



Growth Group Discussion Guide

Passage: *Genesis 21:1-21*

Introduction: In this passage God fulfills His promise to Abraham and Sarah. The promised son Issac is born! Yet in the midst of this joyous occasion tension arises in Abraham's home and heart. Ishmael, Abraham's son through the slave Hagar, is found laughing at Issac. God, through Sarah, commands Abraham to cast out Ishmael so that Abraham might rest in His promises alone. Ultimately this passage challenges us to consider what it means to live by faith alone and not by ambitions or achievements.



Into the Word

Consider verses 1-7. How does this passage draw attention to God's faithfulness? What can this passage teach us about God's promises?

Consider: Hebrews 6:17-18

Verse 9 tells us that Sarah saw Ishmael "laughing". This Hebrew word means to mock or scorn. What seems to be the source of the conflict? What Ishmael think of God's promises?

Note: Paul gives a fascinating interpretation of these events in Galatians 4:21-31

Verse 11 tells us that Abraham was disturbed by God's command to cast out Ishmael. Why was this so disturbing to Abraham? What did God want Abraham to learn?

In verse 12-13 God gives Abraham clear and certain promises regarding his sons. What are these promises? How do these promises change the way you read the rest of the story?



Into the Heart

Galatians 4 tell us that Ishmael represents a life lived by ambition and achievement, not faith. What ambitions or achievements are competing with God's promises in your heart? What might casting these out look like in your particular case?

Central to this passage is the fact that God's promises are not vague but clear and certain. How can we practically grow in our knowledge of God's promises?

Work together to list a few of God's promises to us in Christ:

Consider: James 1:5, 1 John 1:9, Hebrews 13:5, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 Peter 1:3-4



Into the World

Read Hebrews 6:17-18. How will a deeper sense of our security in Christ shape how we relate to our ambitions, achievements, disappointments, or failures?

How will a clearer sense of God's promises affect how we pray? For ourselves? For others? How is this different from (in fact opposed to) "name-it-and-claim-it" type prayers?