

ISAAC AND ISHMAEL

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: GENESIS 21:1-21



The promise of a son is fulfilled.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

God kept His promise to Abraham – After years and years of waiting, God finally fulfilled His promise to Abraham and gave Sarah a son. Sarah, who once laughed in her unbelief, now laughed with joy over what God had done. Abraham, who was 100 years old at the time of his son's birth, named his son Isaac just as God had commanded him (17:17). Finally, the promised son had come!

Ishmael mocked Isaac and was sent away – Ishmael was caught mocking Isaac on the day of a great feast which Abraham held in Isaac's honor. Isaac means "laughter" of a joyful nature but Ishmael was caught laughing in a mocking tone against this child of great joy. In response, Sarah told Abraham to send Hagar and her son away and Abraham reluctantly obeyed when God affirmed Sarah's request

In Galatians 4:21-31 Paul used this story to compare the old covenant of works with the new covenant of promise. So, God was behind the sending away. The child of promise, Isaac, was to have no competition. Later, in Genesis (chapter 22:2), it would be said of Isaac that he was Abraham's only son. Again, we see the purpose of God in removing Ishmael from Abraham's household.

God saved Ishmael and Hagar – Because God cared for Abraham, He saved Hagar and Ishmael from dying of thirst and provided for their future just as He promised Abraham He would. This is a wonderful picture of how God pours out His grace on the whole world, see Matthew 5:45.

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WHERE IS JESUS?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

God intended to give Abraham a son through his wife Sarah. When Sarah grew old, she suggested Abraham take a second wife who was younger in order to produce a son. Ishmael was the fruit of Abraham's own work – his attempt to make God's promise come about by his own effort. Isaac was a child supernaturally born in Sarah's old age. From the story of Abraham and Sarah, we learn that when God makes a promise, He will keep it. God's promise was fulfilled when Isaac is born and His plan was that through Isaac, Jesus would ultimately come. Jesus brought a salvation which is by faith, not works, so no one should boast.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Genesis 49:9-10

Connecting the passage to Christ:

In Revelation 5:5 Jesus is called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. When Jacob prophesies over Judah he called Judah the lion's cub and mentions that the scepter shall not depart from him, he was referencing Christ. Jesus is the King of Kings who is eternal upon the throne. It is in Christ that this passage is fulfilled.

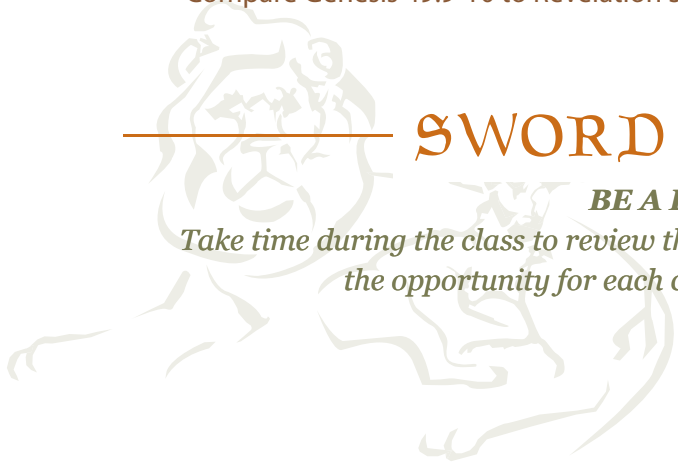
Questions for reflection:

- Compare Genesis 49:9-10 to Revelation 5:5. How are the two passages related?

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

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.



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

THE LAST LAUGH

Read Genesis 21:8-10, which tells the part of the story where Ishmael mocks 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 Proverbs 9:12 and Proverbs 22:10 and relate them to the passage by answering the following question.

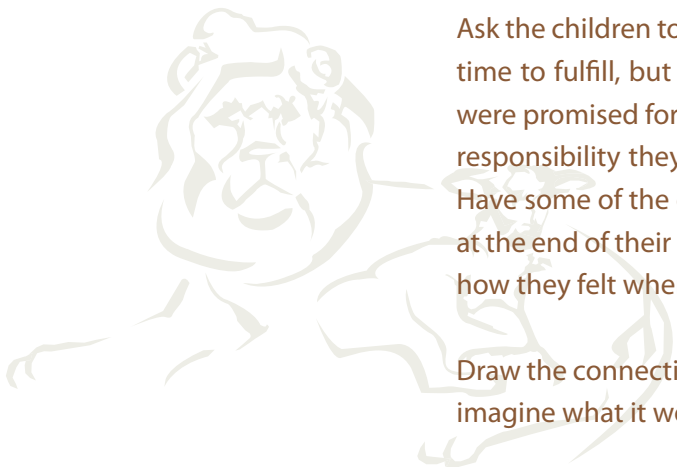
- Was Ishmael just laughing at Isaac, or was there a sense in which he was also dishonoring Abraham and God? How so? (In mocking the son, he also mocks the child's father Abraham. Unlike the laughter Sarah intended in naming her son, Ishmael's laugh was a mocking laugh. This was an insult to God and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

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

A PROMISE FULFILLED

Ask the children to think of a promise that someone made to them that took a long time to fulfill, but in the end was honored. This could be a gift like a bicycle they were promised for a birthday, or a trip they were promised, or a responsibility they were promised when they achieved a certain standard or age. Have some of the children share their stories with the class. Draw out the children at the end of their stories to find out if at any point they felt like giving up. Ask them how they felt when their promise was fulfilled.

Draw the connection to our story. Read Genesis 21:1-7 to the class and ask them to imagine what it would have been like for Sarah to realize she was pregnant.



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GOD'S MERCY TO THE MOCKER

Compare God's mercy to Ishmael with the mercy He demonstrated to Cain after he was caught murdering Abel in Genesis 4:14-16.

How are we told in the New Testament to follow God's example of forgiveness?

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. This is the motivation for treating others graciously so that we receive God's blessing.

PRAYER

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

IN CLASS PROJECT

Supplies

- paper
- colored pencils

The first and second grade children can use the preschool coloring sheet and questions. Have the older children draw the name Isaac in block letters and decorate it with smiles symbolizing the meaning of the name.



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FOR OLDER GRADES

Supplies:

- old earth tone towels and sheets for makeshift costumes

Divide the class into groups and have each group come up with a skit which depicts the scene where Sarah realizes she is pregnant, tells Abraham, and then Abraham tells the other people in his family.

Have each of them incorporate the naming of Isaac and the meaning of the laughter. Perhaps some of the people that Abraham speaks to 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 was the birth of Isaac 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 which represented the multitude which 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.)

A LITTLE BIT MORE

Allegory – An allegory is a story where the characters and story line symbolize another story. Paul, in Galatians 4:21-31, tells us 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 child-bearing years were over.

This story is told by Paul to allegorize our own pursuit of righteousness. We cannot become righteous by something we do, 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, by His initiative and promise, and not because of anything we could accomplish on our own.