

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

61. Here Is the Truth: God Sees You and He Cares

You are listening to episode 61 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast, titled, *Here's the Truth: God Sees You and He Cares*. Some days are just plain difficult to maneuver, aren't they? We run into detours, roadblocks, and rough terrain. Our hearts and bodies get weary, our minds become overloaded, and our attitudes take a nosedive. We attempt to trudge through the day on our own, forgetting God is with us and is going ahead of us. We forget God sees all, hears all, and knows all. And to top it all off, we don't always remember just how much God cares for us. Well, in today's episode we're pausing to look at truth. We're stepping back from life for a few moments to ponder the intimacy of God and just how much He cares for you and me. If you could use a dose of this reality, then hang with me here for a few moments as we find help and hope for our real lives today.

Have you ever asked questions like these?

Does God really care about me and what I'm going through?
Or am I invisible to Him?
Does He hear me when I pray?
Or do my words fall on deaf ears?
Does God understand my suffering?
Or is He too busy to notice?
Does God see how I'm struggling?
Or is He making me go through this because of my past mistakes?

I'm guessing we've all asked these or similar questions. And there's nothing wrong with asking them. In fact, it's in the asking where we find the answers. It's in the asking where we learn truth. And it's in the asking where we are met with reality of who God really is and how much He cares about you and me.

The truth of the matter is this:

God sees you, He hears you, and He cares.

And it doesn't matter what we've done or haven't done.

And as an earthly father would be, His gaze is on, and His ears are tuned in to His children. Our Heavenly Father cares for us. He is neither blind nor deaf to our needs. What concerns us concerns Him. He is never too busy or too tired or too anything to meet us in the circumstances we find ourselves in. You and I are never alone, never out of God's sight, and never beyond His earshot.

How do I know?

Well, simply, because the Bible tells me so.

All throughout scripture, we see how God intervened and acted on behalf of His people. How he watched over infant Moses floating down the Nile River in a basket. How He rescued His people from

slavery in Egypt. He parted the Red Sea so they could escape Pharoah and his chasing army. His hand was upon Joseph and eventually made him second in command in all of Egypt. Through Jesus He healed the blind, the sick, the deaf, the lame, and brought Lazarus back to life. And He even saw a woman and her son alone in the wilderness and cared and provided for them there.

And if He did all this for them, why would He not act on our behalf, too?

One of these accounts stands out to me today, and it's the story of Hagar and Ishmael.

It's an encouraging one for us, and you can find it in Genesis 21:8-21. If you have your Bible nearby, or your Bible app, feel free to grab it, pause this episode, and read the account. If you don't, simply just listen in. We will walk through it together.

This story picks up after Sarah (Abraham's wife) gave birth to Abraham's promised child, Isaac. Sarah's joy in giving birth at age 90 appears as if it lasts for a couple years. She's elated to have a son! A son that was promised by God, Himself!

But on the day Isaac is weaned, Sarah's joy is quickly dashed. The weaning of a child in that culture occurred between ages two and three, and it was a time for great celebration. So, Abraham hosts a great feast as this weaning was his beloved son's first step toward manhood.

This happy occasion takes a dramatic turn when Sarah witnesses Ishmael (the son of Hagar, her Egyptian handmaid) who was mocking little Isaac. And this form of the verb mocking, which normally means to laugh, suggests here an evil intent. So, 16-year-old Ishmael was showing evil towards young Isaac. In seeing this, Sarah did what any momma would do, she protects her son. She's not about to stand for any of Ishmael's nonsense.

Sarah has had enough.

So, she marches over to Abraham and demands him to "*Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac*" in verse 10. She's fuming. So much so, she does not even mention Hagar's and Ishmael's names here. Interestingly, Sarah referred to Isaac as *her son* and not *Abraham's* or *their son*? Isaac was *hers*. Thank you very much.

What is Abraham to do? He's distressed. After all, he loves Ishmael! He's his first born son and doesn't want to cast him out away from him. Abraham might also be remembering the last time He followed Sarah's orders (in Chapter 16), well, let's just say that didn't work out so well. Maybe you know the story. That's when Sarah got impatient waiting on God's promise of a child and took matters into her own hands. God had promised Abraham offspring, and since she was unable to conceive up to this point, she gave Hagar, her handmaid, to Abraham for a son. That son is Ishmael.

But God tells Abraham to not be distressed and to do what Sarah says because Abraham's lineage will continue through Isaac. God will also bless Ishmael as a nation. Interestingly, Sarah's desire was in line with God's will this time.

