

Union United Methodist Church
Fall FOCUS Bible School, 2022
FOCUS: Followers Of Christ Understanding Scripture
Study: Book of Genesis

Week 6: November 2, 2022

Isaac - A Promise Fulfilled; Faithfulness Proven

This Week's Study: **Genesis chapters 21 through 25**

Prepared by Pastor Michael Larbi

1. Recap & Reminder

- **Overview of Genesis**

The table below gives a breakdown of the chapters of Genesis, with themes that we shall be exploring in this study. We shall cover one theme per week. Our next week's study is Genesis 21 through 25 for the week.

From	To	Theme
1	4	Creation & The Fall, Original Sin
5	10	Adam through Noah: Judgement & New Covenant
11	14	Babel, A New Beginning in Abram
15	17	Abrahamic Covenants
18	20	Intercession & Judgement: Sodom & Gomorrah
21	25	Isaac - A Promise Fulfilled; Faithfulness Proven
26	30	Abrahamic Covenants: Second Generation - Jacob & Esau
31	36	Jacob's Family; Reconciliation with Esau
37	41	Abrahamic Covenants: Third Generation - Jacob's Children
42	47	Joseph & Migration to Egypt
48	50	Israel in Egypt, Death of Jacob

Please refer to last five weeks' outline and lectures for more background and to catch up. You can find these on our website: <https://unionumcnc.com>

2. Genesis 21 to 25 Overview

- **Genesis 21:1-7 Isaac is Born - Divine Promise Fulfilled**

At long last, the Lord's covenant promise of an heir for Abraham and Sarah is fulfilled - Isaac is born.

- **God is Faithful – promises fulfilled**

1The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised. 2Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. NRSV

1Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. 2Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. NIV

Note:

- **Grace at work: Impossible to Possible**

The Lord was gracious to Sarah. God by grace fixed Sarah's body so she could become pregnant, long after it was medically and physiologically impossible for her to become pregnant. Experiencing God's grace is tangibly experiencing God's transformative power.

- All things are possible with God
"Jesus looked at them and said, **"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."** Matthew 19:26 NIV
- All things are possible for those who believe
Jesus also said,
"Everything is possible for one who believes." Mark 9:23 NIV

- **The Lord Keeps His Word**

"the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised." v1

"God is not a human being, that he should lie, or a mortal, that he should change his mind.

Has he promised, and will he not do it?

Has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" Numbers 23:19 NRSV

- **Due Season**

"2Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, **at the time of which God had spoken to him**" v1

God is always on time. The Lord's promises are fulfilled on time.

- **Overjoyed & fulfilled**

"6Now **Sarah said, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."** 7And she said, "Who would ever have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

Jesus said:

"Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete." John 16:23-24 NIV

- **Abraham and Sarah Are Obedient to Covenant Provisions**

3Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. 4And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. NRSV

- **Obedience:**

- **They named the baby as instructed by the Lord**

"your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac [He laughs]" Gen 17:19

- **Circumcision on 8th day**

We must be careful to remain obedient even after we receive God's provision and answers to prayer, etc.

- **Genesis 21:8-21 Dealing with Strife: Hagar & Ishmael Sent Away**

- **Celebration, Mockery and Strife; Sarah Assertive**

"on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. 9But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, 10and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her

son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac." NIV

- Isaac's birth is celebrated in a big way
- Ishmael mocks the whole thing - he was 14 by now. Mockery born of jealousy or losing his place of favor?
- Sarah puts her foot down - Was Sarah being cruel? Was this tough love?

- **Abraham's Anguish, God's Instructions, Abraham's Obedience**

- **Abraham's anguish**

- 11 "The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son." Remember that up to this point Ishmael was the only heir Abraham had

- **The Lord intervenes**

- 2 But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. 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 slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring." NIV

Here again, God repeats what he had already said to Abraham - in this case about Ishmael in 17:20

"20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation." NIV

The Lord intervened in the matter and sided with Sarah.

In the Christian home, the man is the head of the family (just as Abraham was). Does this mean the man is always right? Does God lead the family through the wife too? In other words, does the Lord speak to the woman of the house as well?

