

LESSON 13

# Isaac & Ishmael

GENESIS 20–21



**BIBLE TRUTH**

THE PROMISE OF A SON IS FULFILLED

LESSON SNAPSHOT

- 1. OPENING REVIEW . . . . . 5 MIN**  
Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.
- 2. BIBLE STORY . . . . . 10 MIN**  
Read Genesis 21:1–7 from the Scriptures or read story 13, “Isaac and Ishmael,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.
- 3. OBJECT LESSON 1 . . . . . 10 MIN**  
The Last Laugh
- 4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION . . . . . 10 MIN**
- 5. OBJECT LESSON 2 . . . . . 20 MIN**  
You’re What?  
**SUPPLIES:**  
✓ old earth-tone towels and sheets for makeshift costumes
- 6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY . . . . . 5 MIN**
- 7. ACTIVITY TIME . . . . . 15 MIN**  
Isaac Means Laughter  
**SUPPLIES:**  
✓ paper  
✓ colored pencils
- 8. CLOSING PRAYER . . . . . 5 MIN**
- 9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON . . . . . 10 MIN**  
God’s Mercy to the Mocker

**TOTAL 90 MIN**

## PREPARING TO TEACH

## TEACHING POINTS

**Abraham struggled in trusting God**—God had promised to give Abraham and Sarah a son, but that hadn't happened yet. Abraham was afraid the Egyptians might kill him to get Sarah, his wife. So for a second time he had Sarah tell the Egyptians that she was his sister (the first time appears in Genesis 12:10–20).

Even as Abraham waited in faith for God's promise, at the same time he was fearful and struggled to trust God. How kind of God to show us Abraham's weakness. God knows that all our lives are a mixture of faith and doubt. Sometimes we trust God and sometimes we don't. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:25–34 to seek first God's kingdom and there will be no need to worry.

**God fulfilled his promise to Abraham**—After years and years of waiting, God fulfilled his promise to Abraham by giving Sarah a son. Sarah, who once laughed in her unbelief, now laughed with joy over what God had done. Abraham was one hundred years old when his son was born, and he named the son Isaac just as God had commanded (Genesis 17:17). The promised son had come. God had kept his covenant with Abraham.

**God saved Ishmael and Hagar**—Ishmael mocked Isaac, the child of promise, so he and his mother were sent away. But Abraham loved Ishmael, so God saved Hagar and Ishmael from dying of thirst. God also kept his promise to make a great nation of Ishmael.

In Galatians 4:21–31, Paul uses this story to compare the old covenant with the new covenant. Ishmael, who was born because Abraham didn't completely trust God, is like the old covenant, which was based on trying hard to obey laws. But Isaac, whose birth was a miracle of God, is like the new covenant, which is based on trusting what is promised to us in Jesus.

## A LITTLE BIT MORE

*Allegory*

An allegory is a story in which the characters and story line symbolize another story. In Galatians 4:21–31, Paul recounts the story of Hagar and Ishmael and Sarah and Isaac as an allegory for another story (see Galatians 4:24).

Ishmael was the product of Abraham trying to earn a son his way, apart from the grace of God. Isaac, on the other hand, was the product of God’s miraculous intervention. It is true that every child is a miracle, but in the case of Sarah, her childbearing years were over.

This story is told by Paul to allegorize our own pursuit of righteousness. We cannot become righteous by something we do, but only by what God did in Christ. Trying to be righteous by means of the law is like slavery. Hagar was the slave in the story. But Christ has set us free from the slavery of the law (Galatians 5:1) and saved us by grace. We are saved by God’s initiative and promise and not by anything we accomplish on our own.

**WHERE IS JESUS?** \_\_\_\_\_

How does today’s Bible story fit into God’s greater plan of redemption?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:28–31.

An important part of God’s plan is that no person will be able to boast about what he has done for God. Instead, all our boasting should be about what God has done for us. That was certainly true of Abraham’s life. Let’s take one more quick look at that story.

