

## God Hears

Ponder: Trusting God during trials.

Scripture: "You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction" (Gen. 16:11, NKJV).

We could call it a comedy of errors except it isn't funny. The barren Sarai concocted a scheme to "help" the Lord fulfill His promise to give Abram innumerable descendants. She would give him her Egyptian maid, Hagar, as a secondary wife. Abram went along with the plan; Scripture gives no indication that he sought God's counsel about it.

Almost immediately, Hagar conceived. "And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes" (Gen. 16:4). Sarai complained to Abram, who told her to handle the situation however she pleased. (Wait a minute, Abram! You're the head of a household the size of a small city. This haughty young woman is your wife. Reprimand her!) Sarai chastened her rival so severely that Hagar fled, heading back home to Egypt.

Abram erred by going along with Sarai's bad idea. Hagar erred by despising Sarai. Sarai erred again by abusing Hagar. What a mess! But in spite of it all, God was there to help His flawed people.

The Angel of the Lord spoke to Hagar at a well on the way to Egypt, instructing her to return to Sarai in submission. While that may not have been to Hagar's liking, He also assured her that He would take care of her. In fact, He told her to name her son "Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction" (16:11). Ishmael means "God hears." We don't know when or if Hagar actually cried out to the Lord, but He "heard" her affliction anyway. Every time she spoke her son's name, she would be reminded that God had heard.

Sometimes trials come upon us due to other people's faults. Sometimes we, like Hagar, are at least partially responsible. In His mercy and grace, God is there to help us deal with our issues. Maybe each of us should have a son named Ishmael to remind us that God hears.

Hymn: "In The Hour Of Trial"

Prayer: Gracious Father, how blessed we are to know that You hear us during difficult times as well as when our path is smooth. Whenever and whyever trials come our way, help us to trust you completely. In Jesus' name, Amen.