

*Rediscovering the God Who Sees Me*

Gen. 16

There is something intrinsically in all of us that wants to be seen, to know we are heard, to be loved as we are. At times, I'm sure we have all felt the opposite of that. We feel insignificant, or unwanted, or like our purpose doesn't matter. We feel unseen. Today, as we look into the text of someone who probably felt very similar, we see how a personal interaction with God changes everything. Let's unpack some of these truths as we rediscover the God who sees me. **Read Genesis 16 together as a group to refresh.**

**1.** As you read vs. 1-6, reflect on the situation Hagar was coming from. So many voices present in this passage, and yet Hagar's is not one of them. She had no say, no power, and certainly life was not fair. I'm sure she felt unseen, insignificant, and used - getting pulled into someone else's plan. Although not completely blameless here, she soon comes to her breaking point and flees into the desert. Can you identify with Hagar in either circumstance or emotions? Feelings of insignificance or purpose? Feelings like you have no control over your present circumstances? Stuck in someone else's mess? If so led, share with your group your story.

**2.** For Hagar, a divine interaction in the desert changes everything! The Angel of the Lord (a Theophany - a physical manifestation of God) finds her where she is and she eventually comes to the point of understanding she has seen God, giving Him the name El Roi, "the God who sees me!"

The first truth we find is that **the God who sees me knows my name**. What is the significance of this, especially with Hagar? What does this tell us about God and his nature? Reflect on *Psalms 139:13-16* together.

**3.** Though she wasn't thinking it, she quickly realized that **the God who sees me holds my future**. Before she is told the plan God has for her, what is she told to do? Why is this difficult advice significant? How do the verses following this command help us to better understand it? Does this mean we should always "go back"? Have you ever felt God asking you to return to something difficult, or to "stay the course" in a tough situation? Hagar's future blessing is told to her. How is God's blessing to Hagar a double-edged blessing? What is the significance of her offspring?

**4.** Hagar also realizes that **the God who sees me hears my voice**. In all her cries to Him, he not only saw her, but heard her in her affliction! What is significance of her son "Ishmael" in this? What comfort can we take knowing He hears us!?

**5.** This interaction with the divine changes her, as see that **the God who sees me opens my eyes to see Him!** When we see the God who sees us, our perspective shifts. Hagar's heart changed, and she went back to Abram and Sarai holding on to the promises of God. This is God's greatest desire - for us to know Him as He knows us! Can you declare as Hagar has, "I have seen the One who sees me"? How can "seeing God" change your perspective in this life? Reflect on how God has "opened your eyes" to see Him and His work all around you.

May 8th, 2022

*Rediscovering the God Who Sees Me*  
*Gen. 16*

There's a few things we all have in common. One of them is the fact that at one time we were all children, and one thing I've learned about kids is that they love to be watched. They love to be noticed! They want to be known!

I can remember watching my kids when they were younger, and sometimes it still happens when they say, "Hey mom, hey dad - - watch this! Look what I can do! Look at me!" Your heart may stop when you realize what they're doing, but whatever it is, they want to be seen!

William Tammeus, a Christian journalist for the Kansas City Star, wrote, "*You don't really understand human nature unless you know why a child on a merry-go-round will wave at his parents every single time around — and why his parents will always wave back.*" Isn't that so true! **We all have a fundamental need to be seen.**

In the end, I believe that's true for all of us. We all want to be known. We want people to know we exist. We want to be heard, and know we have a purpose. That we are making a difference...

Many of us know what the opposite feels like. To be overlooked, ignored, forgotten about, or we feel what we do is insignificant...

Surely, on this day, Moms are no exception...

**Excerpt from Christian author and speaker, Nicole Johnson** - her book, *The Invisible Woman: When Only God Sees* - talking about being a mom, she said this:

One day I was walking my son Jake to school. I was holding his hand and we were about to cross the street when the crossing guard said to him, "Who is that with you, young fella?"

"Nobody," he shrugged.

Nobody? The crossing guard and I laughed. My son is only five, but as we crossed the street I thought, "Oh my goodness, I'm nobody?"

As Nobody, I would walk into a room and no one would notice. I would say something to my family, like "Turn the TV down, please." And nothing would happen. No one would get up or even make a move for the remote. I would stand there for a minute, and then I would say again, a little louder, "Would someone turn the TV down?" Nothing.

That's when I started putting all the pieces together. I don't think anyone can see me.

I'm invisible.

