



God Blesses Ishmael and Isaac

(based on Genesis 16; 21:1-7, 9-13)

God had promised that Abraham and Sarah would have a son. As time passed, though, it seemed they would never have a baby of their own. They waited and waited. Then they waited some more.

As the years went by, Sarah began to give up hope. "I am too old to have a baby now," she cried.

Then it happened.

"Have you heard the news?" cried the messenger. "Sarah and Abraham's baby has been born! It's a boy!" Everybody was really happy.

Sarah rejoiced. "God has given me a great gift!" she exclaimed. Abraham and Sarah called their son *Isaac*, a word that means "laughter."

Now Abraham had another son. His name was Ishmael (ISH-may-ehl). He lived in the camp with his mother, Hagar, who was one of Sarah's servants.

Sarah was very jealous of Ishmael and Hagar.

One day, Sarah saw Ishmael and Isaac playing together. She heard Ishmael laughing. She became upset and stormed over to Abraham.

"Get rid of Hagar and her son!" she cried. "I don't want him playing with Isaac. I don't want him to live with us anymore. Send the boy and his mother away."

Abraham was worried. "How can I throw Hagar and Ishmael out of the camp?" he wondered. "Who will look after them?"

"Don't worry about Hagar and Ishmael," God explained. "Let them go. Isaac will stay with you, and I will bless him. Ishmael is also your son, and I love him. I will bless him too. Ishmael will marry and have many children and grandchildren. One day, his family will become a great people. This is my promise to you."

So, Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away. God blessed both of Abraham's sons just as God had promised.



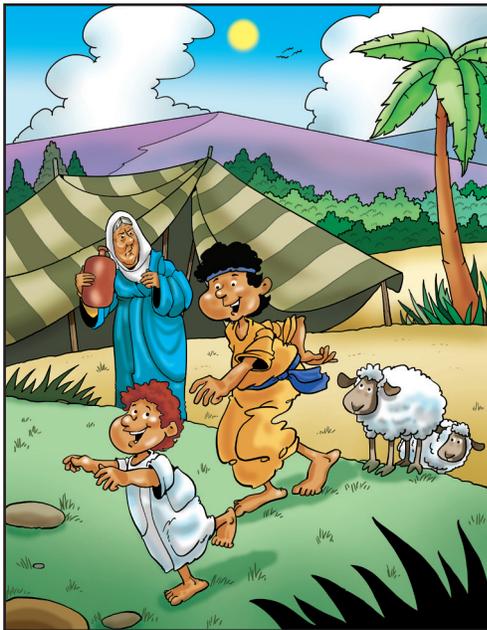
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your child—imagine and wonder.
- Invite everyone to pick a character or group of people from the story—Abraham, Sarah, people in the camp, Isaac, Hagar, Ishmael, and future children and grandchildren. Tell one way that God was with your character or group and why, when, or how. For example, Sarah might say, “*God was with Sarah . . . when she had a baby boy.*”
- Imagine Sarah waiting for Isaac, or Hagar leaving with Ishmael. Draw some things Sarah or Hagar probably did while they waited, prepared, or traveled. Imagine what God was doing for Sarah or Hagar in your picture or scene.
- Picture in your mind what God does when you are waiting or busy. Use your body to show what God's grace and presence look or feel like to you.



Responding to God's Grace

- Let your child finish this sentence: “God is with us when we . . .”
- Find a space in your home where you and your child can stand face to face. Lift your arms and place them on one another's shoulders for a group hug. Invite your child to repeat, “God is with us in our family.” Drop your arms, step back, and repeat, “God is with us outside our family.” Stretch your arms out wide and repeat, “God is with the whole wide world.” Find other ways to pose and claim God's presence.
- Play a hide-and-seek game. Select one person to be the seeker. Send everyone else to hide. After counting slowly to twenty-five, the seeker looks for the hiders. When the seeker finds someone, the seeker shouts, “God's got you!” Take turns being the seeker.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Locate a world map or globe in a book, on a tablet, at a website, or in your home. Invite each person to close his or her eyes. While all eyes are closed, point to a country or region on the map or globe, then ask all to open their eyes and say the following prayer: “God is with the people of (*name country or region*); thank you, God.”
- In gratitude for God's presence with everyone everywhere, sing or say a song of praise each day this week:

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise Christ all creatures here below.
Praise Holy Spirit ever more.
Praise Triune God whom we adore. Amen.*