

# ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

Genesis 19 - 25

## STRUCTURE

**Key-persons:** Abraham, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac

**Key-location:** Canaan

### Key-repetitions:

- God promises Abraham: numerous descendants (Gen 22:17-18); blessings (Gen 22:15-18); all nations would be blessed through his descendant (Gen 22:15-19).
- Son/offspring/descendants: God promised Abraham descendants (Gen 22:17-18); Ishmael (Gen 25:9); Isaac (Gen 21:1-7, 8; 22:1-14; 24:1-8, 52-67; 25:9).

### Key-attitudes:

- Abraham's faith.
- Abraham's weakness to resist Sarah's suggestions.
- Positive attitude toward Abraham.
- Sarah's disgust of Hagar and Ishmael.
- Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac to God.

### Initial-situation:

Sarai and Abram had no children. Sarai told Abram to sleep with Hagar, her servant girl. Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born. When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him, changed his name to Abraham, Sarai's name to Sarah, and promised Abraham that he and Sarah would have a son.

### Initial-problem:

On the day Isaac was weaned, Sarah saw Ishmael, the son of Hagar, teasing Isaac.

### Final-situation:

The Lord's angel promised Abraham that he would make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Through his offspring all nations on earth would be blessed.

## BIBLE STORY

### Isaac's Birth; Hagar and Ishmael's Departure

The Lord fulfilled his promise. Sarah became pregnant and gave Abraham a son at the time God had promised. Abraham named him Isaac. When Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was ninety-one when Isaac was born (Gen 21:1-7).

On the day Isaac was weaned, Abraham gave a great feast. Sarah saw Ishmael, the son of Hagar, teasing Isaac. Sarah 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" (Gen 21:8-10).

This greatly distressed Abraham because Ishmael was also his son. Finally, the Lord told Abraham to listen to Sarah and let the boy go. Abraham's family line would continue through Isaac. The Lord promised Abraham that he would take care of Ishmael (Gen 21:11-13).

Early the next morning, Abraham took some food and a canteen of water, gave them to Hagar, and sent her off with Ishmael. Hagar went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba.

When the water was gone, Hagar put the boy under a bush. Then Hagar went about a bowshot away and sat down. Hagar thought, "I can't watch the boy die." Hagar sat and began to sob.

God heard the boy crying. The angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, "What is wrong, Hagar? God heard the boy crying. Help the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." Then God opened Hagar's eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the canteen with water and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer (Gen 21:14-20).

### **Testing Abraham**

Many years later God tested Abraham. The Lord said, "Abraham, take your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on the mountain I'll show you."

Early the next morning Abraham saddled his donkey and set out for the place designated by God. He took with him Isaac, two servants, and enough wood for the burnt offering. On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He told his servants, "Stay with the donkey while the boy and I go over there. We'll worship; then we'll come back to you."

Isaac carried the wood for the burnt offering. Abraham carried the fire and the knife. The two of them went on together. Isaac asked Abraham, "Father, the fire and wood are here, but where's the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "My son, God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering." The two of them went on together (Gen 22:1-8).

They reached the place. Abraham built an altar, arranged the wood on it, tied up his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar. Abraham took his knife to sacrifice his son Isaac. But the angel of the Lord called out, "Abraham! Abraham! Don't lay a hand on the boy. Now I know that you fear God, because you haven't kept from me your son, your only son" (Gen 22:9-14).

Abraham looked up and he saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. He took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. Abraham called that place, "The Lord Will Provide."

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time, "Because you've done this and haven't refused to give me your son, your only son, I'll bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the

seashore. Through your descendant, all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (Gen 22:15-19).

Sarah was 127 years old when she died. Abraham bought a cave to serve as the family cemetery and there he buried his wife Sarah (Gen 23:1-20). Abraham lived 175 years. Abraham died and his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave with his wife Sarah (Gen 25:1-10).

### GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

### SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How old was Abraham when he arrived in Canaan and God promised him descendants (Gen 12:4, 7)?
2. How old was Abraham when Isaac was born (Gen 21:5)?
3. Who and what helped Hagar to reconstruct her life after being rejected by Abraham?
4. How can we use Hagar's story to help people reconstruct their lives after being rejected?
5. How did God test Abraham and how did Abraham show his faith in God?
6. God provided a ram to be sacrificed in place of Isaac. How does this relate to John the Baptist calling Jesus the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29)?
7. Who did God promise to bless through Abraham (Gen 12:3; 22:18)?
8. How can other people be blessed because of our lives?

### LIFE-LESSONS

1. **God can delay the execution of his promises; however, he always fulfills them.** Twenty- five years passed from the time God promised Abraham a son (Gen 12:2), until Isaac was born (Gen 21:1-2).
2. **God reaches out to help people who suffer the anguish of a family breakup.** Abraham tried to keep the family together, but Sarah grew hostile toward her stepson, Ishmael. The Lord told Abraham to listen to Sarah and let the boy go. The Lord promised Abraham that he would take care of Ishmael (Gen 22:8-13). Hagar was sent away by Abraham, but with only a little water. She became angry, depressed and helpless. She wandered without direction (Gen 21:16). She received help from two sources (Gen 21:15-20):

- 1<sup>st</sup> **She cried to God, who opened her eyes.** Rejection generates anger, that generates depression. The rejected only has eyes for his problems and doesn't see any solution. God opened Hagar's eyes to see the well that was nearby.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> **Assuming her responsibility to her son helped Hagar's recovery.** Life isn't finished when somebody is rejected, neither do responsibilities go away. Being rejected by a man didn't remove God's willingness to help Hagar survive and continue her life.
3. **God's testing may be understood by looking back in history, but not by looking toward the future.** The Bible tells the reader that Abraham was being tested when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son (Gen 22:1). Abraham did not know he was being tested until he took the knife to slay his son (Gen 22:11-12).
4. **God provided the perfect sacrifice to substitute for sinful man.** God provided a ram (male sheep) in the place of Isaac (Gen 22:13). God made sure the ram was caught by its horns in a bush. If it had been caught by any other part of its body, it would have injured himself, trying to escape. God only accepts a perfect and healthy animal as a sacrifice. The ram died in the place of Isaac. Abraham called the place where God provided the ram, "The Lord will provide". The lamb that substituted Isaac is an illustration of Christ, who was offered in substitution for all who have faith in him (Heb 10:5-10).
5. **The person with faith in God clings to God's promises when he is tested with trying situations.** When Abraham and Isaac were on the way to the place of sacrifice, Abraham told his servants that he and Isaac would go away to worship and then both would return (Gen 22:5). The Lord had promised Abraham that his family line would be carried on through Isaac. Abraham was sure that even if God had to raise Isaac from the dead, the Lord would keep his promise (Heb 11:17-19).
6. **God promised Abraham that all people on earth would be blessed through him (Gen 12:3), and that all nations would be blessed through his descendant (Gen 22:18). These were the second and third references to the future coming of Jesus Christ.** All people can have a personal relationship with God through Jesus, and be blessed. (The first reference to the future coming of Jesus was in Genesis 3:15.)

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### **Twitter Prayers** (short, concise prayers):

Invite listeners to pray about the story in “twitter” length prayers. Tell God:

- How they feel about the story.
- How the story of Hagar helps them face being rejected.
- How the story helps them face personal testing.
- How the story helps them to know God better.