

CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
FEBRUARY 23 2019

God provides

Scripture Story: Genesis 21:1-5; 22:1-12.
Commentary: *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 13.

cornerstoneconnections

PREPARING TO TEACH

I. SYNOPSIS

Who doesn't love a baby? That's right, no one—at least no one in their right mind. Babies are special, a seeming nod from God affirming the human life cycle, affirming the process of perpetuation that He instituted in Eden.

Sarah, wife of the great patriarch Abraham, longed to experience the joy of a baby's cry. She had been barren for years, and had long given up any hope of ever having a child. In spite of God's promise to Abraham that He would make his descendants as numberless as the sands of the sea, God's delay in fulfilling this promise meant heartache for Sarah. It was this heartache and disbelief in God that led her to encourage Abraham to bear a child with her servant, Hagar—a very, very disastrous decision.

God did finally fulfill His promise to Abraham and Sarah. Sarah got pregnant at a ripe old age and bore Isaac, a "boy wonder" if there ever was one. The events of this child's birth were so miraculous that God's later command to sacrifice him must have been a test of epic proportions for Abraham's faith. However, at God's command, Abraham does not flinch, pout, or hesitate; he immediately moves to obey God.

While it is certain that Abraham must have had doubts about God's request, he chose to believe that God would provide a way of escape. In life we also face similar dilemmas, and we too must choose to trust God.

Another aspect of this great biblical narrative that makes it stand out is Isaac's trust and obedience to his

father. In this way Isaac was a type of Christ—obedient to the death, even the death of the cross, or in Isaac's case, the altar. His obedience says much about the way his parents reared him, and his love for God. It is a great example for youth today.

II. TARGET

The students will:

- See in the miraculous birth of Isaac that God keeps His promises. (*Know*)
- Experience the challenge of trusting God when He asks difficult things of us. (*Feel*)
- Be given an opportunity to trust God to provide for them when called on to obey His commands. (*Respond*)

III. EXPLORE

- Sacrifice
- Parents (relating to)
- The will of God
- Family dynamics

TEACHING

I. GETTING STARTED

Activity

Refer the students to the What Do You Think? section of their lesson. After they have completed it, discuss their responses.

You could ask: What do you think motivated them to make these sacrifices? How did these sacrifices affect their lives? What does that say to you?

Illustration

Share this illustration in your own words:

Motivational speaker and author Eric Fellman speaks of meeting a Chinese couple in Hong Kong while traveling to China.

A friend took me down a narrow alley to a second-floor flat to meet a man recently released from prison in China. I knew I would be pressed to carry Bibles and literature on my trip. But I was hesitant and tried to mask my fear with rationalizations about legalities and other concerns. A Chinese man in his 60s opened the door. His smile was radiant, but his back was bent almost double. He led us to a sparsely furnished room. A Chinese woman of about the same age came in to serve tea. As she lingered, I couldn't help noticing how they touched and lovingly looked at each other. My staring apparently didn't go unnoticed, for soon they were both giggling.

"What is it?" I asked my friend. "Oh nothing," he said with a smile. "They just wanted you to know it was OK—they're newlyweds." I learned they had been engaged in 1949, when he was a student at Nanking Seminary. On the day of their wedding rehearsal Chinese Communists seized the seminary. They took the students to a hard-labor prison. For the next 30 years the bride-to-be was allowed only one visit per year. Each time, following their brief minutes together, the man would be called to the warden's office. "You may go home with your bride," he said, "if you will renounce Christianity."

Year after year this man replied with just one word: "No." I was stunned. How had he been able to stand the strain for so long, being denied his family, his marriage, and even his health? When I asked, he seemed astonished at my question. He replied, "With all that Jesus has done for me, how could I betray Him?" The next day I requested that my suitcase be crammed with Bibles and training literature for Chinese Christians. I determined not to lie about the materials, yet lost not one minute of sleep worrying about the consequences. And as God had planned, my suitcases were never inspected (Eric Fellman, *Moody Monthly*, January 1986, p. 33).

