

What You Need to Know About ABRAHAM

“God Is Faithful to Keep His Promises”

SESSION #7: Abraham 21:1-21

TEXT:

v. 1 Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised.

v. 2 Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.

v. 3 Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.

v. 4 When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him.

v. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

v. 6 Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.”

v. 7 And she added, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

v. 8 The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast.

v. 9 But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking,

v. 10 and she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

v. 11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.

v. 12 But God said to him, “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.

v. 13 I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring.”

v. 14 Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba.

v. 15 When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes.

v. 16 Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob.

v. 17 God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.

v. 18 Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."

v. 19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

v. 20 God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer.

v. 21 While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

INTRODUCTION:

Coffee-Taster Has Excellent Discernment

In his book *The Gospel According to Starbucks*, Leonard Sweet tells the story of Ed Faubert. Faubert is what you call a “cupper”—in layman’s terms, he’s a coffee-taster. And his perspicacious taste buds are actually certified by the state of New York!

So refined is Faubert’s sense of taste for coffee that even while blindfolded, he can take one sip of coffee and tell you “not just that it is from Guatemala, but from what state it comes, at what altitude it was grown, and on what mountain.”

Leonard Sweet, The Gospel According to Starbucks (Waterbrook Press, 2007), p. 54; submitted by David Slagle, Atlanta, Georgia

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HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHO TO MARRY?

(written by kids)

You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like, if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the chips and dip coming.
— Alan, age 10

No person really decides before they grow up who they're going to marry. God decides it all way before, and you get to find out later who you're stuck with.
— Kristen, age 10

WHAT IS THE RIGHT AGE TO GET MARRIED?

Twenty-three is the best age because you know the person FOREVER by then.
— Camille, age 10

HOW CAN A STRANGER TELL IF TWO PEOPLE ARE MARRIED?

You might have to guess, based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids.
— Derrick, age 8

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR MOM AND DAD HAVE IN COMMON?

Both don't want any more kids.
— Lori, age 8

WHAT DO MOST PEOPLE DO ON A DATE?

Dates are for having fun, and people should use them to get to know each other. Even boys have something to say if you listen long enough.
— Lynnette, age 8 (isn't she a treasure)

On the first date, they just tell each other lies and that usually gets them interested enough to go for a second date.
— Martin, age 10

WHAT WOULD YOU DO ON A FIRST DATE THAT WAS TURNING SOUR?

I'd run home and play dead. The next day I would call all the newspapers and make sure they wrote about me in all the dead columns.

— Craig, age 9

WHEN IS IT OKAY TO KISS SOMEONE?

When they're rich.

— Pam, age 7

The law says you have to be eighteen, so I wouldn't want to mess with that.

— Curt, age 7

The rule goes like this: If you kiss someone, then you should marry them and have kids with them. It's the right thing to do.

— Howard, age 8

IS IT BETTER TO BE SINGLE OR MARRIED?

It's better for girls to be single but not for boys. Boys need someone to clean up after them.

— Anita, age 9 (bless you child)

HOW WOULD THE WORLD BE DIFFERENT IF PEOPLE DIDN'T GET MARRIED?

There sure would be a lot of kids to explain, wouldn't there?

— Kelvin, age 8

And the #1 Favorite is.....

HOW WOULD YOU MAKE A MARRIAGE WORK?

Tell your wife that she looks pretty, even if she looks like a dump truck.

— Ricky, age 10

(Received via email from Brenda Lawless, May 9, 2007)

Getting Old . . .

An elderly gentleman had serious hearing problems for a number of years.

He went to the doctor and the doctor was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed the gentleman to hear 100%.

The elderly gentleman went back in a month to the doctor and the doctor said, “Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again.”

The gentleman replied, “Oh, I haven’t told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I’ve changed my will three times!”

An elderly couple had dinner at another couple’s house, and after eating, the wives left the table and went into the kitchen. The two gentlemen were talking, and one said, “Last night we went out to a new restaurant and it was really great. I would recommend it very highly.”

The other man said, “What is the name of the restaurant?”

The first man thought and thought and finally said, “What is the name of that flower you give to someone you love? You know . . . the one that’s red and has thorns.”

“Do you mean a rose?”

“Yes, that’s the one,” replied the man. He then turned toward the kitchen and yelled, “Rose, what’s the name of that restaurant we went to last night?”

Hospital regulations require a wheelchair for patients being discharged.

However, while working as a student nurse, I found one elderly gentleman—already dressed and sitting on the bed with a suitcase at his feet—who insisted he didn’t need my help to leave the hospital.

After a chat about rules being rules, he reluctantly let me wheel him to the elevator. On the way down I asked him if his wife was meeting him.

“I don’t know,” he said. “She’s still upstairs in the bathroom changing out of her hospital gown.”

A couple in their nineties are both having problems remembering things. During a checkup, the doctor tells them they are physically okay, but they might want to start writing things down to help them remember. Later that night, while watching TV, the old man gets up from his chair. “Want anything while I’m in the kitchen?” he asks. “Will you get me a bowl of ice cream?” “Sure.” “Don’t you think you should write it down so you can remember it?” she asks. “No, I can remember it.” “Well, I’d like some strawberries on top, too. Maybe you should write it down, so’s not to forget it?” He says, “I can remember that. You want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries.” “I’d also like whipped cream. I’m certain you’ll forget that, write it down?” she asks. Irritated, he says, “I don’t need to write it down, I can remember it! Ice cream with strawberries and whipped cream—I got it, for goodness sake!” Then he toddles into the kitchen. After about 20 minutes, the old man returns from the kitchen and hands his wife a plate of bacon and eggs. She stares at the plate for a moment. “Where’s my toast?”

A senior citizen said to his eighty-year old buddy:

“So I hear you’re getting married?”

“Yep!”

“Do I know her?”

“Nope!”

“This woman, is she good looking?”

“Not really.”

“Is she a good cook?”

“Naw, she can’t cook too well.”

“Does she have lots of money?”

“Nope! Poor as a church mouse.”

“Well, then, is she good in bed?”

“I don’t know.”

“Why in the world do you want to marry her then?”

“Because she can still drive!”

Three old guys are out walking.

First one says, “Windy, isn’t it?”

Second one says, “No, it’s Thursday!”

Third one says, “So am I. Let’s go get a Coke.”

A man was telling his neighbor, "I just bought a new hearing aid. It cost me four thousand dollars, but it's state of the art. It's perfect."

"Really," answered the neighbor. "What kind is it?"

"Twelve thirty."

Morris, an 82-year-old man, went to the doctor to get a physical. A few days later, the doctor saw Morris walking down the street with a gorgeous young woman on his arm.

A couple of days later, the doctor spoke to Morris and said, "You're really doing great, aren't you?"

Morris replied, "Just doing what you said, Doc: 'Get a hot mamma and be cheerful.'"

The doctor said, "I didn't say that. I said, 'You've got a heart murmur; be careful.'"

(Received via email from Billy Martin, August 22, 2006)

Shirley

A woman named Shirley was from Beverly Hills. One day she had a heart attack and was taken to Cedars Sinai hospital. While on the operating table, she had a near-death experience. She saw God and asked, "Is this it?" God said, "No, you have another 30 to 40 years to live." Upon her recovery, she decided to stay in the hospital and have collagen shots, cheek implants, a face lift, liposuction and breast augmentation. She even had someone dye her hair. She figured since she had another 30 to 40 years, she might as well make the most of it. She walked out of Cedars Sinai lobby after the last operation and was killed by an ambulance speeding up to the hospital. She arrived in front of God and said, "I thought you said I had another 30 to 40 years?" God replied, "Shirley! I didn't recognize you!"

(Received via email from Floyd Edwards, January 30, 2006)

(Still Lookin' by Joe Kreger) St. Louis, MO: Doane Agricultural Services Company. Copyright – Joe Kreger (poetry) and Doane Agricultural Services Company (book), 2000.

Homesick for Oklahoma

Homesick for Oklahoma,
I'm wonderin' how that fate
has carried this ol' Okie boy
far from his native state.

The other side looked greener,
and I ventured forth to roam,
but now the green is fadin',
and I want to go back home.

I'm growing weary of this place
and the grub that these folks make.
I'm thinkin'; biscuits, gravy
and a bait of panfried steak.

I miss that muddy river
just a flowin' around the bend
and the sight of windmills spinin'
in that never-ending wind.

I long for the smell of horses
and the sound of cows a bawlin'
and alfalfa blooms of purple
with the bees out spreadin' pollen.

And wavin' wheat and prairie grass
and a little country town
and a thunderstorm in April
with a torrent beatin' down.

I can hear the one-lung engines,
that far off driftin' sound,
and the way they pop and falter,
pullin' oil up from the ground.

And I think of those wild sunsets,
splattered clear across the sky.
No other place can match'em,
though I've often wondered why.

Those evenin's in the front yard,
out beneath a million stars,
we could see clear to the highway,
and we'd count the passin' cars.

Good Lord, I miss the homefolks,
the best I ever knew.
I wonder how many still are left.
There's bound to be a few.

I shouldn't sit here thinkin',
just making myself sad,
but those days in Oklahoma
were the best I ever had.

From my land of birth and childhood.
I've moved away so far,
and folks should be contented
just right where they are.

But, I'm battlin' with homesickness,
and it's shore a terrible fight,
'cause back home in Oklahoma's
where I wish I was tonight.
pp. 51-52

(He's God and We're Not by Ray Pritchard) Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman. Copyright – Ray Pritchard, 2003.

It was the first day of training camp in Vince Lombardi's third year as coach of the Green Bay Packers. In the previous two years, the team had done well, winning fifteen games and a conference championship. By the force of his personality, Lombardi had taken the Packers from losers to winners overnight. Yet as practice began in July 1961, Lombardi was scared. He worried that his team had forgotten what it would take to win the championship. He decided to approach training camp as if the players were blank slates who knew nothing at all about the game they were being paid to play. So he began with the most elemental fact of all. Facing the team at the first meeting, he held up a pigskin and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football." From the back of the room Max McGee called out, "Uh, coach, could you slow down a little. You're going too fast for us."

p. 9

Coach Wooden Started with Socks

Players gathering for the first day of basketball practice at UCLA were full of anticipation. They wondered how their coach, John Wooden, would set the tone for the long season to come. They didn't have to wait long.

Veterans knew what was coming. But first year players were no doubt perplexed by the initial lesson imparted by their Hall of Fame coach: He taught them how to put on a pair of socks. He did not teach this lesson only once, but before every game and practice. Why?

Wooden discovered many players didn't properly smooth out wrinkles in the socks around their heels and little toes. If left uncorrected, these wrinkles could cause blisters that could hamper their performance at crucial times during games. Many players thought the practice odd and laughed about it then. Wooden knows some of them still laugh about it today. But the coach would not compromise on this basic fundamental principle: "I stuck to it. I believed in that, and I insisted on it."

In our desire to grow as Christians, we can easily forget about the fundamentals of our faith. If we do, we run the risk of developing painful spiritual blisters that can hurt us as we run our race.

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We have watched the Lord separate His servant unto Himself through the many experiences of life that we have faced with Him together. Now the time has come for Abraham and Sarah to enjoy the fulfillment of the promise which God had made to them in the beginning.

It has been about 24 or 25 years since God initially spoke to Abraham these promises and now when it seems impossible, from the human point of view, God is ready to move in and to take action and to fulfill the promises He has made.

In our last study we saw Abraham in sweet fellowship with the Lord, enjoying the blessed Christian life. He is not only in the place of obedience in the center of God's will but he is acting as an intercessor for Lot and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In Genesis 19 the Lord sees fit to destroy these cities and Lot and his wife and two daughters are led by the angels of destruction from the city before they are destroyed.

Lot's wife turns to look back because of the pain of being separated from her possessions and she too experiences God's judgment.

This just leaves Lot and his two girls and they end up living in a cave. That finishes the biography of Lot, the man who could have been if he had only been willing to allow God to do what He wanted to do in his life and to be obedient to His will.

In Genesis 20 we have the account of the same old Abraham coming to the forefront. Whereas in Genesis 18 he is in rich fellowship, in Genesis 20, once again, parts from the will of God and in verse two we see his old nature active.

Genesis 20:2

and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” Then Abimelech king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.

Genesis 20:3

But God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.”

How precious the Lord is to protect Sarah in the situation and to protect the seed Isaac who is being formed in her womb even at this time.

Evidently God’s work in both of their lives reversed the wheels of time so that Sarah was once again beautiful and capable of a love relationship, and so was Abraham. For we read in the later record that even after Sarah dies he remarries a woman of the name of Keturah and has six more children.

Genesis 20 concludes with these words:

Genesis 20:17-18

Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his slave girls so they could have children again, for the Lord had closed up every womb in Abimelech’s household because of Abraham’s wife Sarah.

We can summarize Genesis 20 with the words of:

Genesis 20:1

Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar,

The total absence from Abraham's life of a word from the Lord to do this and the absence once again of the altar which has spoken to us of Abraham's obedience and being in the place of fellowship with the Lord.

Our flesh always wants to get up and go. The flesh is like that.

So now as we look into Genesis 21, we find Abraham restored to the place of fellowship and to the place of walking once again in the will of God.

Gangel & Bramer say:

Even when God's plans and promises seem impossible, he fulfills them—and forgives our doubts and fears.

p. 183

Hartley says:

The two episodes in this section are the birth of Isaac (vv. 1–7) and the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael from Abraham's house (vv. 8–20). A play on the name Isaac binds the two accounts. In the first account Sarah laughs because of the gift of Isaac ("laughter"). In the second, Ishmael makes fun of (i.e., causes people to laugh at) Isaac.

p. 198

Henry says:

Few under the Old Testament were brought into the world with such expectation as Isaac was, not for the sake of any great personal eminence at which he was to arrive, but because he was to be, in this very thing, a type of Christ, that seed which the holy God had so long promised and holy men so long expected.

p. 38

Phillips says:

It was a red-letter day in Abraham's life. It was a chapter in his experience to be written in bold capitals, underlined and framed, and hung forever in the gallery of faith. There had been other notable days, but never a day like that. For on that day, Isaac was born. Up in heaven the angels must have smiled to see Abraham skipping and hopping around his compound like a five-year-old. We are reminded of old Ebenezer Scrooge when he woke up after his three soul-shaking hauntings to find out it was still Christmas Day. He was so transported with joy he could hardly put his clothes on. "I don't know what to do," cried Scrooge, laughing and crying at the same time. "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy, I am as giddy as a drunken man." He cavorted about his rooms. He burst into a laugh. "Really," exclaims Dickens, "Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh, the father of a long line of laughs."

And so it must have been with staid old Abraham. A boy had been born into his home. His boy! Sarah's boy! God's boy! And, had it been possible for us to be there that day, we might have seen him popping in and out of his tent, laughing and chuckling, and beaming, and embracing everyone within reach.

pp. 170-71

Spurgeon says:

BRIEFLY let us rehearse the circumstances. The child Isaac was, according to God's word, to be the heir of Abraham. Ishmael, the elder son of Abraham by the bondwoman Hagar, resided at home with his father till he was about eighteen years of age; but when he began to mock and scoff at the younger child whom God had ordained to be the heir, it became needful that he and his mother should be sent away from Abraham's encampment. It might have seemed unkind and heartless to have sent them forth, but God having arranged to provide for them sent a divine command which at once rendered their expulsion necessary, and certified its success. We may rest assured that whatever God commands He will be quite certain to justify. He knew it would be no cruelty to Hagar or Ishmael to be driven into the independence, and He gave a promise which secured them everything which they desired. "Also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a great nation"; and again, 'I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.'" Had they both been able to go forth from Abraham's tent in faith they might have trodden the desert with a joyous footstep, fully assured that He who bade them go, and He who promised that He would bless them, would be certain to provide all things needful for them. Early in the morning they were sent forth on their journey, with as much provision as they could carry, and probably they intended to make their way to Egypt, from which Hagar had come. They may have lost their way; at any rate, they are spoken of as wandering. Their store of food became exhausted, the water in the skin bottle was all spent; both of them felt the fatigue of the wilderness, and the heat of the pitiless sand; they were both faint and weary, and the younger utterly failed. As long as the mother could sustain the tottering, fainting footsteps of her boy, she did so; when she could do so no longer, he swooned with weakness, and she laid him down beneath the slight shade of the desert tamarisk, that he might be as far as possible screened from the excessive heat of the sun. Looking into his face and seeing the pallor of coming death gathering upon it, knowing her inability to do anything whatever to revive him, or even to preserve his life, she could not bear to sit and gaze upon his face, but withdrew just far enough to be able still to watch with all a mother's care.

p. 101

Stigers says:

There is more to this passage than the mere birth of a son. Both Abraham and Sarah are beyond the time of normal childbearing, but involved is the fact that Yahweh declares His purpose to establish in them the messianic line; *God seeks to show the world that salvation resides not in human efforts but in Yahweh's regenerative power.*

p. 183

Thomas says:

THE believer never comes, never can come, to a point in his experience when God has nothing new to teach him or to give to him. Further and deeper lessons come constantly, lessons about God and about life in relation to Him. This is now very clearly and strikingly brought before us in connect with Abraham.

p. 184

Waltke says:

After excruciating tension and delay, the promised birth arrives. But astonishingly, the birth story is reported in only a few short verses before the narrative dashes into more conflict . . .

p. 291

Waltke says further:

The birth of Isaac does, however, bring resolution to the dilemma set out at the beginning of the account of Terah (11:27-32) and of Act 2 (see 16:1). Sarah, who until now has only observed the fruitfulness of others, is no longer barren.

p. 291

Waltke says finally:

The conflict of seed, however, is not just about waiting for the miraculous offspring but about faith's response to God's election of that seed. Abraham responds faithfully by naming his son "Isaac" (21:3; cf. 17:9) and by circumcising him (21:4; cf. 17:10), and Sarah responds with praise that breaks into laughter at God's goodness (21:6). However, Ishmael—a foil—reflects his mother's defiant spirit against Sarah (16:4-5) and mocks God's miraculous gift (21:9).

p. 291

Wenham titles the section:

Isaac Displaces Ishmael (21:1–21)

p. 76

Wiersbe says:

The birth of Isaac was certainly *the revelation of God's power*. That was one reason why God waited so long: He wanted Abraham and Sarah to be "as good as dead" so that their son's birth would be a miracle of God and not a marvel of human nature (Rom. 4:17–21). Abraham and Sarah experienced God's resurrection power in their lives because they yielded to Him and believed His Word. Faith in God's promises releases God's power (Eph. 3:20–21; Phil. 3:10), "for no word from God shall be void of power" (Luke 1:37, ASV). pp. 99–100

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary* titles this chapter:**

The birth of Isaac and the expulsion of Ishmael (21:1-21)

v. 1 Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised.

Peterson paraphrases verse 1:

God visited Sarah exactly as he said he would; God did to Sarah what he promised:

The NET Bible translates verse 1:

The Lord visited Sarah just as he had said he would and did for Sarah what he had promised.

There are **TWO THINGS** that stand out in verse 1:

1. **“THE LORD WAS GRACIOUS TO SARAH”** and
2. **“THE LORD DID FOR SARAH WHAT HE HAD PROMISED.”**

Verse 1 is one of the most important in the chapter and one which has a lesson we would love to bring home to every heart. Christians ought to rejoice in this wonderful truth.

There is a depth here which is inexhaustible. God would not break His covenant even though Abraham had been unfaithful over and over again.

He has:

become **IMPATIENT**,

become **FLESHY**,

DOUBTED God,

QUARRELED with the Lord, and

even gone so far as to **TAKE MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS** and has tried to raise up a substitute for the promised seed in order to help God out of a difficult situation.

But now the Lord let him go on for Abraham has had to come entirely to the end of himself before he could realize that this thing must be left completely in the hands of the Lord.

Here in verse 1 we have the **HOLY SPIRIT'S DECLARATION** concerning the faithfulness of God:

“[HE] DID FOR SARAH AS HE HAD PROMISED.”

We can trust Him no matter what the circumstances may be. We can trust Him no matter what the appearances may be. We can trust Him no matter how long the delay. For in God's own good time He is going to keep His word.

“[HE] DID FOR SARAH AS HE HAD PROMISED.”

One of the greatest demands of God on the human spirit is to believe that God is good when His providence seems to prohibit the fulfillment of what He has promised. No one can fulfill the promise but the one who made it. These words contain the whole autobiography of the Godly ups and downs of the life of faith. During the years when everything seemed to contradict the fulfillment of the promise, Abraham continually forgot this fundamental fact and tried to help God fulfill it.

God is a God of His word. What He says will be faithfully fulfilled.

It reminds us when the Lord says in:

Genesis 18:14

Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.”

Numbers 23:19

God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

The time had come for God’s plan to be fulfilled and **TWO THINGS** stand out here in verse 1:

1. **“THE LORD WAS GRACIOUS TO SARAH AS HE HAD SAID”** and
2. **“THE LORD DID FOR SARAH WHAT HE HAD PROMISED.”**

Anderson says:

Waiting for “the appointed time” often presents a big problem for believers. We can commit a situation to the Lord—we can trust Him—but it’s the waiting that so often gets to us. It’s the waiting that frequently makes us come unstuck and causes us to jump right into the middle of things and create enormous trouble.

p. 157

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Verse 1 picks up a central line of narrative from 18:10. Strangely, the news of the birth of Isaac had been delayed and treated anticlimactically. More attention was paid to the *announcement* of the birth of the son in ch. 18 than to the report of the *accomplished fact*. The birth of Isaac came about “as [the LORD] had said,” stressed three times within the first two verses. Thus the narrative calls attention to God’s faithfulness to his word and to his careful attention to the details of his plan.

p. 32

Barker & Kohlenberger say further:

The importance of the announcement of Isaac’s birth is seen in the statement that “the LORD was gracious,” which focuses on his attentive care and concern.

p. 32

Barnhouse says:

God is a God of His word. If He were not, the universe would fall apart. The long-awaited child would never have been born if God had not acted. Isaac, we are told in the New Testament illustrates the covenant of grace (Galatians 4:28). We are born, “not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man but of God” (John 1:13). “Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (James 1:18).

p. 185

Barnhouse says further:

Self-will is no longer considered a means to bring a promise to fulfillment. Death and deadness are recognized, but they no longer obstruct true faith. Isaac, the type of laughter and joy, is born, and he is in the line of the promised seed. God is never ahead of His time and He never lags behind. Whatever He promises comes to pass at the right moment.

p. 186

Bush says:

And the Lord visited Sarah. Heb . . . *pakad*; bestowed upon her the promised mercy.
p. 346

Hartley says:

. . . God fulfilled the promise of a child to Abraham and Sarah. Behind the NIV “be gracious” is Hebrew *paqad* (“visit,” 1 Sam. 2:21). This term conveys that God directed the course of nature for a specific outcome . . .
p. 198

Hughes says:

God had been faithful to his word. This is stressed three times in the first two verses so that we would not miss it. “The LORD visited Sarah *as he had said*, and the LORD did to Sarah *as he had promised*. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age *at the time of which God had spoken to him*” (vv. 1, 2, emphasis added).
p. 292

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

The language of the historian seems designedly chosen to magnify the power of God as well as His faithfulness to His promise. It was God’s grace that brought about that event, as well as the raising of spiritual children to Abraham, of which the birth of this son was typical . . .
p. 30

Keil & Delitzsch say:

Jehovah did for Sarah what God had promised in chap. xvii. 6 (cf. xviii. 14): she conceived, and at the time appointed bore a son to Abraham, when he was 100 years old. Abraham gave it the name of *Jizchak* (or Isaac), and circumcised it on the eighth day. The name for the promised son had been selected by God, in connection with Abraham's laughing (chap. xvii, 17 and 19), to indicate the nature of his birth and existence.

p. 243

MacArthur says:

To the aged couple (vv. 2,5,7), exactly as promised, a son was born and the twenty-five year suspense was finally over with the earlier laughter of derision now turning to rejoicing (v. 6). The barrenness of Sarah (11:26) had ended.

p. 42

Phillips says:

That Isaac should be there at all was a very great miracle. What doubtings, what difficulties, what disasters had to be overcome before that little fellow could see the light of day. Two specific miracles are mentioned in connection with Isaac's birth. There was the miracle of the exact nature of *the forecast* (21:1-2). "And the LORD visited Sarah *as he had said*, and the LORD did unto Sarah *as he had spoken*. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time *of which God had spoken* to him" (italics added). Three times in one sentence the forecast is mentioned.

p. 171

Radmacher & Allen say:

. . . The Bible stresses that the Lord causes conception; that children are a gift of the Lord (Ps. 127:3). The verb *visit* is an extraordinary choice here, because it means that the Lord entered directly into the affairs of His people. This was what He did for Sarah **as He had said . . . as He had spoken**: These two phrases speak of the exact fulfillment of His promise to Abraham (17:21) and Sarah (18:14).

p. 41

Wenham says:

“The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for her as he had promised.” At long last the promise of a child for Sarah is fulfilled. The birth of Isaac is predicted twice (17:16–21; 18:10–15), and here the fulfillment of the promises is mentioned twice.

p. 79

v. 2 Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.

Peterson paraphrases verse 2:

Sarah became pregnant and gave Abraham a son in his old age, and at the very time God had set.

The NET Bible translates verse 2:

So Sarah became pregnant and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the appointed time that God had told him.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

God provided the child of promise to Abraham and to Sarah . . . at the very time God had promised (cf. 18:10).

Back in verse 1 we learned **TWO THINGS**:

1. "The Lord was gracious to Sarah" and
2. "The Lord did for Sarah what he had promised."

Now in verse 2 we see the **TWO THINGS** that He did for Sarah:

1. "SARAH BECAME PREGNANT" and
2. "[SHE] BORE A SON TO ABRAHAM IN HIS OLD AGE."

Then we have the beautiful **SUMMARY STATEMENT**. These **TWO THINGS** happened:

"AT THE VERY TIME GOD HAD PROMISED HIM."

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Once again we have the recurrence of the little phrase:

“AT THE VERY TIME GOD HAD PROMISED HIM”

or

“at the appointed time.”

Habakkuk 2:3

For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.

Psalm 102:13

You will arise and have compassion on Zion,
for it is time to show favor to her;
the appointed time has come.

Acts 1:7

He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;

Revelation 22:20

He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Faith looks at things through God’s eyes.

Sarah’s conception took place three months after Genesis 18. And now, just like the Lord had promised in the conversation with Abraham, at the end of Genesis 17 and also to both of them in Genesis 18, He has now been faithful to fulfill that which He has promised.

It is interesting to note that **ISAAC** is an **ILLUSTRATION OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE**.

He is, first of all, born as a result of **DIVINE INTERVENTION**—just like the Lord Jesus.

Galatians 4:28

And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.

John 1:13

who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

James 1:18

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.

Joshua 21:45

Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

Joshua 23:14

“Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed.

2 Timothy 2:13

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.

GOD IS FAITHFUL.Lamentations 3:21-26

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.” The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:24

Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

In Genesis 12 we had the **SELECTION OF ABRAHAM**.

Now in Genesis 21 we have the **BIRTH OF A SON**.

Sarah's dead womb prepares for the miracle of the virgin birth of Christ.

There are **SEVEN BEAUTIFUL PARALLELS** between the birth of Isaac and the birth of Christ.

1. There is a **PROMISED SEED** and a **SON** in both cases—**Genesis 15**. The Lord obligates Himself to Abraham with regard to the promised seed and a son.

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

2. There is a **LENGTHY INTERVAL** between the **PROMISE** and the **FULFILLMENT**.
3. You have the **WOMEN'S RESPONSES** similar in both.

SARAH says:

Genesis 18:12

“After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

MARY'S response:

Luke 1:34

And Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

4. Each of them is **NAMED BEFORE THEY ARE BORN**.

Genesis 17:19

Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.

Matthew 1:21

“And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.”

5. It is at **GOD’S APPOINTED TIME.**

Here in Genesis 21:2 we read:

“SARAH BECAME PREGNANT AND BORE A SON TO ABRAHAM IN HIS OLD AGE, AT THE VERY TIME GOD HAD PROMISED HIM.”

Galatians 4:4-5

But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

6. **BOTH BIRTHS REQUIRED A MIRACLE.**
7. Each is their **FATHER’S DELIGHT.**

The name **ISAAC MEANS LAUGHTER.** And the Father said of the Lord Jesus, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.”

Barnhouse says:

Anything that God does is well done. Sarah could have sung the 126th Psalm. “When the Lord turned again the barrenness of Sarah, I was like them that dream. Then was my mouth filled with laughter, and my tongue with singing.” This old woman suddenly found herself with child; her laughter became one of joy and satisfaction. Her condition was almost too good to be true. When the child was in her arms, and at her breast, and she found herself a mother after a life of barrenness. Furthermore, she knew that it had all been done by the power of God.

pp. 186-87

Boice says:

. . . the births occurred at God's appointed time. Indeed, there is no parallel more striking than this. We have already seen how this element is emphasized in the birth of Isaac: "by this time next year" (Gen. 17:21), "about this time next year" (Gen. 18:10), "at the appointed time" (Gen. 18:14), "at the very time" (Gen. 21:2). In the same way, Paul says in Galatians 4:4, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." When the time had fully come! Like the birth of Isaac, the birth of Jesus was neither too early nor too late. It was at the time appointed by God. All the events of Christ's life likewise followed that previously determined plan.

p. 658

Henry says:

Isaac was born according to the promise. He was born *at the set time of which God had spoken, v.2*. Note, God is always punctual to his time; though his promised mercies come not at the time we set, they will certainly come at the time he sets, and that is the best time. 2. It was not by the power of common providence, but by the power of a special promise, that Isaac was born.

p. 38

Hughes says:

Sarah's pregnancy was, at the time, certainly the most celebrated of all pregnancies. Pregnant at ninety with baby number one! It was, of course, initially her secret—and then she informed Abraham in hushed excitement. Did Sarah at first try to hide her pregnancy from the camp? She may well have been too sick to hide anything! Besides, everyone knew everything in Tent City. Sarah went on to radiant full-bloom and then to the discomforts of full-term. All the preparations had been long made when her labor began—at four score and ten years. When the baby's cry rose across the camp, there were tears and festive shouts that all would long remember.

p. 292

McGee says:

You will notice that there is a very striking similarity between the birth of Isaac and the birth of Christ. I believe that the birth of Isaac was given to us to set before mankind this great truth before Christ came. Isaac was born at the set time God had promised, and Paul says, “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4:4).

p. 86

Radmacher & Allen say:

It appears that **Sarah conceived** while she and Abraham were living in Gerar (20:1; 21:22). The contrast is wonderful: God had closed the wombs of the family of Abimelech (20:18), and now He opened Sarah’s womb.

p. 41

Radmacher & Allen say further:

What a miracle this was! To both Abraham (17:21) and Sarah (18:14), God had emphasized the concept of His **set time**.

p. 41

Wenham says:

Yet despite their doubts, the promise was fulfilled precisely as forecast; “at the (appointed) time,” the phrase used in 17:21; 18:14, here appears for the last time in Genesis to emphasize the literal fulfillment “which God had promised him.”

p. 80

Wiersbe says:

Finally, the birth of Isaac was a step forward in the *accomplishing of God's purpose*. The future redemption of a lost world rested with a little baby boy! Isaac would beget Jacob, and Jacob would give the world the twelve tribes of Israel; and from Israel the promised Messiah would be born. Down through the centuries, some of the "living links" in the chain of promise may have seemed insignificant and weak; but they helped to fulfill the purposes of God.
p. 100

(A Continual Feast by Jan Karon) New York, NY: Viking / Penguin Group.
Copyright – Jan Karon, 2005.

Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.

Dale Carnegie

Nothing in this world is impossible to a willing heart.

Abraham Lincoln

v. 3 Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him.

Peterson paraphrases verse 3:

Abraham named him Isaac.

The NET Bible translates verse 3:

Abraham named his son—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac.

Here you have Abraham's obedience to the instructions from the Lord.

As a faithful servant he calls his name **"ISAAC"**—which means **LAUGHTER** or **JOY** over the fulfillment of long denied desires.

Henry says:

II. Abraham's obedience to God's precept concerning Isaac.

1. He named him, as God commanded him, *v. 3. Isaac, laughter*. There was good reason for the name, for, (1) When Abraham received the promise of him he laughed for joy, *ch. xvii. 17*. (2) When Sarah received the promise she laughed with distrust and diffidence. (3) Isaac was himself, afterwards, laughed at by Ishmael (*v. 9*), and perhaps his name bade him expect it. (4) The promise which he was the heir of, was to be the joy of all the saints in all ages. p. 38

Because Abraham trusted God, you find him in many of these experiences being so quick to obey what the Lord had said previously.

v. 4 When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him.

Peterson paraphrases verse 4:

When his son was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him just as God had commanded.

The NET Bible translates verse 4:

When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him just as God had commanded him to do.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

They responded in faith by (a) naming him **Isaac** (21:3), (b) circumcising him according to the covenant . . . and (c) praising God for this amazing fulfillment (21:6-7).

Whereas he is obedient in verse 3, by the name which he gives to the child calling him "Isaac," so he is obedient in verse 4 even as God had commanded him in circumcising his son Isaac when he reaches the prescribed age of **"EIGHT DAYS OLD."**

This is fulfilling the mark or the badge of the covenant relationship.

You can not help but be deeply impressed with how careful Abraham is to do all that God says. His priority is to be obedient because obedience leads to blessing and the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises.

Bush says:

The patriarch here pursues his accustomed tenor of obedience by subjecting his child to the painful rite of circumcision. Although as a parent he must have shrunk from lacerating the flesh of a tender infant, yet his supreme deference to divine authority overcomes every natural instinct, and he does to his newborn child ‘as God had commanded him.’ Nothing is of higher value in the sight of God than an implicit observance of his positive precepts, and a disposition to adhere with punctilious strictness to the letter of the command, neither failing nor exceeding in the rule of duty.
pp. 347–48

Thomas says:

The naming of the child “Isaac” and his circumcision were two prompt and definite proofs of Abraham’s thorough trust in God. As already seen (chap. xvii.), the root idea of circumcision is designation, God marking off the life as belonging to Him.
p. 184

Wenham says:

God’s precise fulfillment of his promise is matched by Abraham’s exact obedience. He names his son Isaac as directed in 17:19 and circumcises him on the eighth day as prescribed in 17:12. Note the redundancy, “which was born to him, that Sarah had borne to him.” Comparison with 16:15 shows that “which was borne to him” is unnecessary. But the repetition again serves to drive home the miraculous nature of the birth of a son to Sarah.
p. 80

v. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Peterson paraphrases verse 5:

Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born.

The NET Bible translates verse 5:

(Now Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.)

It has been **A LONG 25 YEARS** of ups and downs. Now we come to the moment of great blessing and fruition, when God is faithful to fulfill the promise which He had made to Abraham earlier.

