

## Genesis 16

Pray for your time together in God's Word!

Study Summary: In this study, we will look at the life of Ishmael. While he is introduced in Genesis 16, his story is found in several other passages in Genesis, so we will be looking at lots of Scripture! The goal is to see how Ishmael fits into God's covenant with Abraham, and to apply that to how God responds to us today.

### Part 1: Call Me Ishmael

Ask the Group: Can you think of a time when you were waiting for something, but you didn't know when it would come?

- Ask the Group: What did you do while you were waiting?  
Leaders' Note: This could touch on distraction, giving up that it would happen, trying to speed up the process themselves, etc.

Ask the Group: We've been discussing Abram/Abraham and the covenant God made with him for a couple of weeks now. As a recap, what are the major components of Abraham's blessing from God?

Leaders Note: If needed, reference Gen. 13:14-17; 15:4-7. Land, descendants.

Possible Transition: Abram had to wait through 13 years of silence before God fulfilled His promise. Our first passage tonight shows us what he did during his waiting period.

Read the following passage:

Genesis 16:1-4a(NIV84)

<sup>1</sup>Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; <sup>2</sup>so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her."

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. <sup>3</sup>So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. <sup>4</sup>He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

Ask the Group: How did the decision get made to have a son? Whose decision was it?

Possible Answers: Abram and Sarai both had role in making the decision.

Ask the Group: This part of the story parallels elements of the Garden of Eden story. How are these stories similar?

Possible Answers: Sarai suggested it, but Abram went along with it. Although Abram was ultimately responsible for the decision, he tries to pass off the blame and avoid responsibility.

- Ask the Group: What do their similarities tell us about mankind?  
Possible Answers:

Genesis 16:4b-16 (NIV84)

...When she [Hagar] knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. <sup>5</sup> Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me."

<sup>6</sup> "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

<sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. <sup>8</sup> And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.

<sup>9</sup> Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." <sup>10</sup> The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."

<sup>11</sup> The angel of the LORD also said to her:

"You are now with child  
and you will have a son.  
You shall name him Ishmael,  
for the LORD has heard of your misery.

<sup>12</sup> He will be a wild donkey of a man;  
his hand will be against everyone  
and everyone's hand against him,  
and he will live in hostility  
toward all his brothers."

<sup>13</sup> She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." <sup>14</sup> That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

<sup>15</sup> So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. <sup>16</sup> Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

Ask the Group: After Hagar gets sent away, an angel of the Lord appears to her. How does the Angel of the Lord encourage Hagar? Is everything the angel says encouraging?

Possible Answers: Promise of descendants, name of son Ishmael - "Lord sees", however the son will be a "wild donkey."

## Part 2: Wait...who gets blessed?

Read the following passage:

Genesis 17:17-26 (NIV84)

<sup>17</sup> Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" <sup>18</sup> And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!"

<sup>19</sup> Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> But my covenant I will

establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.”<sup>22</sup> When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

<sup>23</sup> On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. <sup>24</sup> Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, <sup>25</sup> and his son Ishmael was thirteen; <sup>26</sup> Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that same day.

Ask the Group: What is Ishmael’s role in the covenant?

Possible Answer: He is blessed, but he does not inherit the covenant.

### Part 3: The Covenant Unfolds

Read the following passage, which takes place right after Isaac is born:

Genesis 21:8-21 (NIV84)

<sup>8</sup> The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. <sup>9</sup> But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, <sup>10</sup> and she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

<sup>11</sup> The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. <sup>12</sup> But God said to him, “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. <sup>13</sup> I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring.”

<sup>14</sup> Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba.

<sup>15</sup> When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. <sup>16</sup> Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, “I cannot watch the boy die.” And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob.

<sup>17</sup> God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. <sup>18</sup> Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”

<sup>19</sup> Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

<sup>20</sup> God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. <sup>21</sup> While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

Ask the Group: What happens to Hagar and Ishmael? Whose decision was it?

Possible Answer: Hagar and Ishmael are seen as threats to Isaac receiving his inheritance, so they are sent away. Sarah requests this, but it is Abraham who carries it out, so both of them play a role. When Abraham doubts this course of action, it is God who encourages him to do it, so God is also involved.

Leader’s Note: Hagar’s statement in v.16 could also be translated as a request directed at God (i.e. “Do not let me watch the boy die”).

Ask the Group: How does God interact with Abraham and Hagar in this passage?

Possible Answer: God offers reassurance that Ishmael will be made into a great nation. (to see the realization of this promise, see 25:12-18)

Leader's Note: It's worth mentioning that even though Ishmael wasn't the one to inherit Abraham's blessing, he is still blessed.

In Luke 11, when asked about prayer, Jesus says:

9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

Ask the Group: Is this what prayer is like for you? Why or why not?

Ask the Group: What is our community application of this passage?

Leaders' Note: You may choose to create your own application question as a group based on your discussion, or highlight a question from this study.