It all began to make sense! The blank stares, the lack of response, the way one of the kids will walk into the room while I'm on the phone and ask to be taken to the store. Inside I'd think, "Can't you see I'm on the phone?"

Obviously not; no one can see if I'm on the phone, or cooking, or sweeping the floor, or even standing on my head in the corner. No one can see me, because I'm the Invisible Mom.  
Some days I am only a pair of hands, nothing more. Can you fix this? Can you tie this? Can you open this?

Some days I'm merely a clock to ask, "What time is it?" I'm a satellite guide to answer, "What number is the Disney Channel?"

I'm a car to order, 'Right around 5:30, please'

Some days I'm a crystal ball: "Where's my other sock? Where's my phone? What's for dinner?"  
Hands, a clock, a crystal ball—but always invisible."

I was certain that these were the hands that once held books and the eyes that studied, history, music and literature - but now, they had disappeared into the peanut butter, never to be seen again.

She's going, she's going, she's gone!

I don't know if you've ever felt like that, but I know she is not alone!

Today we look at the story of Hagar - who I'm sure felt invisible, felt like a nobody. She comes onto the scene in Gen. 16...

To set the scene, just a little bit – Genesis 16 comes straight after Genesis 15 – funny how that happens. And Genesis 15 is all about God's promise to Abraham (Abram) . God had chosen Abram in order to bless him so he could be a blessing to the whole world. God wanted a peculiar people group who he could call his own. He found Abram a willing patriarch who had the faith to step out and follow him to a distant country.

In turn, he promised Abraham (Gen. 12:2,3):

- 1) From Abraham there would come a great nation – more than the sands on the sea shore. More than the stars in the sky
- 2) that Abraham's name would become great
- 3) from him all nations would be blessed. And ultimately this finds fulfillment in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ who was a Jew.

Now we come to chapter 16 and it is 10 years later and nothing has changed. Still no children. There was nothing at all to show that they were any closer to seeing the promise fulfilled and Abram and Sarai were getting impatient. They are tired of waiting.

Pick it up in Gen. 16:1-6

*Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar.*

*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.*

*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.*

*And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.*

*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!"*

*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.*

Abram and his wife Sarai decide to take the future into their hands.

Sarai encouraged Abram to take part in what was essentially a surrogate mother arrangement in that day. According to custom, the child would be considered to be the child of Abram and Sarai, not Abram and Hagar.

This is a culture where polygamy and slavery was prevalent - that said - it was still against God's plan!

"I shall obtain children by her" - no understanding for how it worked

Imagine Hagar - No choice, no voice, so say...

Abram agrees - Hagar conceives - As soon she knows she was pregnant, she begins to despise her mistress. She soon began to look down on Sarah.

This was a chance for her to become a somebody. To find belonging and cease to be an outsider. And Sarah, no doubt was jealous to the core.

Now, this makes Hagar sound conceited, but according to Mesopotamian customs at the time, if you had more than one wife, one wife could not enslave another. It doesn't take a genius to figure that this is a bad idea, especially when a slave girl like Hagar is now able to claim that she is the mother of the heir to the entire household.

**If she is a bit puffed up, its obvious why.** She has gone from being a nobody to a somebody, the mother of the heir is also the slave to the wife that did not produce an heir. Do you see how tangled the situation is?

She resented even suggesting to Abraham the whole idea and if she could reverse her actions, she would have done so. Hagar was miserable because of the torment and mistreatment she suffered at Sarah's hands. Sarah was miserable because of her present situation and that of another. Abraham I'm sure was also miserable because he was being blamed left and right.

What a mess...Sin has such a way of doing this.

Hagar eventually got fed up and ran away. Think about it. She was only the servant. She had no voice in any of this and ended up pregnant. It was not her idea, but now

she was being blamed for it and mistreated because of it. Life wasn't fair anymore and she got to the stage where she couldn't take it any more. So she fled and headed in the direction of Egypt... (her home country)

**How often have we found ourselves in the same place Hagar has - heading into the wilderness. Fleeing into the desert.**

We can all identify with Hagar, whether by circumstances or emotions.

Some of you sitting here today might be miserable and might be facing situations which you wish you could just run from. For some it may be your job situation – maybe you are dissatisfied where you are, maybe there is a boss that has it in for you and you are literally being bullied or mistreated. Maybe for some it is your home – a conflict with another family member, a feeling of rejection or being unloved. Maybe for some it is just feeling insignificant, like what you do doesn't matter - and all you want to do is flee.

Well, we don't know how long she was in the desert...BUT

An interaction with God changes everything! Through a divine conversation in the desert, Hagar comes to the point of acknowledging: The God who see me!