Bush says:

After all delays and difficulties the promised mercies of Heaven come at last. The child of hope, of prayer, of faith at length is born, and the previous years of patient waiting compensated an hundred fold.

p. 348

Hughes says:

The depth of Abraham's joyous belief was immediately evident in his naming and circumcising the child. "Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him" (vv. 3-5). The divinely given name Isaac means "laughter," and the name recalls the initial incredulity of the parents at the idea that a son would be born within a year. As to Abraham, the earlier account says, "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?'"(Genesis 17:17). God countered by further informing him that his son's name would be Isaac ("laughter") (17:19, 21). God would have the last laugh, so to speak.

p. 293

**(The Life You've Always Wanted by John Ortberg) Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan. Copyright – John Ortberg, 1997, 2002.**

Take this child—as Frederick Buechner so wonderfully puts it—born in the geriatric ward for which Medicare picked up the tab, this child named Isaac—which means "laughter." Abraham and Sarah laughed at first because they didn't believe; they laughed at the sheer impossibility of it. They laughed because they were told they would have a son when they had reached an age when they didn't even dare to buy green bananas. And after the child was born, they laughed because they *did* believe. They laughed that when Sarah went to Wal-Mart, she was the only shopper to buy both Pampers and Depends. They laughed that both parents and baby had to eat the same strained vegetables because nobody in the whole family had a single tooth.

p. 214

(Losers And Winners Saints And Sinners by Greg Laurie) New York, NY: Warner Faith. Copyright – Greg Laurie, 2005

Chuck Swindoll once said: “Caleb? Every new sunrise introduced another reminder that his body and rocking chair weren’t made for each other. While his peers were yawning, Caleb was yearning.”

This is an essential key to spiritual longevity. You must always move forward. You must always seek to grow spiritually and never look back. That’s what will keep you going. You have to follow the Lord even if your friends aren’t there with you. As the song says, “Though none go with me, still I will follow.”¹ If you are living this Christian life for others’ applause, you won’t make it. People are going to let you down. Circumstances are going to challenge you. You have to run empowered by your love for God.

p. 7

(How Now Shall We Live? by Charles Colson with Anne Morse) Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Copyright – Prison Fellowship Ministries, 2004.

We should remember that the next time we look in the bathroom mirror. If your current model is due to expire, don’t worry: There’s an incomparably better one coming!

p. 722

(Pearls of Great Price: 366 Daily Devotional Readings by Joni Eareckson Tada)
 Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Joni Eareckson Tada, 2007.

Gray-Haired Splendor

Gray hair [is] the splendor of the old.

—Proverbs 20:29

Ernest Barkaway, a ninety-year-old Englishman, looked bright, sprightly, and dapper in his woolen vest and British tam. He told me that when one of his kidneys was removed, he received a blood transfusion: “I watched the drops trickle through the tube, and I thought of all the people—male and female, English and foreign, black and white—who had given freely of their life blood for my need.” After a pause he wistfully added: “How much more Jesus gave freely for his life blood for my *deepest* need!” I could tell he had garnered much godly wisdom in his ninety years. He proved it with a poem he gave me . . .

*They say that I am growing old; I've heard them say times untold,
 In language plain and bold—but I am not growing old.
 This frail old shell in which I dwell is growing old, I know full well!
 But I am not the shell.*

*What if my hair is turning gray; gray hairs are honorable they say.
 What if my eyesight's growing dim; I still can see to follow Him
 Who sacrificed His life for me—upon the Cross at Calvary!*

*Why should I care if time's old plough has left its furrows on my brow?
 Another house, not made with hands awaits me in the Glory Land.
 What though I falter in my walk and though my tongue refuse to
 talk?*

*I still can tread the narrow way; I still can watch and praise and pray!
 The robe of flesh I'll drop and rise to seize the everlasting prize.
 I'll meet you on the streets of gold and prove I am NOT growing old.*

As I wrote the above, I learned Ernest Barkaway went home to be with Jesus. Write a note of encouragement or call an elderly friend today. Share Mr. Barkaway's poem.

Father, reveal to me ways I can ascribe dignity and show respect to the elderly people in my life. May I never take lightly their struggles and trials.
 (March 30)

v. 6 Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 6:

Sarah said, God has blessed me with laughter and all who get the news will laugh with me!

The NET Bible translates verse 6:

Sarah said, “God has made me laugh. Everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The name Isaac (“he laughs”) is cleverly explained in this passage. **Sarah said** that **God** gave her **laughter** (v. 6), that is, joy. Her laughter of unbelief (18:12) was now changed to rejoicing through the provision of her son. **Everyone who** would hear **about this** would **laugh**, that is rejoice, **with** her. But Ishmael turned her laughter into a ridiculing mockery (see comment on 21:9) of God’s work.

Sarah has not forgotten the laughter of unbelief when she heard from the Lord the fact that she was going to bear a child in her old age. Now her laughter has become one of joy and satisfaction. All has been done by the power of God.

Psalm 126:2-3, 5-6

Our mouths were filled with laughter,
 our tongues with songs of joy.
 Then it was said among the nations,
 “The Lord has done great things for them.”
 The Lord has done great things for us,
 and we are filled with joy.

Those who sow in tears
 will reap with songs of joy.
 He who goes out weeping,
 carrying seed to sow,
 will return with songs of joy,
 carrying sheaves with him.

Isaiah 54:1

“Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband,” says the Lord.

Anderson says:

Sarah was ecstatic as well. She said, “God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me” (21:6). She was thrilled, filled with so much happiness that her heart probably felt like bursting. There are two passages in Scripture that especially speak of this kind of exuberance. Psalm 126 in its entirety is a jubilant affirmation of the joy that God’s goodness can bring. The psalmist exclaims, “The Lord has done great things for us; We are glad” (126:3). We can practically see him dancing in the streets as he sings. And in Isaiah 54:1, we read the following: “Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child; Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you have not travailed.” Amen! What incredible pleasure the Lord can give!
 p. 161

Hartley says:

Full of excitement, Sarah composed poetic lines celebrating her triumph in nursing children and bearing Abraham **a son** when he was **old**. She who had laughed in disbelief at the angel's announcement that she would bear a son (18:12–15) now laughs in joyful glee for her son named "laughter."

p. 199

Keil & Delitzsch say:

For as his laughing sprang from the contrast between the idea and the reality; so through a miracle of grace the birth of Isaac gave effect to this contrast between the promise of God and the pledge of its fulfillment on the one hand, and the incapacity of Abraham for begetting children, and of Sarah for bearing the, on the other; and through this name, Isaac was designated as the fruit of omnipotent grace working against and above the forces of nature.

p. 243

Keil & Delitzsch say further:

. . . *"A laughing hath God prepared for me; every one who hears it will laugh to me"* (i.e. will rejoice with me, in amazement at the blessing of God which has come upon me even in my old age), and gave a fitting expression to the joy of her heart, . . .

p. 243

Thomas says:

Sarah now laughs the laugh of joy and satisfaction. The fulfilment of the promise was almost too good to be true; and yet it *was* true, as she shows by her joyous surprise. She doubtless remembers her former laugh of incredulity (chap. xviii. 13) as well as Abraham's laugh of faith and hope (chap. xvii. 17).

p. 185

Wenham says:

Twice here Sarah uses the root . . . “laugh” found in Isaac’s name. Indeed, the second line involves the exact form of his name: “everyone who hears it will Isaac for me.” Thus the play on his name is most obvious here, even though it is not drawn attention to in the narrative.
p. 80

**(The Life You’ve Always Wanted by John Ortberg) Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan. Copyright – John Ortberg, 1997, 2002.**

Sometimes ago I was giving a bath to our three children. I had a custom of bathing them together, more to save time than anything else. I knew that eventually I would have to stop the group bathing, but for the time being it seemed efficient.

Johnny was still in the tub, Laura was out and safely in her pajamas, and I was trying to get Mallory dried off. Mallory was out of the water, but was doing what has come to be known in our family as the Dee Dah Day dance. This consists of her running around and around in circles, singing over and over again, “Dee dah day, dee dah day.” It is a relatively simple dance expressing great joy. When she is too happy to hold it in any longer, when words are inadequate to give voice to her euphoria, she has to dance to release her joy. So she does the Dee Dah Day.

On this particular occasion, I was irritated. “Mallory, hurry!” I prodded. So she did—she began running in circles faster and faster and chanting “dee dah day” more rapidly. “No, Mallory, that’s not what I mean! Stop with the dee dah day stuff, and get over here so I can dry you off. Hurry!”

Then she asked a profound question: “Why?”

I had no answer. I had nowhere to go, nothing to do, no meeting to attend, no sermons to write. I was just so used to hurrying, so preoccupied with my own little agenda, so trapped in this rut of moving from one task to another, that here was life, here was joy, here was an invitation to the dance right in front of me—and I was missing it.

So I got up, and Mallory and I did the Dee Dah Day dance together. She said I was pretty good at it, too, for a man my age.
pp. 59-60

v. 7 And she added, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 7:

She also said, Whoever would have suggested to Abraham that Sarah would one day nurse a baby! Yet here I am! I’ve given the old man a son!

The NET Bible translates verse 7:

She went on to say, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have given birth to a son for him in his old age!”

Sarah in her enthusiasm and exuberance says:

“WHO WOULD HAVE SAID TO ABRAHAM THAT SARAH WOULD NURSE CHILDREN?”

Sarah is so filled with ecstatic astonishment and joy. She is just saying:

“whoever would have thought it.”

It is something so totally beyond human comprehension. **“WHO WOULD HAVE SAID TO ABRAHAM THAT SARAH WOULD NURSE CHILDREN?”**—that is besides God, with Whom nothing is impossible.

The true children of God, under the covenant of grace, are born contrary to the ways of nature, rather according to the counsel of God. It is so foreign to human nature and to the natural process that a man can be born again by the Spirit of God, no matter what his age might be.

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Also important is the reminder that Isaac was the “son . . . in [Abraham’s] old age” and that he was born “at the very time God had promised him,” reiterating the key themes of the earlier promise narratives (e.g., 18:10–14). The narrative also emphasizes Abraham’s obedience (cf. 17:12).
p. 32

Henry says:

It filled her with wonder, *v.* 7. “The thing was so highly improbable, so near to impossible, that if anyone but God had said it was could not have believed it.” Note, God’s favours to his covenant-people are such as surpass both their own and others’ thoughts and expectations.
p. 39

Radmacher & Allen say:

. . . Wondrously, this woman of ninety (17:17) now had breasts filled with milk and her arms full with a child! In the theology of the Bible, Isaac’s birth suggests the promise of an even greater miracle, the miracle-Son, Jesus.
p. 41

v. 8 The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast.

Peterson paraphrases verse 8:

The baby grew and was weaned. Abraham threw a big party on the day Isaac was weaned.

The NET Bible translates verse 8:

The child grew and was weaned. Abraham prepared a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

It is the custom to wean the child sometime between the ages of 3-5 years. It is on this occasion that Abraham made a **"GREAT FEAST"** in celebration of this special event.

In our last study, they enjoyed a feast when the heavenly visitors came with the promise and the question:

"Is anything too difficult for the Lord?"

Now on this special occasion there is a **"GREAT FEAST"** indicating a time of joy because of the **FULFILLMENT OF THE PROMISE.**

This **"FEAST"** foreshadows the **MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB**, when we shall enjoy on a future occasion the fulfillment of the promises which the Lord has made to us.

