

YWAC



MODERN DAY HAGAR

Young Women Active for Christ

WEEK ONE: *Stolen Identity*

An outcast. Withdrawn. Loner. Quiet. Often overlooked by her classmates. Chosen last as the partner in Science lab. Ridiculed for the clothes she wears and her stringy hair she is only privileged to wash once a week. In bondage to the lies that society feeds her saying her quality in life is so insignificant. She works to earn peers approval but fails at every attempt.

She is labeled as a misfit but deep down she has so much worth. Will anyone ever see it? Will they see the beauty she bestows? Or will they label her as society sees?

Genesis 16:1: “Now Sarai Abram’s wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.”

We don’t know much about Hagar except that she was an Egyptian slave. Stripped away from her home and family to live in a foreign land where she would be mistreated by strangers for personal gain. Can you imagine what life was like for her before she was taken captive? Maybe she was a great cook or an amazing seamstress? We read in Genesis 16:1 that she was taken by Abram and Sarai when Pharaoh pleaded with them to leave Egypt. To them, Hagar was a slave, without any personal rights and identity of her own—someone who was there to meet their needs.

I remember the summer of my eighth grade year. I spent my entire summer at two band camps; band nerd, I know. What I realized was there were tons of other kids there. As I checked in, I saw a number beside my name: 356. For the week that would become my identity. Every time I would sign in and out for practices, when I went to eat, even when I went to the dorm. There were hundreds of kids there. Of course, I didn’t expect everyone to learn and remember my name; but to be labeled by a number was a little disheartening. Can you imagine how Hagar felt when she was labeled a slave. No longer seen as a loving daughter, caring sister, or maybe a crazy aunt, but as a slave.

Have you ever been labeled for something you’re not? Maybe someone has labeled you as a stuck-up person because you’re shy? Maybe someone has labeled you as a braniac because you are extremely smart? Maybe someone has labeled you as four-eyes because you wear glasses? Whatever the case do you know what God labels you? If you have accepted Him as your personal Savior then God labels you as His child. How precious is that?

WEEK TWO: *Blindsided Mistake*

This outcast finally learns the trick to being accepted. If I change my appearance and work to meet their needs then they will see me differently. She becomes a people pleaser by pouring her heart into satisfying the needs of others. Classmates begin to take notice of her when group projects are finished without any effort and graded with an A+. The once unforbidden teachers lounge where they keep loads of soda and snacks becomes available through her opportunity as a teachers assistant. But when the star quarterback of the football team begins to show her attention and affection, everything changes. The girl who was once overlooked is now looked upon as a beautiful, worthy girl by the hottest guy in school. She is estatic and shows it by the smile and confidence she now carries with her. However, her so called friends become vicious mean girls. She has now entered a forbidden territory that she never saw marked off.

Genesis 16:2-4: “And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her, And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram’s wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.”

Female maid servants were often substituted as wives if a married woman was unable to bear a child in that time. Sarai tried for many years to bear Abraham a child but was just incapable. She became frustrated and decided to take matters into her own hands. She gave Hagar as the substitute wife to bear them a child. Hagar had no choice; after all, she was their slave—there to serve their needs. No doubt, Hagar was thrilled when she learned she was pregnant; she had done what her mistress, Sarai, had asked of her. However, Sarai became furious and began to treat Hagar unfairly.

As I began my high school band career, my talent became a passion. I lived and breathed music. However, when it came time for our annual tryouts, nerves would always get the best of me. One of the older, maturer clarinet players and I became quick friends. She helped me work on my scales and sight reading in preparation for tryout day. I will never forget the day we discovered what *chair* we would be placed in. That resembled our ranking like 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. For my first year I received third chair. That was a *huge* deal. But even bigger than that, I had placed higher than my new band buddy. I thought she would be happy for me, considering I only beat her by a few points. After all she was fourth chair. The fact that a newby clarinet player (whom she had helped) deflated her pride and turned her against me. She began to make smart remarks about my playing and scoffed during practices when I didn't understand something.

Have you ever been put in this kind of position? Maybe you and your friend tried out for the cheerleading squad or a sport together; and one of you made it, but the other one didn't. How did you support one another?

WEEK THREE: *Runaway Slave*

The pressure of broken friendships builds and becomes too heavy of a burden to carry. The harsh words that were projected to her repeatedly play out in her head. Everywhere she turns there is someone ridiculing, mocking, or judging her for the supposedly injustice she had committed. Confused and dishearted she runs to escape the injustice.

Genesis 16:5-8: "And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee, And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face. And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? And whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai."

Hagar couldn't take the misery anymore; so she fled from Sarai to a desert. Can you imagine how harsh Sarai must have been? A pregnant woman fled far from a place where she was fed, clothed and sheltered to a desolate place. Can you blame her? After all, she was trying to help Sarai. How could Sarai treat her this way after all she had done for her? However, we realize something unusual about Hagar in this time and place of her life. She wasn't alone. God was there in the midst of her rebellion.

When my friend began to treat me mean and cold, all I wanted to do was quit band, run and hide. I built a wall and shut her out. If she made any slight remark, I gave her no response. I was wrong for that. God calls us to face our problems—not run from them. Just as Hagar was running away from her problem with the wrong attitude, so was I.

We must accept God's promise of help and act as we should.

WEEK FOUR: *Faithful Return*

Later that evening the girls mother talked to her about the events of that day. She realized hiding from the situation wouldn't make things disappear. Everyday that she returned to school would be the same unless she made things different. The next day she went to school and confronted all of those who accused her of wrong doing. She apologized and made amends with everyone. Whether they accepted her apology or not, God gave her the grace and strength to stand firm—even in what seemed like the hottest moment of her life.

Genesis 16:9-11, 15: "And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy see exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael."

Hagar was ordered to return to Sarai; but why? Because God had greater things in store. Did she hesitate to return? No. God had shown His love for her by listening to her desperate cry. He knew every bit of her anxiety about the future. In that moment of her despair he was there.

After I apologized to my band buddy, our friendship didn't begin to heal automatically. I continuously showed her the love and compassion the Lord had placed in my heart for her. It was not always easy and she was not always receptive. However I did as I was told. Gradually she began to realize, I was not her enemy but her friend. Our friendship began to heal and we both excelled in our musical talents. A few years later, she placed first chair in band and I placed second. We never let jealousy and pride interfere again.

Do you have someone in your life you need to forgive? Don't let your pride stop you. If you have pride in your life, it separates you from God and blinds you to His will. Seek now to have a pure heart and clear conscience before Him.



About the Author:

Brandi Meeks of Ecu, Mississippi offers her perspective for teens this month. A youth leader and sign language interpreter at Bethlehem FWB Church in Pototoc, Mississippi, Brandi (26) is a Surgical Technologist at Baptist Memorial Hospital.