

## Ishmael

### Child of Discontent

Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 16:1-16 (Ishmael's birth)

Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 3:7-8, 12-14

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 5:43-48

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Genesis 17:18,20 Blessing for Ishmael

Genesis 21:8-21 Hagar & Ishmael sent away

Genesis 25:1-18 The end of Abraham's life; Ishmael's sons

This is a really messy story.

Everyone makes wrong decisions from their emotions.

Everyone gets hurt, and all share the blame.

This Bible story is not a story that makes us feel good.

This story forces us to face (*confront*) life.

This story forces us to face ourselves.

And this story can teach us to avoid making the same mistakes.

This story begins when Abraham starts talking about God's promises to give Abraham a great family.

His wife, SARAH, feels anxious, because they have no children. And Abraham's talk only stirs up her female desires and emotions. She really wants to become a mother.

So she figures out a way to make that happen.

Get a SURROGATE ... a young womb that can carry her baby.

Bad idea!

That was a bad idea back 4000 years ago.

And that still is a bad idea today -- for the same reason.

Sarah doesn't ask, "What is the right thing to do?"

She just wants to find a "practical solution" to her problem.

Sarah thinks that letting her servant, HAGAR, become her substitute will make her (Sarah) happy. Wrong.

What happened? Exactly the opposite.

Hagar's pregnancy didn't make Sarah happy.

Hagar's pregnancy made Sarah jealous.

Hagar sense that,

and she responded to Sarah's emotion  
with her own emotion.

And that only made Sarah feel worse -- more upset.

Now what does she do?

Admit that she was wrong?

She believed that both Abraham and Hagar made her the victim.

She blamed both of them.

Abraham was smart enough to know that he should not get into the middle of a fight between two women. So what does he do?

Hands off!

"She is your servant. Do what you want.

I keep my hands off."

Sarah can't get Abraham involved.

So she expresses her emotion by abusing Hagar.

Remember that Sarah had authority. Hagar had no power.

The only thing that Hagar could do was to escape. Run away.

That truly seems like the right thing for her to do.

But God, for reasons that we cannot fully understand,

told Hagar to go back and live under Sarah.

Then God made a promise and a prediction [*prophecy*]

*"I will give you so many future children that no-one can count them... You will have a son. You will name him ISHMAEL (meaning: "God hears"), because the LORD heard your cries. "*

The next part is not a promise, but a prediction [*prophecy*] that describes the future conflict that will happen between Ishmael's descendants and Israel for the next 4000 years, and beyond.

*"Ishmael will become like a wild donkey. He will be-against everyone, and everyone will be-against him. He will attack all his brothers."*

Actions have CONSEQUENCES.

(The SEE-sign is "C-end"

suggest signing: PROCEED... HAPPEN. WRONG!)

Attitudes have consequences.

All that we do now is like seed that later grows up,  
that continues growing for future generations.

That conflict that started between Sarah and Hagar,  
we still see that continuing today.

Israel honors Sarah's son, ISAAC, as their father.

ISLAM, the Muslim religion, honors Hagar's son, ISHMAEL, as their father.

Hagar went back to Sarah, in obedience to the Lord.

Now Sarah had the power for changing this story.

Sarah could admit her mistake.

Sarah could show love and kindness to Hagar.

I really believe that if Sarah had a new attitude,  
that could change Hagar's heart.

Then Hagar, her son, and their future descendents would share  
WITH US in the blessings that God promised to Abraham, the  
promise of the Savior that brings us God's love and forgiveness.

God ALWAYS offers His grace to change a bad situation into something good.

But clearly that didn't happen.  
Their tension continued.

Then, when ISAAC was born, and grew.  
When he was about 2 years old,  
    15 year old Ishmael, copies his mother's attitude,  
    and starts picking-on little Isaac.

How does Sarah respond that? Same as ANY mother: "Out!"

Now Abraham is grieved, because he loves both of his sons.  
But God reminds Abraham that God planned to keep His first  
promise to Abraham through Isaac.  
Hagar and Ishmael can go. God will take care of them.

So they leave. And God takes care of them.

We know the story about what happens to Isaac.  
His son JACOB has twelve sons, that becomes the nation named  
Israel.

What happened to Ishmael?  
The Bible says that Ishmael grew, and became a skilled archer.

Archery is good for two purposes: Hunting, and war.  
We don't know which became Ishmael's life.  
But we do know that his mother, Hagar, helped him get a wife  
from her home country, Egypt. *[Genesis 21:20-21]*

Ishmael had twelve sons. Some descendents of Ishmael settled  
in the land that later was called "Midian" (today is northwestern

Saudi Arabia). They became famous and successful in business -- buy and selling in various countries.

Remember the story about Joseph.

When his older brothers sold him into slavery,  
they sold him to whom?

ISHMAELITES. Descendants of Ishmael.

Then they took him and sold him where? In Egypt. *[Genesis 37:28]*

Did Ishmael and Isaac later meet each other again?

Yes. They kept in touch.

When Abraham died, Ishmael, now himself an old man, came back and helped Isaac with Abraham's funeral. *[Genesis 25:7-10]*

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What lessons do we learn from this story,  
lessons that help us?

We see two lessons:

(1) The first, we already saw:

Actions have CONSEQUENCES.

Attitudes have consequences.

