

Genesis 16:1-16—Hagar, The Egyptian Slave: Also Loved By God

Memory Verse

Genesis 15:6 NLT—*Justification by faith*

And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.

Outline (Genesis 16:1-16)

1. Forgiven sin often has long term consequences: Abram reaps the consequences of his past sin, when he chose to go to Egypt instead of staying in the promised land (vs 1-2)
2. The end does not justify the means: Using Human effort to try to accomplish God's will always ends in disaster eventually—don't try to run ahead of God (1-5)
3. Hagar, the Egyptian slave, is also loved by God: God personally appears to her and calls her to repent (vs 6-16)
4. The importance of seeking God's will when making important decisions (v 2)
5. The effects of walking in the flesh—the blame game, jealousy, rivalry, and hating others (vs 5-6)
6. A prophecy of the eternal hatred between the Arabs and the Jews (v 12)
7. A new revelation or name of God: "You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees" (v 13-14)

Genesis 16:1-16 NKJV

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. ³ Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. ⁴ So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me."

⁶ So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

⁷ Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ And He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

She said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai."

⁹ The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand." ¹⁰ Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude." ¹¹ And the Angel of the LORD said to her:

"Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has heard your affliction. ¹² He shall be a wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

¹³ Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" ¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

1. Forgiven sin often has long term consequences: Abram reaps the consequences of his past sin, when he chose to go to Egypt instead of staying in the promised land

Genesis 16:1-2 NKJV

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.

What goes around comes around—we reap what we sow—it was now Abram's turn to be "thrown under the bus", so to speak: "It was Sarai whose faith first weakened. She felt so keenly the shame of her own barrenness, and seeing no other naturalistic solution, she made a decision which must have been extremely distasteful to her. *Just as Abram had once been willing to share her with other men, as the least of the evils he confronted, so now she felt it necessary to share her husband with another woman, as the only solution to their problem.*" (Henry Morris)

What we see here is two dangers that choosing to be in the world has on us. *Firstly, the world corrupts our thinking*, conforming our minds to accept sinful practices that are considered culturally or socially acceptable. *Secondly, it gives us the opportunity to act on those sinful practices.*

Firstly, the world corrupts our thinking: Being a surrogate mother was common in the cultures of Ur, Babylon, and Egypt. Women unable to bear children offered their maids (slaves) to their husbands, and the child produced was considered the child of the husband and wife. This was because the slave was considered the property of the husband and wife, and therefore the child of the slave is also the property of the husband and wife. Today Surrogacy is still legal in many countries, and the child is still raised by the barren women.

However, just because surrogacy was (and is) accepted, it doesn't make it right. This is one of the consequences of living in Egypt, a picture of the world. There are many things that the world considers normal, but which God clearly says are evil: homosexuality, abortion, fornication (sex out of marriage), etc. Surrogacy is wrong because it goes against God's will for one man and one woman to be joined together for life. Adoption is a much better solution.

"However worthy and unselfish may have been the motives of Abram and Sarai, and perhaps even of Hagar, in carrying out this plan, it was bound to create problems. God's creative purpose included only monogamous marriage, and anything else was bound to generate problems. There are many instances recorded of polygamous marriages in the Bible, which God allowed because of mitigating circumstances at the time (e.g., Jacob, Moses, David), but none of a happy polygamous marriage." (Henry Morris)

Secondly, the world provides the opportunity to to act on those sinful practices: If Abram and Sarah didn't go down to Egypt, they would have never have obtained Hagar as a slave, and most likely this surrogacy plan wouldn't have been possible. Being in the world seems to have advantages, but remember this—if God didn't give it to us, then it isn't good for us. It may feel good, look good, give us pleasure, make us money, make life easier etc, but ultimately, it will hurt us. Why do I know this? Because if it was good for us, then God would have given it to us. It is one of His promises that He will give us anything and everything that is actually good for us.

Psalm 84:11 NLT

For the LORD God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. *The LORD will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right.*

We will also find out that there will be many more serious consequences resulting from this decision, both in the very near future (trouble at home), and in the distant future (the eternal hatred between the two siblings and their descendants—the Arabs and the Jews).

