

## Series – Family Check Up

### #1 THE GOD WHO SEES ME

Genesis 16:1-15

**Introduction:** Think of all the lessons mothers have taught us over the years.

My mother taught me RELIGION:

"You better pray that will come out of the carpet."

My mother taught me LOGIC:

"Because I said so, that's why."

My mother taught me FORESIGHT:

"Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."

My mother taught me IRONY:

"If you don't stop crying, I'll give you something to cry about."

My mother taught me about STAMINA:

"You'll sit there 'til you eat all your vegetables."

My mother taught me THE CIRCLE OF LIFE:

"I brought you into this world, and I can take you out."

I heard about one woman who said, ***"Before I was married, I had three theories about raising children. Now, I have three children and no theories."***

Story: There was a woman in a local church that had a son that was quite unruly. They had a visiting missionary come and he was trying to stir up interest to get people to go to a foreign country to preach the gospel. As the missionary was speaking, that little boy seemed determined to disrupt the whole service.

At the end of the service the woman dragging the little boy behind her, told the missionary, "I feel like God is calling me to be a missionary." The missionary replied that he felt that God was also calling her to be a missionary and pointing to the little boy, he said "And there's the little heathen God wants you to start with."

Story: One day, a little girl is sitting and watching her mother do the dishes. She suddenly notices that her mother has several strands of white hair sticking out in contrast to her brown hair. She looks at her mother and asks, "Why is some of your hairs white, Mom?" Her mother replied "Well, every time that you do something wrong and make me cry or unhappy, one of my hairs turns white." The little girl thought about this for a while and then asked, "Momma, how come all of grandma's hair is white?"

One mother had a small decorative windmill in her yard. A storm broke one of the blades, causing the windmill to shake violently. Dad announced that he would "take care of it" and he rebalanced the windmill by snapping off the opposing blade. Watching him, Mom remarked, "I hope I never break a leg."

Story: Edward, a big-game hunter, goes on safari in Kenya with his wife, Frances and his mother-in-law, Agnes. One evening, while still deep in the jungle, Frances wakes to find her mother has disappeared. Rushing to Edward, she insists on them both trying to find her mother.

Edward picks up his rifle and starts to search. Soon, in a clearing not far from the camp, they come upon a frightening sight.

Agnes, the mother-in-law is backed up against a thick, impenetrable bush, and a large male lion is standing facing her. Frances cries out in panic, Edward, what are we going to do?'

'Nothing,' Edward says calmly. 'Absolutely nothing. That lion got himself into this mess, and he can get himself out of it.'

Story: My mother, a master of guilt trips, showed me a photo of herself waiting by a phone that never rings. "Mom, I call all the time," I said. "If you had an answering machine, you would know." Soon after, my brother installed one for her. When I called the next time, I got her machine: "If you are a salesperson, press one. If you're a friend, press two. If you're my daughter who never calls, press 911 because the shock will probably give me a heart attack."

Illustration: Many of us are familiar with the love chapter in the Bible: 1 Corinthians 13. Let me read you a different version ***focusing on moms:***

If I live in a house of spotless beauty with everything in its place, but have not love, I am a housekeeper—not a homemaker.

If I have time for waxing, polishing, and decorative achievements, but have not love, my children learn cleanliness – not godliness.

Love leaves the dust in search of a child’s laugh. Love smiles at the tiny fingerprints on a newly cleaned window. Love wipes away the tears before it wipes up the spilled milk.

Love picks up the child before it picks up the toys. Love is present through trials. Love reprimands, reproves, and is responsive.

Love crawls with the baby, walks with the toddler, runs with the child, then stands aside to let the youth walk into adulthood.

Love is the key that opens salvation’s message to a child’s heart. Before I became a mother, I took glory in my house of perfection. Now I glory in God’s perfection of my child. There is much to teach my child, but the greatest of all is love.