MacArthur says:

21:8 weaned. This usually occurred in the second or third year.
p. 42

Barnhouse says:

In the East this takes place at a much later date than in our land. Isaac was probably three to five years old when he was weaned (cf. Matthew 21:16).
p. 187

Boice says:

When Isaac was weaned, Abraham threw a feast at which the older boy, Ishmael, mocked Isaac. It is easy to understand that. Ishmael would have been about fifteen or sixteen then, and for most of those years he had thought he was going to be the heir. Now there is this other son, and he resents him. When Ishmael mocks Isaac, Sarah sees it and demands that Abraham send the boy and the mother away, because, she says, “that slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac” (v. 10). This distressed Abraham very much because he was reluctant to see either Hagar or Ishmael go.
p. 663

Hartley says:

Delighted at finally having a son by Sarah and desirous of cherishing the stages of his son’s growth, **Abraham held a great feast** when Isaac was weaned. Although weaning took place at different ages, Isaac must have been older than three . . .
p. 199

Hughes says:

Another laughter. By verse 8 we know that at least three years had passed, because that was the traditional time for weaning a child in ancient Israel (see 1 Samuel 1:23ff.; cf. 2 Maccabees 7:27 in the Apocrypha). Isaac was a toddler. And Ishmael was about sixteen years of age.
p. 294

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

. . . children are suckled longer in the East than in the Occident—boys usually for two or three years.
p. 30

Thomas says:

In due course the child was weaned; according to Eastern custom, at a much later date than in Western lands. Isaac must have been at least three, if not five, years old when this event took place. Abraham made a great feast to celebrate this occasion.
p. 185

Waltke says:

This rite of passage from the dangerous state of infancy to childhood usually occurred at about three years of age . . .
p. 293

Wiersbe says:

Jewish children were usually weaned at about age three, so Ishmael was probably seventeen years old at the time (Gen. 16:16). What arrogance that a boy of seventeen should torment a little boy of only three! But God had said that Ishmael would become “a wild donkey of a man” (16:12, NIV), and the prediction came true. The flesh and the Spirit are in conflict with each other and always will be until we see the Lord (Gal. 5:16–26).

When, like Isaac, you are born of the Spirit, *you are born rich* (Gen. 21:10). Isaac was the heir of all that his father owned, and God’s children are “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). Abraham cared for Ishmael while the boy was in the home, but “Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac” (Gen. 25:5).
p. 101

v. 9 But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking.

Peterson paraphrases verse 9:

One day Sarah saw the son that Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham, poking fun at her son Isaac.

The NET Bible translates verse 9:

But Sarah noticed the son of Hagar the Egyptian—the son whom Hagar had borne to Abraham—mocking.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

God used this incident of Ishmael's **mocking** Isaac to drive out the child Ishmael and **Hagar** (v. 10), for they would be a threat to the promised seed. The word "mocking" is . . . ("laughing or jesting"), from which comes "Isaac" . . . Earlier Sarah had mistreated Hagar (16:6); now Hagar's son was mistreating Sarah's son. Earlier Sarah caused pregnant Hagar to flee (16:6); now she caused Hagar and her 16- or 17-year-old **son** to flee. (Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born [16:16], and 100 when Isaac was born [21:5], and Isaac **was** probably **weaned** [v. 8] at age 2 or 3.)

Even as the feast for the **PRODIGAL SON** created some problems for the eldest boy, so now this celebration for Isaac causes Ishmael to become jealous and to mock and make fun of Isaac, the promised son.

Ishmael is probably about 17 years of age on this occasion. He is now robbed of his former position and he finds that he is no longer the joy of his father, Abraham as he has been during his previous years.

Because Abraham had anticipated helping God out, I am sure a deep relationship has developed between Ishmael and his father during these intervening years. It is now a very tough thing for Ishmael to accept the fact the promised son in the eyes of God has finally arrived.

It is often the case with older children when babies arrive in the family that there is a jealousy because of all of the personal attention both required and given so profusely.

So it is in the life of the believer, the presence of the new divine nature stirs up the old nature within us.

Galatians 5:17

For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

The celebration of Isaac's coming of age was the occasion for the expulsion of Ishmael. The similarities between this chapter and the events in ch. 16 are notable. The writer's close attention to the similar details in the two chapters is perhaps best explained by his frequent use of "foreshadowing" to draw connections between important narratives.

p. 32

Barnhouse says:

The New Testament interprets this word as *persecuting*. "But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now" (Galatians 4:29, RSV). The flesh cannot tolerate grace. The flesh hates grace. This is why even some Christians positively hate the idea of salvation as being by grace. The world does not hate us because we believe in moral reform, but because we say that we were chosen by God in grace alone (John 15:19).

p. 188

Bush says:

On the whole there can be no doubt that the Heb. phrase implies a contemptuous and malignant treatment, a bitter and sarcastic jeering, sufficient to constitute a very grave offence.

p. 350

Candlish says:

From the history itself in fact, it is plain enough that Ishmael's "mocking" had a deeper meaning than a mere wild and wanton jest. The "children," the lads or young men, who "mocked" Elisha after the translation of his master in a chariot of fire, "saying unto him, Go up, thou bald-head; go up thou bald-head,"—knew what they were about better than we are apt to think (2 Kings ii. 23, 24). It was no boyish frolic—no senseless insolence to Elisha personally—no idle mockery of his grey and scanty locks—that was so promptly and terribly punished; but a profane and ribbald outburst of blasphemy against the stupendous miracle which had just taken place. They mocked, not the prophet, but his God; when scoffing at Elijah's glorious ascension into heaven, they taunted his venerable follower with impious scorn;—Thou, too, "thou bald-head, go up," as he did! The mockery of Ishmael was probably of a similar kind. That it had respect to the birthright is evident, both from Sarah's reasoning, and from the Lord's. She assigns, as the cause of her anxiety to have Ishmael cast out, her apprehension lest he should claim a joint-interest with Isaac in the inheritance. And the Lord sanctions her proposal on this very ground, when he says to Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called."

pp. 349–50

Hughes says:

Here the NIV'S "mocking" rightly catches the malicious sense of the laughter because Paul in Galatians 4:29 says that Ishmael "persecuted" Isaac.³ Understandably, young Ishmael felt jealousy at being displaced. Envy always magnifies the importance of the other and belittles our own.

p. 294

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

Ishmael was aware of the great change in his prospects, and under the impulse of irritated or resentful feelings, in which he was probably joined by his mother, treated the young heir with derision and probably some violence . . .
p. 30

Keil & Delitzsch say:

Sarah saw Ishmael mocking, making ridicule on the occasion. "Isaac, the object of holy laughter, was made the butt of unholy wit or profane sport. He did not laugh . . . but he made fun . . . The little helpless Isaac a father of nations! Unbelief, envy, pride of carnal superiority, were the causes of his conduct. Because he did not understand the sentiment, 'Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?' it seemed to him absurd to link so great a thing to one so small" (*Hengstenberg*). Paul calls this the persecution of him that was after the Spirit by him that was begotten after the flesh (Gal. iv. 29), and discerns in this a prediction of the persecution, which the Church of those who are born after the spirit of faith endures from those who are in bondage to the righteousness of the law.
p. 244

Kidner says:

9. RSV's *playing* (implying that Sarah was insanely jealous) is unfair: it should be translated *mocking* (AV, RV). This is the intensive form of Isaac's name-verb 'to laugh', its malicious sense here demands by the context and by Galatians 4:29 ('persecuted'). RSV itself renders it 'jesting' (19:14) and 'to insult' (39:14, 17).
p. 140

Lange says:

A laughing, jesting, gay, and playful youth. It may be that Ishmael had reviled Isaac because of his name which he had received from a laugh, and had treated him with scorn.
p. 462

McGee says:

The coming of this little boy Isaac into the home sure did produce a great deal of difficulty. We find that the boy who was the son of Hagar, Ishmael, was mocking. We begin now to see the nature and the character of Ishmael. Up to this point, he seems to be a pretty nice boy, but now, with the appearance of this other son in the family, Ishmael really shows his true colors.
p. 87

Radmacher & Allen say:

The Hebrew verb for **scoffing** is related to the name for Isaac (21:3, 5). Here is a bad turn on a wonderful joke. Young Ishmael, now perhaps seventeen, was mocking the joy of Sarah and Abraham in their young son.
p. 41

Thomas says:

The results of Abraham's sin as to Hagar now show themselves acutely. Up to the time of Isaac's birth Ishmael occupied the foremost place in Abraham's life, but now he has to give place to Isaac. The disappointment to a growing and wild lad of seventeen must have been keen, and we are not surprised to read of his mockery of the little child. St. Paul (Gal. iv. 29) speaks of the action of Ishmael as "persecuting," and no wonder, from Ishmael's point of view, since Isaac's arrival meant that he was robbed of his former position.
p. 185

Waltke says:

Ishmael is never actually referred to by name in this scene, signifying his secondary position to Isaac and possibly his objectification by other characters. The references to Ishmael do differ in relation to the speaker. To Sarah, he is the "son whom Hagar . . . had borne" or "that slave woman's son" (21:9, 10). To Abraham he is "his son" or "the boy" (21:11, 14). To God he is "the boy" (21:12, 17, 18, 20).
p. 294

Wiersbe says:

In Galatians 4:28–29, Paul makes it clear that Ishmael represents the believer’s first birth (the flesh) and Isaac represents the second birth (the Spirit). Ishmael was “born of the flesh” because Abraham had not yet “died” and was still able to beget a son (Gen. 16). Isaac was “born of the Spirit” because by that time his parents were both “dead” and only God’s power could have brought conception and birth. Ishmael was born first, because the natural comes before the spiritual (1 Cor. 15:46).

When you trust Jesus Christ, you experience a miracle birth from God (John 1:11–13), and it is the work of the Holy Spirit of God (John 3:1–8). Abraham represents *faith*, and Sarah represents *grace* (Gal. 4:24–26), so Isaac was born by “by grace . . . through faith” (Eph. 2:8–9). This is the only way a lost sinner can enter the family of God (John 3:16–16).

It is worth noting that, in the biblical record, God often rejected the firstborn and accepted the second-born. He rejected Cain and chose Abel (Gen. 4:1–15). He rejected Ishmael, Abraham’s firstborn, and chose Isaac. He bypassed Esau, Isaac’s firstborn, and chose Jacob (Rom. 9:8–13); and He chose Ephraim instead of Manasseh (Gen. 48). In Egypt, the Lord condemned *all* the firstborn (Ex. 11–12) and spared only those who were “twice-born” because they were protected by faith in the blood of the lamb.

p. 100

v. 10 and she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 10:

She told Abraham, “Get rid of this slave woman and her son. No child of this slave is going to share inheritance with my son Isaac!”

The NET Bible translates verse 10:

So she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for the son of that slave woman will not be an heir along with my son Isaac!”

SARAH’S COMMAND to Abraham is TWO-FOLD:

1. “GET RID OF THAT SLAVE WOMAN” and
2. “GET RID OF . . . HER SON.”

The REASON for this DOUBLE COMMAND is in the following phrase:

“FOR THAT SLAVE WOMAN’S SON WILL NEVER SHARE IN THE INHERITANCE WITH MY SON ISAAC.”

Now Sarah has her chance to do to Hagar what she had done to her earlier. With jealousy and anger she comes to Abraham and commands him to:

“GET RID OF THAT SLAVE WOMAN AND HER SON.”

The REASON:

“FOR THAT SLAVE WOMAN’S SON WILL NEVER SHARE IN THE INHERITANCE WITH MY SON ISAAC.”

We now come to the time when domestic harmony is destroyed by the very means that Sarah had employed to achieve happiness. It is impossible to have joy any way but God's way.

Psalm 51:12

Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Psalm 30:5

For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may remain for a night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Galatians 4:28-31

And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman." So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

Just as there is a **DEMAND** on the part of Sarah for a separation to take place, so the Spirit of God, when He comes to dwell within, likewise demands that we progressively set ourselves apart from the works of the flesh and pursue a spirit-filled life whereby the Spirit can produce the beautiful fruit that is described in Galatians 5.

Galatians 5:18-25

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But [on the other hand] the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

We are now coming to the point when there is need for **ANOTHER SEPARATION** in the life of Abraham.

It was a painful separation from Lot back in Genesis 13.

Now here, once again, we have the **SEPARATION** that has to take place **BETWEEN**:

the fruitage of the **FLESH** and

the fruitage of the **SPIRIT**.

The believer never comes to the point where the Lord has nothing new to teach him.

It is now time for the distinction between the real and that which is only the appearance of the real to be clearly seen.

Philippians 1:6

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Growth is going to demand separation from the childlike ways, to respond to life in the proper way under the control of the Holy Spirit Who dwells within us.

