

Genesis 21.1-21

“In Joy and Sorrow – Choose the Best”

Would not want to be a Weather Man in Almaty > from Sweaters to Swimsuits  
Life quickly Changes > Joy turns to Sorrow > from Birthdays to Funerals

1. Life's Constant Changes
2. The Lord's Continual Care
3. Life's Challenging Choices

### 1. Life's Constant Changes

a. From Laughter – Birth of “Isaac” GREAT JOY = ‘he laughs’

ENDED Year of PAIN and UNCDERTAINTY-  
SADDNESS >> Sodom GONE > Lot MISSING > Abimelech more RIGHTEOUS

v. 6 Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me."

1) Joy of New Life – Not long until a Baby captures Your HEART

“A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.”  
John 16.21

2) Joyous End to a Long Wait – probably dreamed of motherhood for 80 years

TIRED OF WAITING > Year Earlier > age 89

18.11,12 “Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

LAUGHTER of UNBELIEF > God Rebuked Her for Lack of Faith

ABE REMINDED OF HIS SENIORITY MORE TIMES THAN HE WISHED

v. 2 “a son to Abraham in his old age”

v. 5 “Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him”

v. 7 “a son in his old age.”

“Look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. When I called him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him many” Isaiah 51.2

ABE Just GETTING STARTED > Had SIX MORE SONS > Lived until age 175

### 3) Joy of Shame Lifted

17.15-17 God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

Sarah > Princess?? > NO DESCENDENTS, NO DYNASTY, NO PROSPECTS  
Her SLAVE GIRL HAS MORE DIGNITY > Has a Son BY her OWN HUSBAND

GOD BROUGHT LAUGHTER > But this Sunshine was followed by a Storm...

b. to Lament – “everyone who hears about this will laugh with me” NOT QUITE

Great Celebration > HAWAIIAN BABY LUAU > Kalua Pig, Lomi Salmon, Sashimi, Poke, Opihi, Poi, Rice - (WAS BEFORE Dietary Law of Moses)

Fun, Food, & Fellowship > Other side of Tent > Hagar & Ishmael STINK LOOKS  
v. 9 “Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking”

SARAH’S BIG SMILE Quickly Turned to BITTER SCOWL  
IMAGINE!! > 2 Brothers Fighting > Big Brother 15 Picking on Younger One!!  
“That woman” & “her son” > NOT Going to Spoil MY Party > or My Son’s Life

Sarah PUTS ON THE TURBAN OF THE HOUSE AND COMMANDS ABE -  
v. 10 "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."

Hagar and Ishmael - QUICKLY SENT OFF SOBBING

vs. 14-16 “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. When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob.”

Life's Constant Changes – Quickly – Storm Clouds Came - Party was Rained Out

## 2. Lord's Continual Care

a. In Delight v. 6 Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter"

v. 1 "Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised."

Probably OFTEN SEEMED like God IGNORING or FORGOTTEN His Promise  
30 years > Almost 11,000 Nights of Wondering > 11,000 Days of Waiting

What are you Waiting for God to Do? Become Tired of Waiting? Given Up?

After 70 long years the Lord brought back the Exiles from Babylonian Captivity:  
"When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy...Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy."  
Psalm 126

We MAY WAVER in our Faith > God NEVER WAVERS in His Fulfillment

"By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore."  
Hebrews 11.11.12

b. In Distress – God is Faithful in Sunshine and in the Storms

GOD'S POWER WORKS WHEN WE FINALLY GET WHAT WE HOPE FOR  
God ALSO is Working When we Get what we DREAD – Hopes are DASHED

HEBREWS 11 – Heroes of Faith – In Life AND DEATH

"...the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. *Others* were tortured and refused to

be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated-- the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.”  
Hebrews 11.32-40

### THINGS WERE NOT PLEASANT FOR HAGAR AND ISHMAEL

v. 14 “in the desert of Beersheba” > NO WATER, FOOD, HELP or HOPE

ABE > 318 Soldiers to Rescue Lot > Sends Woman & Son ALONE into Desert??

But God was true to Ishmael’s Name = GOD HEARS

v. 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.”