If you're a mother, you know that motherhood can be messy, and at times frustrating, and exhausting. And there are no foolproof formulas. Every kid is different. You can raise two kids the same and they turn out very differently!

**STORY:** Tony Evans, an African American Pastor at Oak Cliffs Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas tells of a crack that formed on his bedroom wall. He said, “We called in a professional who replaced the plaster around the crack and repainted the wall. But the crack reappeared not long after that. We called the painter back, he repaired the crack, and he repainted the wall again. It all looked fine until about a couple months later when the crack came back. And this time it brought its aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews! Cracks were all over the place.

We called in another professional and he gave the verdict. The cracks in the wall were due to a much deeper problem. We were experiencing a shifting foundation. He told us that until we stabilized our foundation, we would forever be repairing cracks in the walls.”

We are living in a time when we are experiencing a shifting foundation of biblical values. Until we stabilize the foundation, no programs, government grants, or

elections will be able to repair the cracks in our cultural walls. There is no place where the foundation of America needs to be stabilized more than in the home. The breakdown of the family is the single greatest contributor to the deterioration of our country. Strong families hold the key to a strong and stable society. The Bible says, ***“No man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”*** (1 Corinthians 3:11).

I am absolutely convinced not just from a biblical perspective, but from a social and cultural perspective that the traditional family really matters. The family as we all know it, is God’s idea and still the best environment where healthy relationships can grow and thrive...that leads to a safe and stable society.

As I have done for the last several years, I’m going to teach a series of messages beginning today...through Father’s Day called, **“Family Check Up.”**

**Today is Mother's Day.** Today is supposed to be a fun and happy day; but there are some for whom this day brings guilt, sadness, or a sense of failure.

**So, as we begin, let me say...**

To those who are in the trenches with little ones every day and wear the badge of food stains and messy diapers, we **appreciate** you.

To those who gave birth this year, we **delight** with you.

To those who have lost a child, we **mourn** with you.

To those who have loving and close relationships, we **celebrate** with you.

To those who have wayward children, we **pray** with you.

To those who will have "empty nests" in the upcoming years, we both **grieve** and **rejoice** with you.

To those whose mothers have passed away, we **sorrow** with you.

To foster moms, mentor moms, and spiritual moms, we **thank** you for your love and sacrifice.

Turn with me to the book of Genesis, chapter 16. To set the scene, just a little bit; Genesis 15 is about God’s promises to Abraham, which are:

- 1) From Abraham there would come a great nation.
- 2) That Abraham’s name would become great
- 3) And that through Abraham all nations would be blessed.
- 4) Abraham and Sarah would have a son in their old age.

The trouble was that Abraham and Sarah hadn't had a child yet, and they felt that they've waited on God long enough and have come up with their own plan. Let me just say, taking matters into your own hands and getting ahead of God will always be troublesome. So, here's the rest of the story, as Paul Harvey would say:  
**Genesis 16:1-15**

*"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; 2so she said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her."*

*Abram agreed to what Sarai said. 3So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. 4He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.*

*When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. 5Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me."*

*6"Your slave is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so, she fled from her. 7The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. 8And he said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.*

*9Then the angel of the Lord told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." 10The angel added, "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count."*

*11The angel of the Lord also said to her: "You are now pregnant, and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. 12He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."*

*13She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." 14That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.*

**15**So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. **16**Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.”

### **Let's PRAY**

Illustration: Sheila Kissinger, a social anthropologist, writes in her book, Ourselves as Mothers: “Becoming a mother is a biological process, but it is also a social transformation, and one of the most dramatic and far-reaching that a woman may experience. The home is supposed to be a haven of love and good feelings. Thus, it comes as a great disappointment to many women when it proves not to be so for them. For home is also a place where the ugliest and most destructive emotions are experienced, where there is disturbing interpersonal conflict, and inside four walls these raw feelings are concentrated and mixed as if in a pressure cooker.”

