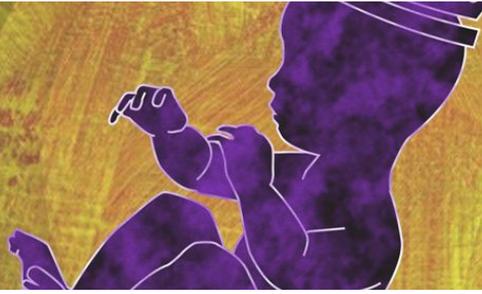


# GREAT EXPECTATIONS



*The narrative of scripture is punctuated with stories of birth. Every new life is special, but God's Word tells us about a number of babies who entered the world under remarkable or even miraculous circumstances, each carrying with them the hopes of others, and each ushering in the next chapter in the story of God. Their lives and ministries foreshadowed the birth of another, one who would assume the expectations of all. "Chains shall He break, and in His name, all oppression shall cease."*

## LIFEGroup Gathering Guide

Week 1 - Isaac

### Getting Started

- *Larger LIFEGroups may consider splitting into same gender groups in order to facilitate more meaningful discussion.*
- *Groups will not have enough time to discuss every question. Leaders are encouraged to skip questions and make substitutions based on what's best for their group.*

### Warm Ups (15 Min)

- Everyone share a "High" from the week and a "Low" from the week.
- Who is someone in your life that's as close as a blood relative?

### Scripture Study (30 Min)

- God made a covenant with Abraham to give him many descendants. However, there was a time that he and his wife, Sarah, doubted God's words. What lessons can be gained from the ill-advised Hagar & Ishmael episode in Genesis 16?
- In ancient societies, having a blood-line heir was important. However, but God tells us that the unity of believers is a special bond that transcends genetic ties. "Whoever does what my Father in heaven wants is my brother and sister and mother." - *Jesus*, Matthew 12:50
- Read Galatians 3:6-9
- In Genesis 17:9-27, God instructed Abraham to circumcise His descendants as a sign that they were heirs of the covenant God made with Abraham. In somewhat similar fashion, God's

covenant to rescue us through faith in Jesus has a sign: baptism. We baptize our children and new Christians as a sign of their entrance into the new covenant and as a means by which God gives the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39).

- “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” - 1 Corinthians 12:12-13
- Many passages in the New Testament (ex: Matthew 5:24, Galatians 6:10) reinforce the idea that we are to have a special bond as fellow believers, even to the point of calling one another “brother” and “sister.”
- On a scale of 1-10, how easily do you let new people into your life? Why?
- What’s a step you can take toward having more fellowship with other believers?
- What was God’s purpose in promising Abraham many descendants? (See Genesis 12:3). What’s a step you can take to invite non-believers to rub elbows with believers in your life?

## Group Prayer (15 Min)

## Trios (20 Min)

*Same gender groups of three. If numbers are uneven, go to groups of two.*

- **Spiritual Velocity:**
  - How did you see God at work in your life this week?
  - What has God been teaching you in His Word as you’ve encountered it in this week’s Life Journal readings, Sunday message, or LIFEGroup study?
  - What’s an area of your life in which you know you need to repent or grow? How can we encourage you?
- **Joining Jesus on His Mission:**
  - What kind of conversations are you having with non-Christians? How’s your 3-2-1 challenge going? Share about connections you’re building and spiritual conversations you’re having with non-believing neighbors and friends.
  - List the names of non-Christians in your life that you can pray for:  

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  - What good can we do around here? (Missional party? Service project?)
  - How can we help each other, our neighbors, and our city in prayer?



## **LIFEGroup Relational Guidelines**

**TIME:** Please be sensitive about the amount of time you share. Group time is limited.

*I will seek to avoid conversation dominating.*

**LISTENING:** We seek to cultivate a group culture in which everyone can be real and open about their struggles and celebrations. If we feel like we must normally “wear a mask,” this is an environment in which we are encouraged to “take it off.”

*I commit to being an understanding listener. I will not hold side conversations while you are sharing. Before responding; I will first seek to listen to you all the way through. If your struggles are emotional, financial, legal, medical, relational, spiritual, sexual, or any other, I endeavor not to be surprised. I endeavor not to offer advice without your permission.*

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** What is said in the group stays in the group.

*I promise to hold your words in confidence. They stay with me.*

**“I” STATEMENTS:** It’s easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use “I” statements rather than “you”, “them”, “they”, etc.

**SELF-AWARENESS:** Be aware of how you are personally affecting the environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication.

**SILENCE:** Can play an important role in group discussion as it allows for people to process the topic or question being considered. Don’t always jump right in - give people a moment.

**CONFLICT:** We will resolve conflict biblically. When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, we make sure to honor God and each other in the ways that resolve issues. The following are a few key Scriptures in this regard:

- If someone sins against you - *Matthew 18:15-20*
- Restoring someone in sin - *Galatians 6:1-5*
- Forgive a sinner - *Colossians 3:12-13*

Reconciling differences - *Matthew 5:23-24, Matthew 7:1-5*