II. TEACHING THE STORY

Bridge to the Story

Share the following in your own words:

Our lives are often defined by crucial moments. In

the life of Abraham and Sarah, several moments define their relationship with God. Their decision to help God fulfill His promise to make of Abraham a great nation—having Abraham bear a child with Hagar—was a moment of disbelief in God for which the world is still paying. The conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians started in that moment.

In spite of this failure, God extends grace to Abraham and Sarah, and Hagar and Ishmael. By right, God could have made Ishmael the son of promise, the one through whom Abraham's numberless seed would spring up and through whom the Messiah would come to save the world. But God didn't do this. He kept His promise to Abraham and Sarah. He gave them Isaac, but because of their earlier disobedience they would have to endure another crucial moment: God's call to sacrifice their only son.

Out of the Story for Teachers

After you read the Into the Story section with your students, use the following in your own words to process it with them.

- How was Abraham so sure that God was the one summoning him to kill his son?
- What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (*Underline* them.)
- What aspects of the story are new to you?
- Why do you think God failed to stop the liaison between Abraham and Hagar? What does this say to you about God? (Place an *arrow* beside the verses.)
- What new thing about God have you learned from Abraham's story? Explain.
- What emotions, actions, or adjectives enrich this story? (Draw a *rectangle* around them.)
- What lesson from this story will you apply to your life?
- What words or phrases most capture the various emotions of the story? (*Circle* them.)

Sharing Context and Background

Use the following information to shed more light on the story for your students. Share in your own words.

God's love for us is unconditional. He never fails to reach out to us, even when we make a mess of our lives. God rehabilitated Abraham, rebuilding a life that now serves as a terrific example for us all. Here are other interesting facts that give context to this narrative.

1. The name Isaac means "he will laugh." Sarah

chose the name Isaac because the angel promised that she should become a mother. Being beyond the age of having children, she privately laughed at the prediction. When the child was born, she said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me” (Genesis 21:6, NIV).

2. During the time in which Abraham and Sarah lived, male heads of families wielded enormous power over their household. They often had multiple wives, and could solicit the sexual services of their servants at any moment.

With this background in mind, it is not difficult to understand the treatment Hagar received at the hand of her masters. Granted, Hagar’s actions following the birth of Ishmael challenged the validity of Abraham and Sarah’s union, but this was a problem that they created. Hagar’s banishment was a source of deep pain to Abraham, and he begged God to allow Ishmael to be his heir, but God was resolute. However, God did promise to make of Ishmael a great nation. God was seeking a win-win in this difficult love triangle.

3. Mount Moriah, the site of Abraham’s aborted sacrifice of Isaac, has been considered a holy site throughout the years, and not just because it was the place that God tested Abraham’s and Isaac’s faith. It is also a revered site because Moriah was the place where Jacob had his dream of angels



Tips for Top-notch Teaching

Love in Action

When Jesus taught on earth, there was an unmistakable theme to His teaching: He taught love. What does this mean in practice?

In the life of Jesus we see Him healing broken people, forgiving sin, raising the dead, encouraging the downtrodden, and yes, castigating the hypocrites. In His earthly ministry Jesus focused on restoring people, giving hope to a people whose church leaders were guilty of religious malpractice.

In the narrative of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac, emphasize the places where God brings restoration and healing to the characters. God is interested in doing something special in the life of Abraham and Sarah, in spite of their clumsy attempts to help Him. Hagar gets swept up in the mix and fails God, but God blesses her and Ishmael. Isaac’s life is saved when God provides a ram for the sacrifice. God looks for opportunities in our lives to show His wondrous love.

ascending and descending on a ladder between earth and heaven (Genesis 28:10-18).

Teaching From . . .

Refer your students to the other sections of their lesson. Invite students to share the key text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Key Text**

Invite the students to share the Key Text with the class if they have committed it to memory.

- **Flashlight**

Read the Flashlight statement, pointing out that most of the time it is from the commentary on this week’s story found in the book Patriarchs and Prophets. Ask what relationship they see between the statement and what they have just discussed from Out of the Story.

- **Punch Lines**

Point out to your students the verses listed in their lesson that relate to this week’s story. Have them share the verse that spoke most directly to them and allow them to explain why they chose it.

