



## The Nourishing Vocation Project Near and Now:

*Listening to your Longings - Hagar*

### Warm-up Question

*When has it been hard for you to imagine a way forward?  
Give examples*



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### Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

## Then God Opened Her Eyes and She Saw

Read [Genesis 21:8-21](#)

### Bible Story Reflection

Hagar is caught in a conflict not of her own making. She has no power, no authority, no agency to create a way forward into her own future or the future of her son, Ishmael. As a slave, she is bound (both literally and figuratively) by the will of her master. While we in the Christian tradition are accustomed to focusing on Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac, it is important to remember that Hagar and Ishmael are essential to the story too. They do not act as “extras” in a dramatic plot-line, but as both receivers of and bearers of God’s blessing.

In the story of Hagar, we are invited to reflect upon our personal experiences of being cast off and cast out, to name our own experiences of feeling “not seen” or “not heard.” We also have an opportunity to look into this story as a mirror of a different kind. In so looking, we can see, name, and repent from the times in our lives when we have used others as a means to an end and then discarded them as though they do not matter.

Equally, this story is an opportunity to deeply consider what it means that God’s promises are far greater than we can begin to think about or imagine. Cast out and cast off into the wilderness, Hagar and Ishmael face certain death, but Hagar cries out and God hears, God speaks to her, God comforts her, and God gives a word of promise for Ishmael. Hagar cries out, and God opens her eyes to see life-giving water that provides respite in the present and hope for the future.

We often dwell on the stories of God’s promises carried out and fulfilled through Abraham and Sarah’s descendants, all the way to Jesus, and that is good and right to do. But this story gives us the chance to consider the width and breadth of God’s promise that [“all the families of the earth will be blessed.”](#) to contemplate – and celebrate – that “all really means all.” Ishmael, whose very name means “God will hear” bears witness to both the hope and reality of blessing enough for everyone.



## Discussion Questions

1. How do you think Hagar would tell her own story? How about Ishmael?
2. What does this story reveal about power and jealousy?
3. God hears and responds to Hagar's cries. Why is this so important?
4. When have you felt "not seen" or "not heard?"
5. Who are some people today who may feel "cast out" or "cast off" by the church? What can we do about that?
6. From what is this story calling you to repent?
7. Who are you being called to "hear" and "see" today?
8. How are you being called to embody "all means all" when it comes to God's blessings?

## Activity Suggestions

Sing or read the hymn, "[All are Welcome.](#)" ELW 641, verse by verse. After each verse, discuss how you are living out these words and how you can do better.

Use *Legos* or other building blocks. Have each person take one at a time, and while holding the block, name something that prevents people from really seeing or hearing others. Build a wall with the blocks that have been named. One-by-one, name a strategy to tear down the wall, dismantling the wall while doing so.

Take a prayer walk around your community, stopping at various places along your route to pray for those who may not feel seen or heard.

## Prayer Concerns

Refugees and others forced to leave their homes, all who are overlooked in their homes or communities, those suffering under the abuse of power

## Closing Prayer

When my longings overwhelm me O God, help me focus on you and realize your promises. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