2. The end does not justify the means: Using Human effort to try to accomplish God's will always ends in disaster eventually—don't try to run ahead of God

Genesis 16:1-5 NKJV

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. ³ Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. ⁴ So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me."

Abraham had been in the promised land for 10 years now. He is now 85 years old, and Sarah 75 years old. What we reminded of here is that there is usually a time gap between the giving of a promise and the fulfilment of the promise. In the case of Abram and Sarai, the wait would be for a total of 25 years. From the time of this incident with Hagar and Ishmael, they still had another 14 years to wait until Isaac was born.

Why did God make them wait? *The answer is that God is preparing us, He is strengthening our faith.* The gap between the promise and the fulfilment is the opportunity for our faith muscle to be exercised. Think of the butterfly as it struggles to get out of the cocoon—we all want to just get a knife and cut open the cocoon because it seems heartless to let the poor butterfly continue to struggle. But what happens if we do cut open the cocoon? The butterfly's wings don't fill out (expand) and the butterfly never flies, and ends up dying. God loves us too much to cut us out before the goal of the struggle has been achieved—God's desire is for our faith to grow, and that is usually a painful process. "If there is no struggle, faith never soars." (Jon Courson)

"God had promised Abram that he would have descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven, and Abram had believed God. This was the whole point of Genesis 15. **But now the man of faith becomes (in Genesis 16) the man of unbelief. Retreating from his walk by faith, he begins to walk by sight and gets into trouble in the process.** This can happen to all of us. We lose patience and start to run ahead of God. It always leads to trouble for us." (James M. Boice)

We do the same thing today. Instead of waiting on, leaning on, trusting in God, we look at God's promises for our lives and try to achieve them in our own strength and our own wisdom. We know that this was not God's way of solving Abram and Sarai's problem of infertility because of what Paul says in Gal 4:22-31. We'll read only verses 22-23.

Galatians 4:22-23 NKJV

For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise.

Born according to the flesh means a product of human effort. "Through promise" refers to something that God did by His strength and power. The New Living Version makes this very clear.

Galatians 4:22-23 NLT

The Scriptures say that Abraham had two sons, one from his slave wife and one from his freeborn wife. The son of the slave wife was born in a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise. But the son of the freeborn wife was born as God's own fulfillment of His promise.

Why would Abram have not sought God's guidance to find out if this idea was actually from God or not? Because Abram's faith was also weak after waiting 10 years, and he was losing hope as well as Sarai. When we start to lose faith in God's promises, we become impatient and are strongly tempted to do things the world's way. We lose sight of God's good plan for our lives. The Scriptures warn us not to lose our faith in God's promises, because if we do, we will often miss out on the reward, and it is certain that we will only cause unnecessary hardship.

Hebrews 10:35-36 NLT

So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! ³⁶ Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that He has promised.

3. Hagar, the Egyptian slave, is also loved by God: God personally appears to her and calls her to repent

Genesis 16:6-16 NKJV

So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

⁷ Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ And He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

She said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai."

⁹ The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand." ¹⁰ Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude." ¹¹ And the Angel of the LORD said to her:

"Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has heard your affliction. ¹² He shall be a wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

¹³ Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" ¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

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Considering Hagar's lot in life

v 6 **So Abram said to Sarai, “Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please.” And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence:** We often think of Hagar as just a worldly Egyptian woman. But think about her circumstances. In her day, if you were born as a slave, you remained as a slave for life—Hagar had no choice. Secondly, as a slave, she had to do what Sarai and Abram wanted her to do. We see her submitting to their command to be a surrogate mother. Did she actually want to? We don't know, but probably not. Then Hagar does get pregnant. As a result, Sarai believes that she alone is the problem (since Abram could get Hagar pregnant), and so her feelings of shame concerning her infertility are magnified. Hagar doesn't help the situation: She despises Sarai, and as a result, the tensions get so strong that Sarai ends up kicking Hagar out.

v 13 **Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?”:** Hagar hasn't had an easy life. Yes, she was wrong to despise her master, Sarai, and rebel against her authority over her. She was also wrong in gloating over her mistress's seeming misfortune. But in everything else, she really had no choice—it was God's lot for her in life. But what we see here is that Hagar realises that God does see, that God does care, that God has had a plan for her life all along. What a revelation, that God cares for the little people as well, the ones that are unknown, the ones that nobody cares about, the ones that get trodden on and pressed down and mistreated. If you feel like Hagar right now, then do what Hagar and David did and cry out to God—God always keeps His promise to save us out of all our troubles.

