

And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. - GENESIS 21:8-11

FELLOWSHIP

(Start the conversation and get to know more about the people in the group. You can choose to answer one question.)

1. *Tell us about things that make you laugh or bring a smile to your face.*
2. *Where do you want to spend your next holiday?*

MEDITATE AND PROCLAIM

(Scripture to be gleaned from and how we can apply the Word in our lives and encourage others to do the same)

After the joyful part of Isaac being born to Abraham and Sarah, a painful story started to unfold. When it was time to wean Isaac, which probably was around three years old (the typical age Jewish children were weaned) the son of Hagar, Ishmael, mocked Isaac. According to R.K. Hughes' book *"Genesis: Beginning and Blessing,"* the word "mocked" is an intensive verb form of Isaac's name, "to laugh." Sarah saw Ishmael mocking Isaac and she became furious. She tells Abraham to get rid of them, which greatly grieved the patriarch. The slave woman Hagar and her son are cast out and it is not said whether Abraham would see them again.

For this lesson, we will see the possible emotions of our characters, the conflicts between them and the conflicts within their hearts. We will see how God responds to this situation and what can we learn from this event.

ISHMAEL'S JEALOUSY, SARAH'S ANGER

But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." - GENESIS 21:9,10

We can just imagine what could be going in Ishmael's mind. Until the birth of Isaac, he was probably considered the heir apparent - he was going to receive Abraham's inheritance. But ever since Isaac was born, Abraham could have treated him differently. Ishmael probably experienced a sense of being unwanted. Jealousy crept in, as many older siblings face when a new child is born.

There is no denying that Sarah got upset. Think about this: wouldn't you be furious when, during a celebration for your son, he gets mocked and laughed at by the son of your slave, your rival? This was probably the tipping point of Sarah's jealousy. God probably did not agree with Sarah's anger, however, Sarah was right in the fact that Ishmael would not share in Isaac's inheritance. Even though culture dictated that Ishmael receive the first portion of Abraham's inheritance, that was not God's will.

But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. - GALATIANS 4:29

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. - EPHESIANS 4:26,27

DISCUSS: WAS THERE A TIME IN YOUR LIFE THAT ANGER AND JEALOUSY GOT THE BETTER OF YOU?

ABRAHAM'S SADNESS, HAGAR'S DESPAIR

And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. - GENESIS 21:11

Abraham loved and cared for Ishmael, he was also his son. There could have been a conflict in his soul whether to send Hagar and Ishmael away or not. According to the code of Hammurabi, the laws and customs of the time, the son of the slave woman should not be dismissed from the home just because an heir had been born to the true wife. Abraham did not understand God's reason for sending Ishmael away. However, he did so, not in cruelty but in trust and obedience to God.

So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. When the water in the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down

opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, for she said, "Let me not look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. - GENESIS 21:14-16

Hagar felt it was going to be their end. She left her son Ishmael for she probably thought it was a good idea not to see each other die. At her point of desperation, she will again encounter the Lord who had been with her through other challenges (see Genesis 16:13,14).

*The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing. - ZEPHANIAH 3:17*

DISCUSS: HOW HAS THE LORD SAVED YOU FROM DESPAIR?

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring." - GENESIS 21:12,13

Even though Ishmael was a result of Abraham and Sarah's own sinful efforts to produce an heir, God remained faithful to Abraham by promising this son will be a nation as well. There was a conflict between Abraham's work of the flesh and God's miraculous work through the birth of Isaac, that is why a separation needs to be done and Abraham needs to let go.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. - GALATIANS 5:16,17

Our flesh always conflicts with God's Spirit living in us. We try to fulfil God's will in our own strength and ways. Instead of seeking peace through the Spirit, we often seek it through the things of the world. Instead of waiting on God's perfect time, we rush things and receive the consequences of our selfish efforts.

And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. And God was with the boy, and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. - GENESIS 21:17-20

We also see God's compassion toward Hagar and Ishmael. She has abandoned her son, thinking he is going to die. She began weeping. But in verse 17, it says that God heard, not Hagar, but the voice of the boy. God then calls to Hagar, points her to a well of water and both mother and son were saved.

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, - DEUTERONOMY 7:9

*But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.
- 2 THESSALONIANS 3:3*

DISCUSS: TELL US ABOUT A RECENT EVENT THAT GOD HAS SHOWN YOU HIS FAITHFULNESS AND GRACE.

PRAY

(Remember to do this. Pray for one another; for everyone to live out the Word and for any other specific prayer needs)

Ask the Lord to grow in us the fruit of His Spirit. When in conflict, rather than reacting in our flesh, let us respond in ways that honour God. Pray for God's faithfulness and grace to always shine in and through us.



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