

STARTING SLOW: LOOKING

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Genesis 21:2-21

²Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. ³Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. ⁴And Abraham circumcised his son, Isaac, when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶Now Sarah said, 'God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.' ⁷And she said, 'Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.'

⁸ The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. ⁹But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. ¹⁰So she said to Abraham, 'Cast out

this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.' ¹¹The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. ¹²But God said to Abraham, 'Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named after you. ¹³As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.' ¹⁴So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

¹⁵ When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes.

¹⁶Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, 'Do not let me look on the death of the child.' And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, 'What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.' ¹⁹Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰ God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. ²¹He lived in the

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wilderness of Paran, and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. In her distress, God “opened her eyes” and Hagar saw the water she needed. Have you ever found yourself at the end of your rope, like Hagar? Has God ever “opened your eyes” to the help you needed? How so?
3. This is not the first time Hagar fled into the wilderness. Hagar escaped the abuse of Sarah once before (Genesis 16) and there encountered God. In that encounter, Hagar did what no one else in all of scripture does: names God! Hagar calls God *El-Roi*: “the God who sees me.” How does God then see and respond to the full humanity of the mistreated Hagar and Ishmael in this passage?
4. Hagar is an Egyptian, and her name means “the resident alien/foreigner”. She is exploited, abused, and then discarded. Hagar’s story was embraced by enslaved and formerly enslaved people. Hagar finds freedom. God sees Hagar and cares for her, even when others did not. How might this challenging story shape who and how we see today?

5. Use the Ignatian Examen to help you “look” again on your day.

IGNATIAN EXAMEN

A form of prayer developed by St. Ignatius in 1522. It can be especially meaningful at the close of the day.

Prepare

Find a comfortable position. Use a few deep breaths to calm your spirit. Become aware of God’s presence.

Review with Gratitude

Thank God for the gift of this day and ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the day clearly. Like a movie in your mind, move through your day noticing what happened, especially what emotions you felt and might still carry, and consider how near or far God seemed to be. Offer each moment to God in gratitude.

Pray The Day

Choose at least one feature of the day and pray with God about it. Seek what you might need, be it forgiveness, peace, understanding, courage, guidance, or patience.

Look Toward Tomorrow

What does tomorrow hold? What are you excited about? What are you worried or uncertain about? Ask for God’s help in whatever tomorrow brings.

Close

Now rest in the presence of God and give thanks again. Linger in prayer and listen for God.

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