

## SCRIPTURE:

### PSALM 42:1-5

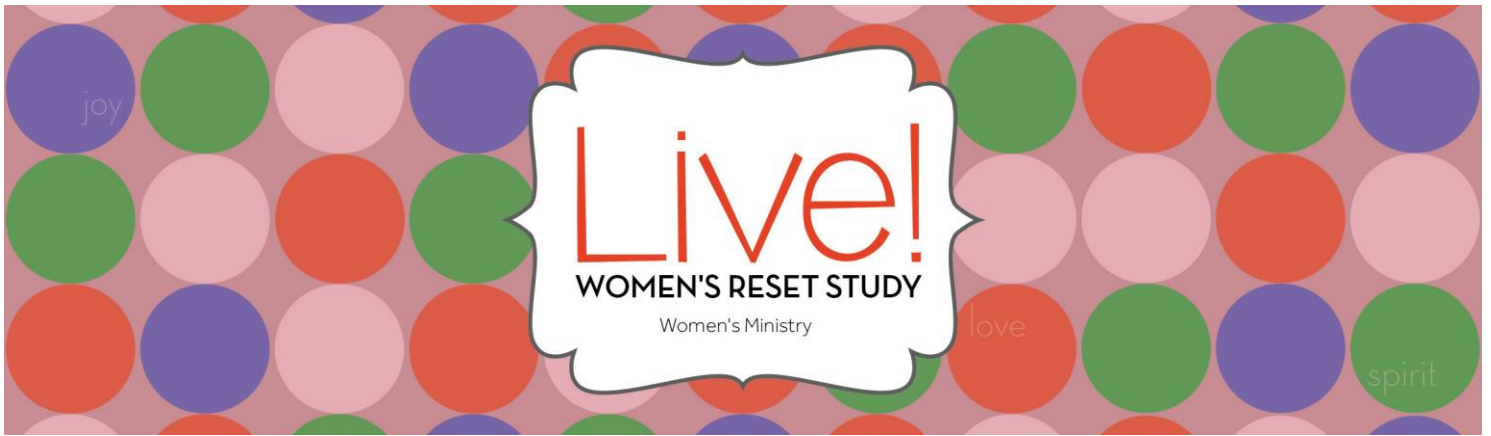
- This psalm begins with a picture of a deer panting for water. Just like ours, its life depends on water. Our story of Hagar also points to the provision of water. How are you caring for yourself and your basic, life-sustaining needs? Are you able to give all your needs to God with confidence that God will provide?
- Verse 5 repeats in verse 11, and again in Psalm 43:5. Being downcast or depressed is not unique to the psalmist; other narratives tell similar stories. All people, including Christians, can experience depression, with no guilt or shame. Are you able to recognize and name your feelings, just as the psalmist does, to seek help from God and others?

### PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

- “Let your gentleness be evident to all.” Including yourself! Self-compassion is important and begins with mindful awareness to what you are feeling, recognition that it is a shared human experience (others feel it too), and an offering of comfort and kindness. What brings you comfort? How can you treat yourself to a dose of gentleness?
- This passage continues with an encouragement to focus on positive (pure, lovely) things, followed up with a word to “put into practice” what you have learned (see verses 8-9). This combination is sure to lead to peace. What practices help you focus on positive self-talk? What leads you to find peace “that passes all understanding?”

### HAGAR--GENESIS 16 AND 21

- Midrash\* tradition about Hagar describes her as the daughter of King Pharaoh of Egypt. During Abram and Sarai’s visit in Egypt (Genesis 12:10-20), the Lord intervenes on Sarai’s behalf. Hagar takes note of this miracle and decides it is better to be a slave in Sarai’s house than a princess in her own. Where do you see God at work right here and now, even performing modern day miracles? Are there ways you can join in, to be part of what God is doing?
- The first time Hagar finds herself lost and afraid in the desert she has run away from her mistress. At that time, God answers her plea, and she exclaims, “You are El Ro’i . . .” (Gen. 16:13). Hagar calls God “the One who looks upon me” and names the well where she sits accordingly: Be’er-lachai-ro’i, “Well of the One who looks upon me.” What is it that God sees? We often pay little attention to the silent and invisible. How might you really see? Could you find a way to really pay attention to someone who is experiencing anxiety or pain?



In the middle of our portion we find the story of Hagar and her son Ishmael, who are cast out into the harsh desert. Ultimately, God hears the boy's cries. Scholars wonder why when there is no indication that Ishmael cries out at all. "The answer is that sometimes one can cry out without uttering a syllable, and it is that cry which pierces the Heavens, although only God hears it" (Torah Gems, Tel Aviv: Yavneh Publishing House, 1992). When have you cried out in this way? Does this give you a greater understanding about the love of God?

- "God then opened her eyes, and she saw a well" (Gen. 21:19). Scholars say that all are presumed to be blind until God opens their eyes. It's possible to consider that whatever we need is available, but we must have the fortune to have God open our eyes. Two miracles occur in the space of a moment in our text. Ishmael's silent cry is heard, and Hagar's eyes are opened. The text does not say God created the well for Hagar, only that God opened her eyes to see it. Is it possible there are lifesaving answers all around us, if only we could learn to see more openly, listen more subtly? What would help you live into this idea?

\*Author Rachel Held Evans, in her book *Inspired*, states that "*Christians can learn a lot about Scripture from the people who have had it the longest... Midrash is the imaginative exploration and expansion of Scripture that serve as the most common form of biblical interpretation in Jewish traditions.*" (The book includes a midrash-like chapter devoted to Hagar.)

**RESET:** From Hagar's story, Genesis 16 and 21, "see and hear"  
How will you be seen, and see others? How will you be heard, and hear others?