We were all once children once, and children like to be watched. I bet you said to your mom, “Hey, mom, watch this! Look what I can do! Look at me!” And your mother looked every time, no matter what goofy thing you were doing. We all know what that’s like as a child, wanting to be seen by our parents.

Many of you moms wonder if you are seen—because there comes a point as a mom where you begin to think you are invisible. Nicole Johnson wrote an article called, “*I Am Invisible*,” and says... **“it all began to make sense—the blank stares, the lack of response, the way one of the kids will walk into the room while I am on the phone and ask to be taken to the store. And inside I am thinking, can’t you see? I am on the phone. No one can see if I am cooking or sweeping the floor or even standing on my head in the corner because no one sees me. *I am invisible.*”**

**Some days I am only a pair of hands; ‘Can you fix this? Can you tie this? Can you open this?’ Some days I am a clock to ask, ‘What time is it?’**

**I am a satellite guide to answer, ‘What number is the Disney Channel?’ I was certain that my hands that once held babies, changed diapers, and instructed kids, have now disappeared. *I feel invisible.*”**

I don't know if you've ever felt like that or feel like that now, but we are going to look at a woman who feels invisible, misunderstood, abused, and forgotten. The title of my message this morning is **The God Who Sees Me.**

Hagar is an immigrant from Egypt and has no sense of belonging. She is running away from a household where her body has been used to produce offspring for an infertile couple.

Like many other women, she is mistreated. She is trapped in a system where she feels as though she is invisible. She has no rights, dignity, freedom, or choice, and she has had enough. It is very hard to be a nobody. She is referred to by Abram and Sarah as "the maid" or "the Egyptian."

Some of you may be listening today and you feel like Hagar. You feel mistreated, abused, neglected, or overlooked. You understand that you have made mistakes, and you live with those, but what's confusing is when you must live with other people's mistakes and mistreatment.

Hagar's instinct, like many women, when they've had all they can take, is to run. Just a quick view of the daily headlines reveals that women all over the world are on the run.

Running away from an abusive home, relationship, or marriage. It could be physical, emotional, or spiritual abuse.

Running away from the entrapments of oppressive religious demands or cults.

Running away from women's sports, and women's locker rooms and bathrooms, because they've been taken over by men who identify as women.

Running from an unwanted pregnancy or an unloving spouse.

When we're on the run, we feel lonely, abandoned, angry, helpless, and misunderstood. But let me tell you that God in heaven who created you and gives you purpose, sees what's happening to you.

The angel intercepts Hagar and asks her a two-part question, that I'd also like to ask you today. **Where have you come from and where are you going?**

Check out Hagar's response, "I'm running away from my mistress Sarah." She is so focused on where she's **coming from** that she doesn't even answer the second question as to where she is going.

**Many times, we become so preoccupied with dealing with our past that we can't even think about our future.**

Hagar teaches us that it's important to answer the question, "Where have you come from?" I'm running away from a bad marriage, I'm running away from my childhood, I'm running away from a destroyed relationship. You see, where you're running from is the first step to getting the help you need.

Like Hagar we sometimes get caught up in that question, where have I come from? However, an equally important question is, **"where are we going?"**

Is it possible that you've been running away from something your whole life when God is calling you to run toward Him? Hagar spends all this time running away, but the angel doesn't just tell her to **handle her past**, he gives her **hope for a better future**.

Sometimes we allow events in our past to define us. We think that the way people see us is the way that God sees us.

I love what Hagar says in verse 13, ***"You are the God who sees me. I have now seen the One who sees me."***

Let me ask you this morning, "Do you see the God who sees you?"  
Do you realize how much He cares about you, and how much He loves you?

Are you aware that God knows exactly what you are going through?  
He sees you...He knows where you are and what you're going through.

***The Lord does two things for Hagar: He instructs her, and He encourages her.***

(1) The instruction is to stop running and turn around. Verse 9 says, ***"Go back to your mistress and submit to her."*** You can trust Me enough to go back and do the right thing?