Psalm 35:6 NLT

In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD listened; He saved me from all my troubles.

Psalm 34:6-10 NKJV

This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

⁷ The Angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.

⁸ Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!

⁹ Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him.

¹⁰ The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing.

Who is the “Angel of the Lord”?

v 7 **Now the Angel of the LORD:** We see for the first time in Scripture the phrase, “**the angel of the Lord**”. Like in the New Testament, the word translated “angel” means “messenger.” But who is this Messenger? It is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a Christophany—Jesus appearing to Hagar in human form. How do we know? Because the Scripture tells us.

v 13 **Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?”:** The Scripture makes it clear that it was God who spoke to Hagar, not just any angel.

God found Hagar

v 7 **Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness:** Jesus describes Himself as “the Good Shepherd” in John 10:11, “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*”

Notice how and when God found Hagar. She was in trouble, pregnant without a husband, rejected, desperate, running away from everybody, and hopeless. She was probably headed back to Egypt to worship the gods back home. To get home she had to cross a desert, a crossing she would probably not survive. She was not seeking God, was not looking for God. But remember that God is far more interested in us than we are in either Him or ourselves.

Psalm 139:17-18 NLT

How precious are Your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! ¹⁸ I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, You are still with me!

God calls Hagar to repent of her sin

v 8-9 And He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

She said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.”

⁹ The Angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.”

Like is the case with every person, Hagar must repent before God can bless her. To repent (change direction) means that she must change her attitude towards God. Hagar must choose to willingly come back under God’s authority, to submit to God’s will for her life. This is how a person is saved. They must repent *and* believe.

Mark 10:15 NLT

“The time promised by God has come at last!” [Jesus] announced. “The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News [of the Gospel]!”

A good example is Jesus confronting the Rich Young Ruler with his sin of idolatry. Jesus gave him the opportunity to repent, to change his ways, to turn from his sin and to put Jesus first—to choose to love Jesus more than his sin. If he did, then he could experience God’s blessing—treasure in heaven, and being a follower of Jesus.

Luke 18:22-23 NLT

“When Jesus heard his answer, He said, “There is still one thing you haven’t done. Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.”

²³ But when the man heard this he became very sad, for he was very rich.

With Hagar, although the Scripture doesn’t record what Hagar said, we know that she did choose to obey God, demonstrating her genuine repentance (see v 15). We also know that Hagar believed in God as her Saviour when she called Him LORD (see v 13). Hagar going back to Abram and Sarai and choosing to submit to them was really her submitting to God: She was doing what she in her flesh (her prideful sinful nature) didn’t want to do, but she knew it was the right thing to do, because it was what God had told her to do—it was the word of God. It wouldn’t have been easy for Hagar to face Sarai again, apologise to her, and change her hostile and prideful attitude towards Sarai—but she did. Remember, where God guides, God provides. God will never ask us to do anything without first giving us the strength to do it—God’s commands are also God’s promises. God also worked in the hearts of Abram and Sarai to make the reconciliation possible.

“After this experience, Hagar did return to Hebron, to Abram and Sarai, no doubt telling them about her experience with God. No doubt there was a time of repentance and thanksgiving on the part of all three of them, and they resolved to live together as amicably as the situation would permit, and by God’s help. When the child was born, Abram, in obedience to the revelation received by Hagar, named him Ishmael and raised him as his son. This was the right and necessary thing for Abram to do at this point.” (Henry Morris)

“When the angel of the Lord told Hagar to return to Sarai, she could have said, “No way.” Instead, she said, “Okay.” Hagar not only made a confession of faith by acknowledging God as Lord, but she was obedient to the Lord [demonstrated repentance] in returning to Sarai. Therefore, I expect to see Hagar in heaven.” (Jon Courson)

God’s promised blessing for Hagar

v 13 **Then the Angel of the LORD said to her:** Notice the word “then”. Again, repentance comes before blessing. We must choose to position ourselves “under the spout where the blessings come out”, if we are going to receive and experience God’s blessings. The analogy goes like this: if a child wants to fill their bowl with soft serve ice cream from the soft serve machine at an all you can eat buffet meal, all they need to do is place their bowl under the spout and pull the lever. It’s that simple. The child just needs to humble themselves, go to where their parents told them to go, and then experience the blessings.

v 13 **“I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.”:** Hagar’s son Ishmael is the father of the Arabs. Not everyone who is called an Arab today is actually a descendant of Ishmael, as it has become a general term (e.g. “the Arab nations”). However, many among this group of people are true “Arabs”, descendants of Ishmael.

