

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #37

Genesis 16:1-6

Abram had been promised a child that would come from his own body (15:4), but Abram faced two problems: 1) He didn't have much information from God regarding the specifics of how and when; 2) He was getting old, in fact he was 86 years old (16:16). Instead of Abram and Sarai waiting for God to fulfill His promise, they came up with their own plan, which ends up a big mess.

WHEN BELIEVERS ATTEMPT TO FULFILL GOD'S WILL AND PROGRAM BY THEIR OWN HUMAN METHODS AND NOT BY WAITING ON GOD THE RESULTS WILL BE A COMPLICATED DISASTER.

Try to use the world's methodology to accomplish the will of God and you will fall flat on your face. Success comes by carefully praying and waiting on God. As Dr. S. Lewis Johnson said, these six verses completely negate the vain, foolish, sinful and worldly philosophy that says "God helps those who help themselves." Every human work, every human effort and scheme is rejected by God.

OBSERVATION #1 - Wrong decisions are made when there seems to be a problem which is not being resolved. 16:1a

The perceived problem is that Abram had been promised a child and ten years have transpired since God first made that promise (12:4; 16:16). Actually there is no real problem here; it is just not God's time to fulfill the promise.

Before we are too hard on Abram and Sarai three things need to be stated:

- 1) God had not specifically informed Abram or Sarai that Sarai was to produce the child, although it is certainly implied, it is not specifically stated.
- 2) Sarai believed that Abram would produce a child, for that is what led to this whole mess.
- 3) Humanly speaking, Sarai's solution is logical in that she is old, figuring her childbearing days are over.

OBSERVATION #2 - Wrong decisions are made when there seems to be an option which may bring a resolution. 16:1b

Somewhere in time, Sarai had obtained an Egyptian maid named Hagar, probably when she was in Egypt. Egyptian documents have been found, which allowed a wife to give a female slave to her husband to bear a child, if she were not able (Davis, p.188). The word "maid" in Hebrew means maid- servant. If she were obtained during Abram's lapse, then this potential option existed not because of the perfect will of God, but the imperfect choices of Abram. **A good lesson for us to learn is that we must be very careful about jumping to conclusions just because there seems to be an option or open door available to us.**

A critical factor here is that Sarai's maid-slave was an Egyptian, which means she is from the line of Ham. God had promised (Genesis 9:26) that one would come through the line of Shem, from which came both Abram and Sarai. Had either of them zeroed in on carefully understanding God's word, this mess could have been avoided.

OBSERVATION #3 - Wrong decisions are made when people listen to wrong worldly reason. 16:2

Just as Eve convinced Adam to partake of the wrong fruit, so Sarai convinced Abram to produce the wrong fruit. Three things Sarai does to lure Abram into this complicated mess: 1) She speaks to Abram - 16:2a; 2) She blames God - 16:2b; 3) She offers her alternative solution -16:2c

OBSERVATION #4 - Wrong results occur when a believer follows wrong counsel. 16:3-4

The plan worked perfectly and one would think everyone would be happy and elated, but as verse 4 ends we learn that the results were envy, jealousy, strife, misery and tragedy. Relationships were fractured.

OBSERVATION #5 - Wrong consequences occur when a believer yields to wrong counsel. 16:5-6

Everyone in this story is affected negatively.

Participant #1 - The person of Hagar. 16:4b-6

The most innocent person in this entire scenario is Hagar, because she is a servant from a culture which supported submission to this kind of thing or else one could be punished by death.

(Result #1) - Hagar ended up despising Sarai. 16:5

The word "despise" means to think lightly of someone in a contemptible manner. Hagar lost a lot of respect for Sarai after she conceived.

(Result #2) - Hagar ended up mistreated by Sarai. 16:6b

The word "harshly" means Sarai afflicted labor on Hagar to the point of making her miserable.

(Result #3) - Hagar ended up running away from Sarai. 16:6c

This relationship between these two which once was so good and clean was now a total disaster.

Participant #2 - The person of Abram.

Abram's action has put him in a bind in that he has to make a choice between the two. When Abram tells Sarai in verse 6 to make up her own mind, he has stopped functioning as head of the house and as a man of God.

Participant #3 - The person of Sarai.

Sarai ends up a jealous, manipulative, mean, unfair woman because of her own sin.

When one runs ahead of God or runs away from God's Word, the end result will always be one big mess.