

Discussion Questions

July 5, 2026

The God Who Sees Me - Hagar's Story (Genesis 16 & 21)

This week we stepped out of Galatians to meet the woman behind last week's hard words: Hagar. While Paul cast out the system Hagar represents, God never once cast out the person Hagar is. We traced her story honestly. We saw how Sarah, herself twice traded away by Abraham, replicated her own wounds onto Hagar, and how Hagar, an Egyptian slave never once called by name in Abraham's household, fled to the desert, where the Angel of the LORD appeared for the first time in all of Scripture. God found her, called her by name, and invited her to tell her story. In response, Hagar became the only person in the Hebrew Bible to name God: El Roi, "the God who sees me." Years later, when Abraham cast her and her teenage son out to die, God heard the boy whose name means "God hears" and opened Hagar's eyes to a well that was there all along. Isaac, the son of promise, would later make his home at that very well, Beer-lahai-roi, "the well of the Living One who sees me." The whole story points forward to Emmanuel: the God who came all the way down and was cast out on the cross, so that the cast-out could be brought in. In a world where we are constantly watched but rarely seen, Hagar's God sees, hears, and relentlessly pursues the discarded.

1. Read Genesis 16:1-6. How do Abram and Sarai refer to Hagar throughout this passage? What do they never do? Track the verbs: who acts, and who is acted upon?
2. Read Genesis 16:7-13 The first word the angel speaks is her name, "Hagar," and then He asks her two questions He already knows the answers to. What is God doing here that goes beyond simply fixing her situation?
3. In the ancient world, naming was an act of authority. Adam names the animals; God renames Abram and Sarai. What is the text claiming when the lowest person in the household, someone whose owners won't even say her name, becomes the only person in the Hebrew Bible to name God?
4. If you named God based on how you've experienced Him in your hardest season, what name would you give Him? Be honest, even if the name reflects struggle.
5. Read Genesis 21:14-19 In verse 19, God doesn't create a well; He opens Hagar's eyes to one that was already there. Why do you think the text tells it that way, and what does it suggest about the real nature of her crisis?
6. Ishmael's name means "God hears," and Hagar spoke it every day for seventeen years, likely wondering if it was true. Is there an area of your life right now where you're out of water, repeating promises of God while quietly wondering if He's really listening?
7. The sermon ended with the names: Hagar the foreigner, El Roi the God who sees, Ishmael the God who hears, and Emmanuel, God with us. On the cross, Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" How does it change your view of the cross to see that the God who found the forsaken one in the desert became the forsaken one Himself?
8. Hagar wasn't wounded by pagans; she was wounded by a household of faith, and God left the patriarch's tent to go find her. If you've been hurt by believers or the church, what does God's pursuit of Hagar say to that wound? And who in your life this week needs you to say their name, ask their story, and truly see them?

Prayer Focus: Pray for anyone in your group or known to your group who feels unseen, discarded, or wounded by the church. Ask God to open eyes, like Hagar's, to the well that's been there all along, and thank Him that the God who sees and hears became the God who is with us.

Leader's Note on Genesis 16:9: If someone raises the angel's instruction to "return and submit," point them to how the sermon handled it: the Bible is describing what happened, not endorsing abuse. This verse is never a command for anyone to return to someone harming them. Note also that Hagar returns seen and named, carrying a promise, and that in chapter 21 God Himself sends her out for good.

7.5.26 The God Who Sees Me — Hagar's Story (Genesis 16 & 21)

Genesis 16:1-3 (NLT)

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, "The Lord has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." And Abram agreed with Sarai's proposal. So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife.

Genesis 16:5-6 (NLT)

"...she's your slave, do as you please."

Genesis 16:6 (NLT)

Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.

Genesis 16:7-13 (NLT)

The angel of the Lord found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur. The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai," she replied... And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard your cry of distress." Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, "You are the God who sees me." She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?"

Genesis 16:13 (NLT)

"You are the God who sees me." She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?"

Tim Keller, The Meaning of Marriage

"To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God."

Genesis 16:9 (NLT)

"Return to your mistress and submit to her."

Genesis 21:10 (NLT):

"Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won't have it!"

Genesis 21:14 (CSB)

Early in the morning Abraham got up, took bread and a waterskin, put them on Hagar's shoulders, and sent her and the boy away. She left and wandered in the Wilderness of Beer-sheba.

Genesis 21:15-16 (NLT)

When the water was gone, she put the boy in the shade of a bush. Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards away. "I don't want to watch the boy die," she said, as she burst into tears.

Genesis 21:17-19 (NLT)

But God **heard the boy crying**, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, "Hagar, what's wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants." Then God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.

Ishmael = "God hears"

Genesis 21:19 (NLT)

Then God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well full of water.

Genesis 16: God sees her = "El Roi"

Genesis 21: God hears the boy = "Ishmael"

God sees & God hears

Genesis 24:62 (NLT)

Meanwhile, Isaac, whose home was in the Negev, had returned from Beer-lahai-roi.

Genesis 25:11 (NLT)

After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who settled near Beer-lahai-roi.

Beer-lahai-roi

"the well of the Living One who sees me."

God does not throw people away

Hagar, the stranger/foreigner

El Roi, the God who sees

Ishmael, the God who hears

Emmanuel, God with us - Jesus

Matthew 27:46

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Beer-lahai-roi

"the well of the Living One who sees me."

C.H. Spurgeon, Hagar at the Fountain, 1885

"It was a beautiful thing to name a well after God, so that every traveler who stopped to drink might be reminded of him. There is a God — not an abstraction far away, but a reality who sees, and observes, and cares for us. Next time you eat, worship him who lives and sees. Next time you drink, worship him who lives and sees. Let our tables and our wells remind us of the One who removes our hunger and quenches our thirst."