4. The importance of seeking God’s will when making decisions

Genesis 16:2 NKJV

So Sarai said to Abram, “See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.

“On this occasion, the temptation came from his wife. He followed the lead of his wife, as Adam before him had followed the suggestion of Eve, and stumbled badly. It’s not always bad to listen to your wife. Later on, God tells Abram to listen to his wife. The point is that we must be careful as to what we listen to. The lies and doubts of the enemy can come from anywhere. Everything needs to be screened, everything needs to be weighed against scripture to see if it is of God or not. We need to take the time to pray and seek God’s guidance before blindly accepting and following someone’s advice - even if we trust that person and they are close to us.” (James M. Boice)

5. The effects of walking in the flesh—the blame game, jealousy, rivalry, and hating others

Genesis 16:5-6 NKJV

Then Sarai said to Abram, “My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me.”

6 So Abram said to Sarai, “Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please.” And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

What are some of the consequences of trying to do things in our own strength?

The blame game: “One thing that happens when we stop trusting God—no matter how reasonable our lack of trust seems—is that we then tend to blame God (and other people as well) for our difficulties. We see this in Sarai’s situation. The narrative begins by noting that when she approached Abram with her suggestion, she blamed God for the fact that she had no children: “The Lord has kept me from having children” (v. 2). As a statement of fact, this was true; but we detect more than this in the words. We detect a belligerent note, as if she were saying, “I know we should trust God for a solution, but God has made things too difficult for us to do that. By preventing me from having children, he is forcing me to do what under normal circumstances I would reject.” Nor is this all we see in Sarai’s attitude. Later, when Hagar had conceived and then began to despise her mistress for her sterility, Sarai complained to Abram, saying, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me” (vv. 5–6).

This always happens when we stop trusting God. We do wrong. We say God caused it to occur. Then, when our plans go sour, we blame either God or others for the outcome. The difficulty is not with God. The sin is in ourselves. The fault is in our own bad choices.” (James M. Boice)

We also notice a lot of friction in their marriage, immoral sexual acts, polygamous marriage, jealousy, the making of enemies, and a whole lot of unnecessary hardship. This making of enemies (between Isaac and Ishmael), is still causing havoc even today. Remember what Paul wrote in Galatians about the fruit of the sinful nature:

Galatians 5:13-26 NLT

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. **But don’t use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.** ¹⁴ For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” ¹⁵ **But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.**

¹⁶ So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses [It’s, “I get to”, not, “I got to”].

¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: **sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures,** ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, **hostility, quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division,** ²¹ **envy,** drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to His cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives. ²⁶ **Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.**

Once again, we notice that as soon as Abram and Sarai started doing things their way, and not trusting God to do things His way, things really started going badly for them. I’ve highlighted, in the verses above, some of the characteristics of walking in the flesh that we observe in Abram and Sarai’s life at this point in time.

Overall, there were serious arguments, serious division, sexual immorality, and terrible disharmony. The solution, repent and come back under God's authority, seeking to do His will, and not our own. Also, we rely on His strength to do His will, and not try to accomplish it ourselves. We see that Abram, Sarai, and Hagar all repented, and, by God's strength (grace), lived once again in harmony, for about 20 years, until the time when Ishmael was older and he chose to mock the newly weaned Isaac, which again ignited this conflict.

6. A prophecy of the eternal hatred between the Arabs and the Jews

Genesis 16:12 NKJV

He shall be a wild [lit: wild donkey or wild ass] man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."

What an accurate description of the Arabs in the Middle East. Generally speaking, Arabs are "wild men", with their hands against every man, and every man against them—they always seem to be fighting either against themselves or some other enemy. Also, it is obvious that even today, the Arabs are living in the presence of their brethren, the Jews.

