**Perhaps I can build a family through her**

Genesis 16:1-16 (Key Verse 2)

*So she said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said.*

In today’s passage we are going to witness an escalation of Abram and Sarai’s need for a son. Abram and Sarai had been living in Canaan for 10 years, Lot who was like a son to them had separated from them, and in last week’s passage we saw Abram who had a frank conversation with the Lord about this concern regarding who will inherit his estate. The Lord promised Abram that his offspring would inherit his estate, he promised him that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars. However, in today’s passage as the situation escalated, Abram and Sarai became so desperate and could not wait anymore, they wanted a son immediately. Have you ever been in a desperate situation where waiting for the Lord was unbearable? Or are you in a situation where it is unbearable for you to wait for the Lord?

In the key verse we learn that when the situation was unbearable, Abram and Sarai took matters into their own hands, instead of waiting for the Lord. Therefore, through today’s passage we are going to learn about the dangers of not waiting for the Lord and taking matters into our own hands, we are going to learn why we should hold on and wait for the Lord even if the situation is unbearable, urgent and things seem to be falling apart. We are also going to learn about the character of God who helped Abram’s family who were amid a crisis resulting from not waiting on the Lord.

The passage today begins with Sarai who came to Abram with a suggestion. What was the suggestion? Let us look at **verse 1-2**: “*Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; 2 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.”* Sarai came to Abram because she was baren and she knew how bad Abram wanted a son. Abram had already separated with Lot, Sarai was also privy to the conversation that Abram had with the Lord regarding who would inherit his estate. And so Sarai suggested to Abram that he sleep with her Egyptian slave Hagar so that she can have a son for them. She said, perhaps I can build a family through her.

Why did Sarai make this suggestion? The promise of God was very clear that God will bless them with a son, that their descendants will be as numerous as the stars. Sarai believed this, that even though she is baren by God’s power she will be able to bear a son for Abram. But today Sarai became impatient, they had been living in Canaan for 10 years, she watched Abram break down daily from the lack of a son and she began to doubt. When she doubted, she then came up with the plan for her Egyptian slave to sleep with Abram. Sarai’s suggestion was not inline with the plan of God, it was not in line with the promise of God, it was a fleshly decision. Sarai became impatient and did not wait on the Lord. She said perhaps I cam build a family through her, it was no longer God building her family, but she said perhaps I. Furthermore, instead of waiting on the Lord she said, the Lord has kept me from having children, so somehow she blamed God for her situation and decided to take matters into her own hands.

What did Abram say when Sarai came up with this suggestion? It says: “*Abram agreed to what Sarai said*” Like Sarai, Abram was also desperate for a son, perhaps this was something that he was thinking before and did not want to hurt Sarai, but when she suggested it, he accepted it without hesitation. Like Sarai, Abram became impatient and could not wait on the Lord. Abram had firsthand encounter with God, he believed that indeed God will bless him with a son through Sarai, but when it took long, doubt creeped in and he also considered alternatives, he considered taking matters into his own hands and God’s way was perhaps slow or seemed like it will not happen.

Furthermore, we know that Abram and Sarai loved God, even though this was not God’s will, in their mind they thought Hagar is still family so she can bear a legitimate heir for Abram. But this was not in accordance with the promise of God. In **Galatians 4:22-23** it says: “*22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23 His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.”* Sarai and Abram’s decision to have a son through Hagar was fleshy, it was not by faith it was not to honor God but to satisfy their fleshly desires. If their need for a son was to honor God, they would have waited on God, whose promise was very clear that Abram will have legitimate heir who will inherit his estate, that Abram will be blessed with descendants as numerous as the stars.

Are you currently waiting on God’s promise, are you becoming impatient and frustrated why God is not answering you or delivering you from your situation? Are you thinking perhaps you should skip the conference so that you can study more so you can pass this year? Are you thinking of skipping Sunday services or Bible studies, so you accomplish your very desperate dream of passing this year? The question I have for you is, Are you thinking in line with the will of God? Are you giving up on the promise of God and taking matters into your own hand? As children of God, it is the will and promise of God for us to pass, and God wants to lead us to his promise while we obey his commands, follow his instruction and live according to his promise through Bible study, Sunday service and through our conference. That is why for our Spring Bible Conference, God has led us to study about courage, courage to hold on to his promise even in the midst of life and death.

Now what happened when Abram agreed with Sarai, to have Hagar the Egyptian slave bear a son for them? Let us look at **verse 3-4**: “*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. 4 He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.* After Abram and Sarai agreed to let Hagar bore them a son, Abram slept with her, and she became pregnant. However instead of bringing joy to the family as they expected, Hagar’s pregnancy turned things very sour in Abram’s household. When Hagar saw that she was pregnant, she began to despise Sarai her mistress, and this hurt Sarai a great deal. She probably mocked her and made her feel like she is not woman enough, not able to bore a son for her husband.