Or you might assign the passages to pairs of students to read aloud and then discuss, in order to choose the most relevant one to them.

It was also on this mountain that David built an altar and offered sacrifices to God some 1,000 years after Abraham (1 Chronicles 21:26).

4. Ellen White shares the following about the testing of Abraham's faith:

"God had called Abraham to be the father of the faithful, and his life was to stand as an example of faith to succeeding generations. But his faith had not been perfect. He had shown distrust of God in concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, and again in his marriage with Hagar. That he might reach the highest standard, God subjected him to another test, the closest which man was ever called to endure. In a vision of the night he was directed to repair to the land of Moriah, and there offer up his son as a burnt offering upon a mountain that should be shown him" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 147).

III. CLOSING

Activity

Close with an activity and debrief it in your own words.

Give each student an index card. Ask the students to think of a challenge that they are currently facing. Then ask them to write a note to God explaining the challenge to Him and telling Him exactly what they would like Him to do for them.

To close, ask the students to pray silently over their request, thanking God for answering their prayer according to His will.

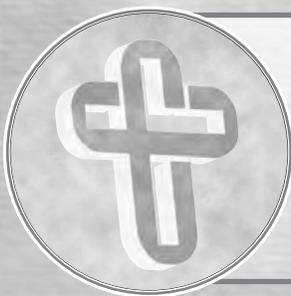
Summary

Share the following thoughts in your own words:

God's promises may take a while to materialize, but He is true to His word. We must never distrust that which God has promised to do in our lives. We must take hold of His promises, as if nothing else mattered, because nothing else does matter when God promises.

The story of Isaac's miraculous birth and Abraham's willingness to sacrifice him at God's command teaches us the truth that everything we have, including our children, parents, relatives, and friends, belongs to God. We have them because of God, and they will always belong to God.

It also points us to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, and who one day will welcome us home with all the faithful children of Father Abraham.



Remind the students about the reading plan that will take them through the inspired commentary of the Bible, the Conflict of the Ages series. The reading that goes with this lesson is *Patriarchs and Prophets* (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 13. A special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets* has been created by the Ellen G. White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net.



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STUDENT LESSON

Scripture Story: Genesis 21:1-5; 22:1-12.

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God provides



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flashlight

“At the appointed place they built the altar and laid the wood upon it. Then, with trembling voice, Abraham unfolded to his son the divine message. It was with terror and amazement that Isaac learned his fate, but he offered no resistance. He could have escaped his doom, had he chosen to do so; the grief-stricken old man, exhausted with the struggle of those terrible days, could not have opposed the will of the vigorous youth. But Isaac had been trained from childhood to ready, trusting obedience, and as the purpose of God was opened before him, he yielded a willing submission” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 152).

keytext

“‘Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ he said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.’”

(Genesis 22:12, NIV)

what do you think?

Each of the following people made several huge sacrifices to achieve world change, and obey their conscience. List one sacrifice each had to make.

- a. Abraham Lincoln _____.
- b. Esther _____.
- c. Josiah _____.
- d. Ellen White _____.

did you know?

The name Isaac means “he will laugh.” It is the name given to him by his father, Abraham. Laughter was a theme in the birth of Isaac. You may remember that when God told Abraham that Sarah would have a son, he fell facedown with laughter (see Genesis 17:16, 17). When Sarah found out about the promise, she too burst out laughing. Isn’t it great to see into the Bible characters’ personalities? However, God didn’t find their laughter at His words funny.

INTO THE STORY

“Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.”

“Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, ‘Abraham!’

“‘Here I am,’ he replied.

“Then God said, ‘Take your son, your only son, whom you love— Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.’

“Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two

of his servants and his son Isaac.

When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, ‘Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.’

“Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, ‘Father?’

“‘Yes, my son?’ Abraham replied.

“‘The fire and wood are here,’ Isaac said, ‘but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’

“Abraham answered, ‘God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.’ And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, ‘Abraham! Abraham!’

“‘Here I am,’ he replied.

“‘Do not lay a hand on the boy,’ he said. ‘Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.’”

(Genesis 21:1-5; 22:1-12, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main actors in this story?

Who are the minor actors in this story, the people who are in the background of the story?

