

Topic: Sarah

Reading Outline

- Read Genesis 11-25, paying particular attention to scripture references listed below. Also read the specific scriptures listed in Isaiah, Romans, Hebrews, and 1 Peter.
- Focus on the person of Sarai/Sarah, as well as the “big picture” themes.
- Have fun and see how learning more about Sarah can edify and teach us women regarding the unity of the faith.

Scripture References

- Genesis 11:29-31; 12:5-7; 16:1-8; 17:15-21; 18; 20:2-18; 21:1-12; 23:1-19; 24:36,37; 25:10,12; 49:31, Isaiah 51:2, Romans 4:19; 9:9, Hebrews 11:11, 1 Peter 3:6

Historical Context of Genesis (From Zondervan Study Bible)

- Author: Moses
- Audience: God’s chosen people, the Israelites
- Date: Between 1446 and 1406 BC
- Theme: Genesis is the book of beginnings that introduces central themes of the Bible

Background

- Sarah is from Ur of the Chaldees, possibly in northern Mesopotamia, but more likely in southern Iraq.
- Her former name, Sarai, meaning “princely”, identifies her as coming from an honored family (Lockyer, 156). She was the daughter of Terah and half-sister to Abraham (10 years younger than him, as noted in Gen 17:17).
- Sarah was the first Hebrewess-the joint fountainhead of the Jewish race (Isa 51:2).
- Sarai’s inability to conceive (see Gen 1:2-3; 17:17) “...emphasized the fact that God’s people would not come by natural generation from post-Babel peoples. God was bringing a new humanity into being, of whom Abraham was father (17:5), just as Adam and Noah were fathers of the fallen race” (The NIV Study Bible, Zondervan, p.29).
- The promise of ancestorship of many nations came with the change of her name from Sarai to Sarah, as she became mother to Isaac at age 90.

Post Reading Questions

Genesis Chapter 11

- V11:29-31 – What is significant about Sarai being childless and unable to conceive? Why do you believe these are some of the first details we learn of Sarai in scripture?

Genesis Chapter 12

- V12:1-3 - After the death of Terah, God calls Abraham and Sarai to go to an unknown land, Canaan. He asks Abraham to leave his people and his country. He exhibits prompt obedience (Heb 11:8). What must this have been like for Sarai?
- V12:12 - Sarai observes her husband following God's command to flee from Harran to Canaan, trusting in His Divine providence. She then sees his insecurity play out when he fears his life will be taken by the Egyptians due to her beauty. What do you make of this? How might Abraham's fear impact Sarai? How easy is it to be influenced by another's fear or insecurity (1Jo 4:18, Deu 31:6, Psa 27:1; 118:6)?
- V12:11-13 - What do you notice about Abram's choice of words, "Because of you...I may live on account of you..."? How is Sarai's beauty a double-edged sword (Pro 6:25, Mat 5:27-28, Pro 31:10-31)?
- V12:14-16 - If the pharaoh were to have added Sarai to his harem while knowing that she was Abram's wife, he would have been required to kill Abram first (Zondervan, p.32). How must Sarai be feeling in this moment? What types of pressures must she be experiencing?
- V12:17 – When the Lord struck Pharaoh with plagues, what type of response do you think this elicited from Sarai? What part of God's character is revealed in this verse (2Co 13:8, Psa 28:7)?
- We read nothing of Sarai's resistance to her husband's request in this chapter. While it is not mentioned in the Bible, is it possible that she may have encouraged Abram to have faith in God for protection in this moment?

Genesis Chapter 16

- V16:2 - Sarai states, “The Lord has kept me from having children”. What is Sarai implying about God and His promise?
- V16:2b - Sarai turns to her own plan and suggests that Abram sleep with Hagar so that she may “build a family through her” (Note: Sleeping with slaves was an ancient custom, illustrated in Old Assyrian marriage contracts to ensure the birth of a male heir [Zondervan, p. 36]). What type of pressure might she have experienced to provide offspring (Gen 12:2-3)? How is Sarai’s action similar to that of Abram’s in Chapter 12?
- V16:2 cont’d - What causes us to try to take things upon ourselves instead of waiting on God’s timing? What can be the results of such actions (Act 1:7, Isa 55:8-9, Psa 37:7)?
- V16:2 cont’d - How does Sarai’s suggestion to Abraham compare to Eve’s suggestion to Adam in the Garden (Gen 3:6)?
- V16:3-4 – How can we compare Sarai’s treatment of Hagar to Abram’s treatment of Sarai? What type of “scar tissue” develops in women who are objectified by others or by themselves? How does the objectification of women in society today satisfy Satan’s desires? How does cumulative scar tissue in this area impact God’s perfect design for women in marriage (pertaining to both earthly marriages of husband and wife, and as brides of Christ) (Eph 5:22-30)?
- V16:5 - After becoming pregnant by Abram, Hagar despises Sarai. Sarai states that Abram is responsible for the wrong she is suffering. What is the “wrong” being suffered (Gen 2:23-24, Eph 5: 25-32)? How are we to overcome the wrongs we suffer (Dan 9:9, Psa 103:12, Luk 23:34)?
- V16:5b - Sarai says to Abram, “Let God be the judge between you and me”. How often do we have this attitude? What happens when we let God be between us and others?