El Roi - The God Who Sees Me

The God Who sees Me? What does that even mean?

**Many times we say, "God is watching you."** We often think of him as a proverbial Santa, "he know's when you are sleeping, he knows when you're awake, he knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake."

At times the thought of God watching over us brings us great hope, and other times it brings us great fear. So different people think about God watching us in different ways:

Telescope: Some people think of God as way up in heaven, and we're way down here on earth. He surely doesn't have time to watch us every hour of the day, so every once in a while he goes to the old telescope and checks us out. So, we try to do more good than bad, with the hope that by the laws of averages He'll catch us feeding the poor or going to church, more than He sees us cheating on our taxes or being a jerk at home.

Microscope: Some people think that God is constantly watching our lives, and He sees every screw up, follow-up, and blemish that can be found. As he looks at us through the microscope and sees us for who we really are, He gets angrier and angrier and angrier by the minute.

What is the truth? How does God really see us? I believe the story of Hagar gives us much insight on who God is - El Roi, the God Who sees me

There is much Truth to be found here as we Rediscover the God Who Sees Me:

## 1. The God Who Sees Me Knows My Name.

*Read vs. 7,8*

It is interesting that Hagar's name means "forsaken", "flight", "A stranger", or "one that fears". I love how names have so much meaning and Hagar's story is no exception. Her name alone tells so much of her story, she's a stranger in this land, with struggles and fears, she's forced to take flight and leave what she's known as home so she naturally feels forsaken and abandoned.

She is found, where she is, by an "Angel of the Lord", a Theophany - a physical manifestation of God. First time in Scripture as "Angel of the Lord" (Abraham, Moses)

Yet, the **Angel of the Lord** calls Hagar by name in direct opposition to her previous experiences. He calls to her personally.

As we read through Hagar's story, we see she is only referred to as "my maidservant" (vs.2), "my servant" (vs.5), and "your servant" (vs.6) to Abram and Sarai.

El Roi is a personal God!

She was lost, scared, alone, and the Lord met her right where she was, seeking refuge near a spring in a barren wilderness. God found her when she felt alone. God had a plan for her life when she felt like it was all falling apart. God loved her, knew her needs, and cared about her when she felt like everyone had turned their backs on her.

\*The one who sees the forsaken ones, the one who knows the strangers, the one who gives courage to the frightened, the one who formed this woman in her mother's womb. The one who knew her name before the beginning of time saw her. The one that saw her struggle, and knew her pain. The God who spoke planets into existence, and set the cornerstones of the earth in place knows your name!

Saw a similar instance a couple weeks back with Mary at the tomb - Jesus called Mary by name!

David expresses this reality so well in *Psalms 139:13-16*

*"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."*

*My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

*Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

This is the picture of a personal God, who loves us and desires a deep personal relationship with us!

He then asks - "Where have you come from and where are you going?" These questions aren't just about her current situation at that moment. They reflect her past and her future. She answers truthfully but not completely. She states where she has come from but does not say where she is going.

By focusing on the past, Hagar confesses that she envisions no future.

Like Hagar we often get caught up in that question, where have I come from. It's easy to get stuck here, however, an equally important question is, "where are we going?"

Some people's mission and purpose in life has become dealing with stuff from their past! They replay events and get angrier and angrier and angrier.

How many of us get caught running away from something our whole life when God is calling you to run toward something?

Listen for his call - The God Who Sees ME Knows MY Name!

## **2. The God Who Sees Me Holds My Future.**

*Read vs. 9-12*

The Lord then delivers the following oracle informing her of the gender, name, character, and future of her child... BUT FIRST

The angel's command is to "*return and submit*".

This is Hard. God told Hagar to do something very difficult; to go back to her terrible situation and submit herself to Sarai. This is difficult advice.

To some, this command is insensitive and oppressive - BUT -The verses that follow, however, display God's focus on Hagar's future. She won't return defenseless or with the same status. She will return with strong promises received directly and personally from God.

He knows what's best for us, and he assures us that He knows, He cares, and His purpose for us is always good. The God who sees me knows my future.

He sees us, but He also sees the larger picture outside of the constraints of time.

Every situation is different - sometimes God calls us to return... sometimes he tells us to flee... (*Gen. 21!*)

In some situations to have boundaries and walk away - In other situations, God calls us to stay the course!

Maybe He asks us to persevere in a difficult marriage, a work situation or church conflict with a new perspective, a new attitude - now holding onto His promises.

