

FAITHFUL ONE

ABRAHAM TO ISAAC

Part 1: *The Blessing of Isaac*

Part 2: *The Binding of Isaac*

Part 3: *The Kindness of Strangers*

APPETIZER: Standing on the Precipice

Parallels between chapters 21 and 22...

1. God tells Abraham to give up his dearly loved son.
2. Abraham must fully trust God to preserve life.
3. "Early the next morning..."
4. The Angel of the Lord intervenes at the last minute.
5. God provides by revealing what was there all along.
6. God gives a promise of future blessing.
7. God is worshipped.

HOMEWORK: Reflect on Genesis 21 (in Home Church or using Home Church questions for personal study), then read Genesis 22 in preparation for next Sunday.

DINE IN: The (Almost) Sacrifice of Ishmael

Genesis 21

QUESTION #1: Why does God make promises rather than just do things?

God's repeated pattern:

Promise → Wait → Struggle → Fulfilment

2 Corinthians 1:20; Matthew 11:28-30; 18:20;
Mark 10:29-30; John 5:24

QUESTION #2: Why does God choose some people and not others?

Everything God does he prefers to do through people for people.

"God chooses to work through complex situations and imperfect human beings on behalf of the divine purposes. God works with individuals on the scene; God does not perfect people before deciding to work through them."

~ Terence E. Fretheim (NIB Commentary)

QUESTION #3: What can we learn from Ishmael?

Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 9:7-8; Matthew 7:6

QUESTION #4: What can we learn from Hagar?

As a symbol of the oppressed, Hagar becomes many things to many people. Most especially, all sorts of rejected women find their stories in her. She is the faithful maid exploited, the black woman used by the male and abused by the female of the ruling class, the surrogate mother, the resident alien without legal recourse, the other woman, the runaway youth, the religious fleeing from affliction, the pregnant woman alone, the expelled wife, the divorced mother with child, the shopping bag lady carrying bread and water, the homeless woman, the indigent relying on handouts from the power structures, the welfare mother and the self-effacing female whose own identity shrinks in service to others."

~ Phyllis Trible (Texts of Terror)

Galatians 3:28-29; Psalm 68:5-6; James 1:27; Romans 8:28

QUESTION #5: What is the symbolic meaning of this passage?

Galatians 4:21-31

BONUS QUESTION: Why include the stuff about Abimelek?

God works through the mundane as well as the miracles.

TAKE OUT: A Well in the Desert

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.

~ Jesus (John 7:37-38)

Home Church Questions

HANGOUT [Warming Up to the Topic – in one Large Group]

1. What stood out to you from Sunday's sermon? New thoughts? Lingered questions?

HEAR [Listening to God through Scripture – in Discussion Groups]

2. Read **Genesis 21** again. Remember to use these questions more like a menu to choose from than a list to be fully completed.
 - a. What seems most significant to you in this text?
 - b. Isaac's name, birth, and childhood is surrounded with laughter. And yet, mocking laughter becomes the last straw of Ishmael's membership in the family. Talk about how laughter can be both encouraging and cruel, and what guidelines you use for humour. (Also see **Psalms 1:1-2; Proverbs 9:7-8.**)
 - c. Do you know any "Hagars" or "Ishmaels" in your life (not the symbolic sense of people tied up in the slavery of religion but real people on the margins in need of help and hope)? Think of parents (especially single parents) who are struggling to thrive or even survive. Think of kids from difficult homes who could use help from a spiritual uncle or aunt. What can you do this week to bless them in practical ways? (Remember that God wants to work through you, the body of Christ.)
 - d. God works through *the miraculous* (the angel of God pointing out a well for Hagar) and through *the mundane* (the kindness of Abimelek regarding the well of Beersheba). Can you discern ways God has shown you kindness over this past week?
3. Bonus Bible Study! The Apostle Paul uses the faith of Abraham and Sarah as an example for following Jesus. Read the following texts and talk about what *lessons we can learn about the Gospel*. (This would be a terrific opportunity to break into groups, study one passage per group, and come back together to report on and discuss what each group has learned.)
 - a. **Romans 4:16-25**
 - b. **Galatians 4:21-31**
 - c. **Hebrews 11:8-16**

HUDDLE [Making It Personal and Praying Together – in Huddles]

4. Talk about a specific next step you can take this week regarding #2-c above. Make a plan. Commit to the plan. And next week, report back about the execution of the plan.