

# Readings

## Scripture

<sup>1</sup> Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. <sup>2</sup> And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. <sup>3</sup> So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. <sup>4</sup> And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. <sup>5</sup> And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!" <sup>6</sup> But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.

<sup>7</sup> The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. <sup>8</sup> And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." <sup>9</sup> The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." <sup>10</sup> The angel of the Lord also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude." <sup>11</sup> And the angel of the Lord said to her, "Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction. <sup>12</sup> He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."

<sup>13</sup> So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing," for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me." <sup>14</sup> Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

<sup>15</sup> And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. <sup>16</sup> Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

- Genesis 16 (English Standard Version)

## Reflection

There is a fragrance in the air, a certain passage of a song, an old photograph falling out from the pages of a book, the sound of somebody's voice in the hall that makes your heart leap and fills your eyes with tears. Who can say when or how it will be that something easters up out of the dimness to remind us of a time before we were born and after we will die? The child in us lives in a world where nothing is too familiar or unpromising to open up into the world where a path unwinds before our feet into a deep wood, and when that happens, neither the world we live in nor the world that lives in us can ever entirely be home again any more than it was home for Dorothy in the end either because in the Oz books that follow The Wizard, she keeps coming back again and again to Oz because Oz, not Kansas, is where her heart is, and the wizard turns out to be not a humbug but the greatest of all wizards after all.

- Frederick Buechner, *Telling the Truth* (p. 97-98)

# Sermon Outline

## The God Who Sees

Genesis 16

*The Life of Blessing*

Brad Anderson

*God not only sees our struggle to live by faith, God enters our lives as a living word...*

### How does God's living word stabilize us in our struggle to live by faith?

By speaking to desire, as in the life of Sarai (Genesis 16:1-6)

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By speaking to injustice, as in the life of Hagar (Genesis 16:7-15)

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By speaking to passivity, as in the life of Abram (Genesis 16:2, 6, 16)

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### Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- Where recently have you taken matters into your own hands? Where recently have you been affected by others who have taken matters into their own hands?
- Look back over Genesis 12-16. How do these chapters show God's commitment to his promise, even in the midst of human faithlessness?
- Of the three main characters in this story – Abram, Sarai, and Hagar – which do you like the most? The least? Why?
- What might change your opinion of Abram and Sarai: (a) Knowing it was a common cultural practice in their day for childless couples to include as their own any children the man had by his servants? (b) Knowing their attitude and motives are right toward God? (c) Knowing Sarai is now long past childbearing years and has always been barren? (d) Knowing it has been 10 years since God promised them a son?
- What, if anything, might justify the strategy of surrogate motherhood? Why does God reject the plan? How does he comfort the oppressed Hagar (Genesis 16:7-12)? Why does God insist that she submit to Sarai's authority?
- What does Genesis 16 tell you about God? Angels? Human nature? Hagar's heirs?
- Where have you been waiting "10 years" for God to fulfill a promise? How do you cope with such delays?
- From what are you feeling tempted to run?
- Where have you seen God lately? As a result of that encounter, what name would you give to God or the place where you met him? (Genesis 16:13-14)