

PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.

Questions

Read **Genesis 16**. You may want to find **Genesis 16** on the Bible at a Glance chart in your notebook.

1. What are your first impressions after reading this story? Of the three main characters, who do you empathize with the most? The least? Why?

Have several share . . .

- ♥ What in your life have you had to wait a long time for? Are you still waiting? How do you cope with waiting? What do you think is the purpose of waiting?

Background – The first eleven chapters of Genesis describes God's dealings with the human race. In **Genesis 12**, the focus shifts to a single individual, *Abram*, and his family line. God called Abram to leave his home country of Ur and go to the land of Canaan, which God promised that he and his descendents would ultimately possess. God blessed Abram and promised that through his family line a Savior would be born to reconcile all humankind to God. Abram was obedient to God's call and although God periodically renewed his promise to Abram as time passed, he and his wife Sarai remained childless as they advanced in years. When we pick up the story of Abram's life in **Genesis 16**, it has been at least ten years since God had first made his promise to Abram, who is now 85 years old.

2. It was not uncommon in ancient cultures for a barren woman to give her servant/slave to her husband in order to conceive a male heir. After the baby was born, the wife would adopt the child and he would become a legal heir. Read **Genesis 15:1-6** and explain how Abram and Sarai (later called Abraham and Sarah) might have rationalized their solution to make it agree with God's promise.

God promised Abram that a "son coming from your own body" (Gen 15:4) would be his heir. Abram and Sarai could have rationalized and said that if Hagar conceived and gave Abram child, this heir would be from his own body. The lesson here is that when God promises us something, he doesn't need our help in fulfilling the promise. Waiting is truly the hardest part – but it is during the waiting and the trusting that God does "heart work" in us, getting us ready to receive the gift he has promised. Waiting is never wasted time.

- ♥ What contradiction does Sarai state about God in **16:2** and what does it imply about God? Why is *knowing God* just as important as *knowing his promises*?

Sarai says, "The Lord has kept me from having children," yet it was the Lord who promised they would have children. God does not make promises that he will not keep. Sarai is revealing her doubt and the fact that she does not know God and his character very well. A more appropriate response would have been, "The Lord is keeping us waiting for his promise for some reason." While we are waiting, we may say: I don't like it; I don't understand it -- but in the end we need to choose to trust God and his promise because God will not lie and God is love and always has our best interests at heart.

- ♥ In her desperation, how might Sarai have benefited if she had known and encountered *El Roi*? Sarai was understandably anxious and afraid – but if she had encountered *El Roi* as Hagar did, she would have known that God's eyes were always on her and that he was watching out for her and taking care of her regardless of what she was feeling or experiencing. Reaching out to God in our times of difficulty instead of taking things into our own hands will save us much heart-ache.

- ♥ When have you attempted to supply your solution to God's promise? How did it work out?

- ♥ When are you generally tempted to take shortcuts? Why is it so hard to wait for God to act?

3. The situation deteriorates quickly, with the consequences of one bad decision leading to another. Trace this downward spiral in the chart below, summarizing the choices and consequences in each verse.

Verse	Choices and/or Consequences
16:2	"The Lord has done this to me . . . go sleep with my servant and maybe we can have a baby through her.
16:3	Sarai took Hagar and gave her to Abram "as his wife"
16:4	Abram slept with Hagar; she conceived and then began to despise that treat Sarai with contempt
16:5	Sarai begins to blame Abram – "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering from Hagar. She then makes Abram choose between her and Hagar
16:6	Abram says, "Whatever! Do what you have to do." Sarai begins to intentionally mistreat Hagar and so Hagar runs away.

