

**INTRO:** Last week we learned how *God had promised Abraham a son from his own body (15:4)*, and **Abram believed God!** (*Amen... I'm going to be a daddy!*). What God did NOT reveal was **WHEN** the child would be born! – He's now **85 years old** which means that it was approximately **3-8 years** since God last spoke with him about **the Hebrew family plan**. – These next two ch's expose 3 different approaches to Family Planning, revealing both Human and Divine plans...

**I. FLESHLY PLANS (16:1-6)** – The Bible makes clear that when the people of God fail to **Wait on God and Trust in Him** at all times, we soon stumble. (**Prov 14:12**), *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*. – The spotlight now turns to Sarai...

**A. Sara' Predicament (1-4a)** – Her Increase in age plus Waiting on God seemingly taxed her Patience, **driving her to her own fleshly resolve**. – Most people don't like to wait, but it's a key ingredient to building faith. (**Heb. 6:12**), tells us that it is through *"faith and patience [that we] inherit the promises"*

**1. Sarai's Desperation (1-2a)** – Her assessment was based on sight and circumstance, which produced **contempt towards God** for His "lack of involvement." *She was hopelessly infertile*, so she decided to resort to a **surrogate marriage plan**, which was a perfectly respectable practice in the other cultures of the ancient Near East. A child born to a slave-girl could be regarded as the wife's own child, if she had no children of her own.

**2. Sarai's Decision (2b-4a)** – Was not an act of faith but was a **FLESHLY PLAN!** The word *"Perhaps"* implies doubt or uncertainty. – (**v.5**) reveals that **she knew it "was wrong!"** – She wanted to **Help God out, and that's always a mistake!** (**Rom 14:23b**) says, *"...for whatever is not from faith is sin."* – Notice that there was **No Argument from Abram!**

**B. SINFUL Produce (4b-6)** – Abram and Sarai's plan led to huge problems in the home!

**1. Conceiving Sin (4b,5b)** – Things got bad when Sarai first SAW that conception had taken place! (*Baby Bump?*) Then Hagar **despised Sarai** when she **knew that she conceived Abram' Child!** Conflict arose between the women and **Abram was in the middle of it!**

**2. Correcting Abram (5)** – Sarai ultimately **BLAMED** Abram for the Problem, *"My wrong be upon you!"* and *"May the Lord judge..."* and He does...He know all our motives?

**3. Casting Out Hagar (6)** – He told her to handle however she thought best (*Another mistake*) – Sarai then **mistreated Hagar** so that she fled. (**Gen 21:10; Gal 4:30**).

**P/A** – **God did not tell Abram and Sarai to do what they did.** They were acting independent of God! Trying to fulfill God's promise to Abram. Their actions were **Fleshly Plans** as listed in (**tt. Gal 5:19-21**). – Their actions also produced a common negative phrase: **Don't Birth an Ishmael!** Which is applied to those who make decisions in the flesh. – (**Gal 6:8**) *For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*

- Often, people try to help God, but they produce "*Ishmaels*." God does not need any help – all He wants is your obedience. (**Zech 4:6b**)

**II. ESCAPE PLANS (16:7-16)** – Hagar’s approach to Family Planning was... *“I’m outta here! I’m heading back to Egypt, and I’ll figure it out for myself.”* She decided to flee to the scene and head for the wilderness; broken, weary and lonely. **Conditions that attracted divine intervention!** (Expound) – And so, here we see **the first appearance of the mysterious “ANGEL OF THE LORD,”** a pre-incarnate appearance of **Jesus Christ (7a).**

1. **HIS Interaction (7b-10)** – This Angel left heaven in pursuit of this one outcast, a woman! **Hagar**, whose very name means: *“Flight,”* was fleeing when He found her! So, He questioned her, instructed her and made a promises to her. – I find it interesting that He asked her two significant questions. *“Where have you been?”* and *“Where are you going?”*

- **He Directed Hagar (9)** – To *return* and *submit*, which required humility! (**Jam 4:10**)
- **He Promised Hagar (10)** – A bountiful Family Plan! *i.e., Innumerable descendants.*

2. **HIS Insight (11-12)** – Was prophetic, telling Her that her child was to be a *male*, and his name was to be **ISHMAEL**, which means **“GOD WILL HEAR.”** – The Angel revealed what was to become of Ishmael: He would be a **“WILD MAN,”** who *causes strife with men*, and he will dwell near his brethren (Israel). Here we have the **Israeli-Arab conflict!**

3. **Her Illumination (13-14)** – Apparently, Hagar received and believed the Angel of the Lord and **acknowledged Him as GOD!** She referred to God as, **EL-ROI** or **Jehovah Roi** which means **“THE GOD WHO SEES!”** – She also named the well as a result.

4. **Her Involvement (15-16)** – In obedience, Hagar returned and bore a son to Abram. – **God did what He had promised Hagar.**

**P/A** – When difficulties arrive in your life **are you an Escape Artist like Hagar was?** Know that God Sees you and Hears you when you call on Him. (**Jer 29:11 NLT**), *For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.* – **Let God take care of your Family Planning because His Plans are the best!**

– On the other hand, we have **Abram and Sarai** who NOW had a son! Their **Family Planning** ... produced a son of the flesh. But God wanted to give a son of promise, according to...