GOD HAD A PLAN FOR ISHMAEL TOO v. 13 “I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring.”

v. 20,21 “God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.”

c. Right on Time v. 2 “at the very time God had promised”

30 Yrs EARLIER 12.2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you”

THANK GOD HE DOES NOT GIVE US ALL THE DETAILS > We would Quit!  
“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”  
Matthew 6.34

WHEN ABE WAS 99 – SARAH WAS 89 - 17.21 “My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you *by this time next year.*”

18.14 “Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you *at the appointed time next year* and Sarah will have a son.”

We BELIEVE God Will Do Something > WONDER– What is He WAITING For?

Sometimes Like Sarah – WE Make Plan B – Get a Hagar to Help God Out

“God does not need to consult anyone in formulating his plans, and he does not need any help from anyone in carrying them out” James Boice

GOD IS LORD OF TIME > ALL TIME > PERFECT TIME

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.” Ecclesiastes 3.1-8

d. For our Good and God’s Glory

NEXT MONTH > Olympic Games in place they Began > ATHENS  
Kazakhstan sending 117 Athletes to Compete > Many Nations

ENDLESSLY TRAINING > Some One year, Many Four years, Few LIFETIME  
Events End in Seconds > Most Eliminated in Qualifying Heats > Go Home Empty

Christian Life > Life Long Marathon > ALL GET Victory Wreath will not Perish  
Rewards are Eternal > Glory never Fades > Kept secure in Heaven Forever

“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to *his purpose*. For those God foreknew he also predestined *to be conformed to the likeness of his Son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” Romans 8.28-30

WHAT IS GOD’S PURPOSE FOR US?? Be Like Jesus > How?

“conformed to the likeness of his Son” > CONFORMING takes a Cross

"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it." Luke 9.22-24

“give thanks *in* all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus”  
1 Thessalonians 5.18

NOT *FOR* all Circumstances – Thank you for that Plane Crash, Stillborn Baby, etc  
Thank God that *IN* that Plane Crash He has a Purpose > for Good and Glory  
HORRIBLE – HIDEOUS – UNIMAGINABLY TERRIBLE > God is Good

Disappointment – His appointment, change one letter, then I see  
That the thwarting of my purpose is God's better plan for me  
His appointment must be blessing though it may come in disguise,  
For the end from the beginning open to His vision lies

Disappointment – His appointment, Whose? The Lord's who loves me best.  
Understands and knows me fully, who my faith and love would test.

For, like loving earthly parents, He rejoices when He knows  
That His child accepts unquestioned all that from His wisdom flows

Disappointment – His appointment, no good thing will He withhold,  
From denials oft we gather treasures of his love untold.

All my life's plan is his molding, not one single choice is mine.  
Let me answer, unrepining, Father, not my will, but thine”

Edith Lillian Young

### 3. Life's Challenging Choices

a. Surprise > Sarah's Great Joy > Abraham ALSO Joyful > Long, Difficult Wait

DOUBTED WHETHER THIS DAY WOULD EVER COME -

17.17,18 “Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"  
And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"

ABE's Affection for Ishmael – & Hagar? > Constant Companion > PROUD  
Loved Isaac > Young Baby spent most of his time with Mom

Sarah > 15 years of FEELING JEALOUS > Regretting her Plan with Hagar  
NOW – She had HER SON – Wants Hagar & Ishmael GONE FOREVER

All this NOT SURPRISING > What is SURPRISE – God AGREES WITH Sarah

b. Speculation – Not Told WHY God sends them away > we can hypothesize

1. Friction between Sons Increase > if Abe's House is anything Like Mine  
Ishmael the ARCHER might soon be making Isaac a TARGET
2. Ultimate Test is Coming > call to Sacrifice Isaac > NO OTHER OPTIONS  
Separation from Ishmael > PREPARATION for Separation from Isaac
3. Friction with Sarah > Abe had BRAGGING RIGHTS – 2 Sons!! + Concubine
4. Theological Reason > Renewed Call to FAITH ALONE – not trust in Works