Some marriage lessons from Abraham & Sarah:

- **Husbands and wives are joint heirs of the gift of life (1 Peter 3:7)**

- **Sarah accepted Abraham's authority and called him "Lord"**
 1Wives, in the same way, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct, 2when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 6Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you. 1 Peter 3:1,2,6 NRSV

- **Abraham showed consideration for Sarah and honored her**
 7Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life—so that nothing may hinder your prayers. 1 Peter 3:7 NRSV

A husband who doesn't do this can find their prayers unanswered.

- **Abraham instantly obeys**

Abraham's response? Instant obedience!

Abraham also relied on God's word and must have resisted fear and worry about Hagar and Ishmael.

"14So 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 about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba." NRSV

- **Genesis 21:14-21: God's Faithfulness to Hagar & Ishmael**

Hagar and had a rough time. But God sustained them, provided them with water and provisions, and comforted Hagar. As for Ishmael,

20God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. 21He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt. NRSV

- **Genesis 21:22-34: Abraham's Covenant with Abimelech, the Philistine**

We see here an example of someone seeing God's blessing in Abraham's life and seeking to benefit from it.

22At that time Abimelech, with Phicol the commander of his army, said to Abraham, "God is with you in all that you do; 23now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity, but as I have dealt loyally with you, you will deal with me and with the land where you have resided as an alien."

Abraham willingly obliged him. And they made a covenant of mutual support.

Some lessons:

- When God blesses us, others see it and may want in on the blessing too
- Abraham did not withhold blessing from Abimelech and his people.
Recall: Abraham was called and blessed by God, so he could also be a blessing to others, nations, etc.
- This might have seemed like his being a blessing to Abimelech's people who had been kind to him
- We should reciprocate when others are good to us.

- **Genesis 22:1-19 Abraham's Faithfulness Proven**

The focus of this chapter is Abraham's test by God, and how he fared.

- **The Test**

1After these things **God tested Abraham**. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2He said, "**Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you.**"

In the context of the religious practices of the time, was this a strange request? In reality, God does not condone child sacrifice. This is clear in passages like Leviticus 20:2:

"Any Israelite or any foreigner residing in Israel who sacrifices any of his children to Molek is to be put to death. The members of the community are to stone him"

Molek was a god worshipped in Canaan. It is not clear when the practice of sacrificing children to Molek first started. But clearly, the Lord does not condone that. Recall that the Lord brought Abraham and Sarah to Canaan and had told them they were to inherit the land but

“the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure” 15:16 NIV

Thus, this was clearly a test of Abraham’s faith and obedience to God.

The only child/human sacrifice that God approved of is that of Jesus Christ, God’s only begotten son (John 3:16), and that for the specific purpose of redeeming us.

○ **Abraham’s Response**

3So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place in the distance that God had shown him. NRSV

Again, we see instant obedience from Abraham to God’s instructions. In the same way he did not hesitate to send Hagar and Ishmael away, because the Lord asked him to.

Question: Did Abraham consult Sarah on this?
The text does not say, but it is unlikely that he did.

○ **Abraham & Isaac’s Interaction**

7Isaac said to his father Abraham, “Father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” He said, “The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” 8Abraham said, “God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together. NRSV

- Isaac’s question made sense
- Abraham’s response might have been from faith or parental evasion in the face of doubts

- **Abraham Passes the Test**

10Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. 11But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12He said, "**Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.**"

- **How Abraham Dealt with Doubt**

Hebrews 11 gives us an insight into how Abraham dealt with whatever doubts he had.

17By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."**19Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.**" Hebrews 11:17-19 NRSV

Abraham had the right kind of thinking - focused on God's nature and ability, God's power, God's faithfulness, etc.

- **Genesis 23: Sarah's Passing; New Family Burial Ground**

The focus of this chapter is the death and burial of Sarah, and how Abraham honored her in death and also bought a burial ground for the family for its full price.

- **Sarah's Death**

Sarah lived to be 127 years old - v1

Thus, she lived to see Isaac grow into a young man.

Theirs had been a very long marriage and Abraham mourned deeply -v2-3

- **Family Burial Ground**

Abraham desired a particular piece of land for as his burial ground for Sarah and his posterity.

