



MEET ME IN THE BIBLE

THE STORIES
OF WOMEN

AN 8-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

COLLEEN D. SEARCY

Foreword by Jen Wilkin

“Simple and straightforward, Meet Me in the Bible is a wonderful resource to gain foundational skills in studying the Bible. If you want to feel confident in mining Scripture for God’s truths and applying it to your life, this is an incredible guide.”

Laura Wifler, Cofounder, Risen Motherhood; coauthor, *Risen Motherhood: Gospel Hope for Everyday Moments*

“I was greeted by the bright smile of Colleen Searcy over thirty years ago when I walked into a youth group in West Texas as a freckle-faced, curly headed, unbelieving teenager. Over the last three decades, I have watched Colleen cling to God’s word, teach God’s word, sing God’s word, and live God’s word. If you are looking to *meet* God in the Scriptures, I can think of no better guide than my friend Colleen. She will help you taste and see that the Lord is good!”

Shane Barnard, singer-songwriter, Shane and Shane

“Colleen Searcy is one of my favorite Bible teachers. You will sense her open-armed ministry within the framework of her Meet Me in the Bible series, in which she’s thoughtfully prepared a table for women to feast on God’s word. Whether you are an individual hungry to know God more, a small group desiring an accessible way to study together, or a women’s ministry leader looking for a foundational resource for your teaching team, the Meet Me in the Bible series is a trustworthy guide.”

Caroline Saunders, author, *Come Home: Tracing God’s Promise of Home through Scripture*

“I’ve benefited from Colleen’s wisdom, teaching, and partnership in ministry for a number of years. She is a gifted Bible teacher who uses her skills to invite others into biblical literacy. In the Meet Me in the Bible series, she provides what few studies do—an opportunity for women to gather for both in-person teaching and discussion. You will be equipped to not only study for yourself but also cultivate teaching gifts in the lives of the women in your church. I can’t wait to recommend this to my ministry friends.”

Courtney Reissig, author, *Teach Me to Feel: Worshiping through the Psalms in Every Season of Life*

“As the CEO of a worldwide mission agency, I highly recommend Colleen Searcy’s Meet Me in the Bible series for anyone interested in going deeper in their study of the Bible. Colleen uses a structured approach with guiding prompts that are fully interactive and enhance your reflection on Scripture. These books are helpful resources for pursuing individual study or leading a Bible study group, and these studies are culturally relevant for all groups of people. Meet Me in the Bible is an excellent and well-rounded framework that can make studying the Bible a more engaging and enriching experience for anyone.”

Kurt Nelson, CEO, East-West Ministries

“I have seen firsthand the fruit of Meet Me in the Bible. Colleen’s accessible framework for studying the Scripture has had a large and lasting impact on our church. Many in our congregation are still reaping the benefits of her investment in our women’s ministry. If you are a seasoned student of the Scripture or are just getting started, Meet Me in the Bible will launch you into a greater exploration of the Bible and a deeper enjoyment of the God it reveals.”

JR Vassar, Lead Pastor, Church at the Cross, Grapevine, Texas; author,
Glory Hunger

THE STORIES OF WOMEN

Meet Me in the Bible Studies

Colossians and Philemon

The Stories of Women

The Story of Abraham

The Story of Jacob

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FOREWORD

For the past twenty-five years, my primary place of ministry has been the local church, and my primary aim has been to build Bible literacy among women. So, naturally, any time I'm asked to endorse a resource, I ask myself how it will serve that context. That's why I'm particularly excited to bring to your attention the Meet Me in the Bible series.

When evaluating a resource, I hold two important questions in view: (1) Is this from a trustworthy voice? and (2) Does this challenge those who use it to grow in their ability to read and understand the Scriptures? I want to help answer both of those questions for you as you consider how the Meet Me in the Bible series might help you personally, or those you serve in your church.

In terms of the trustworthiness of the author, I can speak with confidence that Colleen Searcy is an excellent guide. I first met Colleen in 2008, about a year after moving to Dallas and joining a new church. I was looking for other women in the church who shared my desire to see women equipped with solid discipleship opportunities. Colleen and I went to coffee, and I knew I had found a like-minded partner. Since that time, we have together taught, written curriculum, led teams, and prayed—all from that desire to see God's daughters grounded in the Scriptures. Colleen is not only theologically and biblically solid; she is a gifted teacher, humble and kind, and a faithful friend.

