would come from him. This shows the wideness of God’s mercy and love, even as God works through a particular people.

HOW DOES HAGAR POINT US TO JESUS?

As far as we know, Hagar hadn’t done anything wrong, and yet, she is treated with contempt by Sarai and Abram allows it, yet because she is their servant, they ought to be caring for her wellbeing.

We can see Hagar’s suffering in light of Jesus’ suffering. He too, had done nothing wrong yet suffered indignity, abuse, and mistreatment by the religious leaders during his ministry, eventually leading to his crucifixion.

Also, it's in Jesus that we see embodied the characteristic of God that Hagar names—*the God who sees*. When Jesus was walking the earth, he *saw* those who were downtrodden, among them women who were second class citizens in his society; still, Jesus honored them as equal image-bearers of God as we read in the gospels¹. Jesus' treatment of women in the gospels speaks back to and contrasts with Sarah and Abraham's treatment of Hagar. Jesus *saw* his women disciples, and he honored and respected them.²

Also, it is through Jesus Christ that humankind has access to God's covenant promises made to Abraham all those years ago. Jesus is the chosen son long awaited for by Israel. No longer do you have to be born of a specific line (blood descendant of Abraham) to inherit God's promises for God's people. Instead, now when you are born in Christ through the Spirit, you are made an heir to the promises made to Abraham.³ Again, Jesus' reconciling of people of different ethnic groups answers the division and separation between the son of Sarah (Isaac) and the son of Hagar (Ishmael). In Christ, there is no more Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female, but you are all made one in Christ Jesus.⁴ In Christ, those who come from the bloodline of Abraham and those who don't are united as one family.

Engage the text as a group:

3. What are some **applications**?

- What was God doing or saying to Sarai/Sarah, Abram/Abraham, or Hagar that God might also be saying to you today?
- Where do you see yourself or your life in this passage?

6 tools for interpretation: read through the 6 Tools (if time allows) or take-home and read.

Literary: Genre = narrative; part of the Pentateuch⁵; author = Moses, according to Hebrew tradition; period Pentateuch written: 1446B.C. to 1406B.C.⁶

Historical & Theological: Genesis unfolds the story of God's creation of the world and God's choosing a particular family to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

Cultural: In Hagar's particular story, in the Ancient Near East, there was a practice of taking a servant and having children through her if the wife of a family is unable to conceive.

¹ Luke 7:11-18; Luke 7:36-50; Luke 8:40-56;

² Luke 10:38-42- Mary & Martha; John 4:1-30 – Samaritan woman at the well;

³ Galatians 3:26-29.

⁴ Galatians 3:28.

⁵ The first 5 books of the Old Testament.

⁶ "Genesis," *International Bible Society*, <https://www.biblica.com/resources/scholar-notes/niv-study-bible/intro-to-genesis/>.

The bigger story: In light of the New Testament, Christians understand Jesus' redemption of the world as fulfilling the promise God spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden,⁷ to restore the relationship between God and humans broken by disobedience and sin.⁸

Genesis sets the table for the entire biblical narrative and God's redemptive plan in the world.

Holy Spirit: The Spirit was at work weaving Hagar's story into the Genesis narrative and the history of Israel. We see from the beginning of the biblical story how God is reaching far and wide to redeem and bless humankind in the story of this foreigner woman who was a slave.

Close in prayer:

How can you turn the themes of broken family relationships or "God who sees" into a prayer?

God who sees, you give us the good gifts of family relationships. But they are so often broken by sin, discord, distrust, harsh words. Thank you that you do not give up on us; and you invite us not to give up on one another. We lift up our family relationships where we have experienced brokenness because of harsh words, lack of kindness, infidelity, distrust, dishonesty, abuse, or power struggles. Forgive us and teach us to forgive one another, especially our families. Thank you for the promise of your son Jesus Christ, who heals us where we are broken, in whom all the families of the world will be restored and made whole. It's in his name we pray. Amen.

⁷ Genesis 3:14-15

⁸ Genesis 3