We are now going to bear the sorrow which is the result of Abraham's sin. This is going to show up acutely in Abraham and Sarah's life. It is a sorrow that God did not intend for them, but the result of a mistake in helping God out.

If we refuse to let go of these old ways of the flesh, there will come a future time of **PAINFUL SEPARATION** that is described for us in:

1 Corinthians 3:12-15

Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Hartley says:

At this feast Sarah became extremely jealous when she saw Hagar's **son . . . mocking**. "Mocking" or "sporting" (*metsakheq*) is from the same root as Isaac's name. Possibly Ishmael was showing his prowess in order to draw the attention of the guests away from Isaac. It is likely, though, that he was making fun of Isaac by abusing his name. It is also important to note that the narrator mocks Ishmael by never using his name in this account. Whatever Ishmael was doing maddened Sarah. Perhaps his behavior made her apprehensive that he might do something, even a violent act, to take Isaac's place. In no way did Sarah want Ishmael to receive any praise, position, or affirmation that was greater than Isaac's, and in no way would she tolerate Ishmael's acting in a way that would put down Isaac. Therefore, she pleaded with Abraham to banish Hagar, **that slave woman, and her son**. This language reflects the increasing distance between the two women (Trible, "The Other Woman," p. 232). Sarah's determination to expel Hagar shows that her confidence as a matriarch had increased with Isaac's birth. To persuade Abraham she used an argument that concerned him intimately by saying that she did not want Hagar's son to **share in the inheritance with her son Isaac**.
p. 199

Wenham says:

But Isaac's status as heir apparent is always at risk while "the son of Hagar . . . who had borne a child to Abraham" is around, so Sarah demands their expulsion.
p. 81

Wiersbe says:

Sarah was wrong when she told Abraham to marry Hagar (Gen. 16:1–2), but she was right when she told Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael out of the camp. The Apostle Paul saw in this event an allegory involving the Law of Moses and the grace of God (Gal. 4:21–31). Sarah represents grace (the heavenly Jerusalem), and Hagar represents Law (the earthly Jerusalem under bondage). The lesson is simply that God's children are to live under the blessings of grace and not the bondage of Law.
p. 101

(Lost Women of the Bible: Finding Strength & Significance Through Their Stories by Carolyn Custis James) Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. Copyright – Carolyn Custis James, 2005.

Most biblical scholars believe Hagar entered the Genesis narrative anonymously several chapters earlier when Pharaoh was enriching Abraham for the privilege of marrying his “sister” Sarah. Pharaoh treated Abraham well for Sarah’s sake, giving him “sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and *maidservants*, and camels” (Genesis 12:16, emphasis added). Hagar may well have been an item on the inventory of property that changes hands between Pharaoh and Abraham. What a horror to wake up one morning to the news that you’re heading for the auction block, that before the day is out you’ll be wrenched from the people you know and love, degraded by being lined up with cattle and other livestock, and placed in the hands of a stranger.

p. 87

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

Learn from David to take no step without God. Christian, if thou wouldst know the path of duty, take God for thy compass; if thou wouldst steer thy ship through the dark billows, put the tiller into the hand of the Almighty. Many a rock might be escaped, if we would let our Father take the helm; many a shoal or quicksand we might well avoid, if we would leave to His sovereign will to choose and to command. The Puritan said, “As sure as ever a Christian carves for himself, he’ll cut his own fingers;” this is a great truth. Said another old divine, “He that goes before the cloud of God’s providence goes on a fool’s errand;” and so he does. We must mark God’s providence leading us; and if providence tarries, tarry till providence comes. He who goes before providence, will be very glad to run back again. “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go,” is God’s promise to His people. Let us, then, take all our perplexities to Him, and say, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

Leaven not thy chamber this morning without enquiring of the Lord.

p. 80

(Whispers of His Power by Amy Carmichael) Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications. Copyright – The Dehvanur Fellowship, 1982.

The cart was a Philistine expedient (1 Sam. 6:7-8). It has been truly said that the Church is full of philistine ways of doing service to Christ. But those ways are not acceptable to God. The Uzzah story tells us so.
p. 163

(Our Daily Walk: Daily Readings by F. B. Meyer) Scotland, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications Ltd. Copyright – Christian Focus Publications, 1993.

How often in daily life a Christian man or woman is suddenly overtaken by some temptation, to which they yield, and which leaves a deep stain on their character. Thus was David overtaken and also Peter! What an agony of remorse ensues! The Psalms are full of bitter repentance for such transgression. The sinful soul has to bear a heavy burden indeed; and too often his fellow-Christians pass him by with averted faces or frowns. No one visits him, or cares to be seen in his company, or tries to help him regain his former footing.

(July 6)

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

The Holy Spirit shall purify our minds, and divine power shall refine our bodies, then shall *we see Him as He is*.
p. 88

v. 11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.

Peterson paraphrases verse 11:

The matter gave great pain to Abraham—after all, Ishmael was his son.

The NET Bible translates verse 11:

Sarah's demand displeased Abraham greatly because Ishmael was his son.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

. . . **Abraham** became **distressed** because of Sarah's request to oust Hagar and Ishmael, **God** assured Abraham that Ishmael would have a future because **he** too was Abraham's **offspring** . . .

It is a great sorrow and grief because they have been through seventeen years of life together. They have been through the most tough teenage years and now their relationship is deep and sweet because of the many experiences which they have had together. Now Abraham realizes that something must be done to deal with this problem which confronts him.

Barnhouse says:

It is understandable that Abraham should love Ishmael, who, for many years had been his only son, the light and joy of his heart. Abraham genuinely loved Hagar, and this in no wise detracts from the fact that he genuinely loved Sarah. The exclusiveness of woman's love was a part of the curse (Genesis 3:16), but it was not put upon man. This has determined much of the flow of human history. Abraham probably knew Sarah well enough to detect his littleness which was a contributing factor in her jealousy. He probably thought that a less severe remedy would accomplish the desired effect. He wanted to hold on to his love of the flesh. But it had to go.

p. 189

Henry says:

Abraham was averse to it: *The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight, v. 11.* 1. It grieved him that Ishmael had given such a provocation. 2. It grieved him that Sarah insisted upon such a punishment. "Might it not suffice to correct him? would nothing less serve than to expel him?"

p. 39

Hughes says:

Abraham was, of course, distressed. Ishmael was his son and had been the sole focus of his fatherly love until the arrival of Isaac. What heartache. How welcome, then, God's intervention must have been! "But God said to Abraham, 'Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring'" (vv. 12, 13). Abraham's breaking heart was comforted by the promise that great futures awaited both his boys. Isaac was the one through whom the promise would be realized. And Ishmael would father a great nation. Both boys had prodigious futures.

p. 295

McGee says:

The thing is very grievous if Abraham is going to have to send him away. Again, I go back to that which we said before: God did not approve of the thing which Sarah and Abraham did, and God cannot accept Ishmael. This is *sin*. God just did not approve of it, and He doesn't intend to approve of it at all. It was a heartbreak to Abraham, but in order to relieve the embarrassment, he had to send that boy away. Poor Sarah just couldn't take it with this older boy around mocking her.

p. 87

Wiersbe says:

It was "grievous" (21:11–12) for Abraham to say good-bye to his son, but this was God's command, and he had to obey. Little did he realize that his obedience was preparation for an even greater test when he would have to put Isaac on the altar. The word translated "grievous" means "to shake violently," like curtains blowing in the wind. Abraham was deeply moved within and perhaps somewhat displeased at this turn of events.

p. 102

Why Fathers Have Gray Hair

A father passed by his son's bedroom and was astonished to see the bed nicely made up and everything neat and tidy. Then he saw an envelope propped up on the pillow. It was addressed, "Dad." With the worst premonition, he opened the envelope and read the letter with trembling hands:

Dear Dad,

It is with great regret and sorrow that I'm writing you. I had to elope with my new girlfriend because I wanted to avoid a scene with you and Mom. I've been finding real passion with Joan, and she is so nice. I knew you would not approve of her because of all her piercings, tattoos, tight motorcycle clothes, and the fact that she is so much older than I am. It's not just her passion, Dad. She really gets me.

Joan says that we are going to be very happy. She owns a trailer in the woods and has a stack of firewood—just enough for the whole winter. We share a dream of having many children.

Please don't worry, Dad. I'm 15 and I know how to take care of myself. I'm sure we'll be back to visit someday so you can get to know your grandchildren.

Your son, Chad

P.S. Dad, none of the above is true. I'm over at Tommy's house. I just wanted to remind you that there are worse things in life than the report card that's in my desk drawer. I love you! Call when it is safe for me to come home.

Submitted by Charles Kimball, Allen, Texas

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**(Why? Trusting God When You Don't Understand by Anne Graham Lotz)
Nashville, TN: W Publishing / Thomas Nelson. Copyright – Anne
Graham Lotz, 2004.**

The disciples were arguing with Jesus!

Have *you* ever argued with Jesus? Have you ever questioned His wisdom or timing and honestly blurted out that what He seemed to be doing was not a good idea . . . not a good time . . . not the way to do things . . . in your opinion?

It's amazing how arrogant we can be, isn't it?

Yet there are times when Jesus seems so slow to answer our prayers! And when He does begin to move into a situation, things can be so different from what we envisioned that we resist the answer we've been waiting for! Not only His *delays* but His *ways* can be totally confusing!

p. 58

**(Slaying the Giants in Your Life: You Can Win the Battle and Live Victoriously
by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group / Thomas
Nelson. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2001.**

First, we might as well stand up and admit it. It's no good to call it something else—call it by its name, *failure*. You didn't "select an alternate strategy path" in that big work assignment; you fouled up! You and your spouse didn't have "irreconcilable differences." Your God has already bridged the greatest estrangement there could ever be: the one between humanity and Himself. Do you really think that your "differences" were irreconcilable in His power? No, and for that matter, marriage never fails. God created it perfectly. It is *people* who fail. It sounds harsh, it feels uncomfortable, and yet the truth doesn't care much for comfort; it promises only to set us free.

Before all else, we need to call a failure by its true name, and we need to borrow that sign from President Truman that says, "The buck stops here."

p. 178

(The Expositor's Bible: The Book of Psalms-Volume I- Psalms I-XXXVIII by A. Maclaren, D.D.) New York, N.Y.: A.C. Armstrong and Son. Copyright – 1899.

There is comparative peace for a tortured heart in the thought that all its desire and sighing are known to God.
p. 381

(Captivating by John & Stasi Eldredge) Nashville, TN: Nelson Books / Thomas Nelson. Copyright – John Eldredge and Stasi Eldredge, 2005.

A WOMAN'S JOURNEY

*Then the time came when the risk it took
To remain tight in a bud was more painful
Than the risk it took to blossom.*

—ANAIS NIN

p. 3

(Facing Your Giants by Max Lucado) Nashville, TN: W Publishing. Copyright – Max Lucado, 2006.

Are you angry with God? Tell him. Disgusted with God? Let him know. Weary of telling people you feel fine when you don't? Tell the truth. My friends Thomas and Andrea Davidson. A stray bullet snatched their fourteen-year-old son, Tyler, out of their lives. Tom writes:

We were bombarded by the question, "How are you doing?" . . . What I really wanted to tell everyone was, "How do you think we are doing? Our son is dead, our life is miserable, and I wish the world would end."⁴

4. Thomas P. Davidson, *I Called Him Roosk, He called Me Dad: A Collection of Thoughts About a Father's Faith, Love, and Grief After Losing His Son* (privately printed), 36–37.
p. 86

(The Seeking Heart: Volume 4: The Library of Spiritual Classics by Fenelon)
Auburn, MA: The SeedSowers Christian Book Publishing House.
Copyright -Christian Books Publishing House, MCMXCII.

Never make important decisions in a state of distress. You just are not able to see clearly.

When you are calm and collected, you will find the will of God more clearly known.

p. 55

v. 12 But God said to him, “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 12:

But God spoke to Abraham, “Don’t feel badly about the boy and your maid. Do whatever Sarah tells you. Your descendants will come through Isaac.