In terms of the usefulness of the resource, Meet Me in the Bible so closely aligns with my own philosophy of teaching that I can recommend it eagerly. It's a brilliant combination of a Scripture journal and a guide for growing in Bible literacy. It encourages the user to practice the time-tested method of "observe, interpret, apply" in a way that allows understanding to grow gradually. It presses us to be active learners rather than passive consumers, not rushing to commentaries, but sitting with the text, patiently waiting for our own understanding to begin to emerge. For those who know my method and Bible studies, Meet Me in the Bible will feel familiar in the best ways.

It is a streamlined approach suitable for personal study as well as an excellent foundation for group discussion and teaching environments.

The skills taught in each Meet Me in the Bible study will help you understand a particular book of the Bible better. But they will also help you understand *any* book (or books) of the Bible better as you grow in your ability to use those skills. And because application focuses on relationship—with God, self, and others—these skills will help you to live and love like a Christ follower.

So it is my pleasure to commend to you both a trusted guide and a trustworthy resource. My guess is that if you had come to coffee with Colleen and me on that day some years ago, you would have shared our excitement to see women growing in their love of the Scriptures and of the God they proclaim. What we want for you is to be able to serve your local church, whether in a classroom or a living room, with good tools and the confidence to use them. My prayer is that you would take what Colleen has created and combine it with an invitation to the women God has placed in your sphere of influence—a simple invitation: Meet me in the Bible! No sweeter fellowship is found than in that meeting place. May your time spent there yield the richest of treasures.

JEN WILKIN

Bible teacher; author, *Women of the Word*;
None Like Him; and *In His Image*

MEET ME IN THE BIBLE

A Simple Framework for Reading the Bible and Enjoying God

God delights in revealing himself, and one of the primary ways he reveals himself is through the Bible. My deep desire is for people to know and enjoy God through the study of his word. I want people with all kinds of personalities and learning styles to grow in confidence that they can read and study their Bibles. This framework of Bible study was designed to provide helpful structure and a lot of freedom for the studier.

The *Why* behind Meet Me in the Bible

Meet Me in the Bible is a simple, five-step framework designed to help you read your Bible. It is not a fill-in-the-blank study. After numerous conversations with women over many years of ministry, I've found that countless women do Bible studies, yet few feel confident opening the Bible and reading it on their own. And although many women desire to lead a Bible study, few feel equipped to do so. Meet Me in the Bible offers a method to help you do both.

How to Use Meet Me in the Bible

This framework was designed for either individual or group Bible study, and it incorporates the time-tested stages of Bible reading: observation, interpretation, and application. Prompts are provided on your bookmark to help you observe, interpret, and apply the Scriptures. You will also be prompted to use simple and accessible tools as you study. You will grow in confidence and find your pace as you practice observing, interpreting, and applying the Scriptures again and again. You can use this framework to study any book of the Bible.

For Group Study

If you are doing this study as part of a group, you will want to complete each lesson before you meet. Each lesson is divided into five doable steps rather

than five assigned days, to allow flexibility. You can work through one step each day or the whole lesson in one sitting. Find the pace that works best for you. No matter how much of the lesson you are able to complete, please don't skip gathering with your Bible study group. You will benefit from your group, and your group will be encouraged by your presence.

Meet Me in the Bible studies are meant to be flexible. Group studies can opt to meet in small groups for discussion and a time of teaching or simply meet for discussion only.

TIPS FOR GROUPS THAT OPT TO MEET FOR BOTH A TIME OF DISCUSSION AND A TIME OF TEACHING

- If this is your group's first Meet Me in the Bible study, be sure each participant is familiar with how to use the Meet Me in the Bible framework before you meet. You can find my videos on how to use the Meet Me in the Bible framework at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching. In these videos, I demonstrate how to cross-reference, quickly check other translations, and more, using simple and free digital tools.
- For the first meeting, teachers will want to cover the Getting Started section before discussion. One of the greatest Bible study tools available is the historical context of the Bible book you are studying. To have the best chance of interpreting the Scriptures correctly, you need to know who the author was, whom he was writing to, the literary style he used, and what was happening in the world when he wrote it. I cover the answers to these questions in my "Getting Started" video, which you will find at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching.
- After answering those preliminary questions, move to small-group discussion. Spend time getting to know one another. You can use the Getting Started questions in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit.
- For all future meetings, you can gather for discussion before or after the teaching. I suggest that you gather *before* the teaching. You will

be amazed at the insights gained as each participant shares what was discovered during personal study. Confidence will grow as you learn from one another's discoveries. Tips for discussion:

- The prompts on your bookmark make good points of discussion. (What did you learn from the repeated words? What was hard to understand? What did you learn about people?)
- Content-specific discussion questions for each lesson can be found in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit.
- Additional historical context is given in the questions in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit.
- The bounce questions in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit are intended to jumpstart discussion and provide an easy transition to the content.
- Discussion leaders may use as many or as few discussion questions from Tool 7 as they'd like. These questions were written to help you think deeply about the text. Many of the questions do not have one right answer and are meant to encourage further thought and robust discussion. Questions with one correct answer (e.g., What did Paul say about sin in verse 12?) can feel like a quiz rather than an invitation into conversation.
- Discussion leaders *do* want to plan which questions they will cover and think through their own answers before the group meets. They *do not* need to feel pressure to answer every question that surfaces during Bible study. The purpose of Bible study is not to impress with our knowledge; it is to grow in our knowledge of and love for God as we get to know him better through the study of his word. Enjoy being a colearner with those you are studying alongside. If the questions that surface are not answered in the teaching time, you can circle back with your group after you've had time to think further about them.

- Use the prayer pages in Tool 6 of the Tool Kit to record personal prayer requests and the prayers of those you are studying alongside.

TIPS FOR GROUPS THAT OPT TO MEET FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

- If this is your group's first Meet Me in the Bible study, be sure each participant watches my videos on how to use the Meet Me in the Bible framework before you meet. You can find them at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching. In these videos, I demonstrate how to cross-reference, quickly check other translations, and more, using simple and free digital tools.
- For the first meeting, be prepared to discuss the Getting Started section. One of the greatest Bible study tools available is the historical context of the Bible book you are studying. To have the best chance of interpreting the Scriptures correctly, you need to know who the author was, whom he was writing to, the literary style he used, and what was happening in the world when he wrote it. I answer these questions in my "Getting Started" video at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching.
- Spend time getting to know one another. You can use the Getting Started questions in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit.
- For all future meetings:
 - The prompts on your bookmark make good points of discussion: What did you learn from the repeated words? What was hard to understand? What did you learn about people?
 - Content-specific discussion questions for each lesson can be found in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit.
 - The bounce questions in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit are intended to jumpstart discussion and provide an easy transition to the content.

- Additional historical context is given in the questions found in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit.
- Discussion leaders may use as many or as few discussion questions from Tool 7 as they'd like. These questions were written to help you think deeply about the text. Many of the questions do not have one right answer and are meant to encourage further thought and robust discussion. Questions with one correct answer (e.g., What did Paul say about sin in verse 12?) can feel like a quiz rather than an invitation into conversation.
- Discussion leaders *do* want to plan on which questions they will cover and think through their own answers before the group meets. They *do not* need to feel pressure to answer every question that surfaces during Bible study. The purpose of Bible study is not to impress with our knowledge; it is to grow in our knowledge of and love for God as we get to know him better through the study of his word. When stumped by a question, you can say something like, "That is a great question! I'd like to give that more thought and circle back next time we meet." Then have fun studying! Enjoy being a colearner with those you are studying alongside. Ask God to help you with the questions that surface. He is delighted to meet you in the Bible. What a great discussion you will have the next time you meet!
- Use the prayer pages in Tool 6 of the Tool Kit to record personal prayer requests and the prayers of those you are studying alongside.

For Individual Study

- If you are doing this study on your own, you will want to begin by watching my videos on how to use the Meet Me in the Bible framework. You can find them at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching. In these videos, I demonstrate how to cross-reference, quickly check other translations, and more, using simple and free digital tools.

- Be sure to complete the Getting Started section before diving in to study the passages of Scripture. One of the greatest Bible study tools available is the historical context of the Bible book you are studying. When you study a passage that is hard to understand, overlay the passage with the context. To have the best chance of interpreting the Scriptures correctly, we need to know who the author was, whom he was writing to, the literary style he used, and what was happening in the world when he wrote it. I answer these questions in my “Getting Started” video at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching.
- After completing the Getting Started section, each lesson is divided into five doable steps rather than five assigned days, to allow flexibility. You can work through one step each day or work through the whole lesson in one sitting. Find the pace that works best for you.
- For a deeper dive, use the questions in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit. Additional historical context is also given within the questions. These questions were written to help you think deeply about the text.
- Use the prayer pages in Tool 6 of the Tool Kit to record your prayers while you study.