- He refused to accept it when it was offered to him for free - v3-13

- He asked for and paid full price for it -v14-15

- **Genesis 24 A Wife for Isaac - Rebekah**
 - **Rebekah enters the picture**
Rebekah was Abraham's niece - daughter of his brother Nahor (Genesis 22:23; 24:
 - **Abraham Seeks a Wife for Isaac**
 - **Abraham's Method**
Sent his servant back to his homeland to find his son a wife.
Made the servant swear to do as he requested - v3-4
 - **Abraham's Criteria**
 - **Not a Canaanite woman - v3**
"you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live"
 - **Woman Must Be from his own**
"go to my country and to my kindred and get a wife for my son Isaac." v4
The equivalent for us as Christians (believers) is to find a partner who is also a Christian (believer).
"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" 2 Corinthians 6:14 NIV
 - **The Call & Covenant Have Primary Importance**
"The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your offspring I will give this land,' he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there." v7 NRSV
 - **Isaac Must Not Leave the Land of Covenant Promise**
"5The servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land; must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?" 6Abraham said to him, "**See to it that you do not take my son back there.**"
 - **The Lord will provide**
"**he will send his angel before you**"

- **Genesis: 24:10-61 The Servant's Successful Quest**

- The servant was faithful, prayerful, and discerning.

“12And he said, “O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham.”

21The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful.

- The Lord led the servant to Rebekah's family

- Rebekah was willing - sight unseen - to marry Isaac

58And they called Rebekah, and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” She said, “I will.”

- Rebekah's family acted in faith, blessed her, and sent her on her way

50Then Laban and Bethuel answered, “The thing comes from the Lord; we cannot speak to you anything bad or good. 51Look, Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken.”

- **Genesis: 24:62-67 Isaac & Rebekah Married**

There was a lot of faith in this arranged marriage...

67Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

- **Genesis 25:1-11 Abraham's Life After Sarah; Abraham's Death**

- Abraham Remarries & Has Concubines

- Abraham married Keturah after Sarah's death and had 6 more children with her. 25:1

- He also had “concubines” which whom he had “sons” 25:6

- Isaac Inherits the Covenant Blessing

“Abraham gave all he had to Isaac” 25:5

To the children of Keturah and his concubines,
“Abraham gave gifts, while he was still living, and he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country”

3. Daily Study Schedule & Questions

- **Day 1: Genesis 21:1-7 Isaac is Born - Divine Promise Fulfilled**

As you read and study the verses, here are some suggestions of themes to reflect on - see the cross-references in other scripture:

- What it must have taken for God’s promise to Sarah to be fulfilled. What did God have to do?
- God’s faithfulness in keeping His Word
- Prayer and why we must persist.
- How God must feel when we are fulfilled and blessed and overjoyed
- Abraham and Sarah’s faithfulness in continuing to do what was required in their covenant even after Isaac was born

- **Day 2: Genesis 21:8-21 Dealing with Strife: Hagar & Ishmael Sent Away**

Suggested reflection themes:

- How Sarah dealt with immediate and potential strife in the family with regards to Isaac and Ishmael
- How Abraham responded to Sarah
- What do we learn from God’s instructions to Abraham regarding Sarah’s request to send Hagar and Ishmael away?
- Lessons on successful Christian marriage from Abraham and Sarah. Cross reference with 1 Peter 3
- God’s faithfulness to Hagar and Ishmael

- **Day 3: Genesis 21:22-34: Abraham’s Covenant with Abimelech, the Philistine**

Suggested reflection themes:

- Why Abimelech wanted a covenant with Abraham
 - How Abraham responded
 - How Abraham regarded how well he had been treated by Abimelech
 - Compare the covenant here with that which God entered into with Abraham in Genesis 15
- **Day 4: Genesis 22:1-19 Abraham's Faithfulness Proven**
Suggested reflection themes:
 - Why God tested Abraham
 - God's views on child sacrifice to idols
 - How Abraham passed the test
 - How God provided as Abraham said he would
 - Was the test too much for Abraham? Homework: meditate on 1 Corinthians 10:13
- **Day 5: Genesis 24 A Wife for Isaac - Rebekah; 25: Abraham after Sarah's Death**
Suggested reflection themes
 - Why Abraham felt the need to get a non-Canaanite woman for Isaac
 - The role of prayer and discernment in seeking a marital partner
 - The role of faith and dependence in God in getting the right partner
 - How Abraham organized his affairs before his death and why.