

# GENESIS 21

After 25 years of waiting, disappointment, and trying to take matters into their own hands, Abraham and Sarah finally meet their son. Isaac is born. The build-up was long, but the actual birth in Genesis 21 is described so simply. Why? Because God didn't want to distract us from the only detail that matters: **God did exactly what He said He would do, exactly when He said He would do it.** He takes our brokenness, our bitter laughs of disbelief, and redeems them into joy. Our response is joyful obedience. If God acts as he had promised, then we can obey as He has commanded.

However, past mistakes resurface as Ishmael mocks and laughs at the young child of promise. When God tells Abraham to send Ishmael away, He is preparing Abraham for an even greater test of faith when He later calls him to sacrifice Isaac in Genesis 22. With Ishmael out of the picture, there is no plan B. Abraham had to learn to rely entirely on God's grace rather than his own human efforts. Yet God hears Ishmael's cries in the desert and provides water. If God provides for Ishmael, how much more will he provide for the son of promise?

At the end of the chapter, Abraham plants a tree in Beersheba, right on the edge of the Promised Land. Why plant a tree that takes decades to grow when you're just a foreigner living in a tent? Because it's an act of faith. Abraham had the promised child, but not yet the promised land. He was trusting the Everlasting God for the future.

We live in that same tension today. The ultimate promised child, Jesus, has already come! We have the promise already, but not yet. We are still foreigners in a broken world, longing for our eternal home. In our seasons of waiting, *remember* God's faithfulness in your life and at the cross, *rejoice* in worship, and *respond* with obedience, planting trees for God's Kingdom by investing in things that will outlast this temporary world.

The wait might feel long, but one day, the wait will finally be over. We won't just get a taste of home—we will finally *be* home.

# QUESTIONS

## **QUESTION ONE:**

What is something you waited a long time for (a movie, a gadget, an event, a restaurant)? Did it live up to the hype, or was it a letdown?

## **QUESTION TWO:**

Ishmael represented Abraham and Sarah's "backup plan" and their attempt to manufacture God's blessing in their own strength. What are some common backup plans or safety nets we tend to rely on instead of fully trusting God? Have you ever experienced a time when losing a safety net actually forced your faith to grow?

## **QUESTION THREE:**

We live in the tension of the "already and not yet"—Christ has already saved us, but we still live in a deeply broken world. How do you hold onto the joy of what Jesus has already done while dealing with the daily frustrations of a world that isn't fully restored yet? Since this world is not our ultimate home, what does it practically look like for you to live as a "foreigner" without getting too attached to earthly comforts?

## **QUESTION FOUR:**

Abraham responded to God's faithfulness by remembering the past, rejoicing in worship, and responding by planting a tree for the future. Which of these three comes most naturally to you, and which one do you struggle with the most right now? What is one practical step you can take this week?