El Roi holds our future - we have to trust His instructions since He sees the bigger picture.

Think back to times when God showed up in your storm or answered your fervent prayers. He has been moving in your life all along.

His ways may not look like the answer we would choose or pray for, but His plans are always good.

For now, we strive to soak in the Word of God and gain as much wisdom and discernment as possible. Sometimes it takes a little while before we have our “aha!” moments of understanding!

*Jer. 29:11 - For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

God proceeds to tell Hagar the future and blessing He has for her:

*The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude."*

*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.*

*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."*

God revealed his grace to her. Although the actions of Abram in trying to fulfill God's promises were wrong, God, takes shows compassion on Hagar and offers her a blessing.

This blessing is double edged. She is to have a son who is to be the father of many nations, but God knows this nation will have its problems.

From Ishmael, descended the Arab nations that we know today – the arch enemies of Israel. From Ishmael has sprung the Muslim faith – again some of the strongest opponents to Christianity in the world.



We could talk more about the legacy of sin and how trying to do things our way instead of God's way can bring scares which we and our descendants have to deal with for generations, but that is a topic for another Sunday!

Even in the midst of all this mess - He shows Grace, and a purpose for her life!

Why - because The God Who Sees Me Holds My Future.

### **3. The God Who Sees Me Hears My Voice.**

God not only sees us in our afflictions, but he hears the cry of our affliction.

Think about this - The promised son will be called Ishmael for Ishmael means "God Hears."

Grasp the mercy of God displayed in this picture!

Here is a servant girl, invisible and mistreated, used and then almost thrown aside. And yet God reassures her by telling her He hears her. He knows what she is going through, he hears the torment, he hears her inward groan, he hears her frustration ...

And so that Hagar would never forget it, her Son was to be called "God hears" – Ishmael. Even when she would return to that place of difficulty, she could rest in the promise that she was not alone. God hears.

Every time she whispered her sons name in song trying to get him to sleep, Every time she called him sharply by name "Ishmael!" - she would be reminded - "God hears"

And be assured that if God hears what is happening in this Egyptian servant girl's world, He hears what is going on in your lives.

No matter where we are in life - no matter what is happening in our little world – even if we think that we are totally isolated and think that no-one knows what we are facing – we can be assured that God hears.

Psalm 34:15 - *"The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry."*

Psalm 56:8 - *"You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book."*

He hears the things that cut to your very heart – the things which feel as though they are gripping your heart and ripping it out – he hears them.

He hears the things which are said against you that are totally unfair and nothing but lies – he hears them.

He hears the words that are said to hurt you, he hears the words spoken when bad news is delivered to you, he hears your words uttered through tears and those screamed in anger. He even understands the language of tears.

I Peter 5:7 - *“casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”*

Whatever situations you are in – be assured The God Who Sees Me Hears My Voice.

#### **4. The God Who Sees Me Opens My Eyes to See Him.**

Read vs. 13-16

Hagar’s response is remarkable! She doesn’t revel in the information about the child, she doesn’t inquire further about going back, she doesn’t ask about the difficult news regarding the son she would bear...

She celebrates God and realizes all her knowledge of God depended on His initiative in knowing her. When she felt as if God was absent, and she learned that He was watching over her - **Her soul sang**. El Roi -

“You are a God of seeing,” for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.” **I have seen the One who sees me!**

She obeys God, traveling back to Abram and Sarai, submitting to Sarai. She believed God at His word.

\* She was the only person in the Old Testament - male or female - who gave a name to God!

God’s greatest desire for us is that we know Him because He knows us!

When we trust Christ and our eyes are opened in faith, for the first time we clearly see God. Like Hagar, we cry, “I have now seen the One who sees me!”

Even in the mess of life, the hurt, the struggle, the pain, the confusion, the doubt, the insecurities - We can see the God who sees us!

After meeting with El Roi - she is changed. Hagar knew that if God could be with her in the wilderness, He would be with her in having to submit to Sarai also.

II Chron. 16:9 - *The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.*

We know Hagar's story doesn't end here... Gen. 21 - There would be more trouble , the two women would never get along. The conflict would only escalate once Isaac was born... She would flee again - this time of God! And God would take care of her...

I want to finishing reading that piece from Nicole Johnson, the mom who felt invisible. She wrote , reflecting on a perspective shift she had, after a friend came back from a trip and gave her a book. She says...

"It was a book on the great cathedrals of Europe. I wasn't exactly sure why she'd given it to me until I read her inscription: "With admiration for the greatness of what you are building when no one sees."

