

## **Our Bible Sisters:**

### **Sarah – Learning to Wait on God's Timing**

## **Participant Guide**

This Bible study was written by Marilyn Miller, a staff minister at Abiding Word Lutheran Church in Houston, TX. The theological content was reviewed by Professor Lyle Lange.

*Our Bible Sisters is a series of one-hour studies that may be used separately or in any combination. Each looks at a different woman of the Bible, highlighting God's faithfulness in her life, with applications to the lives of all Christian women today.*

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# Sarah – Learning to Wait on God’s Timing

## Opening Prayer

## The Setting

1. What do we know about Sarah’s background? Read Genesis 11:27-31, 12:1-3, 15:5-6 and 20:11-12?
2. Read Genesis 12:10-20. What do we learn about Abram in this episode?
3. How was God’s plan superior to Abram’s?
4. What can we learn from this short story?

## Sarah’s Response

5. Read Genesis 16:1-3. God had promised more offspring than stars in the sky, yet Abram and Sarai were both getting old and had no children. What are some of the things Sarai might have been thinking?
6. Was Sarai’s plan acceptable in their culture?
7. Was it acceptable to God?
8. What role did Abram play in this sin?
9. Discuss a time that you tried to help God with your own plan instead of waiting on his timing.

10. When we take God's plan into our own hands as Sarai did, what attitudes are we displaying toward God?

## **The Result**

11. Read Genesis 16:4-8. What are some of the immediate consequences of Abram having a child with Hagar?
12. From Genesis 16:9-12 we learn that Hagar's child was named Ishmael and would be a "wild man" who would live in hostility toward his brothers. We see this hostility to this very day. Ishmael is the father of the Arab races and Sarai's son the father of the Jewish races. What lessons can we learn from Sarai's "solution" to her problems?

## **God Repeats His Promise**

13. Years later, God repeats his promises to Abraham and now it is very clear, since Sarai is no longer young enough to have children, that God alone would make this happen. Read Genesis 17:1-7 and 17:15-16. What is the significance of changing their names to Abraham and Sarah?
14. Even with the name change, Sarah and Abraham still exhibit doubt. In Genesis 18:10-15, the Lord visits Abraham and once again voices the same promise he has been making for over 25 years. What is the response of both Sarah and her husband?
15. What is the significance of the words "at the appointed time" in vs 14?
16. What promises can we focus on when we are waiting on God's timing?
17. What do we learn from the Lord's words to Sarah in vs 15?

## **The Promise Fulfilled**

18. Read Genesis 21:1-7 God keeps his promises! Sarah was 90 years old and Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born. Compare Sarah's laughter in Genesis 18:12 with that in 21:6.

19. As we read about Sarah and Abraham holding their new son in their arms and reflecting on their years of waiting, it calls to mind other faithful Christians who have been called to lives of waiting. God said in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." How does the act of waiting show us our weakness?
  
20. How does the act of waiting show us God's power and grace?
  
21. Those who believe can trace their heritage back to Abraham and likewise to Sarah. She is mentioned alongside Abraham in Isaiah 51: 2a as well as Romans 9:8-9 as the mother of the righteous. Their faith is praised in that great chapter of heroes, Hebrews 11 (vs 11). It is clear that we are to look to Sarah as an example for our lives. What can we learn from her?

## **Closing Prayer/Meditation**

If You But Trust in God to Guide You CW 444 vs. 1, 3, 4

*If you but trust in God to guide you  
And place your confidence in him,  
He'll give you strength and stand beside you  
When days are dreary, dark, and dim.  
For those who trust his changeless love  
Build on the rock that does not move.*

*Be patient and await his leisure  
In cheerful hope, with heart content;  
Then take whate'er your Father's pleasure  
And his discerning love have sent.  
Doubt not; your inmost wants are known  
To him who chose you for his own.*

*Sing, pray, and keep his ways unswerving,  
Perform your duties faithfully,  
And trust his Word; though undeserving,  
You'll find his promise true to be.  
God never yet forsook in need  
The soul that trusted him indeed.*

**For further study:**

- In the days ahead, reflect on the situations in your life right now that require trust in God's promises and God's timing.
- Pray or journal about Genesis 18:14a, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" and 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
- Like Sarah, we doubt but like Sarah we have the same God who is faithful even when we falter. Read the beautiful picture of how, in the end, God regards his "friend" Abraham (Isaiah 41:8-11) and the fullness of his grace as recorded in Romans 4:16-25— a message of strength and comfort and hope.
- Confess your failure to trust in this great promise and confidently ask God to strengthen you through his Holy Spirit. He will do it!

**Additional references:**

- Psalm 145:13-14 (for all generations, God is faithful to all his promises, he lifts up all who are bowed down)
- 2 Timothy 2:11-13 (he will remain faithful)
- Hebrews 10:23 (Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful!)

Perhaps there is someone dear to you who also needs to be strengthened in the midst of doubt. Pray for God to open your eyes to others' needs and how he might guide you, holding out the wonderful message of hope and God's promises.

**References:**

Jeske, John C., The People's Bible – Genesis

Lockyer, Herbert, All the Women of the Bible

Barber/Rasnake/Shepherd, Life Principles from the Women of the Bible