Genesis Chapter 17

- V17:15 -16 – What must it have been like for Sarah upon hearing her new name? What was the significance of this new name? Imagine if our names were related to His spiritual purpose for our lives, and others called us by these names. How quickly do we forget how God has made each of us for a unique purpose to bring Him glory (Rom 12:6-7)? What happens when we become familiar with those of the Body of Christ (Mar 6:1-4)?

Genesis Chapter 18

- V18:5-7 - What is the significance of the bread? How do you think Sarah responds to Abraham’s sense of urgency (CP Mat 13:33)?

- V18:10-12 - What possible emotions could Sarah be experiencing in this verse? Why does she laugh “to herself” (CP Gen 21:6)?
- V18:13-14 - God speaks to Abraham about Sarah’s doubt. Is it possible that God is also speaking to Sarah? How does God help us believers overcome our doubts (Rom 1:17, Zec 13:19, 1Pe 1:7, Isa 48:10, Job 23:10, Pro 17:3)? What other scripture comes to mind?
- V18:15 – In this verse, Sarah states that she did not laugh. What are some possible reasons that she did not want her laughter to be revealed in this moment? Why do we try to hide certain emotions from God? How do we forget that He knows exactly how we feel? (As an important reminder, thoughts that are unsubstantiated by the Word of God are conjecture.)

Genesis Chapter 20: 2-18

- V20:2 - What are some possible thoughts going through Sarah’s mind in this second mentioned instance of both being presented as Abraham’s sister and being given to another man for marriage?
- V20:8-11 - What is the irony in Abraham’s statement in verse 11?
- V20:13 – Abraham describes how Sarah can show her love towards Him. On what levels is his request wrong? What type of conflict could such a request create in Sarah’s soul? How do the concepts of Godly conscience and obedience pertain to this section (Jer 7:23, 1Sa 15:22)?
- How slow are we to learn from past failures? Why is this? Thanks be to God for His patience (Num 14:18, Exo 34:6, Psa 86:15)!

Genesis Chapter 21: 1-12

- 21:1 - The Lord did for Sarah what He had promised (Gen 17:16-19). Who is blessed in this act of God fulfilling His promise?
- 21:1 cont’d- How is God’s grace revealed to Sarah? (2Co 12:8-9, Rom 11:6)
- 21:1 cont’d- What is important to note about the covenant Sarah represents? How can this be compared to that of Hagar? (Cp Gal 4:22-31)
- 21:2- This verse states that Abraham would have a son with Sarah “...in his old age at the very time God had promised him.” What is noteworthy about Sarah being 90 and Abraham being 100 at the time of Isaac’s birth? (Gen 18:14)

- 21:6-7- According to Zondervan’s NIV Study Bible, the laughter in this verse is laughter of joy and faith, whereas the laughter in Genesis 17:17 is laughter of temporary disbelief. Sarah states that “...everyone who hears will laugh with me.” How does Sarah’s experience increase your joy and your faith? How does God bring us through moments of temporary disbelief to moments of joy and laughter?
- 21:7- What does this verse say about God’s omnipotence versus human rationalism? How should we be encouraged? (Rom 9:16, 1Co 6:14, 2Co 13:4, Isa 26:4, Mat 19:26)
- 21:9-10 – Sarah expresses her desire to have Hagar and Ishmael sent away. Why might she have felt threatened about Ishmael sharing in Isaac’s inheritance?
- 21:11-13 – Why does God ask Abraham to listen to what Sarah tells him and not to be distressed? (See Rom 9:6-8)
- 21:11-13 cont’d –God uses Sarah feeling threatened to accomplish His will. How can we apply this to our lives? How does Scripture address slavery versus freedom? (cp Gal 4:28-31)

Genesis Chapter 23:1-19

- 23:1-2 –Sarah dies at 127 years old. According to Dr. Lockyer, she is the only woman whose specific age is stated in Scripture. As this study comes to an end, what have we learned from Sarah? (Heb 11:11, 1Pe 3:1-6, Isa 51:2, Rom 4:19-25)
- 23:19-20 – What is significant about Abraham providing a burial place for Sarah and him in the land of Canaan?