God promised to give Abraham a son through his wife Sarah. Sarah seemed to be too old to have children, so she suggested Abraham take a second, younger wife to have a son. That’s how Ishmael was born. Ishmael was Abraham’s effort to make God’s promise come true. But later on Sarah gave birth to Isaac, which was a miracle.

God wants all of our boasting to be about what God does for us, not what we do for ourselves. God wants us to give him the glory and praise for our salvation. That is why God gave Isaac to Abraham in his old age and that is the pattern God follows in saving us. There is nothing we can do to take away our own sin. We must depend on Jesus to take it away. When God saves us, we know that all of the credit should go to God.

**THE LESSON**

**OPENING REVIEW** . . . . . **5 MIN**

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

**BIBLE STORY . . . . . 10 MIN**

Read Genesis 21:1–7 from the Scriptures or read story 13, “Isaac and Ishmael,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

**OBJECT LESSON 1 . . . . . 10 MIN**

The Last Laugh

Read Genesis 21:8–10, the account of Ishmael mocking Isaac.

- Why might Ishmael be mocking Isaac with laughter?  
*(It could be that Ishmael was jealous of all the attention Isaac was getting.)*

It is interesting that Ishmael mocked his half brother by laughing when Isaac’s name means laughter.

Have the children look up and read Proverbs 9:12 and 22:10 (“mock” in the NIV is “scoff” in the ESV). Then ask:

- Was Ishmael just laughing at Isaac, or was there a sense in which he was also dishonoring Abraham and God? How so?  
*(In mocking the son, he also mocks the child’s father, Abraham. Unlike the laughter Sarah intended in naming her son, Ishmael’s laugh was a mocking laugh. This was an insult to God and his plan.)*

Ishmael was likely stunned when he was sent away. However, God cared for him by preserving him in the wilderness and by making him a great nation.

**TEACHING/DISCUSSION . . . . . 10 MIN**

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

**OBJECT LESSON 2 . . . . . 20 MIN**

You’re What?

**SUPPLIES:**

- ✓ old earth-tone towels and sheets for makeshift costumes

Divide the class into groups and have each group come up with a skit that depicts the scene where Abraham tells the members of his extended family that Sarah is pregnant.

Have each of them incorporate the naming of Isaac and the meaning of the laughter. Perhaps some of the people to whom Abraham speaks could laugh with joy and wonder that Sarah could be pregnant. Take time to allow the groups to perform their mini-dramas.

Engage the children in a dialogue with the following questions:

- **Why is the birth of Isaac so important to Abraham and Sarah?**  
*(Isaac's birth demonstrates God's faithfulness to keep his promise.)*
  
- **Why is the birth of Isaac important to all Christians today?**  
*(We are the ultimate beneficiaries of God's promise to Abraham. We are the stars in the sky and the grains of sand that represented the multitude that would be saved through Abraham's seed. This is true because Jesus came from Abraham's seed and it is through Christ that we are adopted into the family.)*

**SWORD BIBLE MEMORY . . . . . 5 MIN**

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

**ACTIVITY TIME . . . . . 15 MIN**

**Isaac Means Laughter**

- SUPPLIES:**
- ✓ paper
  - ✓ colored pencils

Have the children draw the name Isaac in block letters and decorate it with smiles symbolizing the meaning of the name.

**CLOSING PRAYER . . . . . 5 MIN**

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's scripture passages.

**BONUS OBJECT LESSON . . . . . 10 MIN**

**God's Mercy to the Mocker**

Compare God's mercy to Ishmael with his mercy to Cain in Genesis 4:14–16.

What does it look like for us to forgive the way God does? Look up and discuss Matthew 18:21–22, Luke 6:29–31, and 1 Peter 3:9.

The passage in 1 Peter teaches us not to repay insult with insult because of our calling. We receive God's blessing when we treat others graciously.