The NET Bible translates verse 12:

But God said to Abraham, “Do not be upset about the boy or your slave wife. Do all that Sarah is telling you because through Isaac your descendants will be counted.

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:**

The two emphases (vv. 1-13) then are these: the birth of Isaac (in which the naming commemorated the fulfillment and the circumcision confirmed the covenant), and the expulsion of Ishmael as the removal of the threat. Once the promised child was received, Abraham and Sarah, rejoicing in God’s miraculous provision, had to avoid any possible threat to Isaac’s inheritance. Because God chose one son, His choice had to be protected. Abraham and Sarah had to expel Ishmael.

God instantly responds to Abraham being **“DISTRESSED.”** He commands him:

1. **“DO NOT BE SO DISTRESSED ABOUT THE BOY AND YOUR MAIDSERVANT”** and
2. **“LISTEN TO WHATEVER SARAH TELLS YOU.”**

The **REASON** for this:

“BECAUSE IT IS THROUGH ISAAC THAT YOUR OFFSPRING WILL BE RECKONED.”

God says, **“DO NOT BE SO DISTRESSED”**—“let not your heart be troubled.”

Separating from Ishmael is part of God’s wisdom, in picking up the tangled threads of our lives and weaving them into something beautiful.

Profit? Loss?

Who shall declare this good that ill.
 When good and ill so intertwine
 but to fulfill the vast design of an omniscient will.
 When seeming gain but turns to loss,
 when earthly treasure proves but dross
 and what seems less but turns again
 to high eternal gain.

God is working it all out according to His grand design and now even as Abraham has trusted Him earlier so he needs to commit this matter into the hand of God.

There are times when a man must listen to his wife. Here God goes back to his original covenant promises. Events will pass in accordance with the eternal plan.

Radmacher & Allen say:

. . . **but God said:** This is the sixth time Abraham received a direct word from the Lord since coming to the land of Canaan. **listen to her voice:** Abraham needed to hear God give him permission to send Hagar and Ishmael from his home. **In Isaac** alone would the principal covenant be fulfilled. Ishmael had his own promise (v. 13; compare 16:10–12), but nothing God promised to Ishmael would replace His promise to Isaac.
p. 42

Wenham says:

“Obey Sarah in whatever she says to you.” The last time Abraham obeyed Sarah (16:2) was a great mistake (cf. 3:17), so this command answers yet another objection that Abraham raised to expelling Hagar and Ishmael. It was his right to decide family policy, not Sarah’s. Now he must submit to her, for her demands fit in with God’s plans, “because your descendants will be named through Isaac” (cf. 48:16). The precise sense of this clause is obscure, but the general sense is clear. The elect line of Abraham’s descendants will run through Isaac; none of his other children count, a point already made in 17:19 and here reaffirmed.
p. 83

On Being Accident-Prone

A rabbi taught that experiences of God can never be planned or achieved. “They are spontaneous moments of grace, almost accidental.”

His student asked, “Rabbi, if God-realization is just accidental, why do we work so hard doing all these spiritual practices?”

The rabbi replied, “To be as accident-prone as possible.”

Philip Yancey, Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference? (Zondervan, 2006), p.106; submitted by Douglas McCoy, Crestline, Ohio

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Rookie Pitcher Allows a Record Four Home Runs

Every baseball player dreams of making it to the majors, but to set a record within the first week would be something really special. Chase Wright, a rookie pitcher for the New York Yankees, tied a Major League Baseball record in the first week he was called up from Double-A ball—though probably not in the way he had hoped.

On Sunday night, April 22, 2007, Wright gave up a record four consecutive home runs to the Boston Red Sox, allowing the Red Sox to sweep their division rivals in their first meeting of the season.

Wright tied the record previously held by Paul Foytack, who gave up four consecutive homers in 1963. Rather than berate the young pitcher, Yankee skipper Joe Torre said, “It’s just another piece of experience for that kid. It has nothing to do with what he’s going to be or what’s going to happen in the future. I still think he’s going to be special. He’s a pretty tough kid.”

While Torre’s confidence was certainly heartening to Wright, he received some support in the mail from someone who can empathize. Paul Foytack, Wright’s partner in baseball infamy, mailed Wright a letter of encouragement the next morning. “He’s kind of young to be going through that,” Foytack said. “Hopefully, he’ll take it to heart.”

*Jeff Passan, “Historic Breakdown,” sports.yahoo.com, (4-23-07);
submitted by David Slagle, Atlanta, Georgia*

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Policeman Writes Himself Ticket

Police Chief Richard Knoebel of Kewaskum, Wisconsin, demonstrated uncommon integrity by holding himself accountable to the same laws he swore to uphold. He wrote himself a ticket.

Knoebel said he didn't want to take the easy way out by avoiding the consequences because of his position of authority when he accidentally drove past a stopped school bus with its emergency lights flashing. Knoebel wrote himself a \$235 ticket, docked himself four points on his driving record and paid the fine.

Most people wouldn't have known about the officer's deed, which actually took place back in September of 2006, but his fine appeared in local court records and a newspaper reporter discovered Knoebel's honest truth.

While on patrol, Knoebel said he had become distracted by a stopped dump truck. Worried that a car quickly approaching the truck might collide with it, he moved to the next lane over in order to pass the truck and give the oncoming car more room to stop. That's when he realized he was passing a stopped school bus in the far lane.

No matter the reason for his transgression, Knoebel told the truth, did the right thing, and held himself accountable, even when most people weren't looking.

Associated Press (2-5-07); submitted by Clark Cothorn, Tecumseh, Michigan.

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(Devotions and Prayers of F. B. Meyer compiled and edited by Andrew Kosten)
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. Copyright – Baker Book House, 1960.

O MY Father, I know that thou lovest me, and that thy love has chosen my path. I would have it so. Help me to be satisfied with thy wise choice of time and tide, of sun and shower. Grant unto me such faith in thy fatherly mercy and love that I may never be troubled about the things of this life, but seek the coming of thy kingdom and the glory of our Lord. Amen.
p. 55

v. 13 I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 13:

Regarding your maid’s son, be assured that I’ll also develop a great nation from him—he’s your son, too.”

The NET Bible translates verse 13:

But I will also make the son of the slave wife into a great nation, for he is your descendant too.”

Here once again the Lord cares for the promises which He has made to Abraham with regard to Ishmael.

Isn’t it amazing that God can take the **MESSES** that we make and turn them into a **MIRACLE**.

HE EVEN HAS A PLAN FOR OUR DISOBEDIENCES.

Romans 8:28

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

The **REASON** the Lord is going to do something special for the **“SON OF THE MAIDSERVANT”** is because **“HE IS YOUR OFFSPRING”** as well.

Hughes says:

God was graciously addressing the self-created mess of Abraham and Sarah because he “was taking up the tangled threads of His servant’s life, weaving them into his own divine pattern, and overruling everything for good” (Griffith Thomas).⁴ This is God’s way. This is what would later be realized in Joseph’s life when he addressed his brothers: “you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20). The truth is, without affliction and hardship we would be trivial, superficial, flat-sided beings—people without depth or substance—with shallow faith. This truth is a life-changing revelation when taken to heart. God works in and through the vicissitudes of life to mature our faith. Take this to heart!

p. 295

MacArthur says:

Ishmael was about seventeen years old, a customary time for sons to go out to set up their own lives.

p. 43

v. 14 Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba.

Peterson paraphrases verse 14:

Abraham got up early the next morning, got some food together and a canteen of water for Hagar, put them on her back and sent her away with the child. She wandered off into the desert of Beersheba.

The NET Bible translates verse 14:

Early in the morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He put them on her shoulders, gave her the child, and sent her away. So she went wandering aimlessly through the wilderness of Beer Sheba.

Abraham is now called to a **SEPARATION FROM ISHMAEL** and so he is faithful and obedient to do what the Lord asked him to do in making this separation.

It is interesting that the Apostle Paul uses this very account in Galatians 4 to describe the relationship which the Christian has with the Mosaic Law.

There must come a **SEPARATION FROM LEGALISM** to the deepening of a relationship with our Lord.

Galatians 4:30

But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.”

Galatians 5:1

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

What an incredible example of a person who is obedient immediately and who does just exactly what the Lord asks him to do even when he doesn't understand fully what's going on.

Our text tells us, "EARLY THE NEXT MORNING ABRAHAM" did **THREE THINGS**. He:

1. "TOOK SOME FOOD,"
2. "TOOK . . . A SKIN OF WATER," and
3. "GAVE THEM TO HAGAR."

After this:

"HE SET THEM ON HER SHOULDERS AND THEN SENT HER OFF WITH THE BOY."

Her **RESPONSE** was:

"SHE WENT ON HER WAY AND WANDERED IN THE DESERT OF BEERSHEBA."

You can't help but think that she's probably trying to figure out how she can get back to Egypt.

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

Ishmael was a lad of seventeen years, and it is quite customary for Arab chiefs to send out their sons at such an age to do for themselves: often with nothing but a few days' provisions in a bag.

p. 30

Thomas says:

Abraham at once obeys the Divine word. We see him rising up early in the morning, and with thoughtfulness and tenderness he bids Hagar and Ishmael farewell. It requires very little imagination to enter into his feelings as he saw them depart, realizing that a break had come into his life which could never be altered or set aside. It is striking to notice the entire absence of any remonstrance on the part of Hagar. She seems to have taken everything quietly. Ishmael, too, although seventeen years old, showed no signs of rebellion.

p. 186

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

Whole-heartedness shows itself in *perseverance*; there may be failure at first, but the earnest worker will say, “It is the Lord’s work, and it must be done; my Lord has bidden me do it, and in His strength I will accomplish it.”

p. 151

Humility makes us ready to be blessed by the God of all grace, and fits us to deal efficiently with our fellow men.

p. 193

(The Expositor’s Bible: The Book of Psalms Volume I- Psalms I-XXXVIII by A. Maclaren, D.D.) New York, N.Y.: A.C. Armstrong and Son. Copyright – 1899.

It is the pure utterance of personal trust in Jehovah, darkened by no fears or complaints and so perfectly at rest that it has nothing more to ask. For the time desire is stilled in satisfaction.

pp. 226-27

v. 15 When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes.

Peterson paraphrases verse 15:

When the water was gone, she left the child under a shrub

The NET Bible translates verse 15:

When the water in the skin was gone, she shoved the child under one of the shrubs.

The water that had been provided by Abraham is used up and as Hagar and Ishmael wander around in the wilderness, finally without water, she leaves Ishmael in this destitute state, very near to physical death under one of the bushes in the shade.

v. 16 Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob.

Peterson paraphrases verse 16:

and went off, fifty yards or so. She said, "I can't watch my son die." As she sat, she broke into sobs.

The NET Bible translates verse 16:

Then she went and sat down by herself across from him at quite a distance, about a bowshot away; for she thought, "I refuse to watch the child die." So she sat across from him and wept uncontrollably.

She watches his struggle with life and death from a distance, but she does not want to be looking at him at the moment of his physical demise.

Parker says:

And what men God trains in the wilderness! It would seem as if great destinies often had rough beginnings. "I will make him a great nation," said the angel of God. We must go down to go up. We must suffer if we would be *strong* with other than a rude unmellowed power. Why this is human history repeated in an individual example! Man's story had a rough opening. Adam, in blighted Eden, was as Ishmael in the inhospitable wilderness. God knows what we need, where we are, and when to come for us. Compare your present self with your former self, and say if God be not as gracious as he is mighty. If you could take out of your character all the fine elements which have come into it through sorrow, you would be turned into a crude and selfish creature. Sorrow, rightly accepted, sorrow sanctified, refines the gold of life; it raises the heart into noble elevation of feeling; it enriches the memory with many helpful recollections; it conquers and destroys the spirit of unbelieving and selfish fear. My friends, God would make us very poor if he took from us the results of sanctified sorrow.

p. 234

The **REASON** she withdrew from Ishmael is given in the later part of verse 16:

“FOR SHE THOUGHT, ‘I CANNOT WATCH THE BOY DIE.’ AND AS SHE SAT THERE NEARBY, SHE BEGAN TO SOB.”

v. 17 God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 17:

Meanwhile, God heard the boy crying. The angel of God called from Heaven to Hagar, “What’s wrong, Hagar? Don’t be afraid. God has heard the boy and knows the fix he’s in.