Johnson added, in the book, there was the legend of a rich man who came to visit a cathedral while it was being built. He saw a worker carving a tiny bird on the inside of a beam. He was puzzled and asked the man, "Why are you spending so much time carving that bird into a beam that will be covered by the roof? No one will ever see it." And the worker replied, "Because God sees."

After reading that, I closed the book, feeling the missing piece fall into place. It was almost as if I heard God whispering to me, "I see you. I see the sacrifices you make every day, even when no one around you does.

"No act of kindness you've done, no sequin you've sewn on, no cupcake you've baked, no last minute errand is too small for Me to notice and smile over. You are building a great cathedral, but you can't see right now what it will become. But I see."

### **Our perspective changes when we see the God who sees us! Same circumstances!**

God is still a God that sees!

That's the great thing about God - He comes to the "Hagars in the wilderness" and also the the miserable Abrams and Sarais in the camp, and ministers GRACE.

He's see you where you are at and calls you by name. He want a relationship with you, and for you to know you are loved, valuable, and visible. He has a plan for you, and He wants you to see Him as the God who sees you!



# REDISCOVERING THE GOD WHO SEES ME

GENESIS 16



EL ROI

“THE GOD WHO SEES ME”





1. THE GOD WHO SEES  
ME KNOWS MY NAME.



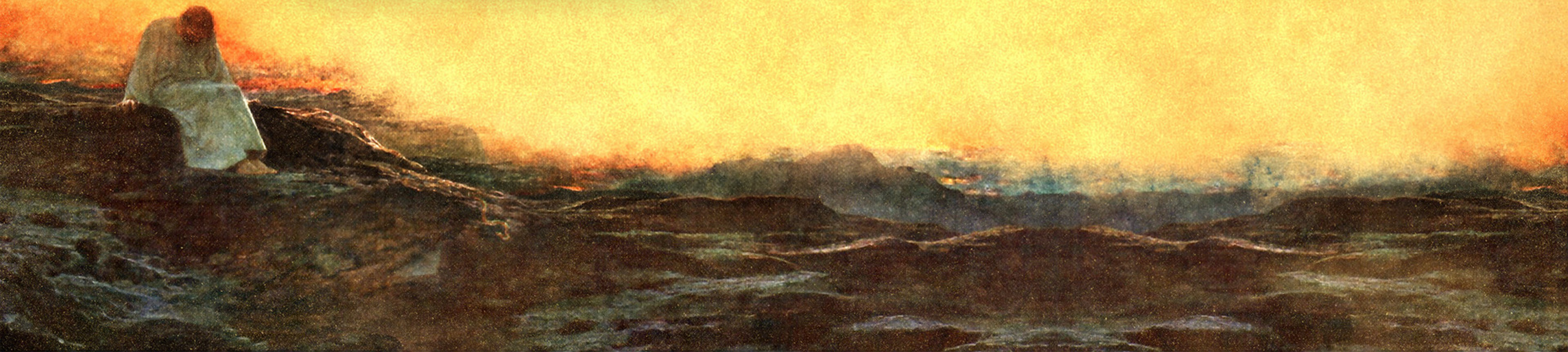


“FOR YOU FORMED MY INWARD PARTS; YOU KNITTED ME TOGETHER IN MY MOTHER’S WOMB. I PRAISE YOU, FOR I AM FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE. WONDERFUL ARE YOUR WORKS; MY SOUL KNOWS IT VERY WELL. MY FRAME WAS NOT HIDDEN FROM YOU, WHEN I WAS BEING MADE IN SECRET, INTRICATELY WOVEN IN THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH. YOUR EYES SAW MY UNFORMED SUBSTANCE; IN YOUR BOOK WERE WRITTEN, EVERY ONE OF THEM, THE DAYS THAT WERE FORMED FOR ME, WHEN AS YET THERE WAS NONE OF THEM.”

