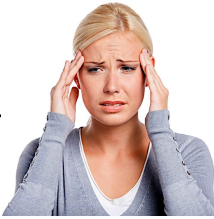


Life Lessons from Mothers of the Bible

Hagar: Running from Your Problems



"8 The angel said to her, 'Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?' 'I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai,' she replied. 9 The angel of the Lord said to her, 'Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.'" Genesis 16:8-9 NLT "God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." James 1:12 NLT

- Have you ever felt like running away?

Today numbers of people are running away from their problems. They run from a troubled marriage and get a divorce. They run from a difficult work situation and bounce from one job to the next. They run from personal financial mismanagement or unforeseen economic crisis and file for bankruptcy. Teenagers run away from home over conflict with their parents. People make unwise decisions that ultimately bring additional trouble and unnecessary pain on themselves.

Hagar is a mother in the Bible that teaches us an important life lesson. She is an example of how running away from our troubles rarely solves them. She shows us that we must face our problems with God's help and in God's way. Her story is recorded in Genesis chapter 16.

Central Lesson

Running from our problems rarely solves them - we must face them with God's help.

Hagar's Problems

Hagar tried to run from her troubles....

1. Hagar was forced to have an unwanted **PREGNANCY** (16:1-4).

Sarah was unable to have a child. So as the custom was in those days, she gave her servant, Hagar, to her husband, Abram, to bear a child for her. Hagar had no choice about getting pregnant. She was a slave and had to do as she was told.

The Life Application Study Bible explains: "Sarai gave Hagar to Abram as a substitute wife, a common practice of that time. A married woman who could not have children was shamed by her peers and was often required to give a female servant to her husband in order to produce heirs. The children born to the servant woman were considered the children of the wife. Abram was acting in line with the custom of the day, but his action showed a lack of faith that God would fulfill his promise." (Note on 16:1-3). "Sarai took matters into her own hands by giving Hagar to Abram. Like Abram she had trouble believing God's promise that was apparently directed specifically toward Abram and Sarai. Out of this lack of faith came a series of problems. This invariably happens when we take over for God, trying to make his promise come true through efforts that are not in line with his specific directions.... When we ask God for something and have to wait, it is a temptation to take matters into our own hands and interfere with God's plans." (Note on 16:3).

2. Hagar developed a bad **ATTITUDE** and relationship with her mistress, Sarai (16:4-5).

After becoming pregnant, Hagar despised Sarai. She may have become proud and felt superior to Sarai. Hagar developed a bad attitude and conflict developed between the two women.

3. Hagar was **MISTREATED** (16:6).

Sarai reacted to Hagar's attitude and mistreated her. She made life so miserable that Hagar finally ran away.

4. Hagar became **HOMELESS** and **BANKRUPT** (16:7-8).

Hagar ran away from Sarai, but had no home or provision. For Hagar, life went from bad to worse.

How to Respond to Our Problems God's Way

1. Look for the ways God **REVEALS** Himself to you in the midst of your problems (16:7-8).

Hagar is in the wilderness when The Angel of the LORD appeared to her and gave her counsel and encouragement. Theologians believe that this Angel of the LORD is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. Like Hagar, God often reveals Himself to us when we are in the wilderness of life's troubles. Most often, we are more receptive to His Word when we are in a hopeless place than when we experience abundance and ease.

2. **SUBMIT** to the proper authorities over you (16:9).

The Lord told Hagar to go back to Sarai and submit to her. He had His reasons.

The Life Application Study Bible explains: "Hagar was running away from her mistress and her problem. The angel of the Lord gave her this advice: (1) to return and face Sarai, the cause of her problem, and (2) to submit to her. Hagar needed to work on her attitude toward Sarai, no matter how justified it may have been. Running away from our problems rarely solves them. It is wise to return to our problems, face them squarely, accept God's promise of help, correct our attitudes, and act as we should." (Note on 16:8).

3. Trust God to **BLESS** you when you are in the right place (16:10).

The Lord promised to bless Hagar and her son, Ishmael. But she had to go back. She had to be in the right place. Are you where you should be so God can bless you?

4. Know that God **KNOWS** your struggles and be encouraged (16:11-14).

Hagar was encouraged by this divine encounter. She was assured that the Lord was concerned about her and knew her misery (16:11) and was watching her struggles (16:13). God is watching us, too.

Central Lesson: Running from our problems rarely solves them - we must face them with God's help.

Prayer: "Lord, I believe you love me and are at work in my life especially when I am experiencing problems. I will not run away, but I will face my problems with your help. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

► Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.