- ♥ Considering Abram's encounter with God in **Genesis 15:1-6**, what could he have done instead of agreeing with Sarai's plan (**16:2**)? He could have reminded Sarai that the promise came from God and that together they would wait and trust. The fact that Abram agreed also showed that he, too, was doubting God's promise. When have you chosen *the wrong but easy way* over the *right but difficult way*? *Vice versa*? Share what you learned from these experiences.
 - ♥ **Disbelief** leads to *disobedience* which results in "*dissed*" relationships. Describe Abram and Sarai's relationship in **16:5-6**. She begins to "blame" Abram and he then disengages and distances himself from her pain. When have you seen these same patterns in your own life? What is the solution?
 - ♥ Was Sarai right to blame Abram for her suffering? Why or why not? Why is "blame" so tempting?
4. Do you *approve* or *disapprove* of Hagar's behavior in **16:4** and **6**? Why? What advice would you give? Hagar's behavior is understandable, although not right. Have several share what advice they might have given.
- ♥ How did God view her behavior? On what do you base your answer?
God told Hagar to go back and submit to her mistress – but he also assured Hagar that he was going to take care of her.
 - ♥ Describe how you think Hagar was feeling. In what ways can you relate to Hagar and her situation?
 - ♥ From what difficulty are you tempted to "run"? What do you think would be the result?

Angel of the Lord (**16:7**) – a heavenly messenger of God, sometimes described as the Lord himself (**Gen. 16:10-13; Ex. 3:2-6; 23:20; Judges 6:11-18**), but at other times as one sent by and distinct from God (**2 Sam. 24:16; Zech 1:12**). God used this messenger to appear to humans who otherwise would not be able to see God and live (**Ex. 33:20**). The *angel of the Lord* performed actions associated with God, such as *revelation, deliverance, and destruction*. Many Bible scholars have speculated that the *angel of the Lord* was God himself – a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ. The language in the story of Hagar leads us to believe that the angel in this incident was, in fact, an appearance of God himself.

5. In the desert, God "finds" Hagar. How does God identify Hagar and what does he ask her (**16:7-8**)? God calls Hagar by name but also calls her "servant of Sarai." He asks her, "Where have you come from and where are you going?"

Why do you think God asks Hagar these questions when he obviously already knew the answers? Why is Hagar's reply important?

Before God can help us in our trouble and distress, we need to "come clean," admit our own responsibility in the situation and stop hiding or covering anything up. The Bible calls this repentance – turning away from our wayward behavior, excuses and cover-up and turning toward God with honesty and openness. Bad treatment by others is never an excuse for our own wrong behavior. It was important that Hagar admit to who she was, what she had done and where she was headed.

- ♥ Why would God bother to find a runaway slave girl in the desert, address her by name and have a personal conversation with her? What do you learn about God from this encounter?

God loves and cares for each person he has created. He does not have "favorites." Each person, regardless of who they are or what they have done, is important and precious to God, our Creator. People may look down on us or mistreat us, but God never will.

- ♥ Why do you think God told Hagar to go back and submit to Sarai's authority after she had obviously been mistreated (16:9)? Would you have been able to trust God in this situation? Why or why not? Hagar was already pregnant and God was sending her back to a place that she would be cared for. She would have died alone in the desert if she had not returned, or even if she could have made it back to Egypt (her home country), she would not have been accepted or taken care of. In telling her to submit, God was telling her to stop treating Sarai with contempt.

6. Why do you think Hagar agreed to do what God asked of her (16:9)? Why might she have felt it was "safe" (16:10-13)?

Hagar was able to go back and submit because by blessing her and telling her future, God was also telling her that he would take care of her. God told her she was with child and that she would have a son (something no one else knew). He even told her to name her son Ishmael (which means "the God who hears") as a constant reminder that God heard her misery. Every time she said Ishmael's name, she would be reminded of this encounter in the desert and she would take strength from it. God also told her some of Ishmael's future. Hagar knew she could go back and not fear for her life because God had assured her that he was watching, he would hear her and he had a plan for her and her son. This made her feel "safe" enough to go back.

