

Genesis 21:1-2 gives us insight into the nature of God. The fulfillment of God's promise is referred to three times in these two short verses:

- "as He had said"
- "what He had promised"
- "at the very time God had promised"

It was God who promised the child. And the child was delivered right on schedule—God's schedule.

Application: God's purposes are never delayed, nor are they ever defeated by man's sin, nor were they dependent on Abraham and Sarah's performance. God's purposes are certain. What God has promised, He will accomplish. What promises from God are you awaiting? Does His faithfulness to Abraham and Sarah encourage you?

The heir/the promised child has arrived. How did Abraham choose his name? He didn't choose the name. God told him to name the child Isaac in Genesis 17:19.

Isaac means "he laughs." Remember we've previously seen both Abraham and Sarah laughing. God now has the last laugh.

This is the second time Sarah has laughed. Is there anything different about her laughter this time? Her previous laughter of unbelief has changed to laughter of joy. Her heart has changed.

What impact do you think this birth experience had on Sarah? This was a faith-building experience for her. It made her realize that her God was bigger than she thought. A baby turns the world upside down for every mother—certainly for this mother at this age and after all these years of waiting.

Abraham threw a feast for Isaac when he was about three years old. Ishmael was mocking the boy. Was this more than sibling rivalry? What were Sarah's motives for driving out Hagar & Ishmael? Jealousy and a protective instinct. She saw Ishmael as a threat to Isaac's inheritance. She took matters into her own hands once again.

What was Abraham's response to Sarah's demand? Distressed. Distraught.

With the benefit of hindsight, what might have been a better response? Abraham should have provided the loving leadership that Sarah needed at this time. "Let's pray through this Sarah and ask God for guidance."

What was God's response to Abraham's distress? God instructed Abraham to do what Sarah told him to do. Why do you think He did this?

God also consoled Abraham and made two promises:

- one for Abraham: "it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."
- and one for Ishmael: "I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring."

This was the second time God met with Hagar in the wilderness. (See Genesis 16.) This time whose cries caught God's attention? Ishmael's.

How did God answer his cries? Concretely, by showing his mother, Hagar, a well nearby.

Why did God promise to bless Ishmael? As a descendant of Abraham, Ishmael was the object of God's special care. In Genesis 21:13 God said, "because he is your offspring." God made a covenant to bless Abraham's descendants—which included Ishmael.

Why was it necessary for Hagar and Ishmael to leave Abraham's household? Why would God require that Ishmael be sent away? The inheritance/heir issue. But perhaps even more important, the greatest test of Abraham's faith as a man who trusted God, is going to take place in the next chapter when God tells him to take Isaac up on Mount Moriah and offer him as a sacrifice. If Abraham

had another son at home, it would not have been as great a challenge to his faith and trust in God. But now the door had been shut forever to Ishmael. Perhaps the Lord was setting up Abraham for this upcoming test of faith.

God is saying, “I want you to live life without a safety net Abraham. I’m getting Ishmael out of here. There will be no Plan B, no other options. There will be no fall back position. It’s a walk of faith Abraham. Trust me.”

Application: How is this relevant today in our lives? What’s your fall back position if God doesn’t come through for you? If you don’t get your desired assignment? If a relationship disintegrates?

Note Peter’s comments in John 6:66-69. “From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. ‘You do not want to leave too, do you?’ Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.’” Peter had no fall back plan. God wants us to live life without a safety net. God wants to be our fall back position.

Why are Abraham and Sarah’s sins recorded in Scripture? Men’s sins are recorded throughout Scripture in order to remind us that they were no different than we are and to serve as a warning and instruction to us not to repeat their mistakes.

Why would Abimelech want to make a treaty with Abraham? Abimelech sought a treaty with Abraham because he never wanted to go to battle against him. He realized how big Abraham’s God was. To fight Abraham was to attack Abraham’s God and to have to contend with Him. On the other hand, to have an alliance with Abraham was to have God on his side. No wonder Abimelech was so anxious to negotiate such a treaty!

Was it right for Abraham to make a treaty with Abimelech—a pagan? Did Abraham pray about it? Did he consult God? Does 2 Corinthians 6:14 (*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers*) apply here?

What are some other examples of when not to be unequally yoked? Business deals, partnerships, roommates, marriage, etc.

Why do you think Abraham did it? Perhaps guilt over the events of Chapter 20. He may have felt he owed Abimelech.

Does Abimelech express any personal interest in knowing about Abraham’s God? No. Abraham is still paying the consequences of his first encounter with Abimelech in Chapter 20. He forfeited the opportunity to witness effectively to Abimelech. Abraham suffered a loss of respect among the people of Abimelech. He developed no trust or credibility with them.

Application: When do we forfeit the opportunity to share spiritual truth? When does our behavior compromise our witness? When the people around us fail to see anything different about us. When hypocrisy is evident in our lives.

What did we learn about God from these verses?

- God is a promise maker and keeper
- He reveals Himself through the Scriptures
- He wants to be our fall-back position
- He has a sense of humor
- God’s purposes/promises are never delayed, nor are they ever derailed by man’s sin, nor are they dependent on our performance
- God allows consequences to result from our disobedience

Application: At the end of this chapter we again see Abraham calling upon the name of the Lord. This time he plants a tree. Perhaps altars come in various forms? What physical reminders have you “planted” to remind you of times when you worshiped God?