What’s Included in This Study

Bible Study Bookmark

All Meet Me in the Bible studies include a bookmark with the time-tested stages of Bible reading (Observe, Interpret, and Apply) on the front. You will see the five-step framework for reading the Bible on the back of the bookmark, including prompts to help you observe, interpret, and apply the Scriptures. You will also be prompted to pause in your study to listen to and enjoy God. He wants to meet you in your study of the Bible! Although the Bible study bookmark and the Bible study book were designed to work together, your bookmark can also be used alone. It was designed to help you study any book of the Bible, and my hope is that you will use your bookmark again and again.

Bible Study Book

The book includes word-for-word Bible text. Mark it up! If you love highlighters, highlight away! If you prefer to draw symbols, grab colored pencils and go for it. Or simply underline with your favorite pen. Your Bible study book also includes titles and designated spaces that correspond with the titles and prompts on your bookmark. Additionally, you will find blank note pages throughout your book to use as you wish. Draw a chart, sketch an image, or write the lyrics to a song. Each lesson concludes with an important wrap-up question to prompt you to consider what you discovered in the Scriptures.

Meet Me in the Bible Tool Kit

Tool 1: *Bible Timeline*. Understanding historical context is key to reading and interpreting the Scriptures. Place an *X* on the simple timeline of the Bible to indicate where the scriptures you are studying land in the whole story of the Bible.

Tool 2: *Map*. Referencing a map while studying is a helpful reminder that these are stories of real people in real places.

Tool 3: *Bible Genres*. Knowing the literary style of the book of the Bible you are studying is key to correct interpretation. Just as you would approach the poems of Wordsworth differently than you would approach a history book about World War II, there are nuances to different literary styles in the Bible that must be kept in mind while interpreting and applying the Scriptures. Use this resource to identify the literary style of the book you are studying.

Tool 4: *Attributes of God*. You will be prompted to use this tool each week. You may want to mark it with a paper clip so you can turn there easily. The ultimate goal of Bible study is to know and love God, and my prayer is that your hope will be further anchored in him as you are reminded of his attributes.

Tool 5: *Bookmark Content*. All the information on your bookmark is included here for your convenience.

Tool 6: *Prayer Pages*. Use these pages to record personal prayers and prayer requests of those studying alongside you.

Tool 7: *Questions for Further Thought and Discussion*. Use as many or as few of these questions as you'd like in your individual or group study. Additional historical context is included in the questions. The bounce questions are intended to jumpstart discussion and provide an easy transition to the content. The remaining questions were written to help you think deeply about the text.

Additional Tools for Your Study

1. *Different Bible translations*. Reading Scripture verses in different Bible translations can give helpful insight as you study. This book includes the ESV translation. Other translations I recommend are the New International Version (NIV), the New Living Translation (NLT), the Christian Standard Bible (CSB), and the New American Standard Bible (NASB). I use *The Message* as a commentary when I study.
2. *Dictionary and thesaurus*. Look up unfamiliar words as well as “church” words such as *atonement*, *propitiation*, and *covenant*. You will be surprised how much clarity can be gained by reading simple definitions and synonyms in a dictionary or thesaurus.¹
3. *Cross-references*. Cross-references are included in study Bibles, usually in the middle or at the bottom of a page. A cross-reference is a marker in the Bible pointing to other passages of Scripture with related words and themes. It is usually designated with a superscript (tiny, raised) letter. Cross-referencing is a way to use Scripture to rightly interpret Scripture. You can also use digital tools to cross-reference.²
4. *Study Bible footnotes*. If you have a study Bible, the provided footnotes give helpful insights.³ Wait to check footnotes until after you've observed the text and attempted interpretation using other translations, a dictionary, and cross-references, and overlaying the passage with the context. Resist the temptation to jump to someone else's thoughts before observing and interpreting on your own. Enjoy being curious and see what you discover!

5. *Commentaries.* Commentaries can be helpful in Bible study, but wait to use commentaries until after you've observed the text and attempted interpretation using other translations, a dictionary, and cross-references, and overlaying the passage with the context. Ask God for insight as you study, and be willing to wait to hear from him. Again, resist the temptation to jump to someone else's thoughts before observing and interpreting on your own. For help choosing commentaries, begin by asking trusted leaders about their favorites.⁴

The ultimate goal of Bible study is to know and love God. So observe, interpret, apply, and enjoy God! Stay in conversation with him, asking him to help you understand the Scriptures. Ask him your hard questions. Listen to him. He wants to meet you in your study of the Bible!