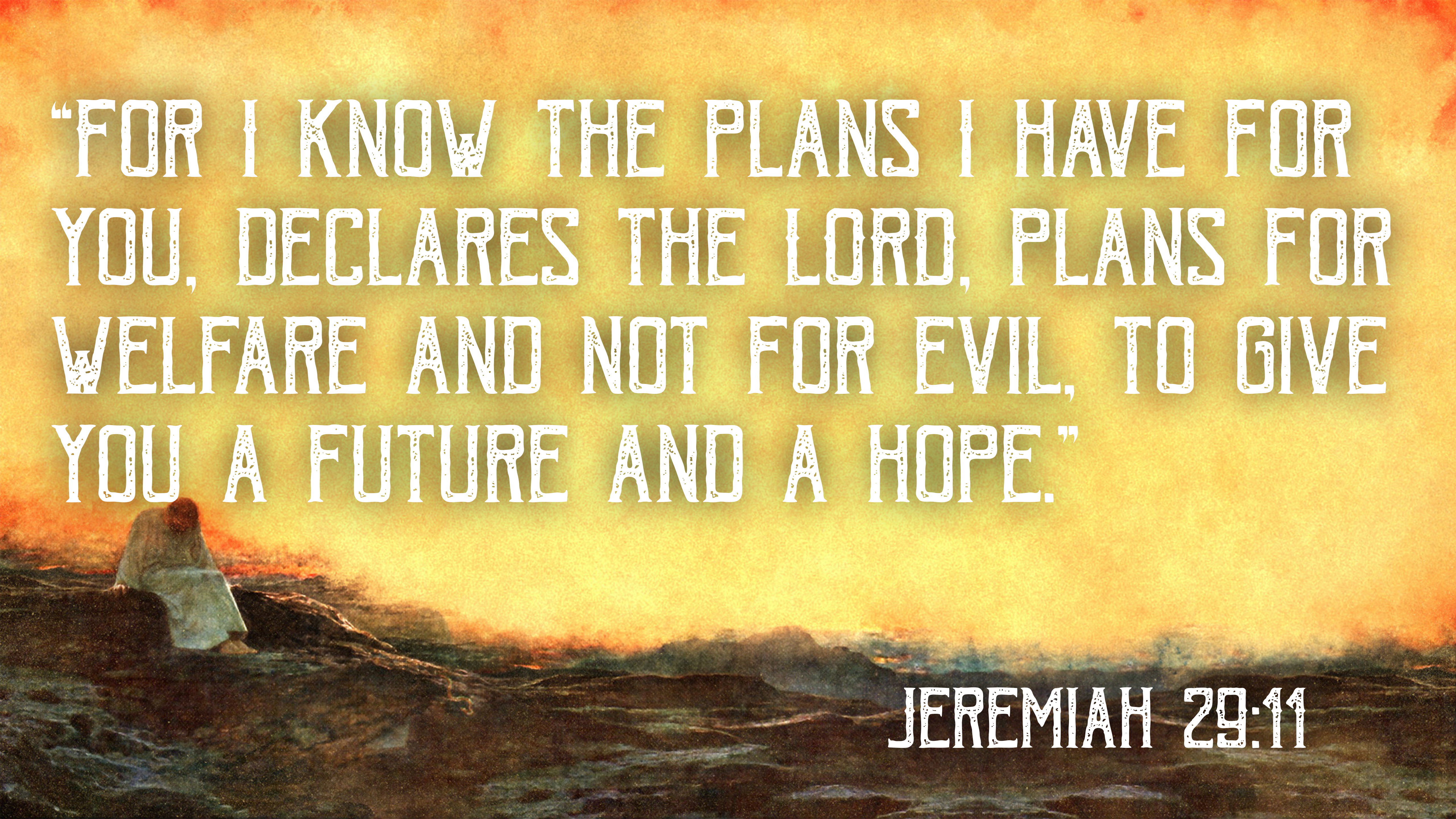
PSALM 139:13-16



2. THE GOD WHO SEES  
ME HOLDS MY FUTURE.







“FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR  
YOU, DECLARES THE LORD, PLANS FOR  
WELFARE AND NOT FOR EVIL, TO GIVE  
YOU A FUTURE AND A HOPE.”

JEREMIAH 29:11



3. THE GOD WHO SEES  
ME HEARS MY VOICE.







“THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE  
RIGHTEOUS AND HIS EARS TOWARD THEIR CRY.”

PSALM 34:15

“YOU KEEP TRACK OF ALL MY SORROWS. YOU  
HAVE COLLECTED ALL MY TEARS IN YOUR  
BOTTLE. YOU HAVE RECORDED EACH ONE IN  
YOUR BOOK.”

PSALM 56:8



4. THE GOD WHO SEES  
ME OPENS MY EYES  
TO SEE HIM.







“THE EYES OF THE LORD SEARCH  
THE WHOLE EARTH IN ORDER TO  
STRENGTHEN THOSE WHOSE HEARTS  
ARE FULLY COMMITTED TO HIM.”

II CHRONICLES 16:9



# REDISCOVERING THE GOD WHO SEES ME

GENESIS 16