

SPEND DAILY TIME WITH GOD AS YOU READ, THINK, PRAY + ACT.

2023 SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Intentional activities to deepen our relationship with God and mold us to be more like Jesus.

SEPTEMBER PRACTICE Community

Day 1 Genesis 16:1-3 | Waiting

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; 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." Genesis 16:1-2

This week, we see how waiting for God's promise of a child leads to a breaking point in the family of Abram (later named Abraham) and Sarai (later named Sarah). God asks Abram to move and promises him, "I will make you into a great nation and bless you." ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)). Abram uproots and moves. Childless their entire marriage, Abram and Sarai have been waiting a decade for this promised child who will produce the great nation. Waiting so long is painful, and Sarai and Abram take matters into their own hands. What happens next mirrors the fall of humanity in [Genesis 3:6](#). Sarai "took and gave" her slave to Abram the same way Eve offers the apple to Adam. Abram and Adam choose to go their own way and not follow God's plan. Turning away from God's plan is never good.

What we decide about God in the waiting matters. It can be a space where we cling to his promises or decide he has forgotten us. The breaking point in Abram's family comes from their lack of faith, resulting in poor choices. This story shows us once again God is with us when things fall apart. God is good, wise and can be trusted. God always has a plan to work out things for good ([Romans 8:28](#)).

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY You may be waiting on God for something dear to you—a child to come home, a disease to be healed, a mate to share your life with, or something else. Offer God this prayer of trust, "Father, I lay _____ at your feet because I believe you are good, wise and can be trusted. Amen."

Day 2 Genesis 16:3-6 | Meltdown

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Genesis 16:3b

Abram's family suffers a massive meltdown. Not just any family, Abram (Abraham) is a central figure in the Bible and a man of great faith. Families can be the best place to learn love and acceptance. They also can be places to experience rejection, pain and frustration, even in families of great faith. Sarai suggests to Abram a surrogate pregnancy, a common practice in ancient times. Rather than trusting God and continuing to wait, they run ahead of God. Sarai gives her personal slave to Abram, who gets pregnant right away. It spirals from there. Hagar is condescending. Sarai is mean. Abram is passive. Everyone carries the blame. It's a total mess, and Hagar runs.

The Bible makes it clear we aren't alone when we experience meltdowns. If we haven't experienced a meltdown in our family, we've likely seen it in someone else's. Breaking points aren't reserved for families far from God. All families need the grace of God to love well and follow his plan.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY Is there a family mess you need to bring to God? Pray for the struggles in your family and the families around you. We care about families at Ada Bible Church. If your family is struggling, we would love to come alongside you. Please email care@adabible.org. We also have a marriage event, "Doing Marriage Better," on October 6 at the Cascade Campus or online. Details and registration at adabible.info > [info&events](#).

Day 3 Genesis 16:5-16 | Meeting

The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" Genesis 16:7-8

A meltdown leads to a breaking point in Abram's family. Tired of waiting on God, Sarai's plan to give her slave as a surrogate mother doesn't go well. Hagar develops a smug attitude toward Sarai. Sarai blames Abram. Abram goes all passive. Sarai mistreats Hagar, so she runs away. But this isn't the end of Hagar's story. An angel of the Lord finds her in the desert and speaks kindly to her. She is not alone. God sees her misery. He knows why she ran, but he instructs her to return home. He assures her he has a plan, and she will have many descendants. He names her unborn son. Hagar is so overwhelmed God sees her that she gives him a name. "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me" ([Genesis 16:13](#)).

This story shows we aren't alone in our breaking points. An angel may not show up, but we have God's Word, his community of believers and the Holy Spirit who never leaves us. All of these reassure us that God sees us when things get tough—we find out our parents are divorcing, our wedding is canceled, we didn't make the team, or we didn't get the job. We are born looking for someone who sees us. We want to know we aren't alone when life becomes miserable. This story reminds us God is the One who always sees us too.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY Offer a prayer of thanksgiving as you listen to the Ada Bible Worship Team sing "[Goodness of God](#)." Thank God that "Your goodness is running after, it's running after me. With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now. I give You everything."

Day 4 John 1:35-51 | Jesus Sees

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel." John 1:47-49

The Gospels tell us Jesus fully sees people, just as God saw Hagar. In his Gospel, John gives the scope of what Jesus sees in how he called the 12 disciples to follow him. Over and over, "Jesus saw" or "looked" as he invites people to follow him. Nathaniel isn't sure about Jesus until Jesus tells Nathaniel he saw him under a tree before he was invited to come. When Jesus sees people, he sees deep into the heart and soul because he is God.

We can confidently know God sees us. It's who God is. Jesus sees us, wants us and reaches out to us. Our part is to respond. The disciples respond by deciding to follow him and learn. Hagar responds by obeying and calling out, "You are the God who sees me." We respond by following, learning and obeying what God tells us to do in the Bible.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY When at a breaking point, it can be hard to feel like God sees us. But God might be reaching out through the words of a song, a gracious waitress, a Bible verse, or a beautiful sunset. We can develop a habit of looking for the God who sees us. Ask God to help you recognize that he sees you, and then respond with a grateful heart.

Day 5 Psalms 13 | Trust

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. Psalm 13:5

This week's message shows Abram and Sarai losing trust in God while waiting for a promised child. Their loss of trust leads to a decision that brings a family meltdown. What they struggle with the most is what is needed to navigate their crisis—trust that God is good and hasn't forgotten them. The Psalmist provides a good model in [Psalms 13](#) for how to navigate difficulty with trust in God. When near death and oppressed by enemies, the Psalmist cries out to God honestly and makes clear requests of God. While honest about his feelings and fears, they don't get the final word. The Psalmist ultimately turns to trust in God, recalling who God is and what he has already done.

God is with us in the midst of our misery. We can trust him as we sit in the chemo chair, in the courtroom, through unemployment, loneliness or infertility. Life will always have breaking points. But God sees us. God is with us. God is good, wise and can be trusted.

IN YOUR CHAIR TIME TODAY Memorize [Psalms 13:5-6](#). Type it in your phone or post it where you will see it throughout the weekend. As you review it, ask God to help you grow in trusting him during breaking points.