Abraham rises early the next morning with a bread in one hand and a skin of water in the other and sends off Hagar and Ishmael. They wander about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba until the water runs out. Hagar does what she can to comfort Ishmael by putting him under a bush. She cannot watch her

boy die from exposure, so she sits a distance away—about the distance of the length of a football field, lifts her voice and weeps.

I think I would, too.

Now, Hagar hasn't been the model handmaid, no, but imagine how she was feeling? Likely betrayed, cast out, despised, alone. She no longer belonged in Abraham's family. Instead, she found herself in the wilderness, waiting at a distance for her 16-year-old son to die. After all, it wasn't her idea to have Abraham's son. It was Sarah's.

How about you? Maybe life hasn't been fair to you, either. Maybe you can relate a little to Hagar. You feel betrayed, abandoned, cast out. Maybe, like Hagar, you feel forgotten by God. You're wandering about in your own wilderness of sorts. The pain, the disappointment, the loss, the hopelessness. You can't keep going on your own. You just can't. So, you sit a distance away from what or whom you love, you lift your voice, and you weep.

I'm so sorry. Take heart, my friend. Just as God heard Ishmael's cries in this text, He hears yours and mine, too. After all, the name Ishmael means "God hears." Verse 17 in chapter 21 reads, "*God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there."*"

The thing is, God hears you, too.

And God sees you.

Let that sink in. God is with you in your circumstances. He is saying to you, *do not be afraid. I hear you, I see you, and I care. I am right here with you.* And not only that, but He cares about what you care about. It's true!

The angel then says for Hagar to help the boy up and to take him by the hand. God will make Ishmael a great nation.

This wasn't the first time God met Hagar in the wilderness, however. He saw her back in chapter 16 as she—pregnant with Ishmael—ran away from Sarah. The angel of the Lord told her to return to Sarah and to submit to her. It was then Hagar named the Lord who spoke to her El-roi, the God who sees.

The God who sees.

The God who saw Hagar is the same God who sees you and me. Nothing doesn't happen in this world that's beyond His sight. Even the smallest, minute detail doesn't escape His vision. He sees it all, and He most certainly sees you and me. Doesn't that bring your comfort? It does me.

After God says he will make Ishmael a great nation, something amazing happens. God opened Hagar's eyes and she saw a well of water. She filled the skin with water and gave Ishmael a drink. The well didn't just appear, no, it had been there all along. But Hagar simply did not see it. Is there a lesson for us here? What gift or blessing or provision has God lavishly given you or me, but in our grief or hard circumstance we just do not see it? Grief without trust in God can blind us from the blessings that may be right in front of us.

But this wasn't just a pond or a stream of water. No! It was a well of water! God not only met Hagar and Ishmael in their need, He met them with abundance. His abundance! A never-ending supply of water from a well. And you know? God provides a well in every wilderness. Do we see it? Are our eyes opened to it? A well for rest, a well for refreshment, a well for everyday life, a well for thirsty souls. Have we been so blinded by our circumstances that we've missed the well God has placed in our lives? Where is His well for you? How is God providing for you today? If you can't see it, ask Him to show you. He'll do it, my friend. He will.

In John 7:37-38 we read, "*On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."*" God has a well in your wilderness, and it's filled with abundance.

This text ends declaring God was with Ishmael as he grew, and he became an expert archer. He lived in the wilderness of Paran and his mother got a wife for him from Egypt, her country. Ismael did become a great nation, the Ishmaelites. Some say he is the father of Arabs and Muslims, and well, some question that.

But either way, the truth is this: just as God saw and heard Hagar and Ishmael, He sees you and me, too. We can trust our Heavenly Father. He is our Defender, our Healer, our Creator, our Sustainer, our Great Physician, our Helper, our Hope, our Provider, our Peace, our Shepherd, our El-roi (the God who sees), and so much more. He cares for us, more than we can comprehend.

Since God cares for you, let Him carry all your burdens and worries. 1 Peter 5:7 Voice

God is so good to us, isn't He?

Come on over to our Encouragement for Real Life Community where we are continuing our discussion on how God sees us and how He cares for us. I invite you over there to be a part of the conversation and to connect with others. The link to this incredible group is in the show notes.

Also, to encourage you further, you'll find some helpful and inspiring resources for your daily use in my Free Resources, such as printables, lock screens, and social posts to share. You can access those on my site using the link in the show notes.

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As we close today, no matter what you may be walking through or experiencing, I pray this story of Hagar and Ishmael encourages your heart. I pray it lifts a burden off you, and I pray it reminds you how much God cares for you. May it revive your soul and fill you with hope and truth. God sees you, friend. He loves you so very much. Hang on to this today and every day. Thanks for tuning in. God bless you.