(2) He encourages her by telling her what God will do. ***“The angel added, ‘I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.’”***

She’s pregnant and God says her descendants will be too numerous to count.

Verse 11, ***“...and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery.”***

Just so you know, Ishmael means ***“God hears.”*** So, every time you say that boy’s name you’re reminded of the goodness and mercy of God, that during your deepest trial, God saw you and he heard your cry.

Here in the middle of her greatest pain—all her confusion—God shows up. And she experiences God like never before. She doesn’t realize what her greatest need was until she meets the God who meets that need. And she names him in Verse 13, *El Roi*—***“the God who sees.”***

I wonder what name you would give God if you had the chance to name him...the God who loves, the God who comforts, the God who guides, the God who forgives, the God of second chances? Whatever you choose would say as much about your need as it would about the character of God because ***it is through our deepest needs, our toughest difficulties, and trials that we experience God at the deepest levels.***

Hagar, who might feel insignificant and misunderstood, is actually a very significant person. Hagar has one of the longest conversations of any woman in the Old Testament. Hagar, the Egyptian maid, is the only person in the Bible who gives *God* a name.

Up to this point, God introduced himself to the children of Israel as ***Elohim***, “the Creator,” ***Yahweh***, “the Covenant maker,” ***El Shaddai***, “the Almighty.”

These are majestic, names of God, but Hagar needs more than a God she has heard about. She needs an intimate, personal God that knows her pain.

Hagar declares ***“I have now seen the God who sees me.”*** It testifies to the fact that the God who hears us, also sees us.

***Ps 34:15 - The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry.***

***Psalm 33:18 - But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,***

***Pr 15:3 - The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.***

What difference does it make in my life to know that there is a God who sees me? What difference does that make as a mom, a dad, as a man, or woman?

**Illustration:** William Tammeus said, **“You don’t really understand human nature unless you know why a child on a merry-go-round will wave at his parents every time around—and why his parents will always wave back.”** Why do we need to be seen? Why do we long for a God who sees and what difference does that make to us? It makes all the difference in the world because to be seen is to be significant, and to know we are loved.”

God says in Psalm 139:16: **“Before I formed you, I saw you. My eyes saw your unformed body.”** God saw us before anyone else did, and He created us.

### **1. To be seen is to be significant and safe.**

**Story:** Some years ago, on a hot summer day in south Florida, a little boy decided to go for a swim in the pond behind his house.

In a hurry to dive into the cool water, he ran out the back door, leaving behind shoes, socks, and shirt as he went. He flew into the water, not realizing that as he swam toward the middle of the pond, an alligator was swimming toward him. His mother, who was in the house looking out the window, saw the two as they got closer together. In utter fear, she ran toward the water, yelling at her son as loudly as she could. Hearing her voice, the little boy became alarmed and made a U-turn to swim to his mother. It was too late.

Just as he reached her, the alligator reached him. From the dock, the mother grabbed her little boy by the arms just as the alligator snatched his legs. That began an incredible tug-of-war between the two.

The alligator was much stronger than the mother, but the mother was much too passionate to let go. A farmer happened to drive by, heard her screams, grabbed his rifle, raced from his truck, and shot the alligator. Remarkably, after weeks in the hospital, the boy survived.

His legs were extremely scarred by the vicious attack of the animal, and his arms had deep scratches where his mother's fingernails had dug into his flesh.

The newspaper reporter who interviewed the boy after the trauma asked if he would show him his scars. The boy lifted his pant legs, showing the damage. Then, with obvious pride, he said to the reporter, *"But look at my arms. I have bigger scars on my arms because my mom wouldn't let go."*

**Illustration:** God places babies between your arms and beneath your hearts, and you cradle them safely there. You feel every movement, but soon letting go begins. Father's arms cradle her. Grandmothers and grandfathers share the hug for the first time.

In quiet moments you whisper prayers over her, fold her little hands to pray, and tell stories of a giant-slaying, earth-shaking, miracle-working God, and you watch her eyes widen at the thought of someone larger than those she sees.