- ♥ What makes it possible to forgive people who have hurt or mistreated you? What part does God play in the process? Forgiveness is the releasing of the "debt" someone owes you because they have harmed you. When we forgive we let go of the resentment and the right to "get back" – but it's important to see that we let go of it by placing it in God's hands, trusting that he will, at the right time and the right way, take care of the person who has wronged us. Forgiveness is NOT saying it doesn't matter and it's okay if you get away with what you have done. Rather, it is placing justice (revenge, vengeance) in God's hands and then it is our trusting God that he will indeed take care of us – and work justice on our behalf, in his own time and his own way. Discuss with your group the difference between **forgiveness** and **reconciliation**. **Forgiveness always needs to happen** – but **reconciliation** is only possible if a person changes and stops hurting and abusing – and trust can be rebuilt. God never asks us to submit to things that **harm** us (not the same as things we "don't like" or things that may make us "uncomfortable" or even "difficult." Biblical submission is always done from a position of **strength** – a willingness to give up the need to always have our own way. **Submission to abusive behavior is not Biblical submission.**

7. Hagar tries to capture the significance of her encounter with God by giving him a personal name that expresses her awe and gratitude (16:13). What are some things she was implying about God when she said, "*You are the God that sees me . . .*"

Hagar, a lowly Egyptian servant (slave) who had been mistreated and "used" is amazed that the God of the universe would not only take an interest in her, but actually find her, appear to her, bless her and take care of her. This is the only time in all of Scripture that the name of God is given to God by a person, instead of God giving a person his name. Hagar calls God *El Roi* out of her utter amazement and gratitude that God knows all about her and has seen her misery – when apparently no one else cared. She is not surprised that God is a God who sees – but she is amazed that he is the God who sees **her!**

- ♥ Why was Hagar so amazed that *she had seen* the God who saw her (Exodus 33:17-20)? What lasting, personal impact do you think this had on her?

- ♥ Where have you seen God lately? From the result of your encounter, what name would you give to God or the place where you met him?
- ♥ God responded to Hagar's *misery* (16:11). When has a difficult time in your own life helped you gain new insight into God's concern for you?

The name *El Roi* implies much more than a God who is *all-seeing* and *all-knowing*. Hagar made the name very personal when she said, "You are the God who sees *me*." God "seeing" us is much more than just his "awareness" of us. The name *El Roi* implies our value as a person, no matter who we are or what we do; it implies that God sees all hearts and the complete truth about every situation; it implies that because God sees, we are never alone; and it implies that in seeing, God is with us to confront, comfort, protect and deliver. The name *El Roi* specifically applies to God *seeing, hearing, knowing, understanding* and *helping* us in our *misery* (16:11).

8. Read each group of verses listed below and write what you learn about *El Roi – the God who sees me*. Write your answers in the first person as if you are speaking to God (You, I, me, etc.).

Isaiah 49:15-16a; Luke 12:6-7; Romans 2:11

Lord, it's not likely that a mother would forget the baby at her breast or lack compassion for the one who came from her womb – but even if a mother did that – you will never forget me. You love me even more than mother loves her baby. You have written my name on your hand just so I will always be in your mind. You, who knows all about each bird that lives, certainly then, know all about me. You are so interested in me that you even know how many hairs are on my head. This is something that no one else knows about me – or even could know about me. You are not a God who has favorites. You love me like you love all your children. I'm important to you regardless of how important I am to anyone else.

- ♥ On a *scale of 1 to 10*, how precious are you to God? Does your *heart* believe your rating? Why or why not?

Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalm 23:4; Matthew 28:20b

Lord, I am able to be strong and courageous and I don't have to be afraid or terrified because you are always with me – no matter where I go or what I do! There is nothing I can do that will ever make you leave me or forsake me. Even when I go through deep darkness, you are with me and will let me experience Your Presence. You are always with me – and will be with me right to the end of time. Even if I wanted to, I can not shake you!

- ♥ If God is always with you, should you always be able to *sense* his Presence? Why or why not?

