

# Life Group Discussion Questions

Week 21: February 7-14

## Genesis 21

Genesis 21 contains three major events: the birth of Isaac, the sending away of Hagar and Ishmael, and the peace treaty between Abraham and Abimelech. The entire chapter is “God-breathed and useful for teaching,” so that we may be “thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). All three of these events show God’s grace correcting human failures. However, the birth of Isaac is the long-awaited fulfillment of the promise God first made to Abraham 25 years earlier (Gen. 12:2), and it is the continuation of God’s redemptive plan to “crush the head of the serpent” through the “seed of the woman” (Gen. 3:15).

### Read Genesis 21:1-7

1. What did the LORD do for Sarah? (21:1-2)
2. What did Abraham do when Isaac was 8 days old? (21:3-4)
3. How old was Abraham when Isaac was born? (21:5)
4. What did Sarah say in verse 6?

The name Isaac means “he laughs.” Both Abraham (Gen. 17:17) and Sarah (Gen. 18:13) laughed when they first heard that they would have a son in their old age. Paul Kissling writes,

Abraham and Sarah get the joke and remind themselves of God's hilarious graciousness every time they look at Isaac. Ultimately God began the process of fulfilling his promises in his way, not through human reasoning and human planning. Such reasoning, consciously or unconsciously, assumes limitations on God's power.<sup>1</sup>

5. What did Sarah say in verse 7?

### Read Genesis 21:8-21

6. What did Abraham do when Isaac was weaned? (21:8)

7. Why did Sarah tell Abraham to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael? (21:9-10)

The word for “mocking” in verse 9 comes from the same root as Isaac’s name. However, the verb stem used here is intensive and indicates a mocking laughter. Kent Hughes observes,

Here the NIV's "mocking" rightly catches the malicious sense of the laughter because Paul in Galatians 4:29 says that Ishmael "persecuted" Isaac. Understandably, young Ishmael felt jealousy at being displaced. Envy always magnifies the importance of the other and belittles our own.<sup>2</sup>

8. How did Abraham feel about Sarah’s request in verse 11?
9. What did God tell Abraham in verse 12?
10. What did God tell Abraham in verse 13?

James Smith notes,

Sarah’s demand may seem harsh, but the Apostle Paul put his stamp of approval upon it (Gal 4:30). Because he loved Ishmael so much Abraham was grieved with the demand of his wife. What Sarah asked was not only personally painful, it was illegal under the law codes of that day. A special revelation was required to convince Abraham that he should go beyond the law and drive out Hagar. The patriarch was to listen to his wife. This direction was accompanied by a word of promise concerning the two sons. In Isaac Abraham’s seed was to be called; yet because he was Abraham’s seed, God would also make a great nation of Ishmael (21:11–13).<sup>3</sup>

11. Where did Hagar go when Abraham sent her and Ishmael away? (21:14)
12. What did Hagar do when she ran out of water in the desert? (21:15-16)

<sup>1</sup> Paul Kissling, *The College Press NIV Commentary: Genesis Volume 2* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2009), 175.

<sup>2</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 294.

<sup>3</sup> James Smith, *The Pentateuch* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), 158.

13. What did the angel of God tell Hagar in verse 17?
14. What did the angel of God tell Hagar in verse 18?
15. What did God do for Hagar in verse 19?
16. What did God do for Ishmael in verse 20?
17. What did Hagar do for Ishmael in verse 21?

**Read Genesis 21:22-34**

18. Why did Abimelech and Phicol want to form a treaty with Abraham? (21:22-24)
19. What complaint did Abraham bring to Abimelech? (21:25-26)
20. What did Abraham do to resolve the dispute about the well? (21:27-30)
21. What did the name of the place where Abraham and Abimelech confirmed their covenant with each other? (21:31-32)
22. How did Abraham address God when he called on God in Beersheba? (21:33)

Kissling explains the significance of this designation for God. He writes,

Abraham's worship referred to the Lord as the Eternal God, אֵל עוֹלָם ('ēl 'ōlām). God's faithfulness is not just in the short term, but in the long term. The planting of the tree near a well, a symbol of ongoing life (Ps 1:3), indicates Abraham's confidence in that fact. That longevity is emphasized by the name used for the Lord: he is the eternal God.<sup>4</sup>

23. When or how has God ever made you laugh?
24. What can we do when we are greatly distressed because we have to say goodbye to someone we love?
25. How can we confront unfair situations in a way that encourages healthy and peaceful relationships?

<sup>4</sup> Kissling, *The College Press NIV Commentary: Genesis Volume 2*, 188.

**Sermon Notes 2/7/21**

**“Laughing with God”**

**How should we respond to Genesis chapter 21?**

1. Listen to God's \_\_\_\_\_.  
Genesis 21:1  
2 Peter 1:3-4
2. Trust in God's \_\_\_\_\_.  
Genesis 21:2  
Isaiah 40:30-31
3. Obey God's \_\_\_\_\_.  
Genesis 21:3-4  
1 John 5:3-4
4. Rejoice in God's \_\_\_\_\_.  
Genesis 21:6-7  
1 Peter 1:6-7



*Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.” Genesis 21:6 (NIV)*