

Within chapter 21 of Genesis, we encounter three brief narratives. Of most significance is the arrival of the promised child, Isaac. Soon after Isaac's birth the chapter shifts focus to Hagar and Ishmael, then concludes with a treaty between Abimelech, king of Gerar, and Abraham. All three stories demonstrate a common theme: the faithfulness of God and the delivery of His promises.

Genesis 21:1-34

God, the Promise Keeper

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

MY EXPERIENCE...

YOUR EXPERIENCE...

Keeping our word is a powerful personality trait. When you follow through with something you've said you'd do, it's a strong demonstration of trustworthiness. While this kind of integrity ought to be easy, the problem often lies in the fact that we say we will do things we either forget about, or simply cannot deliver on. While we may not be consistent on this issue, there is One who is.

II. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

WHAT kind of a "promise-keeper" are you?

HOW well would you say you follow through with things you commit to doing?

WHEN someone tells you they will do something (a child, boss, friend, etc.) and then don't,

HOW do you typically respond?

ARE you generally more gracious toward yourself or others when it comes to grace in following through?

Genesis 21:1-34

God, the Promise Keeper

Read Genesis 21:1-34

OBSERVATION

What did the Lord say He would do (and did) in vs. 1?
What did Abraham and Sarah name their new child?
According to vs. 6, what did God make for Sarah?
What does Sarah see in vs. 9 that makes her unhappy?
How is Ishmael described in vs. 11?
What is the promise God gives to Abraham in vs. 13?
Why did the angel of God call to Hagar, according to vs. 17?
How does God provide for Hagar, and what promise is repeated (vs. 18-19)?
In vs. 22-24, what promise does Abimelech request of Abraham?
How, specifically, do Abimelech and Abraham show the treaty they make with one another (vs. 25-31).

INTERPRETATION

When did God first make the promise to give Abraham and Sarah a child (see Genesis 17:15-19)? When did God first reveal His plan to Abraham (see Genesis 12:1-3)? How much time has passed?

What does the name Isaac mean? How is this title ironic for Abraham and Sarah? Consider Genesis 17:17.

Why do you think Sarah responded as she did after seeing Ishmael laughing?

What does Sarah's description of Ishmael compared to God's description of him in vs. 13 reveal about this child and God's view of him? Consider Genesis 16:15; 17:23, 25:9.

How does God's provision for Ishmael reveal His character as a promise-keeper? See 16:10.

How does Abraham and Abimelech's treaty to deal honestly with each other reflect a kind of and "promise-keeping" toward one-another?

Where is Beersheba and how did Abraham's act of establishing a legal right to this land reveal some of God's future plan to give it to him?

APPLICATION

What has God promised to you? How has He demonstrated Himself faithful to those things?