

Abraham: Conflicts Surrounding Isaac's Birth

Genesis 20-21

Read Genesis 20.

Abraham and Sarah deceived Abimelek, but God protected them all.

- What suffering resulted for each person because of Abraham's sin?
- How is God working in your life to grow your faith and trust in Him?

Principle: God's tests reveal our sin.

Read Genesis 21:1-21.

Isaac was born, and Hagar and Ishmael are sent away under God's protection.

- What do you notice about Abraham's actions that show growth in his faith?
- How do you experience God encouraging you to trust Him through a hard time in your life?

Principle: God grows our trust as we pray and wait.

Read Genesis 21:22-34.

Abraham made a peace treaty and stayed in Beersheba.

- What did Abraham's neighbors observe about his relationship with God?
- What can you do to seek peace in relationships and show others you can be trusted?

Principle: God keeps His promises and grows our trust in Him.

Review Genesis 20-21.

- How will you honor and thank God this week?

Main truth: God's tests grow our trust in Him.

Scripture Memory Verse

“At that time Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces said to Abraham, ‘God is with you in everything you do.’ ”
– Genesis 21:22

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Exploring the Christian Faith

An Attribute of God

from this week's passage

Patient

God is patient. He could put an end to human rebellion immediately, but God has pity on people whose lives are broken by sin. He loves His creation. His plan is to restore creation and reconcile repentant sinners to Himself. Today is the day of salvation, but one day God will come to judge all people.

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A Basic Truth of the Christian Faith

What does sanctification mean?

Sanctification is the Holy Spirit's work of growing us in holiness to be like Jesus, who is perfectly righteous.¹ Sanctification² also involves our cooperation,³ as we study the Bible, pray, obey and serve God.⁴

Philippians 2:12-13¹; 1 Corinthians 6:11²; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24³; Ephesians 4:22-24⁴

Think About It

Why do Christians still struggle with sin?

Christians still live in a sinful world and continue to battle their own sinful desires and Satan's temptation. Justification is immediate, but God's work of sanctification is gradual. The Holy Spirit changes us little by little as we yield to Him. Our thoughts, words and actions become more and more like Jesus as we trust and obey Him. This growth process continues until we reach heaven, where we will be completely free from sin and holy like Jesus. Sometimes the Christians who do not reflect Jesus are not actually Christians at all (Matthew 13:24-30).

Would people be more like Jesus if they just tried harder to follow His example?

We do not become more like Jesus by trying harder. Sanctification is more than developing good habits or willpower. While we must discipline ourselves to seek and obey God, sanctification is also God's work in us. God gives us opportunities to depend on Him more and more. He uses every circumstance, good and bad, to train His children. God has a greater purpose than simply our obedience to His Word. His desire is to keep us from experiencing the harm that comes from sinful choices. God is also growing our love relationship with Him to last for all eternity.

What does it mean to die to sin?

We die to ourselves by refusing to sin. Overcoming sin is so hard that the Bible speaks of it as dying to sin or "putting to death" our sinful desires. Over and over again, God's children ask Him for strength to say "no" when tempted to sin (Colossians 3:5). We must love obeying God more than satisfying ourselves. We must believe that God's ways bring us good (Psalm 18:30) and going our own way is destructive (James 1:14-15). God uses His Word to transform our thoughts and our desires (Romans 12:1-2). The Holy Spirit helps us put on new attitudes and actions. When we show love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, we are living by the Holy Spirit and not being ruled by old sinful desires (Galatians 5:22-23).

To learn more Basic Truths of the Christian Faith, visit mybsf.org.