WHY STUDY THE STORIES OF WOMEN?

With all the curiosity and discussion around the roles of women, it is important to search the Scriptures for answers.

The Scriptures reveal what God is like:

- He is creative. He made all things, from the blue of the sky to the planet Jupiter.
- He is a compassionate parent and will fiercely protect those he loves.
- He is deeply relational and attentive to the needs of people.
- He is on mission to save, not wishing that any should perish.
- He is gentle, and he is intense.

Women were made in God's likeness (Gen. 1:27):

- Women image God in their creativity, from writing songs to designing spreadsheets.
- Women are compassionate and will fiercely protect those they love.
- Like their Creator, women are deeply relational and attentive to the needs of people.
- Women are on mission in other countries, in office buildings, in their homes, and through prayer.
- Women image God in their gentleness and in their intensity.

Throughout the Bible, we see God engage with and invite all kinds of women to image him in different ways—single and married, young and old,

different ethnicities, homemakers and warriors. Why did I choose these particular stories of women?

- It was important to me to include single and married women.
- I chose stories that include enough text to encourage line-by-line inductive study, which is the preferred method of Meet Me in the Bible studies.
- I chose stories with interesting relationships between women, such as mother and daughter, sisters, cousins, and collaborators for the kingdom of God.

Keep in mind that all the stories in this study were written as historical narratives. The authors of history books recorded the facts about what happened rather than what *should* have happened had people obeyed God. The authors did not record how they felt about what happened. This is important to keep in mind while studying stories like Sarah and Hagar and Leah and Rachel. For example, the author of Genesis recorded that Jacob chose to marry Rachel after he was married to Leah. This is what happened, but it does not mean that polygamy was acceptable to God (Gen. 2:24).

This study is about women, but it is ultimately about the God who created women, giving them blessing, dominion, dignity, and purpose (Gen. 1:26-31). My hope is that you will get to know God better and better through these stories! He delights to meet you in your study of the Bible.

Joyfully,
COLLEEN SEARCY

GETTING STARTED IN THE STORIES OF WOMEN

We have our best chance of understanding the stories of women if we overlay the Bible texts with important context. Below are context questions to address before you begin the study. For help answering these questions, you can watch my “Getting Started” video at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching.

1. Why did God create women? (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:4-25)

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2. What happened after God created the first woman? (Gen. 3)

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3. In what style were these particular stories written and why does it matter? For help with these questions, see information about historical narratives in Tool 3 of the Tool Kit.⁵

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4. Central themes to explore throughout this study:

- What do we learn about God?

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- What do we learn about his view of women from the story of _____?

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- What do we learn about people?

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.....
.....



1

SARAH AND HAGAR

Genesis 11:29-12:3; 16:1-16; 18:10-15; 21:1-21

SARAH AND HAGAR

Context for the Story of Sarah and Hagar

Where Are We in the Story of the Bible?

Turn to Tool 1 in the Tool Kit and place an *X* by the patriarchs. Pencil in the names of Sarah and Hagar there.

After the flood, Noah's sons spread out and established nations. Many years later, God called one man, Abraham, to begin a people for himself. Abraham was the first of the Hebrew patriarchs. The Hebrew people laid claim to the promised land based on the covenant God made with their first three patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob's name was eventually changed to Israel, and his twelve sons gave rise to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Who Are Sarah and Hagar?

Genesis 16 and Genesis 21:1-21 are about Abraham's wife Sarah and her Egyptian servant Hagar. God had promised a son to Abraham and Sarah, but he was not in a hurry. In fact, God had promised Abraham so many descendants that they would be like the stars in the sky. Imagine how Abraham and Sarah felt, at eighty-six and seventy-six years old (16:16), and still childless. So Sarah made a plan, but the plan was hers, not God's. Read the passages to see their story unfold.

Helpful hint as you read Hagar's story: God's prophetic words about Ishmael becoming "a wild donkey of a man" in Genesis 16:12 sound like bad news rather than comforting news for Hagar. At this time in history, however, donkeys were considered noble, strong, and free (Job 39:4-8), creatures running wild and untamed in the wilderness. In other words, Ishmael would live as a free man, not as a slave like Hagar.

Genesis 11:29–12:3; 16:1–16; 18:10–15; 21:1–21

^{11:29} And Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah. ³⁰ Now Sarai was barren; she had no child.

³¹Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. ³²The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.

