

Abraham's amazing journey of faith began with God's commands: "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). And so, 75-year-old Abraham went, but not empty-handed. He carried with him promises from God that were stamped with a celestial guarantee. "I will make you into a great nation," God promised (12:2), assuring Abraham, who had no children, as many descendants as stars in the sky (15:5). God changed his name from Abram to Abraham, which means "father of many nations" (17:5). And He promised that Sarah, who "was unable to become pregnant" (11:30), would mother the child from whom Abraham's offspring would come (17:16). Abraham's journey had now come to a pinnacle moment: Isaac was born just as God said! <sup>i</sup>

1. Read Isaac's birth announcement in **Genesis 21:1–7**. Notice how each member of the family had a moment on stage: newborn Isaac, devoted Abraham, and exuberant Sarah. God, however, was (and still is) the star of the show. What does this passage say about Him? What repetitive phrases in verse 1-2 emphasise God's reliability to keep his promises?
2. What two actions does Abraham perform, and what is the significance of these actions (Genesis 21:3–4)? What the significance on Isaac's name? (17:19)
3. What is Sarah's new perspective toward God? (Consider 18-10-15 and 21:6-7)
4. The promise of a son to Abraham and Sarah in their old age was *personal*. It was a promise intended for them alone, so we shouldn't claim it as a promise meant for us. Though we cannot claim God's personal promises, we can claim His *universal* promises. What do the promises in the following verses mean to you? John 6:37–40; Roman's 10:13; Heb 13: 5-6; 2 Peter 1:3-4. (and any other verses of encouragement that you wish to share with your group)

5. *Remember, God is never accidentally late.* Are you waiting for the fulfillment of a promise? Are you hanging on for dear life, only to have the fingers of your faith pried open by skepticism or doubt? What can you do to hang on to God’s trustworthiness while you wait?

Please read Genesis 21:8-21

6. In the following chart, compare this scene with a similar episode.

	First conflict Gen. 16:1-16	Second conflict Gen 21:8-21
What incited Sarah’s anger?		
What did Sarah say to Abraham?		
What happened to Hagar?		
How did God show compassion to Hagar?		
What blessing did God give to Ishmael?		
What does “water” symbolize in each story?		

As you reflect on these two accounts, you can see the ripple effects Abraham’s sin created. Write down a list of consequences that spread in ever-widening circles from having a son through Hagar.

7. Ishmael hindered the covenant from passing to Isaac. Sarah was right—Ishmael and Hagar had to go (Genesis 21:10). And yet, Sarah was *wrong* to allow her emotions to rage out of control. What characteristics of unrestrained anger do you see in Sarah's words (16:5; 21:10)?
  
8. Compare Abraham's response in Genesis 16:6 and Genesis 21:11–14. How are they different? How does Abraham show more wisdom in the second episode than the first in responding to Sarah and handling this heartbreaking choice between his two sons?
  
9. When Abraham released Hagar from servitude, he cut off Ishmael from his inheritance with no hope for return. Although Abraham loved Ishmael and desired God's blessing for him (17:16), he had no choice but to swallow the bitter fruit of his sin and banish Hagar and his beloved son. God, however, was moving behind the scenes. Through each hurtful event—Abraham's sin, Hagar's contempt, Sarah's rage, and the boys' rivalry—God was working His will. It's just like God to take tragedy and turn it around for His purposes (Romans 8:28)! What thread of hope do you see woven into the story?
  
10. God's compassion shines in this story, and there's more! Each character has a lesson to teach.
 

**Sarah:** *Sinful consequences may stalk us, but they won't conquer us unless we let them.* Sarah had to learn to live above Hagar's contempt and focus on God's purposes.

**Abraham:** *Marital disagreements will trouble us, but they can be great teachers if we're willing to learn.* Abraham learned to listen to Sarah. Really listen. Not react to her anger but genuinely seek to understand.

**Hagar:** *Personal regrets can discourage you, but they can't cripple you if you choose to press on.* God will point the way to the wells full of water, but we must ask for help, listen to His words, and follow His way.

Which of these applications hit closest to home for you? How can you put these lessons into action?
  
11. In Genesis 21:22-34 Abimelech the Philistine king makes a peace treaty with Abraham. How does this reflect upon the promises God has given to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3? What is the significance on Abrahams actions in verse 33?

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<sup>i</sup> This lesson is adapted from Insight for Living's, *Abraham: One Nomad's Amazing Journey of Faith*, Searching the Scriptures Study, accessed on 21/10/19 from [ifl.org.au](http://ifl.org.au) (Lessons include: It's a Boy; Forgiven Sin...Lingering Consequences.)