Commentary on Paul's Allegory about these women in Galatians 4 –  
 “Hagar, the slave woman, stands for the old covenant enacted at Sinai, while her son Ishmael, stands for Judaism with her center at earthly Jerusalem. This is one form of religion. On the other hand, Sarah, the free woman, stands for the new covenant enacted on Calvary through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and her son, Isaac, stands for all who have become part of the church of the heavenly Jerusalem through faith in Christ's sacrifice. On the most superficial level, Isaac and Ishmael were alike in that both were sons of Abraham. But on a more fundamental level they were entirely different. In the same way, Paul argues, it is not enough to claim Abraham as one's father. Both Christians and Jews did that. The question is: Who is our mother and in what way are we born? If Hagar is our mother, then we are born of purely human means and are still slaves. If our mother is Sarah, then the birth was by promise, and we are free men.” James Boice

BUT at THIS POINT in the STORY > We do not know WHY God sends them...

Michelangelo / Criticized by Church Leaders as Worked in St. Peter's Rome -  
 “Even if I were able to make my plans clear to you, which I am not, I am not obliged to do so. I must ask you to do your best to help me, and when the work is complete, my plan will be understood” Michelangelo

c. Struggle > Abe called to Follow by Faith > Naked, Blind, Painful Faith

If we cannot understand plan of Great Artist > how can fathom ways of Great God?

NOTHING BAD about Hagar & Ishmael > Loved, Blessed, and Protected by God

Walk with God > Difficult PARTINGS > Reject the Good > Cling to the BEST

CALLED to Leave > Home, Friends, Family, Jobs, Churches, Professions  
ALL GOOD AND IMPORTANT > God has Something Better for You

PERHAPS YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH SUCH A CALL RIGHT NOW!?  
I can only urge you to CHOOSE HIS BEST

RADICAL TEACING OF JESUS – those merely satisfied with the Good

“As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." Luke 9.57-62

How can Jesus be so Insensitive?? > All these are GOOD & Necessary Things  
We need Houses to Live In > Keep the Rain Off our Heads  
We need our Family > Show our Respect > Honor our Traditions

Somehow these things became Obstacles > Jesus says CHOOSE THE BEST

“The new will that had begun in me – and made me want to be free to worship and enjoy you, God, the only certain joy – was not yet strong enough to overpower the old will that had become tough with age. So there were now two wills battling it out inside me, one old, one new; one carnal, one spiritual; and in this conflict they ripped my soul to pieces” Augustine of Hippo

Abe NOT TRUST his Feelings > It did not feel good, but he did it > PROMPLTY

v. 14 “Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar...and then sent her off with the boy”  
PATTERN OF PROMPT RIGHTEOUS OBEDIENCE

TOLD TO BE CIRUCUMSISED > Him and all Men in Household

17.23 “On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household...and circumcised them, as God told him”



TOLD TO SACRIFICE ISAAC > before he could Rationalize and Relativize  
 22.3 “Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac”

d. Security > what Guarantees do we have in Life? What can we hold on to?

4000 year old Story of Abraham > God KEEPS HIS PROMISES

PROMISE of ANOTHER Son of Abraham > Greater than Isaac

This Promise SEEMED to Take Forever > First Made way back in Garden of Eden

God warned the Lying Serpent: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”  
 Genesis 3.15

This Birth also MIRACULOUS > Not Elderly Couple > Young Woman, Virgin

She was amazed: "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God...For nothing is impossible with God." Luke 1.34-37

HIS MOTHER ALSO FILLED WITH JOY: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name...remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers." Luke 2.46-54

GOD IS OUR ONLY SECURITY > We Hold onto His Word by Sheer Faith

All Hagar and Ishmael held > Separated from Abraham > BUT NOT FROM GOD

Abraham built Altars > many in his travels > All of Life is SACRED  
 Abraham lived in Tents > as a sojourner > All of Life is TEMPORARY

“Abraham is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed--the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were. Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Without weakening in his

faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead--since he was about a hundred years old--and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.”

Romans 4.17-24

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## Genesis 21

1. 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 slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."
11. The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.
12. But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.
13. I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring."
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 nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there nearby, 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.

21. While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.