This escalated further and in **verse 5-6** which says: “*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.” 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 blamed Abram for the actions of Hagar and this created a conflict between Abram and Sarai, Abram said to Sarai: “*Do with her whatever you think best.*” And Sarai mistreated Hagar, and she fled from her. Instead of bringing joy, Abram and Sarai’s decision brought conflict, pain and sorrow in their household, it brought lots of worry for Abram who now has lost his son who fled with her mother. It brought a lot of pain, sorrow and wondering around for the Egyptian slave who had to flee into the wilderness. Why did things turn out this way? They turned out this way because it was done out of fleshly desires not by faith. A decision of faith meant Abram and Sarai must wait for God and follow his leading, but out of their fleshly desires they made a decision and did not seek the counsel of God. Their decision also influenced Hagar, instead of teaching her to honor, fear and obey God, they taught her to be ruled by the flesh, and hence, instead of submitting to Sarai her mistress by faith she despised her out of her fleshly desires.

It may look like good idea to skip the conference so you can study, it may look like a good idea to skip Sunday service, Bible studies to study or spend more time on that work project or visit a friend. It may look like a good idea to cross boundaries in your romantic relationship saying you will marry each other anyway. But from what happened in Abram’s household we have learnt that when we compromise on honoring God and waiting on the Lord terrible things happen, that joy that Abram and Sarai thought will come turned into great misery, pain and sorrow. It is indeed better to wait on the Lord, to honor God, follow his leading and commands. God’s will for me and you are first and for most that we may have a relationship with him, study his word and obey it without compromise. Our academics, careers, family friends are also God given but they are secondary, what is fundamental, and primary is that we may have relationship him.

When first joined UBF I struggled with my career and God through his word gave me a promise that he will provide all my needs, and the Lord kept me here in Joburg to serve his ministry and continued to provide for me. However recently I worried so much, especially since our daughter is growing up and her needs keep escalating such as school fees, and to manage this I have been thinking I need to perform more, do the impossible at work to justify more money. And all this has been taking place in the midst of a very challenging period at work, for I have been working on very challenging projects. I have found myself coming home late, even when I am at home I would be so consumed by my work. And as a result, I compromised spending time with God. This also caused some conflict in my home because on many occasions I cancelled spending time with my family to fulfill my work duties. Just like Sarai and Abram’s case, I compromised on my spiritual duties thinking it help my career, but instead it left me empty and stressed, and my family unhappy. I am left unhappy, because I took matters into my own hands when God gave me a clear promise that I will provide for you. Please pray for me to repent, to hold on to the promise of God, depend on God and wait on God and not establish my own Hagar and compromise spending time with God and study of his word.

What then happened to Abram’s family when Hagar fled? Let us look at **verse 7-10**:

“*7 The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. 8 And he said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?” “I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered. 9 Then the angel of the Lord told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.” 10 The angel added, “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.”*

When Hagar fled, the Lord appeared to her through Angel, and the first thing He gave Hagar was a command to go back to her mistress and submit to her and secondly, He blessed her with a promise saying: “*“I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.”*” Through this we first see the mercy of God, Hagar sinned against God, she caused conflict in Abram’s household, instead of obeying her mistress and submitting to her she despised her. But God did not abandon her, but rather he appeared to her. In his appearance the Lord showed mercy and grace to Hagar and commanded her to go back to her mistress and submit to her. Here God encouraged Hagar to repent from her rebellion and go back to her mistress and submit to her. Furthermore, the Lord gave Hagar a promise. Here again we can see the mercy and grace of God who blessed an Egyptian slave saying your descendants will be too numerous to count. It should also be noted that God only blessed Hagar after he commanded her to go back and submit to her mistress Sarai. So the blessing of God goes hand in hand with obedience and submission. True blessings and the promises of God come when we fully submit to God, when we surrender to him and allow him to rule in our lives. When we live according to our strength, we cannot experience the promise of God.

Furthermore, the Lord said to Hagar:

*“You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. 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.”*

When Hagar heard this from the Lord, she praised God, in **verse 13** it says: “*13 She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”* When Abram and Sarai took matters into their own hands, a great crisis arose in Abram’s household. But God in his great mercy appeared to Hagar in the wilderness, she was just a slave girl, an Egyptian, but the Lord appeared to her. She did not do anything impressive, but rather sinned against God, but God appeared to her in the wilderness. She gave the name to God: “*You are the God who sees me*” And this encounter changed her live altogether; she now got to know the Living God. The same God is seeking me and you today, He sees you and me today, that is why he sent his one and only son Jesus Christ to be with us, to love us, have compassion on us, lead us and guide us. I pray that God may have mercy on us, grant us spiritual eyes and ears to hear and see God who sees us and is commanding us, and giving us his promises.

After this encounter, Hagar immediately went back to Abram’s household, gave birth to a son and Abram named him Ishmael. Because of God’s mercy and grace, Abram’s family and peace was restored.

**Conclusion:**

From today’s passage we have learnt that to experience the Lord’s blessings and promises we must wait on the Lord and not take matters into our own hands. We have also learnt that there is great danger when we take matters into our own hands. There is great danger for it takes us away from obeying God, having a relationship with him and living according to his will and purpose. Furthermore, we have learnt that God is merciful and filled with much grace. Even though we might have sinned against God, and disregarded his will, the Lord sees us and desires to restore us grant us his promises anew. We have learnt that without obeying and submitting to God we cannot experience promises and experience his blessings I pray that we may all repent, surrender our lives to God, obey his commands, have a relationship with him and live according to his will and purpose.