

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
Paul Gunn, Pastor

**SARAI'S SHORT-SIGHTED LONG-RANGE PLAN**

Genesis 16:1-6, 12

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**INTRODUCTION:** Today, I will tell you about Abram having a son with Sarai's servant Hagar. I believe every sermon I've heard on this topic always focuses on Abram's failure. While of course we can blame him because there would have been no son without a father, the scripture is clear that the idea was voiced by Sarai.

Here are the three points to my message today:

- Sarai mislearned from Abram how to help God.
- Sarai failed to think through her plans.
- Sarai's plans negatively affected millions.

Here's a brief review of the narrative so far:

- \* Abram was called by God to go. God told him he'd be the father of a great nation. He packed up all his belongings and went, along with his wife, servants, livestock and his nephew and all his nephew's belongings.
- \* As he traveled, he worshiped God.
- \* A famine came and Abram diverted to Egypt for security. The time in Egypt did not end well.
- \* In their travels, Abram and his nephew Lot separate. Lot is taken captive by an enemy army and Abram and his servants defeat the Army.
- \* God reassures Abram many times of his good plans.
- \* Time has passed and Abram and Sarai have still not had a child.

**SARAI MISLEARNED FROM HER HUSBAND HOW TO HELP GOD**

“Mislearned” is not a word in the dictionary, however, it helps explain my point.

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 16:1-3

*Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian*

*slave named Hagar; <sup>2</sup> so she said to Abram, “The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.” Abram agreed to what Sarai said. <sup>3</sup> So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.*

**EXPLANATION:** This is the first record of conversation we have between Abram and Sarai. What their communication was like on a daily basis, we don't know. This story makes me wonder if Abram had been sharing with his wife the lessons he was learning from God. My thought is that no, he had not been doing that. This is only conjecture on my part but my opinion is based on how women were treated more as property in this day. Abram had a growing relationship with God but perhaps was not sharing with Sarai the things he had been learning along the way.

**APPLICATION:** The lesson to be learned here is that it's important for husbands and wives to share with each other the things they are learning in their walks with God. Husbands and wives should be open to hearing from one another. It stands to reason that if the most important person in the life of a husband is his wife and the most important person in the life of a wife is her husband, then they should talk openly and regularly about spiritual things... like whether they are growing or feel stagnant in their walks with the Lord, or about things they wonder about the Lord.

**EXPLANATION:** Having said this, let's look back at the experience in Egypt. Abram basically turned his wife over to the Pharaoh's harem in order to save his own hide. And being the good wife, Sarai complied.

Abram should have learned from that experience that speeding up God was not a good idea, that he should have trusted God during the famine. And he should have reassured Sarai that God would keep his promise to them.

In chapter 15, we have this incredible interaction between God and Abram, where God reassures Abram several times that he has Abram's best interest in mind. I automatically thought that Abram reported all of this to his wife, but maybe not.

The only thing we know for sure that Sarai knew was that she was supposed to have a child in her old, barren state. What Abram had shared with her we do not know.

Perhaps if he had shared the lessons of God's faithfulness along the way, she would have not been inclined to come up with her own plan.

Sarai had grown impatient with the drudgery of maintenance mode. Waiting on God is not easy. It requires patience...the test of time proves one's faithfulness. It wasn't exciting. The sun came up, the chores and drudgery of life began for another day, the sun went down...Sarai went to sleep and did it all over again the next day.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I've been in churches where we felt like we had to come up with things to do in order to oil the pistons to get God moving. "Let's try anything. Let's do anything besides just standing here." Why do we do that? What's wrong with just ministering to the community? And if that appears to be maintenance mode, then so what? I am so far past [preachy tone] *being the fastest growing church in the state*. In fact, I never was there.

**APPLICATION:** In Abram's and Sarai's situation they were waiting on a promise from God. But what about us, when we haven't received a promise from God, but are praying about something? When we are diligently praying in faith for something, we must believe that God has heard our prayer. Sometimes we tend to think of prayer as a Harry Potter potion...if we get it just right, then God will act on our behalf.

## **SARAI FAILED TO THINK THROUGH HER PLANS**

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 16:4-5

*He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. <sup>5</sup> Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."*

Sarai voiced this idea to Abram, and he went along with it, but I am sure he had the thought long before Sarai mentioned it. Think of it. A young servant around the house a lot... But he knew the consequences of following through on such an idea...he'd have to face his wife. But this time it was her idea. So hey, that made it easier.

So here we have it. Sarai was impatient with God, she had a clever idea for Abram: “Have a child with the servant and you’ll be a father, then we will have helped God fulfill his dream.” But she didn’t think past that, did she? She didn’t consider the possible outcomes of what might happen.

Her plan to help God was actually a plan to disobey God. She didn’t see it that way, because she’d spent time considering this idea. She didn’t just come up with it overnight. And because she had spent a lot of time considering her idea, then she thought it must be right. It was fully justified in her mind.

If you remember in the creation story, Adam blamed Eve for their situation. Here, we have the wife blaming the husband for the situation. Blaming each other never really gets a marriage anywhere, does it?

Oh, how I’d like to have a full recording of their discourse. I think surely there is a statement missing in the scripture from Abram that goes something like this: “But it was YOUR idea in the first place!” Abram just gave in to his wife. He didn’t seek God. He didn’t try to work things out. He knew Sarai all too well and he knew it was a no-win situation. So his response was:

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 16:6

*“Your slave is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.*

Sarai didn’t think that Hagar would despise her. Maybe Hagar thought she was just there to be sexual pleasure for Abram...and she ended up pregnant.

The situation was toxic. What was once a simple couple waiting on God to provide a child was now the first Jerry Springer episode: A pregnant servant, an angry, jealous wife, and a man who has really messed up.

If you choose to sin, or you choose to entice someone else to sin, you aren’t thinking about what lay past that sin, are you? No. When we let sin overtake us, we aren’t thinking of consequences.

## SARAI'S PLANS NEGATIVELY AFFECTED MILLIONS

In his compassion, God had mercy on Hagar. He sent an angel to comfort her and to give her instructions. Here is an interesting thing the angel predicted:

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 16:12

*He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."*

The Bible lists Ishmael's twelve sons and then goes on to say:

**SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 25:16-18

*These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers according to their settlements and camps. <sup>17</sup> Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people.*

*<sup>18</sup> His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt, as you go toward Ashur. And they lived in hostility toward all the tribes related to them.*

Who are today's Ishmaelites? Some of his descendants self-identified in ancient records, but today genealogists are not unified on who the descendants of Ishmael are. I saw a carefully made chart of the descendants of Ishmael and it was quite incredible. The Arab Muslims claim to be his descendants and for many of them, that may be true.

Sarai had no idea that her long-range plan was so short-sighted and would affect so many people. The consequences of sin and disobedience are great. God had a lot to teach Sarai and he would use the mess she created to teach her.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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