**III. GOD’S MASTER PLANS (17:1-27)** – Another 13 years have passed. Abram is **now 99 years-old** and Sarai is **89!** They had Ishmael, so they were content, **but they were not expecting what God was about reveal!** – (**Rom 4:19b - NLT**) tells us *“...at about 100 years of age, he [Abram] figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah’s womb.* – According to **God’s Timing...** the circumstances were now ready to unveil **GOD’S MASTER PLANS.**

**A. God REVEALS (1-3)** – As a prelude to what He was about to do, **God appeared** to Abram and **proclaimed... I AM ALMIGHTY GOD.** {*Heb. El Shaddai, i.e, most powerful*} – God first made clear that He is God of the impossible! ***Nothing is too difficult for God!*** (cf. Luke 1:37)

- God commanded that Abram WALK before God, Blamelessly, reminding him of the covenants that were previously established. We often forget with time! (cf. Deut 18:13) God desires integrity in His children! That is our responsibility to keep!
- **Abram Fell on His face...to listen! (3)** – When was the last time you bowed to listen?

**B. God's RENAMES (4-6, 15)** – “*As for me...*” God reminds Abram of **His responsibility to keep covenant with Abram and his descendants**, part of which was *His promise to make him a father of many nations*. – God activated this now, **by changing Abrams name!**

1. The Lord changed Abram's name to “Abraham,” and Sarai's name to “Sarah.”
  - **Abram = “EXALTED FATHER,”** whereas **Abraham** means “*Father of a multitude*” or “*chief of multitude.*” – **Sarai = “PRINCESS,”** whereas **Sarah** means “*Noblewoman,*” *because she will become the mother of all nations.*
2. **Why did God add an “H” to their names?** I am not certain, **but I find it fascinating** that “*H*” is the 5<sup>th</sup> letter in the Hebrew alphabet, the number of grace! – By the Grace of God, **AbraHam** would be the FATHER of many nations.

**C. God REAFFIRMS (7-8)** – God reaffirms His everlasting covenant, His eternal promise to Abraham & his descendants, for perpetual generations. (*300k Sq. miles promised, but only 10% claimed!*) Even though they were removed from the land twice, God kept the land for them!

**D. God REQUIRES (9-14)** – CIRCUMCISION, which is the *surgical removal of a male's foreskin*. God mandated this for Abraham and all of the males in his household as a religious representation of the covenant God made with him (Gen 17:9–14; Acts 7:8).

1. **This Sign was to signify that they were different than others**, i.e., **distinct** because they depended on God to fulfill the promise, **not themselves!** Unfortunately, it became *mere ritual*, to those whose hearts did not belong to God. In (Deut 10:16), **God rebuked** the Hebrews, “*...circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.*”
2. **This sign was meant to be within their flesh (13)** – Later, God would desire to put *a new spirit* within them (Ezek 11:19-20), that they would be His people, walk in His ways. – **As with NT believers**, we should cut-away the callous flesh from our hearts so that we can *be sensitive to the things of the Spirit!*

**E. God REPORTS (15-22)** – “FOUR” SURE PROMISES for Abraham's Family Plan... ha!

1. **His Wife Sarah would be Blessed (15-16a)** – Even though the fulfillment of what He promised seems impossible, God will certainly do it! **He is God ALMIGHTY!** – **NOTE: *This is the first mention of the promise that Sarah would bear a child from Abraham!***

- **Abraham's Response (17-18)** – *He fell on his face*...not for worship, but in **LAUGHTER!** Not mocking laughter, but Ecstasy and Elation. He was Overjoyed, but *still unclear* what the Almighty was reporting... *"Oh, that Ishmael might live..."* But God quickly made it clear in (v.19) ... **NO!**

**2. His Wife Sarah would bear ISAAC (19)** – The name **ISAAC** means "*laughter,*" or "*he laughs.*" – *This is interesting, because there are three different occasions of laughter associated with Isaac's birth: Abraham laughed for joy when he heard his wife would give birth to the promised son (Gen. 17:17); Sarah laughed in unbelief when she heard the news (18:9–15); and Sarah laughed for joy when the boy was born (21:6–7).*

**3. His Son ISHMAEL would also be Blessed (20)** – God knew that Abraham loved his son Ishmael, **but he was not part of the Covenant!** God therefore "*heard*" Abraham's **Angst** as He did Hagar's Hurting (v.11). God reported His Plan to bless and multiply him.

- (Gen 25:12-18) records the 12 princes of Ishmael, who have multiplied exceedingly, even today... as promised by God! – *Islamic traditions consider Ishmael to be the ancestor of Arab people* – **Muslims** also believe that **MUHAMMAD** was the descendant of Ishmael that would establish a great nation, as promised by God in the OT.

**4. His Son ISAAC is the SON OF PROMISE (21-22)** – God emphatically declares the **Covenant in with Isaac!** (*Not Ishmael*). And *Isaac would be born of Sarah within a year!* Then God vanished from Abraham's presence.

**F. Abraham's RESPONSE (23-27)** – Abraham immediately **OBEYED THE LORD** and circumcised all of the males. This took great faith because **he was 99 years old!**

**CLOSING THOUGHT:** *God has a perfect plan, and what He plans is the best. It may pain you to give up your cherished dreams, but God's way is always the right way.*"

- (Prov 19:21) *There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the Lord's counsel—that will stand.*
- (Psalm 33:11) *The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.*