What parts of the story are key to understanding it? (*Underline* them.)

What aspects of the story are new to you? (Place an *arrow* beside them.)

What words in this story help us understand how Ishmael and Hagar might have felt? (Draw a *rectangle* around them.)

What one thing is God saying to you through this story?

What words or phrases most capture the various emotions of this story? (*Circle* them.)

What situation in your life do you feel compares to Abraham's challenge—being 100 years old and having a new baby to rear?

punch lines

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him” (**James 1:12, NIV**).

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (**Galatians 6:9, NIV**).

“Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will’ ” (**Matthew 26:39, NIV**).

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight” (**Proverbs 3:5, 6, NIV**).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (**Proverbs 9:10, NIV**).

“Jesus replied, ‘Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, “Go, throw yourself into the sea,” and it will be done’ ” (**Matthew 21:21, NIV**).

further insight

“Those who thus become participants in labours of love are brought nearest to their Creator.”—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 80.

“If the love of God is in the heart, it will be manifested in the life.”—Ellen G.

White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 85.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read James 1:12.

In the *What Do You Think?* section of this week's lesson you are asked to list some of the sacrifices made by great men and women of history. The Merriam-Webster's online dictionary has three definitions for the word "sacrifice." The third definition is striking: "Destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else." When one makes a sacrifice, it is done because one values something else more than the thing they had to sacrifice.

In your own words, explain what Abraham valued more than the life of his young son, Isaac?

Sunday

Read Genesis 22:3.

Read the story of Abraham and Isaac again in the Bible passage for this week. What person has taught you the most about what it means to sacrifice? What have you learned from them?

The phrase "early the next morning" in this verse should make you pause. It hints at a very important part of what it means to be obedient to God. When God asks us to do something—even when it is difficult—we must never hesitate to comply. To do so is to disobey.

Give three reasons Abraham could have used to avoid obeying God:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Monday

Read John 11:17-37.

If you read the *Key Text* for this week's lesson you had to say, "Wow, that was a close one!" In the nick of time, God spoke from heaven and stopped Abraham, providing a ram for the sacrifice.

From today's reading, answer this question: Does God always come right on time? Am I willing to trust God even when He seemingly fails to show up in time to meet my need?

Tuesday

Read John 6:5, 6.

Read the *Flashlight* quotation. Which of the following would best describe what you might have said to your father:

- a. "Are you crazy?"
- b. "There's no way I'm letting you kill me!"
- c. "Give me a few minutes, Dad. I'll go find you a ram."
- d. "If this is what God wants, then I'll do it."

God will test us from time to time. From today's reading, what test did God give His disciples? How did they do? Did God give up on them?

Wednesday

Read Matthew 26:39 from the *Punch Lines* section of the lesson.

Jesus was so pained by the sacrifice that lay before Him that the blood came through His pores, quite a rare medical condition. Jesus persevered out of His love for us. Read the other *Punch Lines* for this week and answer the following:

What is promised to those who persevere in trials? _____

If you used your faith you would be able to move: _____

We are to trust God with how much of our hearts? _____

Thursday

Read Mark 8:34.

Obedience to God requires faith, and faith is demonstrated through obedience. God has made several requests of His people. From our

reading today, followers of God must be willing to do something. What is that?

Try this today: Identify one bad habit that you'd like to change—wasting time watching too much TV, swearing, getting too angry, talking back to your parents, procrastination, etc. Write that bad habit down on a piece of paper along with what you want God to do with it. Then pray, asking God for strength to sacrifice this habit for His glory. Find a safe place to burn this prayer request. Start overcoming your bad habit today by doing one thing to change it. (For instance, if anger is your challenge, begin the change by asking a cool-headed adult how they stay calm.)

Friday

Read Proverbs 3:5, 6.

What does Abraham's relationship with Isaac teach you about the kind of relationship God wants to have with you?

What are you willing to do to develop a closer walk with God?

If you want a closer relationship with God, ask Him for it right now.

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this week's reading*

Patriarchs and Prophets (or *Beginning of the End*), chapter 13.

**Beginning of the End* is a special adaptation of *Patriarchs and Prophets*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rB09s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.