The NET Bible translates verse 17:

But God heard the boy’s voice. The angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and asked her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Don’t be afraid, for God has heard the boy’s voice right where he is crying.

“GOD HEARD” and GOD RESPONDS. First of all with a QUESTION and then with a COMMAND:

QUESTION—“WHAT IS THE MATTER, HAGAR?”

COMMAND—“DO NOT BE AFRAID; GOD HAS HEARD THE BOY CRYING AS HE LIES THERE.”

So it is with man’s extremity is God’s opportunity and another illustration of the fact the Lord is never late, and that His delay is not His denial.

He had made promises to Hagar and to Abraham with regard to Ishmael. Therefore He will not let the boy die.

“DO NOT BE AFRAID; GOD HAS HEARD THE BOY CRYING AS HE LIES THERE.”

Radmacher & Allen say:

God heard: What wonderful words these are! There is no pain of His people that He does not see or hear about (Is. 40:27, 28; Heb. 2:10, 18; 4:15). God was near to deliver; the child would not die.

p. 42

R. C. Sproul, commenting on the orphan cry of the Savior from the cross, “ELI, ELI LAMA SABACHTHANI?” “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?” says these words:

(Living the Cross Centered Life: Keeping the Gospel the Main Thing by C. J. Mahaney) Sisters, OR: Multnomah. Copyright – Sovereign Grace Ministries, 2006.

This cry represents the most agonizing protest
ever uttered on this planet.
It burst forth in a moment of unparalleled pain.
It is the scream of the damned—for us.

R. C. SPROUL

p. 89

James 5:4

Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

v. 18 Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”

Peterson paraphrases verse 18:

Up now; go get the boy. Hold him tight. I'm going to make of him a great nation.”

The NET Bible translates verse 18:

Get up! Help the boy up and hold him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”

Here the Lord just reinforces for Hagar the promises which had been made earlier.

v. 19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

Peterson paraphrases verse 19:

Just then God opened her eyes. She looked. She saw a well of water. She went to it and filled her canteen and gave the boy a long, cool drink.

The NET Bible translates verse 19:

Then God enabled Hagar to see a well of water. She went over and filled the skin with water, and then gave the boy a drink.

How precious of the Lord to provide that which was her greatest need so that with that provision life might be sustained.

2 Kings 6:15-17

When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh, my lord, what shall we do?" the servant asked. "Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Parker says:

You will bear me witness, as a further matter of fact, that life is full of surprises and improbabilities, and that the proverb, “Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity,” is supported by innumerable instances. “God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.” She expected to die; and lo, she never was so sure of life. Ishmael withered only at the top, not at the root, for out of that root was to spring a great nation. These surprises not only save life from monotony, they keep us, if rightly valued, lowly, expectant, dependent. *They operate in two contrary ways*—lifting up man, and casting him down.
p. 234

Wiersbe says:

So often in the trials of life we fail to see the divine provisions God has made for us, and we forget the promises He has made to us. We open our hands to receive what we think we need instead of asking Him to open our eyes to see what we already have. The answer to most problems is close at hand, if only we have eyes to see . . .
p. 102

**(On Holy Ground: A Daily Devotional by Charles Stanley) Nashville, TN:
Thomas Nelson. Copyright – Charles Stanley, 1999.**

Dear Lord, open my eyes that I may see; give me acute spiritual perception; enable me to taste Thee and know that Thou art good. Make heaven more real to me than any earthly thing has ever been.
p. 239

v. 20 God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer.

Peterson paraphrases verse 20:

God was on the boy's side as he grew up. He lived out in the desert and became a skilled archer.

The NET Bible translates verse 20:

God was with the boy as he grew. He lived in the wilderness and became an archer.

Ishmael continued to grow and he liked to live by himself in the wilderness. He became one who was very effective with the bow and arrow. This I am sure provided adequate food for the table for him and his mother. They were able to live comfortable lives in these circumstances.

v. 21 While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

Peterson paraphrases verse 21:

He lived in the Paran wilderness. And his mother got him a wife from Egypt.

The NET Bible translates verse 21:

He lived in the wilderness of Paran. His mother found a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Hagar goes back home to the land of Egypt to find a wife for her son. It is interesting to note that the product of the flesh ends up in a marriage with the world.

There is another great principle here and that is legalism or life on the basis of performance or living by the Law. Represented in Hagar and Ishmael generally ends up with a marriage of the world. How many thousands of disenchanting young folks, both married and single, who have been brought up in a strict legalistic environment have rebelled so against that environment that they have ended up living very worldly lives in the midst of their rebellion.

***The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:**

The Angel of the Lord met Hagar in the desert . . . as before . . . and provided water from a well . . . as before . . . God told Hagar, as He had told Abraham, that from Ishmael would come a great nation . . . Ishmael lived in the desert . . . became an archer . . . and married an Egyptian . . . The Desert of Paran is in the northeast portion of the Sinai peninsula.

Paul's use of this account is marvelous (Gal. 4:21-31; . . . Ishmael was born by the flesh through "the slave woman" . . . Isaac was born by the promise and was the heir. One represented bondage at Sinai, the other freedom when the promise finally came. When Christ, the seed, came, the old was done away. Now that the promise has come, believers are co-heirs with the promised Seed by adoption through God's grace. To go back under the Law would be to undo the fulfillment of God's promise. Those adopted by the Seed become seeds and are set free from the bondage of the Law . . . Just as Ishmael and Isaac were in conflict . . . so the flesh and the Spirit do not harmonize. The flesh struggles against the Spirit, often mocking it . . . Therefore believers are to "get rid of the slave woman and her son" . . . that is, to remove the threat of the flesh and "live by the Spirit" . . .

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: “The Lord was gracious to Sarah” and “the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised” (verse 1).

LESSON #2: The Lord, at the appointed time, will fulfill the promises which He has made to us, even if it is 25 years later.

LESSON #3: The Lord’s timing is always perfect.

LESSON #4: He makes all things beautiful in His time.

LESSON #5: There is a joy beyond human comprehension which is ours in the fulfillment of God’s promises to us.

LESSON #6: Who would have ever thought that this happening would take place, but God is the God of the impossible.

LESSON #7: The conflict between the old and the new nature is underscored in this passage.

LESSON #8: The sorrow of sowing in the flesh in trying to help God out is also borne out in these verses.

LESSON #9: God is ever calling us to a greater separation unto Himself.

LESSON #10: Legalistic Christianity often ends up in a marriage to the world.

LESSON #11: When we have acted in the flesh and God responds, it is going to be a very painful process to turn loose of what we have done.

LESSON #12: Abraham’s continuous obedience leads to the eventual blessing by the Lord.

Parker says:

As a matter of fact, the men who seem to be the most prosperous have trials of a heavy and most disciplinary kind. Early in the morning Abraham sent Hagar away; early on another morning a heavier cloud gathered over his horizon, and a keener pang tortured his heart. It seems as if great nations must be built upon ruins—as if great prices must be paid for great honours. Ishmael is to die of thirst; Isaac is to perish by the knife—did ever brilliant destinies arise from such flickering embers? My friend, thou knowest not what thou shalt be, or thy children; life is very low with thee just now; it may be because immortality is so near!

I have not far to go for an evangelical application of this incident. It is in our *despair* that Christ brings his Gospel to us. It is when there is no well that he smites the rock. It is when the knife is lifted over our heart that he becomes a “Lamb” for us!

pp. 234–35

(Captured by Grace: No One is Beyond the Reach of a Loving God by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity Publishers. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2006.

As he approached death many years later, Newton would claim that much of his memory was fading. “But I remember two things,” he wrote. “That I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior.”¹ He held on to the two essential facts. Penitence is the prelude to the wonderful work of grace.

p. 67

(Captured by Grace: No One is Beyond the Reach of a Loving God by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity Publishers. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2006.

His epitaph reads as follows:

JOHN NEWTON
 Clerk
*Once an infidel and libertine,
 A servant of slaves in Africa,
 was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior,
 JESUS CHRIST,
 Preserved, restored, pardoned,
 and appointed to preach to faith,
 he had long labored to destroy.
 He ministered near sixteen years as curate and vicar,
 Of Olney in Bucks
 and twenty-eight years as rector of these united parishes.
 On February 1, 1750, he married
 MARY,
 daughter of the late George Catlett,
 of Chatham, Kent,
 whom he resigned to the Lord who gave her,
 On December 15, 1790*

p. 182

(Christ/Life by Ruth Myers) Sisters, OR: Multnomah. Copyright – Ruth Myers, 2005.

It's in God's Word that we can find reliable and uplifting truths about ourselves, and dwelling on these truths can produce obedient, confident, and joyful living. We can think and know, "I'm clean through Christ's death on the cross. I'm free from the dominion of sin through His resurrected life. I'm competent to face life through His Spirit in me. I'm not expected to be a finished product now, but someday I will be. My destiny is to share His love, His purposes, and His glory now and forever!" Nothing gives us greater stability.

In reality, however, our lives are often shaky and faltering. We cower before our spiritual enemy; we feel discouraged and condemned. We feel we're in a deep hole and must somehow get ourselves out before any spiritual progress is possible.

Why do we feel like this? Because we're basing our self-image on (1) Satan's lies, (2) our own past experience, and (3) our feelings—instead of on the solid, glorious, scriptural *facts* of who God is, what He has accomplished, and who we are in Him.

p. 11

(The Attributes of God: A Journey Into the Father's Heart by A. W. Tozer) Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications. Copyright – Christian Publications, Inc., 1997.

God made only you in His image and you're stuck with it, sinner and Christian both. You're made in the image of God, and nothing short of God will satisfy you. And even if you happen to be one of those "nickel-in-the-slot, get saved, escape hell and take heaven" Christians (that poor little kindergarten view of heaven), remember one thing—even you will find over the years that you are not content with "things plus God." You'll have to have God minus all things.

p. 30

(Bits and Pieces by M. B. "Billy" Dunn, 1977)

This is called "A Testimony." Some folks call it "Jesus Loves Me."

"A Testimony"

Jesus loves me this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
Too childish for me was a rhyme like that,
I wanted something scientific to work at.

Something to prove by using logic and mind,
That I was the head not the behind.
"Don't give me that stuff," I said.
All the best scholars say Jesus is dead.

Don't tell me so insignificant a man
Could do anything better than I can.
Why he died on a hill a long time ago,
With not much of anything to show.

For what he had done and what he had said,
Just a few friends who denied he was dead.
So I charged the world with confidence and pride,
To seek my success and from nothing hide.

I expected success because I was me,
Capable, talented, intelligent, me.
But soon I found I was not all-sufficient,
In many ways I saw I was quite deficient.

Finally the waste in my life became too much to bear,
I had nothing worthwhile in my heart to share.
No longer a man but only an "It."
My greatest desire to die and to quit.

Not till then did I see the light,
That my previous scholars might not be right.
So I opened my heart and turned to His word,
Praying my plea for guidance would be heard.

To my surprise I was soon to find,
That my new scholar really had a mind.
His word became simpler, more direct and true,
And I started afresh with a life brand new.

Jesus loves me, this I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
Too simple for me is a truth like that.
I deserve something scientific to work at.

Something that leaves me empty, cold,
Heartless, useless, outside of his fold.
But let me tell you, I now say,
Of the great God-man who came one day,
To die for me an insignificant man.
And who does all things better than I can.