^{12:1}Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

^{16:1}Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. ²And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. ⁴And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. ⁵And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!" ⁶But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.

⁷The angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?" She said, "I am fleeing from my mistress Sarai." ⁹The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress and submit to her." ¹⁰The angel of the LORD also said to her, "I will surely

multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.”

¹¹ And the angel of the LORD said to her,

“Behold, you are pregnant

and shall bear a son.

You shall call his name Ishmael,

because the LORD has listened to your affliction.

¹² He shall be a wild donkey of a man,

his hand against everyone

and everyone’s hand against him,

and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.”

¹³ So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, “You are a God of seeing,” for she said, “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.” ¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ And Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

^{18:10} The LORD said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?” ¹³ The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.” ¹⁵ But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. He said, “No, but you did laugh.”

^{21a} The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised. ² And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. ³ Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. ⁴ And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶ And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." ⁷ And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

⁸ And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. ⁹ But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. ¹⁰ So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." ¹¹ And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. ¹² But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. ¹³ And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring." ¹⁴ So 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 in the wilderness of Beersheba.

¹⁵ When the water in the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes. ¹⁶ Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, for she said, "Let me not look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷ And 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? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸ Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him

fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.²⁰ And God was with the boy, and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow.²¹ He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

OBSERVE: WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE SAY?

Step 1: Setting and Summary

Key Characters and Locations

CHARACTERS:

- *Sarai*. Abram's wife, later named Sarah; she was barren.
- *Hagar*. Sarah's Egyptian servant.
- *Abram*. Sarai's husband, later named Abraham. He listened to Sarai's plan and slept with Hagar.
- *The angel of the Lord*. Found Hagar in the wilderness and spoke tenderly to her.

LOCATIONS:

- Remember to reference the maps in Tool 2 of the Tool Kit.
- *Land of Canaan*. New dwelling place of Sarai and Abraham.
 - *Beer-lahai-roi*. The spring of water in the wilderness where the Lord spoke to Hagar. This spring of water was on the way to Shur, which was between Canaan and Egypt.

Summary of the Passage

What Stood Out to You or Piqued Your Curiosity?

Step 2: Key Words and Phrases

Remember to look at the prompts on your Bible study bookmark as you observe the text.

- "... had borne him no children." "... has prevented me from bearing children." "... that I shall obtain children." (3 times)
- *Looked with contempt* (2 times). Dictionary definition of contempt: "the act of despising; lack of respect or reverence; disdain."⁶
- "*The angel of the LORD found her.*" "*You are a God of seeing,*" "... him who looks after me." NIV translation: "'You are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me.'" (Gen. 16:13).

Remember to enjoy God and listen as you study. Move to a time of prayer after you observe, recording your prayer on the prayer pages in Tool 6.

INTERPRET: WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE MEAN?

Step 3: What Was Hard to Understand?

Questions

- *Why was Sarai so angry when Hagar looked at her wrongly?*
- *Who was the angel of the Lord?*

Insights from Cross-References, Other Translations, and the Context

Remember that historical context is one of the greatest Bible study tools available. Keep asking the questions: Who wrote this? When did he write it? Where does this land in the whole story of the Bible? How would these words land on the ears of the original hearers?

- *Why was Sarai so angry when Hagar looked at her wrongly?* From cross-reference 1 Samuel 1:6: “And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb.” NIV translation of Genesis 16:4: “When she [Hagar] knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress.”
- *Who was the angel of the Lord?* Genesis 16:13: “She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me.’” Hagar believed the Lord had spoken to her; a similar pattern is seen in cross-reference Genesis 22:11-17.

Remember to turn to the Questions for Further Thought and Discussion in Tool 7 for a deeper dive. Additional historical context is also given within the questions.

Step 4: What Did You Learn about God?

Refer to the attributes of God in Tool 4 if needed.

What did you learn about God’s view of women?

Remember to enjoy God and listen as you study. Move to a time of prayer after you interpret, recording your prayer on the prayer pages in Tool 6.

APPLY: HOW WILL YOU APPLY THE PASSAGE?

Step 5: What Did You Learn about People?

Others

Remember to look at the prompts on your Bible study bookmark as you apply the text.

Yourself

- *Is there a command to obey? An example to follow? A sin to confess? A warning to heed? An encouragement to receive?*
- *What action step will you take?*

Wrap Up: What Did You Discover in the Scriptures That Was Important to You?

Remember to enjoy God and listen as you study. Move to a time of prayer after you apply, recording your prayer on the prayer pages in Tool 6.

