



## WEEK 8: NEXT LEVEL JOY & SORROW

At age 100, Abraham receives one of his greatest joys, the birth of his son Isaac. However, he needed to make the most difficult decision of letting go of his first-born son, Ishmael.

### SCRIPTURE Genesis 21

### OBSERVATION

- Interact with the following statements in the context of Genesis 21 and in the context of your own life. How do these fit into the story of Abraham and Sarah, and how do they fit into your story?
  - You can trust God's faithfulness. He keeps his word.
  - You can trust God's power. He can perform the miraculous.
  - You can trust God's sovereignty. His ways are always right and timely.
  - You can trust God's compassion. He close to the hurting, broken, and lonely.
  - You can trust God's watch-care. He will protect and provide.
- Why do you think Sarah reacted so harshly to Ishmael's treatment of Isaac (Gen. 21:9-10)? Why do you think God compelled Abraham to heed her orders instead of insisting that Ishmael stay? How does (Gal. 4:29) offer insight? List several reasons why Abraham did not want to see Ishmael go.
  - Why was it necessary?
  - What promise did God give Abraham concerning this son?
  - What does (Gen. 21:12-21) show about God's nature? Look up (Psalm 68:5-6; 34:18; Isaiah 54:5) for help.
- Disobedience has painful consequences. Ishmael was the fruit of not trusting God completely (read Genesis 16:1-6) which eventually gave Abraham sorrow. Why is it so important to follow God's direction precisely?
- God was gracious to Hagar and Ishmael, and because he was still Abraham's son, God kept His promise by making Ishmael a great nation. Ishmael became the ancestor of modern day Arabs. In Genesis 25:9, Isaac and Ishmael bury their father together in the cave of Machpelah. Yet, even to this day, the children of Ishmael (Arabs) and the children of Isaac (Israelis) are fighting. What does this teach us about actions and consequences? When will their fighting finally end?

### APPLICATION

- How can we know if our efforts for God stem from the flesh or from His power? Does His power make it easy?
- When God makes a promise, He will fulfill it. Has there ever been a time when you short-circuited God's promise by taking things into your own hands? What have been the consequences?
- Where do we see evidence of God's mercy in this passage? How has God been merciful to you in the midst of consequences (of any kind, but even pain caused by your own disobedience)?
- Abraham painfully casts out Hagar and Ishmael, and entrusts them to the grace of God. Sometimes, there are things in our life that we need to cast out in order to see God's promises fulfilled. What do you need to cast out to live by God's promises?

### PRAYER

#### GENESIS 21

1 When Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. 2 Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. 3 Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. 4 When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. 5 Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." 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." 8 The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. 9 But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, 10 and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."

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.

15 When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there, she began to sob. 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. 18 Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." 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. 20 God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer.