

Genesis 20-21 Study Guide

Genesis 20 - Abraham and Abimelech

Abraham moves to Gerar and again tells people that Sarah is his sister because he is afraid he may be killed for her. Abimelech, king of Gerar, takes Sarah, but God warns him in a dream that Sarah is married. Abimelech returns her and confronts Abraham.

Abraham explains that Sarah really is his half-sister, but he left out the most important part: she was also his wife. His words were technically true, but he used the truth to deceive because he was afraid.

God calls Abraham a **prophet** and tells him to pray for Abimelech. Abraham prays, and God heals Abimelech's household.

Main point: Abraham still struggles with fear and repeats an old mistake, but God remains faithful and continues to work through him.

Genesis 21 - Isaac, Ishmael, and Beersheba

God keeps His promise to Abraham and Sarah. Isaac is born when Abraham is 100 years old. Abraham had been 75 when God first called him, so he had waited about **25 years** for the promised son. Isaac's name is connected with laughter. Sarah's earlier laughter of doubt becomes laughter of joy.

When Isaac is weaned, Abraham holds a feast. Sarah sees Ishmael laughing or mocking and demands that Hagar and Ishmael leave. Abraham is deeply upset because Ishmael is his son. God tells Abraham that the covenant line will continue through Isaac, but He also promises to care for Ishmael and make him into a nation.

Hagar and Ishmael run out of water in the wilderness. Hagar believes Ishmael will die, but God hears him and shows Hagar a well. Ishmael grows up in the wilderness and becomes skilled with the bow.

Later Abimelech recognizes that God is with Abraham. The two men settle a disagreement over a well and make a covenant at **Beersheba**. There Abraham calls on the LORD as **El Olam - the Everlasting God**.

Main point: Genesis 21 shows that God keeps His promises. He fulfills His promise through Isaac, cares for Ishmael, and continues establishing Abraham in the land.

Simple Timeline

Abraham age 75	God calls Abraham and promises descendants.
Age 86	Ishmael is born.
Age 99	God promises that Sarah will give birth to Isaac.
Genesis 20	Abraham and Sarah live in Gerar; Abimelech takes and returns Sarah.
Age 100	Isaac is born. Ishmael is about 14 years old.
After Isaac is weaned	Hagar and Ishmael leave; God protects and provides for them.
Later	Abraham and Abimelech make a covenant at Beersheba.

Things to Remember

- **Abraham repeated an old failure.** Faith does not mean we never struggle with the same fear again.
- **A half-truth can still be dishonest.** Abraham told the truth about Sarah being his sister but hid that she was his wife.
- **God used an imperfect person.** Abraham is called a prophet even while God is correcting him.

- **Ishmael was not a baby.** He was about 14 when Isaac was born and older when Isaac was weaned.
- **Ishmael means 'God hears.'** In the wilderness, God hears Ishmael and provides for him.
- **Isaac was the covenant son.** God chose Isaac for the covenant line without abandoning Ishmael.
- **El Olam means 'the Everlasting God.'** Abraham's circumstances changed, but God did not.

Discussion Questions

1. **Why do you think Abraham repeated the same mistake he made earlier?**
2. **Can a person say something that is technically true and still be dishonest? How?**
3. **Why is it surprising that God calls Abraham a prophet in Genesis 20?**
4. **How did Sarah's laughter change from doubt to joy?**
5. **Why was Ishmael sent away, and how did God still care for him?**
6. **What does Hagar's story teach us about God when we feel forgotten or hopeless?**
7. **What do Genesis 20-21 teach us about waiting on God?**
8. **Which person in these chapters do you relate to most - Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, or Abimelech? Why?**

Big Idea: Abraham's faith stumbles, Sarah waits, Hagar cries, and Ishmael is sent away - but God never forgets what He has promised. People and circumstances change. God remains faithful.