

The Story of Hagar

(we will only be covering the first part of Hagar's story)

Ask if anyone knows the story of Hagar.

- Let those who know tell the story as they remember it

Sarai could not have any children, so she gave her handmaid Hagar to Abram as a plural wife. From latter-day revelation we understand that this was a commandment from God that Abram and Sarai obeyed (see D&C 132:34). In this way, Sarai could obtain children by her servant Hagar, thus fulfilling the Lord's promise that Abram would have children.

Explain that at certain times in the history of the world, the Lord has commanded His people to practice plural marriage. Plural marriage was practiced by Abram and Sarai and by their grandson Jacob, and it was practiced for a time during the early days of the restored Church, beginning with Joseph Smith.

Explain that we read in Genesis 16:4–6 that Hagar conceived a child but began to feel jealousy and bitterness toward Sarai. Sarai responded by dealing “hardly” with Hagar, who fled into the wilderness.

Ask - How would you feel if you had been in Sarai's position? How would you feel if you had been in Hagar's position? (*Taken from the Old Testament Seminary Teacher Manual 2014*)

When Hagar fled into the wilderness she learned some important lessons. The first is that she is known to God and He desires to bless her. An angel of the Lord appears to Hagar – something that hasn't happened to any women in the Bible up to this point. The angel instructs Hagar to go back and submit not to Abraham, her husband, but to Sarai. Sometimes God gives us answers to our prayers not by eliminating the problem but by giving us strength to face them.

The angel then gives Hagar a deeply personal revelation about the child she is carrying, including his gender, his name, his future mission in life and a glimpse of the great nation that will spring from him. In her book "Forgotten Women of God" Diana Webb writes this about Hagar:

"Since there are so few annunciation scenes in the scripture, and since each is so significant, we can see what a great honor God pays to Hagar in Genesis 16. He has been especially mindful of her afflictions, and he tells her so. Hagar is a different woman from the one who has fled into the wilderness. She now knows that a power higher than herself notices her and that knowledge transforms her. She is now free in a way that returning to slavery can never eradicate. She is important to God, and that gives her a new sense of self-worth... Hagar has learned that God has a plan for her... She will tell her story to Abram and Sari and teach them things about God that they need to know: That God does indeed hear the cries of the suffering, the downcast, and the abandoned; that every human soul has dignity and worth. Hagar's new knowledge is empowering. If God is with her, she can survive anything." pg. 141-142

After this revelation Hagar knows God; and she then does something that *no one else* in the scriptures ever does. While others, like Jacob and Abraham name the *place* where they saw God, Hagar dared to give God *himself* a name. She called Him, "*The God that sees me*", a testimony that she now knows that God is aware of her, that He hears her cries, and that He can *literally* see her. That knowledge changes everything for Hagar and she returns to Sarai with a new understanding of her purpose in life. (Taken from Heather Farrell, <http://www.womeninthescrptures.com/2012/08/hagar.html>)

Ask - How do you know that God sees you? What experiences have you had in your life when you felt His presence and love for you?

Do the painting activity.