All that we do now is like seed that later grows up,  
that continues growing for future generations.

If we manage our life decisions God's way,  
we avoid the pain, trouble, and mess that we make  
when we manage things our way.

(2) The second lesson:

Everyone is responsible for their own actions and attitudes.

We saw that Abraham's and Sarah's bad decisions made Hagar and Ishmael innocent VICTIMS. Right?

But we also saw that Hagar and Ishmael were responsible for their own actions and attitudes.

True, they were stuck in a bad situation. But how did they respond? Anger and revenge. That did not solve their problems. That only made their life worse.

In ancient times, people had a PROVERB that said:

"Parents eat sour grapes,  
and their children live with the sour taste."

That means what you do can affect your children for the rest of their lives.

We know that is true.

The Bible says that when we let bitter feelings burn in our hearts, that can spread and ruin many, many people, *[Hebrews 12:14-15]* the same as happened when bitterness burned Sarah, then in Hagar, then in Ishmael, then in many of their descendants.

But some people used that to blame God.

"The things I do are not my fault.

God should not punish me for my parents' sins."

God answers,

"No. I don't punish you for your parents' sins.

I punish you for YOUR own sins.

If your parents did wrong, but you do right, you will enjoy good things for that.

If your parents did right, but you do wrong, you will suffer for that." *[Ezekiel 18:1-19]*

No one forces you to follow your parents' ways.  
We all know good people who had bad parents.

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When we look at Abraham and Sarah, Hagar and Ishmael,  
we see that they ALL did wrong.  
They all made evil decisions.

But we also see that God blessed them all,  
as He also continually blesses us.

The Bible says God  
offers His grace,  
offers His mercy,  
offers His love,  
offer forgiveness  
to all people.

Do we ignore His love, mercy, and forgiveness,  
and hold on to bitter feelings? *[Hebrews 12:14-15]*

We face [*confront*] two challenges:

When trouble hits, trouble that is not our fault,  
how do we respond?

When God blesses us so much,  
how do we respond?

Ezekiel 18:1-19  
Matthew 3:4-9  
Matthew 13:24-30  
Matthew 21:28-32  
John 8:31-47  
Galatians 6:7-9  
Hebrews 12:14-15

## The Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 16:4-16

<sup>1</sup> SARAI, Abraham's wife, had no children, but she had a servant girl from Egypt. Her name was HAGAR.

<sup>2</sup> SARAI said to Abraham, "See, the LORD has not allowed me to have children, so lay with my servant girl. If she has a child, maybe I can have a family through her." Abram did as SARAI said.

<sup>4</sup> Abraham lay with HAGAR, and she became pregnant. When HAGAR saw she was pregnant, she hated against her boss, SARAI.

<sup>5</sup> Then SARAI told Abraham, "This is your fault. I gave my servant girl to you, and when she became pregnant, she began hating me. The LORD will decide who is right: you or me."

<sup>6</sup> But Abraham told SARAI, "You are HAGAR's boss. You do to her anything you want." Then SARAI abused HAGAR. Then HAGAR ran away.

<sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD found HAGAR in the desert, near a water spring, near the road

<sup>8</sup> The angel said, "HAGAR, SARAI's servant girl, you come from where? and You are going where?"

HAGAR answered, "I am escaping from my boss SARAI."

<sup>9</sup> The angel of the LORD said to her, "Go home to your boss and obey her."

<sup>10</sup> The angel also said, "I will give you so many future children that no one can count them.

<sup>11</sup> "Now you are pregnant, and you will have a son. You will name him ISHMAEL, because the LORD heard your cries.

<sup>12</sup> Ishmael will become like a wild donkey. He will be-against everyone, and everyone will be-against him. He will attack all his brothers."

<sup>13</sup> The slave girl gave a name to the LORD who spoke to her: She named HIM "You are **EL ROI 'God who sees me,'**" because she said to herself, "Did I really see God who sees me?" ...

<sup>15</sup> HAGAR birthed a son for Abraham. Abraham named him ISHMAEL.

<sup>16</sup> Abraham was eighty-six years old when HAGAR gave-birth to ISHMAEL.

**The Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 3:7-14**

<sup>7</sup> The Holy Spirit says in the Psalms:

“Today listen to what HE says.

<sup>8</sup> Do not become stubborn, as in the past [*ago*], when you turned against God.”

<sup>12</sup> Brothers and sisters, be-careful. Don't any of you have a doubting [*not-believing*] evil heart that rejects the living God.

<sup>13</sup> But today and every day encourage each-other, while you can. Help each-other, so none of you will become hard because sin tricked you.

<sup>14</sup> If the true faith that we had in the beginning, we keep until the end, we all share in Christ.”

## The Gospel Lesson: MATTHEW 5:43-48

43. You heard people say, "Love your neighbor, and hate your enemy."

44. But I tell you, love your enemies and bless those people cursing you, do good to those people hating you, and pray for those people hurting you.

45. In that way you will show you are the children of your Father in heaven. HE makes the sunrise for all people, both bad and good people, and HE lets rain come, no-matter that people do correct or wrong things.

46. If you love people because they first loved you, then what profit do you have? Tax collectors do that, too.

47. If you show kindness only to your friends, that is nothing special. People in the world do that.

48. You must become perfect the same-as your Father in heaven is perfect.