"Although Sarai's proposal was expedient, it was not obedient. Although it was accepted culturally, and had merit logically, it was wrong spiritually, for Abram and Sarai failed to seek the Lord about it. As a result, to this day, world leaders try to figure out what to do concerning the tension, hatred, animosity, and bloodshed stemming from this singular event." (Jon Courson)

Abram and Sarai undoubtedly had no idea of just how much division, heartache, and bloodshed their one bad, impulsive, and immoral decision would cause. This is often true for us as well. Often our choice to sin has far reaching implications that we never anticipated. Better to choose not to sin than live with a lifetime of regret.

7. A new revelation or name of God: "You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees"

Genesis 16:13-14 NKJV

Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" ¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

"Ishmael (meaning "God hears") would, by his name, always remind his mother how the God of Abram (not her old gods in Egypt, to which she had started to return) had met her need. She even named the well where the Angel of Jehovah had spoken to her "the well of the Living One who sees me" (Beer-lahai-roi), and called God by the name El Roi ("the God who sees")." (Henry Morris)

"You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees" is both *comforting* and *convicting* at the same time. Consider the following verses from Hebrews.

Hebrews 4:12-16 NLT

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. ¹³ *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before His eyes, and He is the one to whom we are accountable.*

¹⁴ So then, since we have a great High Priest Who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵ *This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same testings we do, yet He did not sin.* ¹⁶ So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. *There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*

“You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees” is *comforting* because God sees our struggles, weaknesses, desires, and needs—He knows everything about us and will be there to help us—*“This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same testings we do... and we will find grace to help us when we need it most”* (Hebrews 4:15-16).

“You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees” is *convicting* because He also sees our sin—*“Everything is naked and exposed before His eyes, and He is the one to whom we are accountable”* (Hebrews 4:13).

However, there is an order to this. Like we see in Genesis 16, repentance comes before blessing. We must choose to receive God’s mercy before we can receive His help. *“There will will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most”* (Hebrews 4:16). To receive God’s grace (God’s help), we must first receive God’s mercy (God’s forgiveness). Sin must be confronted and dealt with first.

Why is it like this? There are two main reasons why our sin must be confessed and forsaken (receive His mercy—forgiveness—we don’t get the punishment we do deserve), before God can bless us (receive His grace—God blesses us with the good things that we don’t deserve):

- A. If God blessed us first, while we are still in sin, we would think that our sin was okay, that God approved of the evil we are thinking, saying, and/or doing—we would never repent. Imagine if you took your child to their favourite fast food store after they had just sworn at you and trashed the house. You would be reinforcing their bad behaviour. They would be thinking, wow, this bad behaviour really does pay off. I’ll be doing that again.
- B. It’s our sin that is causing the suffering. If we want to be free from the suffering that sin causes, then we must first confess and forsake the sin—there is no way around this. It’s like giving a new house and car to a drug addict—they can never enjoy them for two reasons, *a lack of ability to enjoy the blessings*, and *a lack of ability to appreciate the blessings*.
 - I. *Lack of ability to enjoy the blessings*: their drug addiction will cause them to destroy the house and car almost immediately—the blessing will be abused and wasted.
 - II. *Lack of ability to appreciate the blessings*: with their mind focused only on the pleasure they receive from their sin (sorcery, drugs), they will never be able to appreciate the gift of the house and car—they are unable to return your love.

Here’s an example. The rich young ruler had to give up his idolatry before Jesus would offer him fellowship—“Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him. “There is still one thing you haven’t done,” he told him. “Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Mark 10:21). Why? Because it was not possible for the rich young ruler to love both his money and Jesus—*“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money”* (Matthew 6:24 NLT).

God sets a boundary with us: we must repent before He will share His love and blessings with us. The same principle also applies to human relationships—if there is no repentance, then there is no relationship. If we don’t enforce this necessary and healthy boundary, we will be used, abused, and unappreciated. Like Jesus did, we must let the unrepentant person walk away sad (see Matthew 10:22), it’s the only way we can show them love. For their own good, we need to let them continue to experience the consequences of their sin, just like God does with us. This is speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).