

Praying with the women of the Old Testament
Session 2

Opening Prayer: “Our souls proclaim the greatness of the Lord, and our spirits rejoice in God our Savior. Lord Jesus, teach us to pray. Mother Mary, pray for us.”

1. **Gn 6:5:** “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”
2. **Gn 11:30:** “Now Sar’ai was barren; she had no child.”
3. **Gn 12:1-3** “Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.”
4. **Gn 12:5** “And Abram took Sar’ai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions which they had gathered, and the persons that they had gotten in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.”
5. **Gn 12:7-8** “Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land.’ So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. Thence he removed to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.”
6. **Gn 12:11-13** “When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sar’ai his wife, “I know that you are a woman beautiful to behold; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’; then they will kill me, but they will let you live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared on your account.”
7. **Gn 12:17-20** “But the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sar’ai, Abram’s wife. So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, ‘What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her, and be gone.’ And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him; and they set him on the way, with his wife and all that he had.”
8. **Gn 15:1-4** “After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, ‘Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.’ But Abram said, ‘O Lord God, what

wilt thou give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Elie'zer of Damascus?' And Abram said, 'Behold, thou hast given me no offspring; and a slave born in my house will be my heir.' And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, 'This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir.'

9. Gn 15:5-6 "And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness."

10. Gn 16:1-2 "Now Sar'ai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar; and Sar'ai said to Abram, 'Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my maid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sar'ai."

11. Gn 16:3-6 "So, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, Sar'ai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sar'ai said to Abram, 'May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my maid to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!' But Abram said to Sar'ai, 'Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her as you please.' Then Sar'ai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her."

12. Gn 17:15-18 "And God said to Abraham, 'As for Sar'ai your wife, you shall not call her name Sar'ai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her; I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.' Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, 'Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?' And Abraham said to God, 'O that Ish'mael might live in thy sight!'"

13. Gn 17:21 "But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year."

14. Gn 18:12-15 "So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?' The Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son.' But Sarah denied, saying, 'I did not laugh'; for she was afraid. He said, 'No, but you did laugh.'"

15. Gn 21:6-7 “And Sarah said, “God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me.” And she said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would suckle children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

16. Jn 16:33 “I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

17. Gn 21:9-14 “But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.’ And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, ‘Be not displeased because of the lad and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your descendants be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.’ So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away.”

18. “Jesus is Isaac, who, risen from the dead, comes down from the mountain with the laughter of joy on his face. All the words of the Risen One manifest this joy—this laughter of redemption: if you see what I see and have seen...you will laugh!” (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI)

Closing Prayer: “Father, Your word is a lamp to our feet and a light on our path. May it be done to us according to Your word.”

For Personal Reflection

(These questions are meant to help us have conversations with God that lessons from Sarah's life put in our hearts and on our lips.)

We know from God's call to Abraham that it is the vocation of all God's covenant people to be a *blessing*.

What do you think it means to be a blessing in your own daily life?

Can you think of times when God has enabled you to bless those around you?

Can you think of times when it was clear those around you weren't blessed by your behavior?

When Abram and Sarai reached the Promised Land, they built altars out of gratitude for this gift of the new life God had given them.

We can't physically build altars when we experience gratitude for God's various kindnesses, answered prayers, consolations, unexpected gifts, etc.

What can you do to mark your gratitude to Him, perhaps in small but meaningful ways, for any of these that come into your life?

When Abram and Sarai faced famine in their new homeland, they cobbled together a plan without asking God's guidance.

Have you had any experiences of rejoicing in God's good plan for your life only to suddenly run into disturbing, unexpected setbacks?

Why do you think God allows that kind of thing to happen?

If it has happened to you, did it weaken or strengthen your faith?

After their unfortunate trip to Egypt, Abram and Sarai decided it was better to be where God's will had called them, even with its deprivations, than to live outside His will in luxury and comfort.

Is this a truth we modern people have to live with as well?

Is accepting this truth ever a struggle for you?

In her desperate desire to mother a child after 10 long years of waiting for God to keep His promise, Sarai hatched a plan of her own. It proved disastrous, and she blamed it all on Abram.

Does this dynamic of scapegoating ever happen in your marriage?

If so, what do you think is the best remedy for it?

Abram and Sarai both lost the focus of their vocation to be blessed by God and to be a blessing to others. They were desperate to have the child God had promised, not a bad thing in itself. When that became their sole focus, they got into trouble.

Is there anything you so much want God to do that you think you are in danger of losing your focus on your vocation?

If so, can you walk your way back to where you need to be?

Sarah teaches us that God delights in making great reversals, even if they take a very long time. He always keeps His promises, no matter how weak our faith sometimes becomes in time of trial.

Is there a difficulty in your life now that needs God's loving reversal, replacing tears with the laughter of joy?

Can Sarah's life give you any encouragement as you live with this, waiting on God?

Are there any lingering impressions from Sarah's life that you don't want to forget? Perhaps you can write them down below.