He/she begins to grasp and then believe in a Father-God even bigger, kinder, wiser, and more wonderful than her earthly father. And you release her soul to Him, trusting that God, in the fullness of time, will draw her to Himself.

**Motherhood is a series of letting goes.**

Then the day arrives when all that we have prayed for and pointed her toward is no longer on the horizon but is today. The future has become the present, and to hold him/her any longer would be to hinder her.

We remind him/her of her calling as an image-bearer of Christ, to let his/her light shine before others that they may see their good works and glorify their Father who is in heaven. And we commit them to God.

They may drive away like other times, but this time is different. It's not a weekend. It's not a mission trip. It's not the next semester. It's a life—that we prayed and prepared them for. **Motherhood is a series of letting goes.**

One mother said, “my son set off to drive to college in his car that he had just bought. So, as we packed up the car and he set off down the road, I waved, and waved and I watched until he got to the end of the road, and he turned left, and I could see him no more. In my heart I thought, “I can’t see you anymore.” But I heard the voice of the Lord in my heart saying, **“I see him.”**

**I’m here to tell you that God wants you to know, “they’re my kids too.”**

**Be assured that if God sees what is happening in this Egyptian servant girl’s situation, He knows what is going on in your life.**

What is it like to live under the gaze of a loving heavenly Father? There is a beautiful verse in Zephaniah 3:17, which says, *“He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love.”*

Psalm 33:13-15 says, ***“The Lord looks down from heaven. He sees all the sons of men; from his dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth—he who fashions the hearts of them all, he who understands all their works.”***

## **2. To be seen is to be understood and to be encouraged.**

*The movie, Chariots of Fire, where Eric Liddell, the great runner, said, “I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast, and when I run, I feel his pleasure.”*

## **3. To be seen is to be free.**

In 2 Samuel 6, King David is bringing the ark back to Jerusalem. He lived his life before an audience of one – God. That meant when he brought the ark back to Jerusalem—because he knew how much it thrilled God—he danced for joy.

2 Samuel 6:16 says: ***“As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal, daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart.”***

And down in verse 20 it says: ***“When David returned home to bless his household, Michal, daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, ‘How the king of Israel***

***has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!***

David said to Michal, ***'It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD'S people Israel—I will celebrate before the LORD. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.'***

David doesn't care what the crowds think. He doesn't care what his wife thinks. He doesn't even care what he thinks about himself, because when God sees us delighting in Him, we are free to dance; and free to express our joy.

#### **4. To be seen is to be strengthened.**

2 Chronicles 16:9: ***"The eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth." Why? "... that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."***

I don't know if the thought of God seeing you makes you cringe, or it gives you courage. For Hagar, it gave her courage.

**When no one else knows and no one else cares and no one else sees and no one else helps, God sees. And to be seen is to be known, and to be loved and to be cared for. You are not invisible. That's what Hagar discovered when she fled into the desert. God sees you.**

Just because you can't see God doesn't mean that he is not there. Just because I can't see Him doing anything immediately does not mean He is not doing something. To be seen does not mean you don't fall. The Bible does not say, "No sparrow falls." It says, "He sees a sparrow when it falls."

You know the story of Job. He went through unimaginable pain. He lost all his children, all his possessions, everything. But at the end of it all in Job 42:6 he said, ***"My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you."***

**CONCLUSION:** What difference does all this make? Let me put this as plainly as I can, and here's the **BIG TAKEAWAY:** It makes absolutely no difference that God sees you, unless you see the God who sees you.

Have you fixed your eyes on Jesus, the Author and finisher of your faith? Or are your eyes still wandering around the world looking for something else. Whether you like it or not and whether you believe it or not and whether you want it or not, God sees you. Can you see Him like Hagar did in her desperate situation? He knows where you've come from, but where are you going – to the Lord or away from Him.

There is an old song we used to sing, "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus."

**Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full on His wonderful face.  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.**