1 Samuel 16:7b; Hebrews 4:13; Proverbs 15:3

Lord, you see everything and you know all hearts. You know the TRUTH about everything and everyone. Nothing is hidden from you and no one can hide anything from you. You are watching – and you are watching out for me. It's so comforting to know that You know!

- ♥ God knows the real truth about every person and every situation. How does this *comfort* you? When might it make you *uncomfortable*?

Psalm 121:2-3, 7-8; Psalm 34:15; Psalm 38:9

You are Creator – my Creator and the Maker of the heavens and the earth. My help comes from You and you are always watching out for me, 24/7 – and you will not let me "slip." You will keep me from harm (not hard times!) as you continually watch over me. You hear my cries for help – I don't even have to tell You what I am feeling because all my longings lie open before you – you hear every sigh. I must be important to You!

- ♥ How does knowing *El Roi* encourage you? How do you need him today?

♥ Heart Therapy

SPEND SOME QUALITY TIME WITH *EL ROI – THE GOD WHO SEES YOU . . .*

All we have learned about God in this lesson is **TRUTH**, whether or not we *feel it* or are *experiencing it* in our lives at the moment. When our feelings and/or circumstances seem to contradict God's truth, we, in faith, choose put our trust in *Truth – God's Word*. This is what it means to live by *faith* and not *sight* (2 Corinthians 5:7). *Trust* is always a *choice* made in the midst of *uncertainty* – but it is what God needs from us so that he can work in us and our situations (Hebrews 11:6).

Read **Psalm 9:9-10**. On the back of this page, *write a personal prayer of trust to God* expressing the truths you have learned about him and your intention to *trust him completely*. *Listen* for what he may say to you!

NIV

Genesis 15:1-6

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

2 But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” **3** And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.” **4** Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” **5** He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” **6** Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

Isaiah 49:15-16 “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! **16** See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;

Luke 12:6-7 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. **7** Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Romans 2:11 For God does not show favoritism.

Deuteronomy 31:6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Psalms 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Matthew 28:20b . . . And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

1Samuel 16:7b The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Hebrews 4:13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. **Proverbs 15:3** The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.

Psalms 121:2-3, 7-8

My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. **3** He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; **7** The LORD will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; **8** the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Psalms 34:15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry;

Psalms 38:9 All my longings lie open before you, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you.

NLT

Genesis 15:16

Afterward the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.” **2** But Abram replied, “O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don’t even have a son? Since I don’t have a son, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. **3** You have given me no children, so one of my servants will have to be my heir.” **4** Then the LORD said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own to inherit everything I am giving you.” **5** Then the LORD brought Abram outside beneath the night sky and told him, “Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that—too many to count!” **6** And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD declared him righteous because of his faith.

Isaiah 49:15-16 “Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for a child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you! See, I have written your name on my hand. . .

Luke 12:6-7 “What is the price of five sparrows? A couple of pennies? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. **7** And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to him than a whole flock of sparrows.

Romans 2:11 For God does not show favoritism.

Deuteronomy 31:6 Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid of them! The LORD your God will go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor forsake you.”

Psalms 23:4 Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

Matthew 28:20b . . . And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

1Samuel 16:7b The LORD doesn’t make decisions the way you do! People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at a person’s thoughts and intentions.”

Hebrews 4:13 Nothing in all creation can hide from him. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes. This is the God to whom we must explain all that we have done.

Proverbs 15:3 The LORD is watching everywhere, keeping his eye on both the evil and the good.

Psalms 121:2-3, 7-8 My help comes from the LORD, who made the heavens and the earth! **3** He will not let you stumble and fall; the one who watches over you will not sleep. **7** The LORD keeps you from all evil and preserves your life. **8** The LORD keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever.

Psalms 34:15 The eyes of the LORD watch over those who do right; his ears are open to their cries for help.

Psalms 38:9 You know what I long for, Lord; you hear my every sigh.